

Ezekiel 37

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14: We have just gone through an exhausting and repetitive series of chapters upon chapters of how the sins of Israel and Judah went beyond repentance. This is also true for all of mankind since Adam. Now we have gotten beyond what Jeremiah and Ezekiel warned against. Nearly everybody in the Jewish community is dead as a result. The prior generations and the generations before that are all dead in their sins.

⁵¹ “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, ⁵³ who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” (Acts 7)

The opening scene of this valley of dry bones is really a summary of the Old Testament. Men dying in their sins; have stacked up for generations of moral failure. Century after century. It is a real privilege to see these things and have this 6,000-year perspective. The warnings are over, and the people died in their sins. God has his hand on our shoulder. He is coaching us not to join this worldwide cemetery and hell. God can improve our life and destiny if we just let him.

Ezekiel knew that the hand of the LORD was upon him as he took another spiritual journey. What confirmations do we have that God’s hand has been upon you?

- Do your life experiences match up with what you are reading in the Bible?
- Does the bible passage jump off of the page at you; because it specifically identifies your current concerns?
- Do things have a way of working out, though they may seem to be mundane and routine and random?
- Do you have a still, small voice calling you to engage in higher quality prayer and worship, or to help your neighbor?
- Do you sigh when you see the evening news and the misdirection of our society?
- Are you seeing a different side of current events than others see?

The Bible is not a random history book. It is about people exactly like us. Don't take it for granted. The prophets considered some of their heavenly visions and messages to be a burden. Truth does not always taste as sweet as sin. It was not complimentary, fun or the solution that they were hoping for. The Christian life is a messy, non-linear series of ups and downs. It can be almost indistinguishable from the world if we go on auto pilot. The bible is called a sword because you can get opened up just by handling it. You may have thought that you were on the moral high ground. It exposes the reader to deep truths about himself. We have all kinds of vulnerabilities.

God is showing Ezekiel all of the dead children of Israel. The land is like a holocaust skeleton graveyard. Hebrews have been getting slaughtered for centuries and millennia. We have been reading about Babylon taking Jerusalem by force; but they are just one of many destroyers.

Our youngest son, Brett just got back from a trip to Germany. He was able to stop by Dachau. That is a reminder of how many Jews have been killed. The worldwide population of Jews went down by 6 million (60%) during World War Two. What would it have been like to see bones and shoes piled two stories high?





What if God asked us if these piles and of slaughtered Jews could come back to life? It is a crazy question. God can do anything. God tells Ezekiel to start telling the piles of bones to come alive according to God's word. This is more than improving the status of lives of others. It is the ultimate turn around. From total failure to a fresh start. We all respond to the underdog. There is no humbler place than to be dead in your sins. That is how the Bible describes us all:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)

As soon as Ezekiel prophesied over the dry bones something miraculous happened. The bones started rattling and coming back together to form full skeletons. Next, the ligaments and tendons and muscle and skin came back on them. God told Ezekiel to prophesy again to live; and they did! They became a great army. Then he prophesied that the children of Israel worldwide would come back to life.

¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; (Romans 4)

They did. What is more of a miracle: for God to create man out of dirt and his breath, or to make dead bones live?

We do not think of salvation as a huge miracle; but the psalmist ranks it above creation of the universe.

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! ² Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! ³ Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! ⁴ Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. ⁶ He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. ⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; ⁸ Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; ⁹ Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; ¹⁰ Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl; ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; ¹² Both young men and maidens; Old men and children. ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. ¹⁴ And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints— Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 148)

God could have just told the bones to come to life; but instead, he appointed Ezekiel prophesy to them to make this happen. Ezekiel is injected into God's processes. Like Jeremiah, he was a less than enthusiastic agent of doom. Now he sees that this ultimately serves to become an agent of salvation.

God is telling the Jews that he is bringing a nation back from the dead; and putting his spirit within them. We are all part of one body of faith.

²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no ^[h]schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12)

Jews from all over the world are returning through a process called Alaya. That is the repatriation of Israel from scattered Jews worldwide. Israel was a failed nation with no residents, no language and a scattered and abused remnant. God brought them back to fulfill prophecy and start again the right way.

Israel is the only country to lose its land and language and come back and return to their land and re-learn their language. The point is that Israel failed generation after generation; but God has a plan for them. This chapter is the desperation side of the gospel seen graphically. You do not know how much trouble you are in unless you can see where this life is leading you. Shall we end up in the Valley of Death as skeletons; because we pridefully did it our own way? Isn't it better to let Jesus do it and deliver us?

Read Ezekiel 37:15-28: God is going to reunite Israel and Judah into one nation again. Judah is available. Many of the northern 10 northern tribes are unaccounted for since the Assyrian captivity. We do not know of populations of Zebulun and Issachar and other tribes. There are accounts of a few tribes in foreign nations, and they have mixed.

God is ultimately alluding to the resurrection of the dead living in the millennial Kingdom, King Jesus and his prince David. God also refers to these tribes in the tribulation.

" 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: 5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; 6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; 7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; 8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed. (Revelation 7)

It was Solomon who blew it and caused the nation to splinter. It is God reunifying them.

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the

nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. ³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹ So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. ¹² Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11)

Everything in scripture is a means to get us to an end state with God. It usually takes a lot of pressure and force and redirection and life-changing circumstances from outsiders to bring us to a place of being open to God's plans for our life. It has taken the lives of many non-believers as co-contributors as bad actors to play a role in herding us towards God's grace.