

# EZEKIEL 37

## DRY BONES

*Ezekiel's prophetic vision of the valley of dry bones was a message from God about the revival and reunification of the nation of Israel. But it also speaks directly to believers seeking revival in the fallen and seemingly dead world around us. We must have "almost a foolish confidence" in the Word of God, knowing that it is the power that can bring dry bones back to life. -JT*



**1** The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. **3** He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

**4** Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! **5** This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath[a] enter you, and you will come to life. **6** I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

**7** So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. **8** I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but

there was no breath in them.

**9** Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

**11** Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' **12** Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. **13** Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. **14** I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'"

**15** The word of the Lord came to me: **16** "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Belonging to Joseph (that is, to Ephraim) and all the Israelites associated with him.' **17** Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.

**18** "When your people ask you, 'Won't you tell us what you mean by this?' **19** say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim's hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah's stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.' **20** Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on **21** and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will take the

Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. **22** I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. **23** They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding,[b] and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

**24** "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. **25** They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. **26** I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. **27** My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. **28** Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever."

## Study Notes BlueLetterBible.org Commentary

**The hand of the LORD came upon me:** Ezekiel's remarkable prophetic experience is not specifically called a vision, but that seems to be the sense of the phrase, **brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD**. We regard what follows as something Ezekiel saw as a vision, not with his physical sense of sight.

"The bones lay on the surface of the valley, like the remains of corpses denied a proper burial and left for scavenging buzzards. As an Israelite and especially as a priest, Ezekiel knew how important was the proper treatment of human corpses." (Block)

**Indeed they were very dry:** Apart from their presence in a living body, bones are dead. Dry bones are not only dead; they have been long dead. Bones are what remain when life has passed. If something never had life, it would not leave bones. Yet when something has been dead so long, we give up hope it will ever live again.



**Can these bones live?** One might hope that a recently dead corpse might somehow resuscitate. No one hopes that scattered, detached bones might live. Admirably, Ezekiel responded to God's question with the only hope that could be found, saying "O Lord GOD, You know."

**Prophecy to these bones:** In the previous verse, Ezekiel deliberately left the matter with God, to His power and wisdom. In turn, God gave the prophet something to do. God commanded him to speak, to prophecy to the dry, dead bones. By all outward observation this was a vain and foolish act.

Many years later the Apostle Paul acknowledged that the message of the cross — God's rescue for lost humanity in the person and work of Jesus, especially His sacrifice at the cross — was foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18).

"If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God's Word into our sermons; even if we paraphrase it into our own words, it must still be his Word upon which we place our reliance, for the only power which will bless men lies in that." (Spurgeon)

**A rattling:** "Since, apart from the Spirit, we are powerless, we must value greatly every movement of his power. Notice, in this account of the vision in the valley, how the prophet draws attention to the fact of the shaking and the noises, and the coming of the sinews and the flesh, even before there was any sign of life. I think that, if we want the Spirit of God to bless us, we must be on the watch to notice everything he does." (Spurgeon)

**O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD:** Ezekiel could only preach this message full of faith in God. Yet if he was confident that he spoke **the word of the LORD**, he knew God's word had supernatural power.

**The sinews and flesh came upon them:** After the bones were assembled, muscles and tissue came upon the bones. The bones were full of activity, yet still did not yet have the breath of life in them. The reviving of the dry bones clearly happened in stages. "So here were men in skin, with flesh, sinews, bones; but, like Adam before inspired with the breath of life, the spirit of life was yet wanting." (Poole)

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"IF WE WANT **REVIVALS**, WE MUST  
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**THE WORD OF GOD.**"

- SPURGEON

**Breath came into them:** After Ezekiel's faithful proclamation of God's message, the work of reviving the dry bones was completed. The **breath** of God came into the reanimated bodies, and they **stood upon their feet**. "Decayed Churches can most certainly be revived by the preaching of the Word, accompanied by the coming of the heavenly 'breath' from the four winds. O Lord, send us such revivals now, for many of thy Churches need them." (Spurgeon)

**An exceedingly great army:** The bones were not revived to become a group of spectators or to live for their own comfort. They became an **army**, and an **exceedingly great** one. They lived to act under the orders of the one who gave them life.

**These bones are the whole house of Israel:** We might have supposed that Ezekiel understood that the **bones** in his vision represented his people. Yet, it might have surprised him when God revealed they represented the **whole house of Israel**, not only those from the kingdom of Judah. The restoration would include those from the northern kingdom of Israel that fell to the Assyrians some 150 years earlier.

This chapter teaches many principles of how God works in revival, and how God's servants should think and act relevant to such a mighty reviving work. If we put the modern servant of God in Ezekiel's place, we can make the following observations.

- God's servant must know that the bones are dead and dry.
- God's servant must walk among the dead.
- God's servant must proclaim God's word.
- God's servant must have almost a foolish confidence in God's Word.
- God's servant must understand that the Spirit works in a process.
- God's servant must recognize that the work of the Holy Spirit is essential.
- God's servant must boldly pray for the Spirit to move.
- God's servant must speak in the power of faith.
- God's servant must notice every evidence of the Spirit's work.
- God's servant must look for God's people to be revived into an army of service.
- God's servant must not say that hope is lost.

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HEAR THE WORD  
OF THE LORD

EZEKIEL 37:4