

The Valley of Dry Bones
Ezekiel 37
1/28/18

Last time we looked at the glory of God riding into Babylon upon a heavenly chariot. This was God declaring to Ezekiel that His glory was greater and His power was stronger than any earthly thing that was against them. We crossed the timeless principle bridge and learned that the same is true with us. "Greater is He who is within you than he who is in the world." I John 4:4

Today we read of another divine vision God allowed Ezekiel to see while he and others were living in Babylon. The valley of dry bones.

¹ The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

Ezekiel 37:1-14 CSB

Pray

There is no more startling vision in all of scripture. Not one that stirs the imagination like this one. God paints a picture that even a small child can imagine. It speaks to a

nation that has lost hope. The once proud Israelites had allowed sin to dominate their lives. They had placed other gods before Jehovah. They had become dishonest and immoral. Because of their sinful rebellion against God, they believed they had forever forfeited His blessings.

Now living without hope they were mere shadows of their former selves. The once proud Jewish nation had been taken from their land and their beautiful temple had been destroyed. They could not dream. They could not laugh. They could not cry.

God took Ezekiel to a valley in the Spirit. There he saw a valley that was littered with skeletons. Dry bones. While he is surveying the desolation God asks the prophet a question, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

When God asks a question it is never because He is devoid of the answer. He wants to lead us to truth. To the sinful couple in the garden God asks, "Where are you? and again "Who told you that you were naked?". Jesus asked the disciples about the blind beggar, "Who sinned? This man or his parents?" To the man possessed with demons, "What is your name?" To Peter he asked, "Peter, do you love me?" The answer is never for God's benefit but for our own.

Ezekiel answers; "O Lord God, You know." The prophet is at a loss. The vision is still a mystery to him. Even if he is aware that the dry bones represent the nation of Israel, he does not know the future. God then instructs the prophet to, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." (v4)

Then Ezekiel began to speak to an audience of dry bones. Every preacher knows what that experience is like. He was to prophesy that the bones would raise up and join together. Then sinews would connect and retain the bones in their place. Then flesh would cover these skeletons. And finally the breath of life would enter them and they would live again.

Ezekiel preached and suddenly the Word was fulfilled before his eyes. Bones began to rattle as dust began to fall. The bones formed skeletons and soon they were covered with skin. Now lying before him was a nation of corpses. The structure was there but there was no life.

A couple in our church recently traveled to Europe. While there they surveyed some of the beautiful cathedrals. They are beautiful but empty. They are more museums than house of worship. Unfortunately, that is true in America as well. They are large churches who do not have enough life to maintain or repair the buildings. They are structures with no life. Never mistake structure for life nor programs for power. Size is no substitute for vitality. Only the Spirit of God can bring back life into something that is dead.

God then commands the prophet to prophesy to the breath, "Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." (v9) Breath – "Ruach" "the Spirit of life."

The prophet did as God commanded and the breath entered each of the bodies on the ground. They began to break. They came alive and stood to their feet. When they did they appeared as a great army. John 20:22 "and Jesus breathed on them."

God then interprets the vision for Ezekiel. These bones represent my people have lost their hope. God declares that someday this season will come to an end. When the years of deportation have accomplished what God wished to accomplish then He would bring life back to the nation of Israel again.

Now what does this have to do with you and me? Do I even need to ask? The timeless principle is God's willingness to bless and restore those things which have died.

You may be in a dry and desolate place because of your rebellion against God. Or you may find yourself there because of no wrongdoing of your own, but still you are there. You wonder if the season will ever end. You can't dream anymore. You can't laugh anymore. You can't even cry any more. Your circumstances have left you without hope.

I have good news. This season will pass. When God brings purpose out of your pain you will be delivered. He did not come to destroy you. He came to deliver you. You cannot scheme, plan, bribe, or fight your way out of it. God will bring life back through His Spirit. Note how God revived the dry bones. They heard the word and then received the Spirit. If you have heard the Word this morning then believe it. Then be prepared for God to send His Spirit to bring you back to life. Whatever you are going through, don't lose hope. He has not forgotten you. And when this thing is over you will be stronger than before.