

Ezk. 37:24-28 (LD 27, Q/A 74) “Covenant Multiplication”

For the Children: Many of the boys and girls would know how to do “multiplication.” But in our text there is a different kind of multiplication: God multiplies the number of people in His church and kingdom. He does so by including the children of believers in His church and by using the Gospel to convert many people from the nations. When He includes the children, this means that He gives them His promises – about forgiveness through the Lord Jesus, the work of His Spirit, inheriting the earth and much more. But receiving these promises also brings certain responsibilities upon us – to trust the promises and walk in His ways. **Questions:** List the covenant-promises mentioned in Ezk. 37:24-28. Why do some people say that children can’t be included in the covenant today? How does our text prove that they are included?

Introduction:

First Point: The Promise

- 1) Old Covenant Promises: The text is clearly talking about promises that are part of the old covenant: a Davidic Shepherd-King to rule God’s people (2 Sam. 7); spiritual restoration (Dt. 30:1f); the Promised Land (Gen. 15, 17 etc.); multiplication (Gen. 12:2, 15:5, 17:2); and the promise that God would be their God and they His people (Gen. 17:7).
- 2) New Promises: There is also a promise that the divided kingdoms would be re-united under one Davidic King. See 37:11. After the return from Exile, all the tribes were represented in the one nation of Israel. Looking even further ahead, Ezekiel foretells a time of new cleansing and restoration, with obedience from the heart. This looks forward to the placing of God’s Spirit within all His people. See 36:26-27, Jer. 31:31f. This will be a time of greater stability for the church – “forever” or “everlasting” occur 5 times in the text. It will be a time when the nations will realize what God has done for His people (36:36, 37:28).
- 3) The Fulfillment of Promise: These promises are fulfilled by Christ, the Son of David. He is the New Tabernacle of God with men (Rev. 21:3). He brings an even greater reunion, of Jew and Gentile; a greater multiplication of the New Israel; and a greater Promised Land, the new heavens and earth. He also sends His Spirit in fullness at Pentecost. The Spirit then brings about the spiritual restoration foretold in the OT. However, Christ fulfills these promises in 2 phases – a First and Second Coming. Only when Christ returns will we see all God’s people following Him from the heart. Failure to recognize that leads many to exclude children from the covenant.

Second Point: The Recipients of the Promise

- 1) A Promise to Israel: Ezekiel is giving these promises to Israel. By extension, they belong to the New, expanded Israel, the church in this new covenant time.
- 2) To Your Sons and Your Sons’ Sons: These promises are also given to the sons of God’s people and their sons’ sons (v. 25). This expression cannot be spiritualized away: it is speaking of one’s actual descendants. Moreover, this prophecy concerns the new covenant time. Therefore, the children of believers are included in the new covenant.
- 3) Promises for the Children of Believers: The “promise for you and your children” (Acts 2:39) sums up the covenant (oath-bound) promises. Acts 2:38 specifically mentions the forgiveness of sins; the promise of the Holy Spirit; and v. 39, the effect on the nations – “all who are far off” – all of which are covenant-promises set forth in passages our text. Any Jew hearing this would assume that children of God’s people are still part of the covenant.
- 4) Defining and Applying the Covenant: Both covenant and church are defined according to God’s purpose and promise – not according to the presence of “tares” among the wheat. Hence the Epistles are addressed to adults and children as “saints.” All the saints are the heirs of these promises: none are barred because of their age. However, these promises must be responded to. These promises are also “through Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit” (Q74). Therefore, we speak of the children as being under these promises like the adults. This is a comfort for believing parents (CD 1:17). But we also warn that rejection of Christ is covenant-breaking – which brings down the covenant-curse. See Heb. 4:1.

Conclusion: