



**(Ezekiel 37:4)**

Ezekiel was sent to the Israelites who were slaves in Babylon. God took Ezekiel to the valley of dry bones and explained the vision: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'" (Ezekiel 37:11).

They were slaves. They were far from home. They had lost hope. They felt like

dry bones. Have you ever felt like a pile of dead bones? Do you understand how the Israelites felt? The black slaves in America understood.

God's message is a message of hope. By the power of His word, even dry bones could come back to life! By the power of His Spirit, people rise from the grave!

Ezekiel describes his experience:

"The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' So I answered, 'O Lord GOD, You know'" (Ezekiel 37:1-3).

We might have said, "No way! Dry bones are dead and stay dead!"

But Ezekiel was cautious: "Lord, you know."

Then God gave Ezekiel a strange assignment: "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'" (Ezekiel 37:4).

God could have given life to the bones directly, but His life-giving message was spoken by a man.

"Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 37:5, 6).

To appreciate a play on words in this chapter, one must know that in Hebrew the same word is used for breath, spirit and wind. The translation is determined from the context. Sometimes there is a double meaning that is lost in translation. Remember this as the story unfolds.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and

the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them" (Ezekiel 37:7, 8).

God's word is powerful. Dry bones were restored to full human form, but what value is a material man with no breath, no spirit, no life? The atheistic claim that matter is the only reality does not provide an adequate explanation for man. "The body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26).

Ezekiel is given another command: "Prophecy to the breath, ... 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live'" (Ezekiel 37:9). Remember that in Hebrew the same word is used for breath, wind and spirit. Ezekiel now is no longer speaking to the bones. He is speaking to the Spirit and asking the Spirit to give life to the dead.

“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

Life is both bestowed and sustained by God. “If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14, 15).

“So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army!” (Ezekiel 37:10).

The word of God was proclaimed to a valley full of dry bones and the result was "an exceedingly great army." Do not underestimate the power of God's word!

Then follows a prophecy of the Messianic reign. Two events would occur. God would return the Israelites to their homeland as one people. A holy nation would emerge with the Messiah as its eternal King.

## **The Israelites would return to their homeland.**

At that time both the northern and southern kingdoms had been conquered by enemies and the people had been dispersed as slaves among the nations.

God promised that His people would be reunited: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one

nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again" (Ezekiel 37:21, 22).

### **The people of the Messiah would be a holy nation.**

"They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 37:23). The people of the Messiah would consist solely of those who truly serve God and have been cleansed of sin.

Paul applies this prophecy to Christians: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The high priest Caiaphas, prophesied that Jesus would die for the people and that the scattered children of God would be assembled by Him: “Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad” (John 11:51, 52).

Referring to non-Jewish believers, Jesus said: “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

We read further in Ezekiel: “David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall



also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever" (Ezekiel 37:24, 25).

The promised land, where the faithful will dwell for ever, is symbolized by the land given to Jacob. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

The eternal King is Christ, the son of David: "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; The scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom'" (Hebrews 1:8). "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

Ezekiel 37 ends with a promise of an eternal covenant and an eternal sanctuary: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore"" (Ezekiel 37:26-28).

This eternal sanctuary cannot be the temple at Jerusalem. God allowed that temple to be destroyed. Jesus explained to the woman at the well that under His reign people would no longer worship in a physical temple, but in Spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

God's sanctuary, God's holy temple, is in the midst of us, in our hearts. We are cleansed by the blood of the everlasting

covenant: "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20, 21).

## **"You dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!"**

What does this mean for us? Are we dry bones? Are we slaves?

Jesus offended some Jews when He said He could set them free: "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" (John 8:33). Their claim is absurd. Earlier they were slaves in Babylon and they were under Roman rule! We humans do not like to admit our enslavements.

“Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin’” (John 8:34).

The black slaves in America knew they were slaves and longed for deliverance. Do we think we are free when we are not? Are we slaves of sin? Do we need deliverance?

Without Christ we are dead bones. Only the word of God with His Spirit can give us eternal life and raise us up as an army of God.

Believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Christ, be baptized, and your dead, dry bones will “rise to walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Amen.

RoyDavison@oldpaths.net

<http://www.oldpaths.com/RD>