THE USE OF EZEKIEL 37 IN EPHESIANS 2

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, scholars have endeavored much to identify the background to Ephesians 2. The issue mostly revolves around Eph 2:14–18 with four primary suggestions: Gnostic mythology, a hymnic-liturgical background, the relationship to Colossians, and OT tradition.[1] Today, it is widely agreed among scholars that the author of Ephesians has brought together "traditional materials of various origins in order to express his theological concerns."[2] Admittedly, however, the major underlying traditional source for Ephesians 2 has often been considered to stem from noncanonical literature. The sweeping influence of the Gnostic hypothesis that has dominated the study of Ephesians's background and the seeming lack of clear OT quotations in Ephesians 1–3 may probably have been the major

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[1] See H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1957) 128–29; idem, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1966) 18–26; E. Käsemann, *Lieb und Leib Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur Paulinischen Begrifflichkeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933) 20; Andreas Lindemann, *Die Aufhebung der Zeit: Geschichtsverständnis und Eschatologie im Epheserbrief* (SNT 12; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975) 161–66; K. M. Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973) 132; K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972) 181–86; P. Porkorný, *Der Epheserbrief und die Gnosis: Die Bedeutung des Haupt-Glieder-Gedankens in der entstehenden Kirche* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965); G. Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965) 24–31; Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3* (AB; New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974) 6–10; Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); idem, "Hymnic Elements in Ephesians 1–3," *ZNW* 56 (1965) 214–32; J. Gnilka, *Epheserbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971) 147–52; idem, "Paränetische Traditionen im Epheserbrief" in *Melanges Bibliques en homage au R. P. B. Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamps and A. de Halleux; Duculot: Gembloux, 1970) 397–410; H. Merklein, "Zur Tradition und Komposition von Eph 2, 14–18," *BZ* 17 (1973) 79–102; idem, *Studien zu Jesus und Paulus* (ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius; WUNT 43; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987) 436–46; Thorsten Moritz, *A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians* (New York: Brill, 1996) 23–55; Derwood Smith, "Jewish and Greek Traditions in Ephesians 2:11–22" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1970); P. Stuhlmacher, " 'He Is Our Peace' (Eph 2:14)—On the Exegesis and Significance of Eph 2:14–18," in *Reconciliation, Law, & Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

[2] Derwood Smith, "The Two Made One: Some Observations on Eph. 2:14–18," *OJRS* 1 (1973) 34. Also, see Markus Barth, "Traditions in Ephesians," *NTS 30* (1984) 3 and E. Käsemann, "Ephesians and Acts," in *Studies in Luke Acts* (ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) 297, n. 1.

factors that determined such a direction. Consequently, the study of the use of OT material in Ephesians 2 has received relatively less attention from NT scholars. I suggest, however, that a careful study of Ephesians 2 appears to point to the possibility of Paul's use of the OT in Ephesians 2. In particular, Paul may have constructed his argument based on Ezekiel 37 in that he not only borrowed the material that is found in Ezekiel 37 but that he also applied it to the new community of Christ.

The similarities between Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 have been only rarely noted by NT scholarship. An exception, however, is Ralph P. Martin. He recognized the possible connection between Ezek 37:15–23 and Eph 2:15–22 in his monograph titled *Reconciliation*. Note his comment on the issue:

> But with a mind such as belonged to the author and conceding the subtle ways he appeals throughout the letter to the Old Testament (e.g. 4:8–9; 5:31–32) there is one other allusion that may be mentioned in support of his teaching of "one new man in place of two." The sentence recalls Ezekiel's vision of the two sticks (37:15–23), symbolising Judah and Israel. Yahweh's promise is, "I will join with it (the first stick) the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand." The symbolism is applied to dispersed Israel, which will become regrouped, and then, "I will make them one nation . . . and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms" (v. 22). Pledges of cleansing are given, to be followed (vv. 24 ff.) with the announcement of David's heir as their king, obedience to God's ordinances and statutes (v. 24), and the establishing of "a covenant of peace" (v. 26) as "an everlasting covenant" in a "sanctuary" (vv. 26, 28), which will be God's "dwelling place" with them (v. 27). The cluster of ideas with its links to Ephesians 2:15–22 is striking; and when is added the reminder that the preceding section of Ezekiel 37:1–14 has described the theme of resurrection and the gift of the Spirit (v. 14), we are left to wonder whether the sequence "resurrection"–"renewal"–"one nation"–new "covenant of peace"–God's dwelling place, his shrine in the Spirit in Ephesians 2:1–22 does not run artistically and theologically along lines already set in the Ezekiel prophecy as the author's fertile imagination meditated on it.[3]

Martin, however, does not explore the literary link any further, and he investigates instead the more obvious OT allusion of Isa 57:19 in Ephesians 2.

In Ezekiel 37 Israel's miraculous restoration is portrayed vividly through Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. In the vision, the prophet saw a valley full of dry, disconnected bones, representing the scattered people of Israel. Suddenly, however, the bones began to come together, and tendons and flesh appeared on them. The breath of life then entered into the corpses, and a multitude of living beings stood in the valley. It is proclaimed that in the same way the Lord would miraculously revive the nation of Israel. Furthermore, the day of restoration would also be a day of reunification for Israel and Judah. To illustrate this point, the Lord told Ezekiel to take two sticks–one representing the northern kingdom and the other the southern kingdom–and to hold them as one in his hand. Likewise, the Lord would bring the exiles of both Israel

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[3] Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 190.

and Judah back to the land and make them into one kingdom again. He would raise up a new ideal Davidic Ruler to lead them, establish a new covenant with them, and once more dwell in their midst.

Surprisingly enough, Ephesians 2 accounts a parallel story, yet in a totally different context. It begins by describing the human condition as "dead in transgressions and sins" (Eph 2:1).[4] People were cut off from hope, having no life. But God, who is rich in mercy, on account of his great love with which he loved them, made them alive together with Christ. For it is by grace that they are saved, through faith, which is not their own doing, but it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2 then moves on to speak of reconciliation, particularly the reconciliation of Gentiles. The enmity has been completely broken down in Christ. Jesus Christ not only has made peace, but he himself has become our peace. Gentiles are not without hope any longer. They are not strangers anymore. Jews and Gentiles are no longer two different peoples; they have become one new humanity in Christ, in whom they are "being built together into a dwelling of God" (Eph 2:22).

Although Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 each has its own distinctive historical context, even at first glance it is quite recognizable that the messages of both chapters run topically parallel. The thrust of Ezekiel 37 is that Judah and Israel will become one under the divine leadership, with the Law being observed and followed. The thrust of Ephesians 2 is that Jews and Gentiles have become one in a new creation, through the redemptive event of Christ, with the Law superseded.

II. POINTS OF CONTACT

In an effort to establish a relationship between Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2, the focus will be on seeking out verbal, structural, and conceptual/thematic parallels.

1. *Verbal parallelism.*   It is not at all a difficult task to spot commonly used words in both an earlier text (Ezekiel 37) and a later text (Ephesians 2). Though it may be easy and simple, finding agreement in wording between two or more texts can often become a starting point for establishing literary relationship between an earlier and a later text.[5] Evidence of verbal parallels would strengthen the possibility of some kind of relationship, while the absence of substantial parallels would weaken it.

Upon close examination, Paul seems to pick up on important key words in Ezekiel 37 and masterfully weave them into his new composition. Note the following table:

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[4] All translations of Scripture in this article are my own unless otherwise noted.

[5] There is no consensus among scholars as how to designate both a text that is used and a later work using the earlier one. The technical terms that designate the former are "source," "background passage," "received text," "earlier," "already known," "former," and "precursor," while the latter is frequently referred to as "alluding," "target text," or "later."

Chart 1

Common Vocabulary Shared by Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2

Ezek 37:26	Covenant	Eph 2:12
Ezek 37:26	Peace	Eph 2:14, 15, 17
Ezek 37:16, 17, 19, 22, 24	One	Eph 2:14, 15, 16, 18
Ezek 37:22	Two	Eph 2:15
Ezek 37:27, 28	Dwelling Place	Eph 2:21, 22
Ezek 37:11	Hope	Eph 2:12
Ezek 37:24	Law	Eph 2:15
Ezek 37:9	Dead	Eph 2:1, 5
Ezek 37:23	Sin	Eph 2:1
Ezek 37:24	That They Might Walk In	Eph 2:2, 10
Ezek 37:3, 5, 9, 14	Make Alive	Eph 2:5
Ezek 37:22, 24, 25	Prince	Eph 2:2
Ezek 37:1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14	Spirit	Eph 2:2, 18, 22
Ezek 37:7	Joining	Eph 2:21
Ezek 37:7	Approach	Eph 2:18

At first glance, one may question whether Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 are related as source and allusion since many, yet not all, terms shared by the two passages are fairly common in the Scriptures.[6] On closer inspection, however, the verbal parallels seem more impressive. First, some of the shared vocabulary is used in ways that function as distinctive markers that call to mind the source text.[7] One example can be found when we bring our attention to the clear allusion to Ezek 37:7 made in Eph 2:18 and 2:21. To take the latter first, in Ezek 37:7, LXX does not translate MT's וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת עֶצֶם אֶל־עַצְמוֹ ("and the bones came together, bone to its bone") word to word. Rather, it smooths out to make a better Greek expression and so translates as καὶ προσήγαγε τὰ ὀστᾶ ἑκάτερον πρὸς τὴν ἁρμονίαν αὐτοῦ ("bones came together, each one to its joint"). What is significant is Ephesians's use of the Greek word ἁρμονία ("joint"), which is used only twice in Ezekiel (23:42 and 37:7)

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[6] Although Paul often does not employ the exact same words, this does not by any means reduce the possibility of allusion. He indeed can use his own words to express or develop his new idea when using the alluded text. This is true when one observes how Jubilees and the Temple scroll use the Pentateuch (Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998] 25). Another possible explanation is that Paul might have used a different textual form of the OT. As it is commonly accepted among scholars, the LXX underwent continuous works of recension. Consequently, it is uncertain which version(s) of the Greek OT Paul might have used.

[7] The term "marker" is first used by the famous literary critic Ziva Ben-Porat. In her formulation of intertextuality a literary allusion contains a "built-in directional signal" or "marker" that is "identifiable as an element or pattern belonging to another independent text." Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL* 1 (1978) 108.

and nowhere else in the LXX and in the NT. As Ephesians reuses this word, instead of bringing the exact noun (ἁρμονία) into its text, it verbalizes it and adds its favorite prefix συν- (συναρμολογέω: "to fit together," "to join").[8] Interestingly, this composite word is used only twice in the NT, both appearing in Ephesians (2:21 and 4:16) and cannot be found in any other Greek literature, including the LXX. The word does appear in some later Christian writings, but it is likely to be dependent on the use in Ephesians.[9] Ephesians's use of such a similar, yet rare, word suggests the presence of allusion rather than of mere coincidence. Thus, this phenomenon is to be taken as a marker that indicates Ephesians's dependence on Ezekiel 37.[10] The prefix συν- with this rare verb ἁρμολογέω in Eph 2:21 was probably coined by Paul to stress "the inner relationship of the community and also the relationship between the community and Christ."[11] This reveals the fact that Paul not only makes his own message understood by analogy by borrowing certain vocabulary from the older tradition, but he also emphasizes his point by making a slight change to it.

As to the allusive reference of Ezek 37:7 in Eph 2:18, we should pay close attention to the use of the Greek word προσαγωγή ("access" or "approach") in Eph 2:18. It is another rare word occurring three times in the NT (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; Eph 3:12) and none in the LXX. Surprisingly, προσάγω, which is the cognate word of προσαγωγη, and found four times in the NT (Luke 9:41; Acts 16:20; 27:27; 1 Pet 3:18), is used in Ezek 37:7 (LXX) to describe the bones coming together to attach themselves to each other. When Ezek 37:7 and Eph 2:18 are taken together, the picture is that Jews and Gentiles come to God together as the scattered bones approach each other in the presence of God to form a whole body.

The use of the word "hope" in Eph 2:12 also may suggest literary borrowing. The Greek word ἐλπίς is used about 50 times in the NT in which it is never used to describe a negative situation except in Eph 2:12 and 1 Thess 4:13.[12] In Eph 2:12 it is used to characterize the former existence of believers when they were "outside the sphere of God's people and his covenant promises."[13] This is the identical use of the word ἐλπίς in Ezek 37:11 except that in Ephesians 2 the word is used to describe the past existence of the people of God, while in Ezekiel 37 it is used to describe the present life of the people of God in an exilic period.

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[8] The Liddell-Scott lexicon has ἁρμόζω for its verbal form. J. Armitage Robinson argues that the termination -λογέω was used widely due to the false analogy with the familiar word, λιθολόγεω, that has a similar architectural sense (J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes* [2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1914] 262).

[9] Christian Maurer, "συναρμολογέω," *TDNT* 7.855.

[10] Furthermore, this even suggests that the body metaphor in Eph 4:16, the other place in which the word συναρμολογέω occurs, may very possibly point back to Ezek 37:7, making an analogy between bones being connected together by the power of God and each member of the body of Christ being fitted to each other.

[11] Maurer, 7.855.

[12] In 1 Thess 4:13 the referent is pagans.

[13] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999) 189–90.

2. *Structural parallelism.*   The vision of Ezekiel 37 begins with the present reality of defeat, a death-like, hopeless situation of God's people Israel. They were destitute of all help, and dispirited in their own minds. The vision, however, moves in an opposite direction that no one could ever imagine or expect. The present status of Israel as a captive in Babylon radically changes. They were told that they would not only be brought back to life (i.e. to be free from their oppressor), but also they would become powerful (37:10). Thus the beginning and the end of the vision (vv. 1–10) forms a stark contrast between the present reality and the future one. This is also carried on in the disputation speech in verses 11–14, in which the people's negative self-assessment of their present situation and God's oracle concerning their future restoration are set in opposition to each other.

This structural characteristic can also be found in the second chapter of Ephesians. Paul, however, seems not only to adopt the contrasting element in the vision of Ezekiel, but he also intensifies it, making it much more sophisticated with his artistic ability by using a ποτε/νῦν schema in Eph 2:1–10.[14] It is said that in the past believers were dead (Eph 2:1); walked according to the course of this world (Eph 2:2); lived in the lusts of their flesh (Eph 2:3); and were by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3). But in the present because of God's love they are made alive with Christ (Eph 2:4–5), and are raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). By setting two opposite realities, that is, the past and present existence of believers, Paul effectively succeeds in reminding his readers of their blessed spiritual status that they are enjoying, while Ezekiel encourages his readers in the depressing present situation by having them anticipate the future status they will enjoy.[15]

Besides the contrast between the two opposite realities in both Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2, a striking similarity can be found in terms of a sequence of God's saving activity. Note the following diagram:

Chart 2

• Ezekiel 37:1–14

Bringing Them to the Promised Land (vv. 12–13)

Raising Israel from the Graves (vv. 12–13)

Making Israel Alive (vv. 5–10)

The Dead Bones [Israel] (vv. 1–2)

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[14] For a detailed analysis of the ποτε and νῦν schema in Eph 2:1–10, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1990) 86–88; P. Tachau, *'Einst' und 'Jetzt' im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) 12, 52–85, and 134–43; N. A. Dahl, "Formgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Christusverkündigung," in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: DeGruyter, 1954).

[15] Ezekiel's vision presents its message prospectively, glancing forward to the future from the present, but Ephesians 2 does it retrospectively, glancing backward to the past from the present with the same central axis on which both messages rotate: the salvific work of the gracious sovereign God.

• Ephesians 2:1–10

<div align="center">

Seating Them with Christ

in the Heavenly Places in Christ (v. 6)

Raising Them with Christ (v. 6)

Making Them Alive with Christ (v. 5)

Gentiles Dead in Their Sins (vv. 1, 5)

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As one can observe, the gradual progression in thought of the destiny of God's people in both passages is deliberate, leading one up four levels of significance. By arranging ideas in order of increasing importance and weight, with a sense of continuity and movement, both texts create a climax through which rhetorical forcefulness is fully brought to the readers. Some may think this similarity to be mere coincidence. Paul's possible use of Ezekiel 37, however, is further supported by the placement of Eph 2:7. Ephesians 2:7 concludes what Paul has been saying in verses 4–6, by stating the ultimate purpose for his act of salvation: showing the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (ἵνα ἐνδείξηται ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).[16] Barth has argued for the lawsuit motif in the word ἐνδείκνυμι, seeing the word to be a technical juridical term. According to him, Paul presents the imagery of God bringing the believers as "proof" or "evidence" of God's perfect patience and extraordinary grace in his cosmic lawsuit.[17] Although Barth's suggestion is possible, his view needs more concrete evidence from the context to be substantiated. It would seem more likely that this idea finds its parallel in Ezek 37:13–14, in which a recognition formula appears twice:

(MT) וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּפִתְחִי אֶת־קִבְרוֹתֵיכֶם וּבְהַעֲלוֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקִּבְרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי בָכֶם וִחְיִיתֶם וְהִנַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם עַל־אַדְמַתְכֶם וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(LXX) καὶ γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος ἐν τῷ ἀνοῖξαί με τοὺς τάφους ὑμῶν τοῦ ἀναγαγεῖν με ἐκ τῶν τάφων τὸν λαόν μου καὶ δώσω τὸ πνεῦμα, μου εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ ζήσεσθε καὶ θήσομαι ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ὑμῶν καὶ γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος λελάληκα καὶ ποιήσω λέγει κύριος

A recognition formula is utilized in Ezekiel 37 to show the underlying intention of God's saving act, namely, to let the people know and acknowledge him. After all, Ezekiel's highest concern was not primarily the restoration of God's people Israel, but an acknowledgment by Israel and all nations of the one who proclaims, "I am Yahweh."[18] This recognition formula in Ezekiel solemnly rejects any possible notion of human effort and at the same time sets

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[16] The ἵνα clause serves to indicate the purpose of the entire section of Eph 2:4–6.

[17] Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* 238–42.

[18] See W. Zimmerli, "Knowledge of God According to the Book of Ezekiel," in *I Am Yahweh* (ed. W. Brueggemann; trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) 88.

off God's definitive and purposeful action.[19] Ephesians 2:7 may be suggested as Paul's adaptation of this recognition formula of Ezek 37:13–14 in the light of Christ's coming. As the prophet Ezekiel declares that God who does everything for Israel is to make himself known among his people and all the nations, Paul makes precisely the same point. Paul goes out of his way, however, to pinpoint exactly what God plans to demonstrate to the people concerning himself: τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. The wealth and richness of God's grace will be made known to all, and he will be glorified in ages to come.[20] The intertextual tie becomes much stronger when considering this, together with the four levels of significance of both Ezek 37:1–14 and Eph 2:1–10.

Chart 3

• Ezekiel 37:1–14

So That People Might Know
That He Is the Lord (vv. 13–14)
Bringing Them to the Promised Land (vv. 12–13)
Raising Israel from the Graves (vv. 12–13)
Making Israel Alive (vv. 5–10)
The Dead Bones [Israel] (vv. 1–2)

• Ephesians 2:1–10

So That People Might Know
the Riches of His Grace through Christ (v. 7)
Seating Them with Christ
in the Heavenly Places in Christ (v. 6)
Raising Them with Christ (v. 6)
Making Them Alive with Christ (v. 5)
Gentiles Dead in Their Sins (vv. 1, 5)

Although Paul carefully follows the five-level schema regarding the destiny of God's people, with the explicit mention of God's underlying purpose in Ezek 37:1–14, it is clear that the perspective on land in Ezekiel 37 is changed. Land takes up a significant role in the OT. It is often deemed to be an integral part of God's purpose toward his people Israel. W. Bruggemann even perceives it as "a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith" (emphasis his).[21]

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[19] Ibid.

[20] The meaning of the phrase ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις is the subject of debate. It seems most natural to take this expression with its temporal sense. As O'Brien argues, "The plural 'ages' is not simply a stylistic variation of the singular, but a more general conception, implying 'one age supervening upon another like successive waves of the sea, as far into the future as thought can reach'" (O'Brien, *Ephesians* 173).

[21] W. Bruggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 3.

But to a great extent, the OT preoccupation with land as the locus of covenant blessing is replaced in the NT by Christ and the kingdom of God.[22] This is probably due to the fact that the NT writers feel that the OT land promises find their initial fulfillment in the new creation after the resurrection of Jesus. Paul may have the same idea in mind in Eph 2:6. If this is the case, the land image in Ezek 37:12, 14 is invested with new meaning in Eph 2:6. The notion of promised land, which is purely territorial, is no longer an essential element, but rather it is now linked with the heavenly realm. This indicates that the territorial understanding of "the land is now applied instead to the salvation experienced in Christ."[23] Peter Walker provides a helpful comment:

> Paul also understood such concepts as redemption, exodus and Passover in new ways, which would then affect his view of the land. Within the Old Testament these motifs had their origin in God's act of bringing his people from Egypt into the promised land. Paul now applied them to what God had done for his people through the cross and resurrection of Christ. The logical development of this would be that through Christ's work believers had now been ushered into the promised land, albeit a quite different "land" from the former one.[24]

The parallels between Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 do not cease there. They both advance further by proclaiming the unity of two entities: the southern and northern kingdoms of Israel in the case of Ezekiel 37 and Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 2. Moreover, their messages both reach the same climax where the final establishment of the everlasting new sanctuary in which God will dwell is proclaimed (Ezek 37:26–28; Eph 2:20–22). Thus it can be noted easily that the overall structures of both Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 are following the same pattern:

Chart 4

Ezekiel 37		Ephesians 2	
37:1–10	Bringing alive the dead bones	2:1–7	Bringing alive the sinners who were once dead for their transgressions and sins
37:11–14	Explanation	2:8–10	Explanation
37:15–23	Unification of Judah and Israel	2:11–18	Unification of Jews and Gentiles

[22] For a detailed discussion on the subject, see W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994); C. J. H. Wright, "Biblical Reflections on Land," *ERT* 17 (1993) 153–67; Philip Johnston and Peter Walker, eds., *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

[23] Peter W. L. Walker, "The Land in the Apostles' Writings," in *The Land of Promise* (ed. Philip Johnston and Peter Walker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000) 86.

[24] Ibid.

37:24–28	Looking forward to the establishment of the new sanctuary in a single Davidic rulership	2:19–22	Looking forward to the final establishment of the new sanctuary in the rulership of Christ

3. *Thematic parallelism.* A number of themes in Ephesians 2 resemble those of Ezekiel 37. This high degree of thematic continuity between the two texts contributes to the possibility that Ephesians 2 refers implicitly to the formulation found in Ezekiel 37. We will now briefly examine those shared themes.

a. *The new creation from death to life (Ezek 37:1–10/Eph 2:1–10).* Both Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 begin their chapters with the major theme of God's bringing back dead people to life. The prophet Ezekiel anticipates the day when God will bring about a new creation (Jer 31:21). Upon the completion of his salvific plan, God will make a new covenant with his people (Jer 31:31–36; Ezek 34:25; 37:27). This new covenant will be an everlasting one, and there will be no more hostility, no more wrath, no more punishment, and no more death caused by sin. In Ephesians 2 it is proclaimed that this new creation is already at work (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). In Christ's work God has actualized the new creation by making "one new humanity" constituted of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:15).

At first glance, however, the two texts seem to present the theme in two different dimensions: Ezek 37:1–10 portrays a physical revivification of the dead bones while Eph 2:1–10 has a radical spiritual transformation of believers in view. But when Ezek 37:1–10 is read carefully in its context it becomes clear that Ezek 37:1–10 does not refer to the physically dead members of the people of God. As Gerhard Lohfink rightly describes, "It is about the entombed existence of the present, living generation."[25] Viewed in this way, we can conclude that Ezek 37:1–10 and Eph 2:1–10 utilize the theme in the same way, with each presenting the existence without God.

In addition two similarities must be mentioned. First, in both passages, death is presented not as the result of a natural process, but as something unnatural that is caused by people's hostile opposition to God. In Ezek 37:1–10, death is the effect of the covenant curse that fell upon Israel because Israel continuously violated the covenant oath that was made with God at Mount Sinai (Deut 30:1–3). In Eph 2:1–10, death is figuratively expressed to mean a spiritual state of alienation or separation from God, resulting from unbelief and disobedience. Both in Ezek 37:1–10 and Eph 2:1–10 death is depicted as the ultimate curse that humankind suffers. Therefore, death in both passages has religious significance, demonstrating a clear connection with human transgression.

[25] Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church?: Toward a Theology of the People of God* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999) 206.

Second, the gracious saving action of God lies at the heart of both Ezek 37:1–10 and Eph 2:1–10. The focus of both passages is not the dead status of sinful people, but rather the divine work of granting new life to his people, that is, God's decisive action of recreation for his people. The people were justly judged for their sins and placed under the wrath of God. They were in an utterly hopeless situation. But because of God's love and mercy, God comes through and rescues his people. In Ezekiel 37 this new creation from death to life anticipates its final fulfillment in the messianic age, whereas in Ephesians 2 it is depicted to have been already brought about through the redemptive work of Christ. Contrary to the life beforehand, which was marred by sin, the new creation brings about a perfect restoration and redemption.

b. *Walking in the way of the Lord (Ezek 37:24/Eph 2:10).* Περιπατέω ("walking") in a figurative sense denotes walk of life (i.e. the conduct of one's life, with a strong moral overtone).[26] The verb occurs about 95 times in the NT of which its figurative use is found mainly in the Pauline Epistles (Rom 8:4; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 5:7–9; 10:3; Gal 5:16; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6) and Johannine writings (John 11:9–10; 12:35–36; 1 John 1:6–7; 4:11, 19; 2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3–4). The corresponding Hebrew word הָלַךְ ("to walk"), as used in Ezek 37:24b, bears the same figurative meaning. When used figuratively, the word appears in Qal, Piel, and Hiphil throughout the OT, and often it accompanies the preposition בְ (Lev 18:4; Deut 8:6; 13:5; 30:16; Judg 2:22; 1 Kgs 3:3) as in Ezek 37:24b, describing the community and individual living in obedience or disobedience to the law that God has prescribed for them. In the LXX περιπατέω is also used in a figurative manner to denote the same meaning (2 Kgs 20:3; Eccl 11:9). In Ezek 37:24b the LXX employs the word πορεύομαι rather than περιπατέω. This, however, is understandable when one observes the LXX's preference for πορεύομαι rather than περιπατέω. In the LXX the word περιπατέω appears less frequently, and the notion of conducting one's way of life is more frequently expressed with the verb πορεύομαι (Deut 8:6; 10:12; 1 Kgs 3:14; Ps 119:1; Isa 33:15; Jer 7:23; Prov 28:6).[27]

In Ezek 37:24b, וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי יֵלֵכוּ ("and they will walk in my ordinances" / ὅτι ἐν τοῖς προστάγμασίν μου πορεύσονται LXX) stands side by side with two other expressions, yet all with the same idea: וְחֻקֹּתַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשׂוּ אוֹתָם ("and they will keep my statutes and they will observe them" / καὶ τὰ κρίματά μου φυλάξονται καὶ ποιήσουσιν αὐτά, LXX). This syndetic expression not only produces clarity of meaning but, additionally, it adds great emphasis to that which characterizes the united kingdom under the Davidic Ruler in verse 24a.

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[26] The image of walking itself has a connotation of "continuing progress in time and in a chosen direction." Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., "Walk, Walking," *DBI* 922.

[27] Unlike the LXX, the verb πορεύομαι rarely conveys the notion of living one's life-style in the NT. But when it is used in such a sense it refers mainly to a negative view of life-style (e.g. 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Pet 2:10; Jude 11, 16, 18).

The LXX, taking the simple conjunction waw of the MT in the beginning of the triad of expressions (וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי יֵלֵכוּ) as carrying a telic force, employs ὅτι to express purpose.[28] Ephesians 2:10 keeps in line with the LXX of Ezek 37:24b by placing ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν in a purpose clause, yet with the conjunction ἵνα rather than ὅτι, probably because ἵνα was used more frequently to express purpose. Ephesians 2:10 is thus saying that believers are made new in Jesus so that they might walk in good works, while Ezek 37:24 states that the future Davidic Ruler will be made prince so that Israel might walk in God's ordinances and keep his statutes.

c. *Covenant (Ezek 37:26/Eph 2:12).* Covenant is one of the major themes in both passages. The word itself (בְּרִית / διαθήκη) appears only twice in Ezekiel 37 and a single time in Ephesians 2, but still it supplies the framework for understanding the messages of Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2. The repetition of the formula, וְהָיִיתִי־לִי לְעָם וַאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים ("I will be their God, and they will be my people"), in Ezek 37:23, 27 and Ephesians's declaration, αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποίημα ("For we are his workmanship") in Eph 2:10 and ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ ("so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are members of God's household") in Eph 2:19 clearly imply a covenant relationship between God and his people. The impression of this shared theme as a textual link is strengthened by the thematic relationship between the passages. In both passages the closeness of God to his people, which is often associated with the covenant theme, is expressed. In Ezekiel 37 it is said that עֲלֵיהֶם וְהָיָה מִשְׁכָּנִי ("My dwelling place also will be upon them"). Similarly, Eph 2:22 states that καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι ("and you also are being built together into God's dwelling in the Spirit"). Ephesians also includes the past reality of believers with regard to God's covenant with Israel, saying in 2:12 that Gentiles were ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ("strangers to the covenants of promise"). The Gentiles, however, says Ephesians, are brought into the people of God through the cross of Jesus Christ and thus are no longer foreigners and aliens with Israel (Eph 2:19).

d. *Peace (Ezek 37:26/Eph 2:14–15, 17).* The root of the word שָׁלוֹם denotes completion or soundness. In the OT it further signifies prosperity, well-being in general, all good in relation to both man and God. The word εἰρήνη in classical Greek is primarily negative, denoting the absence or end of war.

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[28] It is not altogether clear whether the use of ὅτι is consecutive or telic. Some may argue for a consecutive use. Although there are not many instances of the consecutive use of ὅτι in both the LXX (Exod 3:11; 2 Kgs 8:13) and the NT (Matt 8:27; Mark 4:41; Luke 4:36; Heb 2:6), no doubt is cast upon the fact that it was used in the later Greek. See A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 1001. However, to take the conjunction as having a telic sense is also valid, and it is likely that this is the case here.

But generally in the LXX and NT the meaning of the word εἰρήνη is determined by the positive conception of the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם. This is supported by the fact that the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם in the OT is always translated into εἰρήνη.[29]

The theme of peace was probably a stunning one to both the readers of Ezekiel and of Ephesians when it is considered against each of their historical contexts. In the days of Ezekiel the thread of their history with God was perceived to be irrevocably broken. Everything seemed to be at an end. The catastrophe of the exile negated any kind of hope for Israel. Similarly peace was a thing difficult to expect at the time during which Ephesians was written, with all the apparent divisions and resentments between the Jews and the Gentiles, which were seemingly impossible to overcome.[30]

According to Ezek 37:26, peace will be an essential characteristic of the messianic kingdom under the new covenant. Peace here in Ezekiel 37 indirectly signifies return from exile. It means freedom from foreign oppression. But more specifically it is the freedom from the perennial human problem of sin, a freedom that brings harmony between God and Israel. Ezekiel 37:23 and 24 make this clear:

> And no longer will they defile themselves with their idols, with their detestable things, with any of their transgressions. But I will deliver them from all their apostasies by which they have sinned and I will cleanse them. And they will be my people and I will be their God. And my servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them. And they will walk in my ordinances, and they will keep my statutes and they will observe them.

The phrase the "covenant of peace" thus captures the picture of the state of perfect harmony between God and his people Israel, with no hostility caused by sin. In fact, in a covenantal context Israel's right standing with God through obedience always serves as the basis for peace. Therefore, the main aspect of peace described in Ezek 37:26 is a peaceful state or condition of a renewed relationship with God under the new everlasting covenant. The concept of peace in Ezekiel 37, however, is not restricted only to this sense. The whole context in which the prophecy is made with regard to God uniting the southern and northern kingdoms suggests that peace also involves harmonious renewal of horizontal relationships.[31] The same concept of peace can be found in Eph 2:16 in which it is said that Christ Jesus came so that

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[29] For a detailed study of the word, see Werner Foerster, "εἰρήνη," *TDNT* 2.400; S. E. Porter, "Peace, Reconciliation," *DPL* 695–99; W. Brueggemann, *Peace* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001).

[30] This, however, does not necessarily mean that there was strife and tension between believing Jews and Gentile Christians in the church. There is no evidence in the letter to support such a view. This must be simply understood against the backdrop of the political and historical situation during that time.

[31] In the OT the renewal of God's relationship to his people often accompanies peace and internal unity between the southern and northern kingdoms. Note what the prophet Isaiah says in 11:12–13: "And he will set up a signal for the nations, and will assemble the scattered people of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The Jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim."

ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ. This partly sheds insight on the expression Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν in Eph 2:14. However, in Eph 2:14–15 this God-human relationship is not the focal point for which this term εἰρήνη is used. The term is also applied to the universal church consisting of Jews and Gentiles.[32] Through the redemptive work on the cross Christ has become peace, destroying the wall of separation between the two groups and bringing them together as one new humanity. Thus as the use of the word "peace" in Ezek 37:26 has both vertical and horizontal dimensions, in Ephesians 2 the term employs both dimensions as well, stressing the notion of unity between Jews and Gentiles and the notion of a peaceful state between God and humans. The use of the word with two different concepts of reality in Ephesians 2 is significant, for it serves as a marker that indicates Ephesians's borrowing from the source text, Ezekiel 37.[33]

e. *The promised Messiah of David/Jesus (Ezek 37:22, 24–25/Eph 2:13–17, 20)*. In general terms the word Messiah refers to a person who is consecrated to office by the ceremony of anointing. It is employed with respect to kings (1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:21; 23:1; Ps 2:2; 20:7; 84:10; 89:39; 2 Chr 6:42; Lam 4:20); priests (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:22); prophets (Ps 105:15; 1 Chr 16:22); and even foreign rulers such as Cyrus, the Persian king (Isa 45:1). In technical terms, however, it was taken to refer to God's instrument by whom God's kingdom is to be established in Israel and in the world. In Ezekiel 37 it is promised that God will set apart his servant David and send him to Israel for his special task, namely to be "prince" or "king" forever over a reunited people (v. 24).[34] In later Judaism this messianic figure was closely connected with the messianic war. Thus the Messiah was taken to be a descendant of David, anointed by God as King and military leader of his people. He is to fight a war against the Gentile oppressors, liberating Israel with the succession of a final establishment of the rule of God.[35] Ephesians employs this messianic understanding and presents Christ as the instrument of God, liberating Gentiles from the ruler of the air (Eph 2:2), destroying the dividing wall of hatred between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14), and bringing about the final establishment of God's sanctuary (Eph 2:20–22).

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[32] Hoehner is right to point out that "the peace is primarily between the Jewish and Gentile believers and secondarily between human beings and God," and that these priorities must not be confused in interpreting this passage (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 367).

[33] In arguing for a hymnic background of Eph 2:13–17, Gnilka claims that the different use of the word εἰρήνη in Eph 2:14–17 is an indicator that Paul is using his own words in one place and quoting from other traditional material in another place. However, there is no need to search for the traditional material used in Eph 2 beyond the canonical scripture if Paul used Ezek 37 (Gnilka, *Epheserbrief* 147–48).

[34] In the prophetic writings the messianic concept has a special reference to God's promised Davidic ruler who will bring a full restoration of Israel (Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5–6; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:25; Amos 9:11–12).

[35] For the messianic war, see Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1955); M. Hengel, *The Zealots* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989) 271–319.

The identification of Jesus with the Davidic Messiah, of course, was not uncommon in early Christianity. Ample testimony concerning the messianic expectation among the Jews and its attachment to Jesus are borne by the Gospel records. What is important is that, by identifying Jesus in Ephesians 2 as the Davidic Ruler in Ezekiel 37, Paul may be drawing the eager anticipations of OT prophetic tradition with regard to the messianic expectation into his message that centered on the role of Jesus Christ. The article before the noun "Christ" in Eph 2:5, 13 and the frequent use of "Jesus Christ," "Christ Jesus," or "Christ" rather than merely using only "Jesus" also supports that Paul may be underscoring a messianic role of Jesus.[36]

f. *The temple (sanctuary/dwelling place) of God (Ezek 37:26–28/Eph 2:19–22).* The biblical imagery of the temple commonly refers to the place in which God dwells. It was the focal center of Jewish national life and identity, which set them apart from other nations. In the Scripture it is often designated as the "house of God (or Lord)," the "sanctuary," or God's "dwelling place." Ezekiel 37:26–28 picks up this symbolic temple image and highlights the promise of God's immanent and everlasting presence with his people. It is noteworthy that MT reads וְהָיָה מִשְׁכָּנִי עֲלֵיהֶם ("my dwelling place will be upon them"). As G. K. Beale argues, the use of the preposition עַל excludes the notion of a temple as a physical handmade building and suggests a metaphorical temple referring to God's spiritual tabernacling presence over all Israelites.[37] The point appears to be that "the new tabernacle will extend over all of God's people who have been 'multiplied' and 'shall live on the land', that is, living throughout the land of promise."[38] In Eph 2:19–22, however, the metaphorical meaning of temple has changed. The temple does not symbolize God's presence any longer. The temple is now the redeemed community, including both Jews and Gentiles.[39] How then should we account for this

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[36] Hoehner states, "the designations of 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus' occur more frequently per thousand words of text in Ephesians (18 times) than in other Pauline epistles. Furthermore, the designation 'Christ,' when used alone, occurs more frequently per thousand words of text in Ephesians (26 times) than in any other of Paul's letters except Colossians. On the other hand, except for Romans and the Pastorals, the name 'Jesus,' when used alone, is less frequent per thousand words of text in Ephesians (2 times) than in other Pauline epistles. However, the article prefixing the noun 'Christ' indicates a title and not only as a name occurs more frequently per thousand words of text in Ephesians (23 times) than in other Pauline epistles (Colossians is a close second). Hence, the use of the term 'Christ' is very prominent in the book" (Hoehner, *Ephesians* 108).

[37] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 111–13.

[38] Ibid. 111.

[39] That the temple symbolizes God's people can be found in other places in the NT (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). Designating temple as community can be traced back to Qumran literature. Alan R. Kerr finds this in the Manual of Discipline (1 QS 9:5–6) where it says, "At that time the men of the *Yahad* (italics translator's) shall withdraw, the holy house of Aaron united as a Holy of Holies, and the synagogue of Israel as those who walk blamelessly." Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: the Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (JSNTSup 220; London: Sheffield, 2002) 296. The English translation of 1 QS 9:5–6 is from Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996) 139.

difference if Ephesians 2 uses Ezekiel 37? Is Eph 2:19–22 merely underscoring a different symbolic aspect of the temple? The answer is negative. The different symbolic meaning may reflect a changed reality. In the OT times, God dwelt among his people in the temple. All that the people of the OT could experience was the presence of God upon them.[40] But now under the new covenant God's presence is not upon them but within them through the Holy Spirit. The changed reality is well represented by the two phrases in Eph 2:19 and 22: Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι. Through the saving work of Christ Jesus on the cross believers under the new covenant no longer need a physical temple any longer to have with them the presence of God, for they have become the temple of God, having Jesus as the cornerstone. Besides, it was only when the work of Christ was completely finished that believers could experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through whom God dwells within the community.[41] In other words, by the redemptive work of Christ and through the Spirit the church has become the temple of God where God indwells. Under a new age with a changed reality when the people of God has become the temple it may have been necessary for Paul to make an adjustment of the old text for which the full revelation was not available to fit a new reality.

Another contact point related to the temple theme is the rare word συναρμολογέω in Eph 2:21. As has already been mentioned earlier, Paul seems to pick up ἁρμονία from the LXX (Ezek 37:7), in which it is used in the vision of Ezekiel to describe the picture of the scattered bones being gathered to be realigned and attached to one another in order to form human bodies. By employing the word ἁρμονία from Ezek 37:7, Paul appears to bring the dynamic vividness of Ezekiel's metaphor of revival into his temple imagery and, by adding the preposition συν-, he describes the momentous truth that all the believers—both Jews and Gentile believers—have been incorporated into the new community of Christ and indissolubly joined with him. Thus Paul can boldly speak of having been raised or made alive with him (Eph 2:5–6), and made to sit with him (Eph 2:6).

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[40] James Merrill Hamilton Jr. has demonstrated in his doctoral dissertation that the scriptural evidence strongly supports that "believers were regenerated by the Spirit, but they were not indwelt by the Spirit." After searching every Spirit-related passage in the OT he finds no indication of the indwelling of the Spirit. He then concludes that the indwelling of the Spirit is the event that has been made possible after the glorification of Jesus and that through the indwelling ministry of the Spirit the Christian community has become God's holy temple. James Merrill Hamilton Jr., "He Is with You and He Will Be in You: The Spirit, the Believer, and the Glorification of Jesus" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003) 205, 208 (a revised version of this dissertation has been published as *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* [Nashville: B & H, 2006]). Also, for a discussion on the indwelling of the Spirit under the old and new covenant, see R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965); M. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001); R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[41] The prepositional phrase ἐν πνεύματι is best taken to indicate the manner of κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.

g. *Unity (Ezek 37:15–28/Eph 2:11–22)*. Few will disagree that the most important theme in both passages is the theme of unity. This great theme seems to be presented identically in both passages in that both speak of a unity of two separate groups. Thus the words "one" and "two" are used both in Ezek 37:15–28 and Eph 2:11–22 exclusively in the context of two groups of people becoming one. Although in both passages we find crucial theological statements with regard to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, this theme of unity is never applied to the "vertical unity," but to the "horizontal unity."[42]

h. *The people of God (Ezek 37:23, 27/Eph 2:19)*. The most often used term that applied to Israel is "the people of God." The very concept of the term springs out of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The identification of Israel as God's people first appears in Exod 6:7: "Then I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." This identification of Israel as the people of God is then repeated over and over again throughout the OT. The same concept is found in Ezekiel 37 as well. The covenantal basis for God's relationship with Israel is evident in the covenant formula found in Ezek 37:23, 27. Although Israel brought upon herself the covenant curse due to her continual disobedience and rebellion, her relationship with God can never be altered or abandoned because God's covenant with them is an eternal one. Therefore, even in the midst of the punishment of exile, God promises her a full national and political restoration. When we look at Ephesians, however, we find the language applies to the church. It is true that Ezekiel 37 does not necessarily rule out the inclusion of the Gentiles into the "people of God." It is equally true, however, that the national Israel is primarily in view, rather than both Israel and Gentiles. Surprisingly, in Ephesians 2 the emphasis is heavily laid on the partnership between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. They are not two different ethnic entities any more. They have become united under one lordship. Together they have been made one new humanity (v. 15), fellow citizens (v. 19), and members of the household of God (v. 19). In this way Paul appears to take the theme of the people of God in Ezekiel 37 and extend its range of relationships for the members of the new community with traditional Israel and with the diverse members of the new people of God (cf. Rom 10:5–13; 11:25–32; Gal 3:28).

i. *The Holy Spirit (Ezek 37:1–14/Eph 2:18, 22)*. Both in Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 the Holy Spirit is described as an integral part of God's redemptive plan. In Ezekiel 37 it is the Holy Spirit who brings out the prophet in the middle of a valley full of dry bones in his vision. But most importantly

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[42] Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Boston: Brill, 1998) 175. Dawes observes that the description of the horizontal unity is consistent in the whole letter of Ephesians.

it is also the Spirit whom God promises to put in the heart of his people (v. 14), which will enable the people to experience the new life depicted in verses 23–28 (cf. Ezek 36:26–28). Although in Ezekiel 37 the word רוּחַ can mostly be translated as "breath" (vv. 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10), except for verse 1 and verse 14 where the Hebrew word is clearly a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, the use of the Hebrew word serves to provide the vivid image of the primary work of the Spirit in giving new life.

In Ephesians 2 it is made obvious that it is ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ("by one Spirit") that both Jews and Gentiles together have access to God the Father (v. 18). It is also ἐν πνεύματι ("in the Spirit") that both Jews and Gentiles are being built together (v. 22). As already shown, Eph 2:18 and 2:21 both may depend on Ezek 37:7.[43] If so, we can conclude that the role of the Spirit is reproduced in the way Ezekiel 37 presents it. In Ezekiel 37 it is the work of the Spirit that makes it possible for the dry bones to approach (προσάγω) each other and join together (ἁρμονία) to form a human structure in the presence of God (v. 7). In Eph 2:18, 21, 22 it is the Spirit who enables Jews and Gentiles to come together to approach (προσαγωγή) God the Father (v. 18) and to be joined together (συναρμολογέω) to become a dwelling place of God (vv. 21–22).

III. CONCLUSION

By the stark contrast between the present reality of Israel and God's future promise of the nation's great restoration, the vision of dry bones under-scores "human impotence" and "divine omnipotence" in Ezek 37:1–14.[44] God's future plan for Israel then is laid out in detail in verses 14–28: God will bring together the two kingdoms that were once one and set up the Davidic dynasty to rule over the people forever. God will also place his own sanctuary in the midst of Israel and dwell among his people forever. Interestingly, Ephesians 2 also stresses human impossibility and the greatness of the power of God in Eph 2:1–10, clearly demonstrated in the saving activity of God through Jesus Christ. This is consistently carried out by contrasting believers' past and present existence. Ephesians 2 then delves into the central issue of unity between Jews and Gentiles. Ezekiel 37 talks about the future unity between two separated kingdoms, Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom). Paul, however, in Ephesians 2 speaks of Jews and Gentiles being united through the work of Christ in their present historical setting (Eph 2:11–18).[45] The affinity between the two texts, however, goes far beyond this. The general sequence of Ezekiel 37 seems to be continuously kept without interruption. Thus as the themes of the Davidic King and eternal sanctuary (Ezek 37:24–28) follow the theme of unity (Ezek 37:15–23) in

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[43] See the verbal parallelism section above.

[44] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 2.260.

[45] In the OT the nation Israel had enjoyed a special relationship with God. However, it must be admitted that the scheme of God for mankind always included a means by which every individual of any nation could be saved. It was through the nation of Israel that God's plan for redemption was unfolded.

Ezekiel 37, the theme of Jesus the chief cornerstone, which corresponds to the theme of the Davidic King in Ezek 37:22, 24, 25, and that of the temple in which God lives follow the theme of unity in Ephesians 2. Apart from the sequence, the underlying idea in both Ezekiel 37 and Ephesians 2 appears to be identical: salvation and unity are not something that humans can achieve; it is purely the gift of God.

The link between the two texts is even further supported by the presence of extensive shared vocabulary and by numerous important themes found in both texts. All the evidence presented in this article suggests that, whatever Paul's intention, he used Ezekiel 37 as a framework for building his own argument in Ephesians 2.