

O YE DRY BONES, HEAR YE THE WORD

EZEKIEL 37:1-4 • TV-045A

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By

HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Grace Church

6088 Zebulon Highway

Pikeville, KY 41501

PH: 606-631-9053

Ezekiel 37:1-4

“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, 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. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.”

The Scripture that I’m using for my text today will be found in the book of **Ezekiel chapter 37**.

Now, most of you are familiar with this passage of Scripture. In fact; there was a popular song written about this Scripture years ago:

**“The ankle bone is connected to the shin bone
And the shin bone is connected to the knee bone
And the knee bone is connected to the thigh bone.”**

You’ve heard it and you are familiar with it. But I want you to take your Bible and open the Word of God to **Ezekiel 37** and let’s ask the Holy Spirit of God to be our teacher as we try to find what God is teaching us in this passage of Scripture.

The text is **Ezekiel 37**, the topic: **“O YE DRY BONES; HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD.”**

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Now listen to God's Word. You follow as I read **Ezekiel 37:1-4**: *"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 and caused me to pass by them round about. And behold; there were very many bones in the open valley and they were very dry."*

And He said to me; *"Son of man can these bones live?"* And I answered; *"O Lord God; thou knowest."* Again He said to me; *"Son of man preach upon these bones and say to these bones: O ye dry bones hear the Word of the Lord."*

Now, this is one of those Scriptures that have several applications, the first of which is this and if you'll take your Bible and look at **verses 11** and **verse 12** you will see that the first application is definitely this, that there will be a restoration and a conversion of the Jews.

Now, look at **verse 11 of Ezekiel 37**; God says, *"These bones, are the house of Israel. I will bring you back to your land. I will raise you from your graves and bring you back to your land."*

Now, you and I have seen in our day the political restoration of the Jewish nation. God-taught preachers have preached this for centuries. Back in 1864, over a hundred years ago, Mr. Spurgeon said this; *"There will someday be a native government in Israel again: the state of Israel will be restored and incorporated. The Jews will return to Palestine. They will walk upon her mountains and they will sit under her tree."*

God says; *"I will open your graves and I will bring you back into the land of Israel."* That's **verses 11 and verse 12** here in **Ezekiel 37**.

Now that's the political restoration of Israel. And some day; we haven't seen this yet, but someday we are going to see a spiritual restoration of Israel.

The Scriptures indicate, and I would like for you sometime to read **Romans chapter 11**. The Scriptures indicate that God almighty will bring Israel to know Christ; that the nation Israel someday will recognize, own and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take your Bible and turn to **Romans 11:1**. Listen to this: *"Hath God cast away His people? God forbid,"* Paul said. Then **verse 12, Romans 11:12**; *"If the fall of Israel be the riches of the world and the decay of Israel be the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness."*

In **verse 15 of Romans 11**; *"If the casting away of Israel be the reconciling of the world, what shall be the receiving of Israel but life from the dead?"* And then in **verse 25 of Romans 11**; *"Blindness in part; (now note that) blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so, all Israel shall be saved."*

When God took Ezekiel out on that mountain and let him look down in the valley and see all of those bones; evidently there had been a battle there and there were bones, very many of them. They'd been there in the sand for many years.

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They were bleached and dry and without moisture or marrow, just bones all over the place. And He said, *“Can these bones live?”* And Ezekiel said; *“Lord, you know.”* Well these bones, (son of man) represent the nation Israel and someday, God says, there will be a political and spiritual restoration of the Jewish nation.

Well, there is a second application. This Scripture is also a picture of the resurrection of the dead at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever seen them open a grave, the grave of someone who has been dead for a long time, open the grave and take the bones out of the grave?

I have, I’ve seen them take the bones out of the hole in the ground and put them in a small container, just bones, and the skull. And as I looked at those bones that had been taken from the ground; this Scripture came to my mind: *“Can these bones live?”* Is it possible that these dry, bleached, barren, bones can one day live?

Well, they will. The Scripture says, *“The hour is coming when the dead; all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they shall come forth and they shall live.”* Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15:2**: *“How say some among you there is no resurrection of the dead? If there be no resurrection of the dead then Christ is not risen.”*

When Ezekiel stood and looked over that valley and God showed him all of these bones of soldiers and men who had been slain in battle, bones lying out there in the sand, very dry, very many of them, God said: *“Can these bones live?”*

He’s not only saying that Israel shall someday be brought back to Palestine; shall one of these days when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in that Israel shall recognize her Messiah, her Redeemer, her Saviour, but also one of these days God’s going to open every grave and the body of every person who has ever lived on this earth shall be brought forth in that day of resurrection, *“Some to the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of damnation.”*

And some will hear Him say; *“Enter ye blessed into the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of this world.”* Others will hear Him say; *“Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire.”*

There is another application here and this is the one that I want us to look at in our message today. It’s another application that’s just as miraculous and is just as amazing as the resurrection of the dead and as the restoration of Israel and that is the restoration of our souls from a dead state and a resurrection of our dead souls to spiritual life.

The song writer put it this way:

**“It took a miracle to put the stars in place
It took a miracle to hang the earth in place
But when He saved my soul
When He cleansed and made me whole**

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**It took a miracle, (a miracle of restoration, a miracle of resurrection, a miracle of regeneration)
It took a miracle to save my soul.”**

That’s what salvation is. It’s a restoration. *“He restoreth my soul,”* David said. That’s what salvation is. It’s a resurrection. *“You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.”*

Now you sit there with your Bible, will you and listen carefully as I make some applications from this Scripture.

This is a picture, this is a picture as Ezekiel stood and looked over that valley of bones and God said; *“Can these bones live?”* This is a picture of how God saves a sinner. Now I’ll show you that if you’ll follow the Scriptures with me.

First of all: Let’s look at **verses 1 and 2:** *“He set me down in a valley full of bones and behold there were very many and they were very dry”*

Do you want the truth about human nature? Do you want a true picture of just how dead, how spiritually dead and spiritually lifeless we are by Adam’s fall, by birth, and by nature?

Here it is, here it is; Ezekiel, the prophet of God looks over this valley where the battle has been fought, where men have fallen and their bones are still lying there where they have fallen and the birds have picked them to pieces and the sun has bleached them and they are barren and the sand has blown over them.

There’s no life in them. These are dead, dry, lifeless, bones without any moisture, without any marrow. Even a dog wouldn’t pick one of them up. And that’s a picture of human nature, spiritually dead and lifeless, as Paul said in **Ephesians**, *“Without hope, without strength, without help, without Christ, and without God.”*

And Isaiah described it this way, he said; *“From the soul of your feet to the top of your head there is no soundness in you, nothing but open running sores that have not been bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”*

Paul wrote in **Romans 3;** *“There’s none righteous. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seek God. Let every mouth be stopped and all the world become guilty, before God.”*

Martin Luther once said this, “Man is without God, man is without life, man is without hope. He is so dead and so corrupt that if man could get a full view of his sin and of his lost condition and of his corrupt state, he would lose his sanity.”

“They were very many and they were very dry” and that’s human nature. That’s the fallen, ruined, totally depraved condition of every sinner out of Christ, just like those bones out there in that valley, very many of them, very dry, without moisture, without marrow, without life, and without hope.

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Secondly: God said, after the man of God had walked about this valley and after he had surveyed these bones and the condition of these bones, after he'd gotten a good clear picture of their state God asked him a question; He said, "*Can these bones live?*"

And when you and I have from the Word of God and from our own experience and from our own consciences and hearts, when we have got a true picture of the lost condition of every man by nature, by birth, before God almighty; this question comes to us, "*Can these bones live?*"

Can they live spiritually? "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, can the leper change his spots?*" Jeremiah asked? Can the death smell of the sepulcher, issue forth the fragrance of a rose? Can the cursing tongue be made to praise the Lord? Can the poison of snakes which is under our lips be changed to honey and to wine?

Can evil feet walk in paths of holiness? Can hate be turned to love? Can arrogant pride be brought down to submissive humility? Can a twisted, evil mind understand the mysteries of God?

Can the drunkard and the harlot be made pure? Can the agnostic and the infidel be made a trophy of God's grace? "*Can these bones live?*" Can this take place? Well, the prophet of God gave the only answer that he could give and the only answer that I can give and the only answer that you can give; "*O Lord God thou knowest.*"

Ezekiel looked at those bones; there were many of them. Oh what a picture, what a sight, just a whole valley full of dry, bleak, barren, parched, bones. No marrow, no life, no moisture. This is a picture of man's dead condition, his lost estate, his depravity before God, his inability.

And God said, Ezekiel; "*Can these bones live?*" And Ezekiel replied; "*Lord, you know, I don't know.*"

The preacher certainly has no power to affect such a miracle. I cannot give life. I cannot regenerate a sinner. I cannot convince men of sin. I cannot beget faith in the dead human heart. I cannot bring forth sons of God from dead hearts. The preacher can't do it.

And the dry bones can't raise themselves. No man will move toward God until God moves toward him. He's just like these dry, dead, barren, bleak, parched, bones. "*Salvation is of the Lord.*"

A dead sinner will no more rise from a spiritual grave than a dead man physically, can under his own power, rise from his grave. Christ said, "*You must, be born again. And no man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw him. Can these bones live?*"

All right; now look at **verse 4**; and then the Lord said to the prophet; now listen to this; He said to me; "*Preach to these bones, preach to these bones and say to these bones: O ye dry bones; hear the word of the Lord.*"

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Now I've had many people say this to me in my ministry and my ministerial experience; I've had them say; "Now if I believe what you believe that salvation is of the Lord from Alpha to Omega, from beginning to end, that salvation of the righteous was wholly of God, (and that's what the Scripture say), then what is the use to preach?"

Well, here Ezekiel is standing looking over a valley of dry bones without life, totally without life, and no possibility of them ever having any life if it's left up to him. He couldn't affect such a miracle. They couldn't give life to themselves and no human power could restore them back to life.

And God says to Ezekiel, "*Preach to them and say to them, O ye dry bones; hear the word of the Lord.*" I suppose if a person wanted dry bones to live that the very last thing that he would do would be to preach to them.

I suppose if a person wanted dry, dead, lifeless, bones to live the last thing he would do would be to preach to them and command them to hear him. "*O ye dry bones; hear the word of the Lord.*"

I'll tell you what we would do and this is what preachers and churches are attempting to do today. We would seek to tie the bones together. We would go down there and we would pick up, like the song says, an ankle bone and a shin bone, and a knee bone, and hip bone, and a thigh bone.

And we'd get a rib and backbone and some arms and a head and we would tie them together into some sort of organization and call it, "life."

Or perhaps, we would go down there and give them a transfusion of our own life. We'd show them how we walk; "Look bones; see how I walk? See how I talk? See how I breathe? See how I move? Now you do what I've done. You do what I'm doing dry bones. You do what I'm doing. I'll give you a transfusion of my experience. I'll tell you how I do it and then you do it like I do it."

Or perhaps we'd put clothes on them and we would dress them up like a human being is supposed to look, like a living person is supposed to look. We'd dress them up in some kind of religious garb and maybe put a Bible under their arms and bring them to church and seat them down among living people.

That's our thoughts and that's our ways, not God's way. Our Lord said; "*Your thoughts are not my thoughts and your ways are not my ways.*" Almighty God said; "*Ezekiel; can these dry, dead, barren, bones live? Well Lord you know.*"

I'll tell you what you do Ezekiel; "*You stand there and preach to them and you tell those dry bones to hear the Word of the Lord.*" God says; "*Preach to them the Word of God. Preach to them, thus saith the Lord.*"

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Why, because it is the Word of God that gives life? The Word of God is called “*the Word of life.*” In **1 Corinthians 1:21** the Scripture says: “*God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save, (to restore to life, to resurrect from spiritual graves) those that believe.*”

In **Romans 1:16** Paul said; “*I’m not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power, (that word is dunamis, dynamite); it’s the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*”

In **James 1:18**; “*Of His own will begat He us, (how with the Word of life) the word of truth?*” In **John 5:24** Christ said; “*He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath eternal life and the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.*”

Christ is the Word of life. “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God.*”

“*And God sent His only begotten Son into this world that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life.*” And that’s the message. And that’s the life-giving Word. Every life-giving sermon is a sermon that’s filled with Jesus Christ because He’s not only the Word; He’s the life-giver.

Listen to **Ephesians 2:4-8**; “*But God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us, (made us alive).*” That’s what the word “*quickened*” means. You hear people say, “The quick and the dead.” That means folks that are alive and folks that are dead. “*And even so He hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved.*”

“*And he hath raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It’s the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

Every man who’s restored to spiritual life will be restored by hearing the Word of God. Every man who is resurrected from a dead, spiritual, grave, will be resurrected when he hears in the hands of the Holy Spirit the word of the living God.

Ezekiel; take a good look at those bones. Take a good look; walk around them. He let him walk around them for a long time. He let him study them. He let him think about their condition.

He let him get a good look at the condition of those bones. There were a lot of them and they were as dry as powder. And He said, “*Can they live?*” And Ezekiel said, “*Lord; you know, you know.*”

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But He said: “Ezekiel; now you do what I’m telling you, you preach to them.” Now what did he preach? All right; look at **verses 5 and 6**. What was the message that God gave Ezekiel to say to those bones? What was the message?

Well listen to it, say to the bones; “*Behold; (now watch it) behold I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live. Behold; I will lay sinews upon you. Behold; I will bring flesh upon you. Behold I will cover you with skin. Behold I will put breath in you and you shall live. And you shall know that I am the Lord God.*”

Ezekiel’s message to the dry, dead, barren, bones, was not a whiney plea of what the bones ought to do. “Now come on bones; let God do something for you. Now bones; won’t you make an effort? God’s done all He can do, now it’s up to you. Bones; won’t you let God in your heart? Bones; won’t you let God save you? Bones; won’t you give your heart to God and live?”

That’s not what he preached. Ezekiel didn’t preach that God was waiting on the bones to do anything. He didn’t say that God had done all He could do, no sir. There’s not an if, there’s not a but, there’s not a perhaps, there’s not a maybe in this message.

This message is taken up with two things. God says; “*I will and you shall. I will put breath in you. I will put skin on you. I will put sinews upon you. I will give you life and you shall know; you shall know that I am the Lord God. I’ll put flesh on you and you’ll live. And I’ll put breath in you and you’ll know that I am God almighty.*”

Who saved you? Did you save yourself or did God save you? Listen to **Ezekiel 36**. God says talking about this new covenant of grace, this work of regeneration, this work of redemption; He said; “*A new heart I’ll give you and a new spirit I will put within you. And I’ll take away the stony heart out of you and give you a heart of flesh. And I’ll put my spirit within you.*”

This is the work of God. Salvation is not something the sinner does for God; salvation is a work that God does for the sinner. “*And I’ll cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them.*”

That’s not all; look at **verse 9**. Ezekiel not only preached to the bones, but he prayed to the Spirit. Ezekiel said: “*Come from the four winds O breath and breathe upon these slain that they my live.*”

My friend; the preaching of truth alone will not give life. The preaching of doctrine alone will not give life. The preaching of this Word alone will not give life. The Holy Spirit of God must give life.

Yes sir; there are three things here. Now I want you to note this in closing. Now God brought Ezekiel to look out there and see that valley of dry bones, a lot of them, lifeless, without moisture, without marrow, just dead, dry, bones.

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God said, “*Can they live?*” Ezekiel said, “Well Lord you know. Well; preach to them.” And he said, “*as I preach,*” and that’s the first thing you have, you have a voice. You have a man’s voice but its God preaching through that man.

Do you see what I am saying? Christ sent His disciples out. He said: “*You go preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*” He that believes what, what you preach, the message you preach, the Gospel you preach, the Gospel of substitution, the Gospel of Christ suffering on the cross in the sinners place, the Gospel of Christ obeying the law as our representative and imputing to us a perfect righteousness, the Gospel of God’s love and grace and mercy through Jesus Christ.

“*You go preach and he that heareth you, heareth me,*” God said. “*And he that despiseth you despiseth me.*” There’s got to be a voice. “*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*”

“*But how are they going to call on Him in whom they’ve not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they’ve not heard? And how are they going to hear without a preacher? And how are they going to preach except they be sent?*”

First of all: God sent a messenger! God sent a man with a voice. And God spoke through that voice.

Secondly: And the Scripture says: “*There was a noise.*” There was a stir, in other words. What is this stir? Well, this stir is a stir of interest. This is the stir of opposition. This is a stir of inquiry.

You know, it troubles me that so many people are preaching today and there is so much indifference. Nobody seems to care. But let a man preach the message God lays on his heart, the message that God gives Him and there will be a stir.

There will be a stir of opposition, there will be a stir of interest, and there will be a stir of inquiry, no longer the deadness of religion, the lifelessness of religion but men and women like these bones coming together to hear the Word of God. “*Teach me some more. Preach to me. I need to know what you’re saying.*”

All right, last of all in **verse 10**; there was breath, silent, sovereign, strong, breath. “*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.*”

The Spirit of God came. The Spirit of God came and gave life, gave eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand, and feet to walk in paths of righteousness, a tongue to praise the Lord, and a mind to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

**“Not by might, nor by power,
But by my spirit saith the Lord God!”**

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