

Introduction: Conflict and division come from our brokenness as human beings. People will always find others who agree with them on some issue and insist they are totally right. Any individual or group attempting to introduce either nuance into their position, or disagree to the point of saying their opinion is wrong is automatically the 'enemy'. But, all people fail to realize they are double-minded sinners (James 4:8-10) until they receive forgiveness through the faith of Jesus to be reconciled to God IN Him so they can be reconciled to everyone who has received the same forgiveness and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)!

*** Before I knew God and Jesus I had a terrible experience of being self-conflicted. In late 1977, as I was trying to establish myself in the actuarial profession, my mother shattered me when she told me she was divorcing my father. They had moved from incompatibility to 'irreconcilable differences'. I talked a lot with my sister on the phone, but it didn't help. I was already under emotional pressure from work performance and feeling like I was the 'odd man out' socially. My emotional 'roller coaster' trait of my mother was clashing with my 'calmly and responsibly do your job' trait of my father. It got so bad that one evening as I showered after my four mile 'wind down from work' run, I spoke this out loud to my parents: If you can't get along together under one roof, try getting along together in one body, I'm a mess! *** The next spring God worked a miracle and brought my parents together so they lived happily until my mother died seven years later. That's another story for another day. *** In the enactment prophecy we heard God give to Ezekiel He proclaims His power to re-unify His divided people Israel in His Messiah who will also be their Shepherd of peace. Our short song of ascent by David teaches us that unity in the family of God results in life that is blessed for eternity! *** Let's discover together the power and love of God that unifies and blesses divided people.

I. Yahweh tells Ezekiel to take one stick for Judah and one for Joseph, then unite them in his hand; this will signify God re-unifying His people into one cleansed covenant people. (Ezekiel 37:15-23)

- A. The covenant God commands Ezekiel to take two sticks and write Judah on one and Joseph on one, then to join them into one stick in his hand. (*Verses 15-17*)
 1. Then it was the Word of Yahweh to me: You, son of man, you must take to you one stick and write on it: To Judah and the children of Israel his companion; and, you must take to you one stick and write on it: To Joseph the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel his companion. (*Verses 15-16*)
Two sticks: After Solomon died, Israel was divided in two in 930 BC. Two tribes were called Judah and ten called after Joseph's sons (1 Kings 12:12-19). Ephraim-Israel was carried away in 722 BC. In 590 BC, Ezekiel is commanded to take two sticks one for each portion of Jacob's descendants.
 2. You must bring them together, one to one, to you, into one stick: they are one in your hand. (*Verse 17*)
Command: Ezekiel must make two sticks look like one by how he grips them in his hand.
- B. When the people will ask Ezekiel what his action means, he is to say Adonai-Yahweh will gather His people who had fought each other to re-unify and cleanse them. (*Verses 18-23*)
 1. And when they will say to you, the children of your people: Will you not declare to us what these (are) to you? (*Verse 18*)
Question: The covenant God knows His people will ask Ezekiel what he did with the sticks with his hands is supposed to mean to them, who after 722 BC feel hopelessly divided in both despair and fear.
 2. You must say to them: Thus says Adonai-Yahweh: Behold! I (am) taking the stick of Joseph ... and have put them with the stick of Judah and made them one stick ... one in My hand. (*Verse 19*)
Adonai-Yahweh: Adonai is Jesus of the Three-in-One Yahweh (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:41-45). God has the power in His 'hand' to bring about the re-unification of His people: Israel.

Ezekiel holds two sticks as one to signify Israel's re-unification

3. These are the sticks on which you will write on them in your hand before their eyes. (*Verse 20*)
Visual aid: At this time, Yahweh is still telling Ezekiel the actions he will need to take with his hands before the children of Israel and how Ezekiel will answer their inevitable question. The sticks will be a visual aid to reinforce Yahweh's incredible Word!
4. Then you must say to them: Thus says Adonai-Yahweh: Behold! I (am) taking the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone; and, I have gathered them from on every side and brought them to their land. (*Verse 21*)
Thus says: Adonai-Yahweh pronounces He will miraculously gather tens of thousands of Israelites widely scattered over one hundred years ago and bring them back to the land He told Abraham would be theirs in the solemn covenant He cut with him (Genesis 15:13-21)!
5. I have made them (both) one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel, and one king will be king over them all; and, they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms again. (*Verse 22*)
One nation, one king: This one king over the re-united kingdom will be the eternal king foreshadowed to Moses and declared to David as a descendant of his by the prophet Nathan (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 2 Samuel 7:10-13). Ezekiel's actions with the two sticks will signify this.

Ezekiel holds two sticks as one to signify Israel's re-unification

6. And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things and all their transgressions, and I have saved them from all their dwelling-places in which they sinned: and I will cleanse them. (*Verse 23a*)
Cleansing: With many words, Yahweh declares He will cleanse Israel from idolatry, detestable transgressions they did, and their sinful actions wherever they lived.
7. And they are My people, and I will be their God. (*Verse 23b*)
Covenant: When God speaks of His covenant with His people, He often says He 'will be their God' (Genesis 17:7-8; Jeremiah 24:5-7; 32:37-41; Ezekiel 11:17-20; Zechariah 9:1-8).

II. The servant-king will shepherd them, making them holy by an eternal covenant of peace so nations know God; when brothers live united, the anointing blesses with eternal life. (Ezekiel 37:24-28 & Psalm 133)

- A. Their Davidic king will be their one shepherd who will make an everlasting covenant of peace to make them holy so the nations will know God. (*Ezekiel 24:24-27*)
1. And My servant David (is) king over them, and one shepherd will be over them all, and they will walk in My (righteous) judgments, and they will keep My statutes and do them. (*Verse 24*)
One shepherd: The Davidic servant-king will be their one and only godly shepherd leading them in the way of righteousness (Psalm 23:3; Ezekiel 34:11-27; John 10:14-18).
 2. And they dwelt in the land which I gave to My servant Jacob in which dwelt your fathers: on it they and their children and their children's children forever, and David My servant (is) their prince forever. (*Verse 25*)
Abraham and David: When Israel-Jacob's descendants took the land under Joshua they fulfilled Yahweh's Word to Abraham. Under the Davidic Messiah, they will possess the land forever.
 3. I have cut an everlasting covenant of peace, it will be: I gave to them and I multiplied them, and I have set My sanctuary in their midst forever. (*Verse 26*)
Everlasting covenant of peace: The everlasting covenant in the Messiah will bring peace to God's people by uniting them. Then they will multiply in numbers with His holiness forever with them. This will be the big miracle the covenant God does through the re-unification signified by Ezekiel when he held the two sticks (kingdoms) of Israel in his hand as one!

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4. And it was My Tabernacle (dwelling) with them; and I was their God and they will be My people. (*Verse 27*)
Covenant: Yahweh is the God who dwelt with His people through the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle in the Mosaic covenant (Numbers 7:89; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 80:1); and, Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh who will dwell with His people forever (John 1:4-14; Revelation 21:1-5).
5. The nations have known that I (am) Yahweh sanctifying Israel when My sanctuary is in the midst of them forever. (*Verse 28*)
All nations: It has always been God's intention that people from every nation know Him and follow Him in obedient faith (Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 11:10-13; 42:1-7; 44:1-7; Ephesians 2:13-18).

Application: We must understand that God's Word to re-unify the physical descendants of Israel is also a command to His fragmented Church IN Jesus to submit to Him and allow Him to unify us. We must accept as brothers and sisters all who commit to the Gospel essentials of the faith of Jesus. And we must also support and rejoice with every segment of the Church called to participate in callings different from ours, according to their Holy Spirit given gifts.

- B. When brothers live as one, people see the anointing of Yahweh and are blessed with eternal and abundant life. (*Psalm 133*)
1. {a song of ascents, to David} Behold! How good and how pleasant / dwelling of brothers also (as) one? (*Verse 1*)
Brothers: Brothers and sisters IN Christ Jesus find there is much goodness and pleasantness when through the indwelling Holy Spirit they are enabled to live and work together as one, rejoicing in the multitude of gifts given by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-27). The heart of this new reality of the Church is when one member of the body suffers, all suffer; and, when one member is honored, all rejoice! How countercultural.
 2. As good oil on the head / running down on the beard // the beard of Aaron / running down on the collar (mouth) of his garments. (*Verse 2*)
Oil of Holy Spirit: The high priest Aaron was anointed with oil (Exodus 40:13). From the prophecy of Isaiah we hear that the Spirit of Adonai-Yahweh anointed someone to preach good news to the meek, bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim liberty to captives (Isaiah 61:1). Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself (Luke 4:16-21).
 3. As the dew of Hermon / which (is) coming down on the mountains of Zion / there Yahweh has commanded the blessing: life until forever! (*Verse 3*)
Refreshing dew: As the temperature drops at night after a humid day, the water in the air during the day descends to ground level to water grass and plants renewing and refreshing them. In the same way, Adonai-Yahweh gives eternal and abundant life to all who are united and refreshed in His Holy Spirit.

Unity leads to life that is eternal

Application: We must constantly seek to be re-filled by the Holy Spirit to 'dial down the heat' that threatens to divide us and drain God's life out of us. We must always be refreshed by the 'living water' received from Jesus by grace through faith so we live in unity with each other (John 4:7-14; Ephesians 2:8-10).

Conclusion: Yahweh tells Ezekiel to take one stick for Judah and one for Joseph, and then unify them in his hand. This will signify God re-unifying His divided people into one cleansed covenant people. Their servant-king will shepherd them, and make them holy with an eternal covenant of peace so that the nations know God. When brothers and sisters live united, the anointing on them results in the blessing of eternal life.

Ezekiel holds two sticks as one to signify Israel's re-unification