

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 18, 2016**

Ezekiel 36:1–37:28. God blesses Israel and Judah.

Revelation 18:1–24. The fall of Babylon.

Job 38:1–11. God’s first speech: ‘Job, you have no clue.’

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 36:1–37:28. In **36:1-15** prosperity returns to Israel. The Lord swore that He would bring vengeance upon these nations (Edom is again singled out, **36:5**). He would also restore His people to the land. Once again crops would grow in the land, and cities would be populated. In **36:16-38** God cleanses His people. Israel had polluted the land with their sinful deeds and had brought dishonor to God’s name. When Israel went into exile, the nations made wrong assumptions about the character of God. To vindicate Himself and restore His reputation among the nations, the Lord would restore the exiles to the land. He would cleanse their sins, create in them a desire for loyalty, and renew His agricultural blessings. At that time both the nations and Israel would recognize His sovereignty. In **37:1-14** Israel comes to life again: Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones portrayed in a vivid way Israel’s miraculous restoration. In this vision the prophet saw a valley full of dry, disconnected bones, representing the scattered people of Israel. However, suddenly 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. In the same way the Lord would miraculously revive the nation of Israel. He would deliver them from the grave of exile, place His Spirit among them, and settle them once more in the promised land. In **37:15-28** Israel and Judah is reunited. The day of restoration would also be a day of reunification for Israel and Judah. To illustrate this the Lord told Ezekiel to take two sticks, one representing the Northern Kingdom and the other the Southern Kingdom, and hold them as one in his hand. In the same way the Lord would bring the exiles of both Israel and Judah back to the land and make them 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.

Life in God by 2nd person love and knowledge. Note how the Lord told Ezekiel to walk around among the bones so he could appreciate their vast number and see how dry they were. As a priest, Ezekiel was never to be defiled by the dead, but this was a vision and the bones were not toxic. The prophet must have been wondering why the Lord gave him this vision, but the Lord’s question gave him the answer: “Can these bones live?” From the human point of view, the answer is no, but from the divine point of view, nothing is impossible. It is God who “gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Rom. 4:17). Ezekiel’s reply didn’t question the power of God; it only expressed the prophet’s conviction that God knew what He was going to do and was able to do it. Although I always try to provide the right motivation for the people of God to walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*, this cannot be done in our power. All we can do is be willing and move in that direction. He is the only sufficient cause of the supernatural life with God. We can desire it all we want, but desiring it in and of itself provides no power. We should pray regularly to God for Him to bring new

life to our otherwise dead spiritual life, dead to really knowing Him and loving Him with a knowledge and love that transcends everything else in our lives—with all of our hearts, minds, and souls.

Revelation 18:1–24. An angel proclaims the death of Babylon. She is punished by God for her immorality, greed and persecutions. The kings who have been deceived and compromised by her values watch in horror. The merchants find their trade and livelihood swept away. And it all happens so quickly! The everyday activities of city life are silenced for ever, as God steps in to judge human arrogance and rebellion. This has been the fate of Babylon from the beginning (Genesis 11:1–9).

Life in God by 2nd person love and knowledge. The judgment on the Babylonian “system” is because she has polluted the whole world. As in the judgment of “the harlot,” the sin is that of “fornication” or idolatry. The system intoxicated the people of the world with all the riches and pleasures it had to offer. It catered to those who were “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Christians in every age have had to heed the warning of 1 John 2:15–17. How easy it is to become fascinated by the things the world has to offer. Like a person taking a sip of wine, we can soon find ourselves drinking deeply and then wanting more. The world system that opposes Christ has always been with us, and we must beware of its subtle influence. The world system satisfies man’s lower sense appetites and this leads to following “the beast” and rejecting the Lamb. But worldly things never permanently satisfy or last. The love of pleasures and possessions is but an insidious form of idolatry, demonic in its origin and destructive in its outcome. God created us *to know and love Him* and when the world takes us away from that purpose of life, we can be sure that the source is demonic. We can walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and proper love* where He fills our hearts with love for true goodness, or we can walk with Satan and have him fill our hearts with greed and materialism (Acts 5:3). What are our hearts filled with? What do we think about the most? What kind of people of God are we becoming? *Quo Vadis?*

Job 38:1–11. In this first speech from God, the idea is ‘can you explain My creation?’ Job was sure that his speeches had been filled with wisdom and knowledge, but God’s first question put an end to that delusion: “Who is this that darkens My counsel with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). ‘Why are you using your ignorance to deny My providence?’ God didn’t question Job’s integrity or sincerity; He only questioned Job’s ability to explain the ways of God in the world. Job had spoken the truth about God (42:7), but his speeches had lacked humility. Job thought he knew about God, but he didn’t realize how much he didn’t know about God. Knowledge of our own ignorance is the first step toward true wisdom.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and love. It is a good thing that, in principle, love for God outstrips knowledge of God. While one cannot love God if he does not know God. Loving God as the Ultimate Good is not circumscribed by our limited knowledge of Him. There are plenty of believers in the Bible who knew far less than we do, but whose great love was acknowledged by the Lord (e.g., the former harlot in Luke 7:47). We should always strive to know God more, but it is a mistake to think that knowledge translates to more love; this is known as intellectual determinism. The phrase

I consistent use is by “knowledge and by love” to emphasize that we need to grow in both together---there is no love without knowledge and there is no true knowledge of God without love (cf., 1 John). Though limited knowledge of the Lord does not circumscribe our love. False knowledge certain can distort and destroy love for God as our ultimate good. In fact, it is false knowledge of God that keeps people from seeing His goodness and being drawn to it by overwhelming love.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love,

Pastor Don