

43. Defining a Foreshadowing of the Servant (Ezekiel 1–3, 33–34, 36–37, 47)

Besides Ezekiel’s prophetic calling to minister to his own people, his role as their watchman additionally foreshadows God’s servant David who warns and gathers end-time Israel so that the Lord may come and dwell with them. We observe the close affinity between Ezekiel and God’s servant in Ezekiel’s allegory of the two “trees” or “sticks” (*‘eitzim*) that become one in the prophet’s “hand,” symbolizing the end-time reunion of the two houses of Israel after the pattern of ancient David. Just as Ezekiel is called in response to the abuses of God’s people by their shepherds, so is God’s end-time servant David. And as Ezekiel was commanded to raise up and regenerate God’s people Israel, so does God’s servant.

The allegory of the two “trees” or “sticks” most nearly symbolizes the division and reunion of the ten-tribed northern kingdom of Israel led by Ephraim and the southern kingdom of Judah or the Jews. Olive trees in the Middle East generally consist of two grafts that grow into two main trunks sprouting fruit-bearing branches. As the Lord tells Nephi, “When two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also” (2 Nephi 29:8)—not the other way around as taught by “precepts of men.” If the “trees” or “sticks” referred to the Bible and Book of Mormon, for example—not to the two houses of Israel—then Moroni’s possessing the keys of “the record of the stick of Ephraim” (Doctrine & Covenants 27:5) would mean he had the keys of “the record of the record of Ephraim,” making God’s words redundant or confusing.

Instead—for those who care to read without jumping to conclusions—God himself explains the allegory’s meaning: “Thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes” (Ezekiel 37:16–20). Notably, the “hand” motif links to the prophecies of Isaiah, which identify God’s end-time servant as God’s right “hand.”

The fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophetic allegory consists of Israel’s end-time restoration to lands of inheritance that form an integral part of the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). To that end, God tells Ezekiel, “I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 37:21–23)

The moving force in this end-time restoration of Israel and Judah, including the restoration of Davidic kingship, is God's servant David who prepares the way for the Lord's coming to dwell with his people: "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezekiel 37:24–28).

The latter-day David's serving as the Lord's "shepherd" to his people possesses a type in Moses, who led Israel's journey to the Promised Land (Isaiah 63:11–14). His reuniting the two houses of Israel possesses a type in ancient David, who reunited Israel's northern and southern kingdoms (2 Samuel 5:1–3). The occasion for the Lord's raising up his end-time servant David are the self-serving abuses of his people's "shepherds":

"The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them" (Ezekiel 34:1–6);

"Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

"For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country" (Ezekiel 34:7–13);

“And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods” (Ezekiel 34:23–25).

Even Ezekiel’s allegory of the dry bones—in which the Lord’s commands him to raise up and regenerate Israel’s dead—ends with the same end-time restoration of his people Israel that his servant David performs: “He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:11–14).

As a sub-note, while Isaiah, too, prophesies God’s end-time people’s rising from the dust to new life (Isaiah 52:1–2), Paul speaks of their end-time restoration as “life from the dead” (Romans 11:15). Many additional scriptures tie in to this scenario of Israel’s restoration in which God’s servant David takes the lead.