

Scripture Lesson Text

EZEK. 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them

above: but *there was no breath in them.*

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon 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 up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then 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.

12 Therefore prophecy 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.

13 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,

14 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.

NOTES

Ezekiel Brings Hope to Israel

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Related Scriptures: Isaiah 26:12-19; 49:13-26; Hosea 14:1-9;
Ezekiel 37:15-28

TIME: 585 B.C.

PLACE: Babylon

GOLDEN TEXT—“And [I] 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 37:14).

Lesson Exposition

REVIVED BONES—Ezek. 37:1-6

Valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1-2). In this particular vision, Ezekiel was carried to a valley full of dry bones. The scene would have been unsettling, to say the least. It was as if a great battle had been fought in this place, with only the skeletons of the fallen soldiers remaining.

“Can these bones live?” (Ezek. 37:3). As Ezekiel surveyed the valley of dry bones, he was asked, “Can these bones live?” Although he surely did not harbor doubt in the limitless power of God, the prophet responded by saying, “O Lord God, thou knowest.”

Prophecy to these bones (Ezek. 37:4). The prophet was now called upon to speak to the bones that lay before him in the valley. As he had proclaimed God’s message to the captive Jews, now he was to call out, “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.”

Ezekiel was assured that these dry bones, representing the people of Israel, would be “resuscitated by the word of God, brought up from their present temporary graves, and resettled in their own land to enjoy once more the blessings of the covenant” (Fairbairn,

Ezekiel, Sovereign Grace).

Many believe that this vision has a larger fulfillment related to the end times and Israel’s salvation.

“Ye shall live” (Ezek. 37:5-6). While Ezekiel was not sure whether the bones would live, the Lord now answered the question He had asked earlier. God would “cause breath” to enter the dry bones, and they would come to life.

The Hebrew word translated “breath” also can be rendered “spirit” (vs. 1) or “wind” (vs. 9). “It covers not only man’s vital breath, given to him at birth and leaving his body in his dying gasp, but also the Spirit of God who imparts that breath” (Taylor, *Ezekiel*, InterVarsity).

While the bones would live, they would not do so as animated skeletons. They would be complete human bodies. Finally, God promised, “I will . . . put breath in you, and ye shall live” (vs. 6).

RESURRECTED BODIES— Ezek. 37:7-10

“As I was commanded” (Ezek. 37:7-8). It is doubtful that the prophet anticipated what happened next. As he prophesied there was a “noise”

and a “shaking” (vs. 7). After the coming together of the bones, “the sinews and the flesh came up upon them” (vs. 8).

Even though these bodies had been created by the power of God, they remained lifeless.

“Prophecy, son of man” (Ezek. 37:9-10). As noted earlier, the word translated “wind” is the same word also rendered “breath” or “spirit.” “Four winds” (vs. 9) refers to the four directions of the compass.

“So I prophesied as he commanded me” (vs. 10), declared the man of God. Obedience to God’s command resulted in breath coming upon “these slain” (vs. 9). Now with the breath of life within them, they “stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (vs. 10).

RESTORED BLESSINGS— Ezek. 37:11-14

These bones are Israel (Ezek. 37:11). While the prophet, addressed again as “Son of man,” may have been pondering the meaning of the vision, it now became apparent: “These bones are the whole house of Israel.”

Since the northern kingdom of Israel had already fallen some 137 years earlier and with Judah now held captive by the Babylonians, all hope seemed lost. There are, however, no lost causes with God; there are no hopeless cases with the Almighty (Prov. 13:12).

Later in the chapter, Ezekiel envisioned a time when David would again rule over Israel (37:24-25). Many see this as having its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of the Son of David.

Graves opened (Ezek. 37:12-13). While the opening of the graves may be symbolic of the restoration of the nation, it also could have the more literal meaning of a physical resurrection from the dead.

This power over the grave would remind the people of Israel that the Lord is the only true God; likewise, we know that Jesus is the Christ because He came forth from the tomb on the third day.

God’s Spirit within (Ezek. 37:14). God again promised, “I shall place you in your own land.” For the exiles, this was the message of hope they needed to hear repeated again and again.

Like the promise of Jeremiah that God’s laws would be written on the heart (Jer. 31:33), Ezekiel was told that God was going to implant His Spirit within His people.

Ezekiel had the huge privilege of proclaiming these words of hope.

—John A. Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. How was Ezekiel carried to the valley? What do you think this experience involved?
2. What did Ezekiel find in the valley?
3. By what title is Ezekiel frequently addressed in the book of Ezekiel?
4. Once in the valley, what was the prophet told to do?
5. What is the significance of the words “wind,” “breath,” and “spirit”?
6. What happened once Ezekiel began to preach?
7. What did the bones in the valley represent?
8. How did the captives feel about their plight in Babylon?
9. How might the promise to open the graves of Israel be fulfilled?
10. What promise is made concerning the Spirit?

—John A. Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Only God knows where spiritual life exists or whether such life will enter a barren place (Ezek. 37:1-3).
2. The Lord can use us to proclaim the way of life to spiritually dead men and women (vss. 4-6).
3. Meeting people's physical needs is only the beginning of what the Lord wants to accomplish through us (vss. 7-8).
4. There is no limit to what God can do through the obedient proclamation of His Word (vss. 9-10).
5. God's restoration of His people will be utterly astonishing to behold (vss. 11-14).

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What do you think was God's purpose in asking Ezekiel whether the bones could live again (Ezek. 37:3)? What would you have answered?
2. Why would God want someone to prophesy to the bones rather than just bring them to life on His own (vss. 4-5)? What might God have been teaching Ezekiel through the vision?
3. Do you think Ezekiel understood the symbolism of the two stages to bringing the bones back to life (vss. 7-10)? What was the meaning for him? Is it different for us? If so, how?
4. How did the vision of the dry bones apply to Israel in Old Testament times (vss. 11-14)? How does it apply to us? What impact does this passage have on our daily lives?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

Golden Text Illuminated

“And [I] 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 37:14).

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is strange to say the least, but it speaks to the dramatic reality of resurrection in Christ.

The first promise God makes in our text today is the promise of Himself. He promises to put His Spirit within His people, resulting in new life.

The Lord does not just promise to give Israel a spirit but *His* Spirit, claiming them as His own people. Considering their rebellion, God's claim shows His faithfulness to them. In the same way, it shows us that having His Spirit in us is not something we achieve through obedience but only something we receive through grace.

Then the Lord makes a very physical promise: “I shall place you in your own land.” To a people under foreign rule, this probably seemed too good to be true. God would deliver Israel once again.

Finally, God gives a reason for His provision: “then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it.” The promises that God gives Israel here are not new. They are a reminder of everything He has been doing throughout history.

Each time we see the Lord's faithfulness in our lives, we should be drawn into a deeper realization of His goodness and trustworthiness.

—Megan Hickman.