

Title: "O Ye Dry Bones!"
Text: Ezekiel 37:1-14
Subject: Lessons from Ezekiel's Vision of Dry Bones
Date: Sunday Morning — August 22, 2004
Tape # Y-40a
Reading: Ephesians 2:1-22
Introduction:

(Ezekiel 37:1-14) "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."

The Lord God leaves no doubt about the meaning of this passage. It speaks of the resurrection of God's elect from death and their being

gathered together in their own land by the power and grace of God – (vv. 11-14).

(Ezekiel 37:11-14) "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 prophesy 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."

1. **This is a Word from God to his lost ones, to lost men and women who have been made to know their lost condition** – (v. 11).

(Ezekiel 37:11) "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."

Find me some lost, helpless sinners, men and women who know that they are lost because of their own sin, **who say**. “*Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off from our parts,*” find me some folks like that, and I will not hesitate to declare this word of promise to them (v. 12). — **God says**, “*I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves!*”

Our Savior **heals** all who have need of healing. He saves all who need to be saved. There has never been a sinner on the top side of the earth who knew he deserved to go to hell who went to hell. The only people in this world who die without Christ are folks who foolishly imagine that they do not need him!

2. **This vision is the vision of a great resurrection.**

It has reference to a fourfold resurrection. It promises God’s elect a resurrection from death to life by his power and grace. Without question, it cannot be fully interpreted unless it is interpreted in a fourfold way.

1st Immediately, it refers to the resurrection of **The Jews out of Babylon** and their return to the land of Israel in the days of Cyrus.

2nd In the distant view of prophecy, it refers to **the resurrection of the dead** in the last day, particularly to the resurrection of the bodies of God's saints unto everlasting life and glory (John 5:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

(John 5:28-29) "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

3rd This vision speaks a word of **promise to God's church** in every age – When the church of God, or any part of it is brought low and languishing, God promises to pour out the Spirit of life upon his languishing ones (Hosea 6:1-3).

(Hosea 6:1-3) "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. (2) After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. (3) Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth."

4th The primary reference of this passage is to **the spiritual resurrection of God's elect** in the new birth (John 5:24-25; Rev. 20:6).

(John 5:24-25) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (25) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

(Revelation 20:6) "Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Proposition: This vision is an instructive picture of the resurrection of a dead sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life by the sovereign power and irresistible grace of God the Holy Spirit.

Divisions: As we look at this vision together I want to direct your attention to five things in it.

1. The Preacher's Vision (vv. 1-2).
2. The Lord's Question (v. 3).
3. The Prophet's Answer (v. 3).
4. The Lord's Command (vv. 4-6, 9).
5. The Glorious Results (vv. 7, 8, 10, 13, 14).

I. **THE PREACHER'S VISION** (vv. 1-2).

(Ezekiel 37:1-2) "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."

The Lord carried his prophet away into a great valley. Apparently, it was once **the scene of a great, great battle**. All around him were bones, scattered parts of what once had been a great multitude of men. The bones were **very many**; and they were **very dry**. The sun, the sand and the wind had bleached them and scattered them across the valley. They were very many. They were dry, very dry. And they were dead. They had been dead for a very long time.

Here is a lesson every preacher must learn. No man will ever be used of God until he learns this lesson. He might be a successful preacher, but he

will never be God’s preacher until he learns this. – **He must be taught the state and condition of those to whom he preaches.** To be wrong here is to be wrong everywhere. What is the condition of man by nature? **Answer that question,** and I will tell you what your doctrine will be in all other points and what your method will be in trying to minister to men.

Any man who denies the utter, absolute, total depravity and inability of man by nature will make all his doctrine man centered. **Everything he believes** will, in some way, extol the will, works and worth of man. And **all his methods** of ministry will be designed to manipulate the sinner, not to resurrect him.

A. **God’s Prophets are men who have learned the true nature and condition of men.**

I have been with Ezekiel into the valley of dry bones and I have been made to see that all men by nature are dead in trespasses and sins. **There was a battle fought in the Garden of Eden that left all men** dead in sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1).

(Romans 5:12) "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

(1 Corinthians 15:22) "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

(Ephesians 2:1) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins:"

1. This battle took place a long, long time ago.
2. It left very many, all the human race, slain.
3. These bones of humanity are very, very dry. – **There is no life in them and no goodness!**
 - “*In the flesh dwelleth no good thing!*” (Rom. 7:18).
 - “*They that are in the flesh cannot please God!*” (Rom. 8:8).
 - “*There is none **righteous**, none that **understandeth**, none that **seeketh** after God, none that doeth good, no, not one!*” (Rom. 3:10-12).

God’s prophet’s understand that man was ruined in the Garden. Man is fallen and can’t get up! **All men by nature are dead!**

- Without God!
- Without Christ!
- Without Help!
- Without Hope!
- Without Life!

(Ephesians 2:1-6) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus."

(Ephesians 2:11-13) "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; (12) That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

B. Our understanding of man's fallen and ruined condition determines everything about our ministry.

1. All our doctrine is a reflection of this doctrine. – If man is dead salvation must be altogether the work of God's grace.
2. Our method of evangelism reflects this doctrine. – We wait on God!

II. **THE LORD'S QUESTION** — “*Son of man, can these bones live?*” (v. 3)

Here is the second lesson that must be learned, by preachers and churches. Few people really believe it, but it is of vital importance – **The new birth is a supernatural miracle of grace!**

When God shows his preacher the true condition of men, dead in trespasses and sins, he causes him **to consider some great questions** – “*Can these bones live?*” — Can dead sinners live unto God? — Can unjust men be made just with God? — Can those who love darkness be made to love light? — Can men who hate God be made to love him? — Can men who love wickedness be made to hunger for holiness?

- Job asked, “*How can a man be just with God?*” (25:4).
- Jeremiah asked, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*” (13:23).
- The Disciples asked, “*Who then can be saved?*” (Matt. 19:25).

I am talking about life, real, spiritual, eternal life in the soul! **I am not talking about the mechanical motions of religion** in which dead bones are wired together by manipulation! The question is “**Can these bones live?**”

III. **THE PROPHET’S ANSWER** (v. 3).

When God asked, “*Can these bones live?*” Ezekiel “*answered, O LORD God, thou knowest!*”

When God’s preacher realizes the true condition of man, by nature, birth and practice, when he ponders the great miracle of the new birth, he is brought to depend totally on the sovereign power and irresistible grace of God to give dead sinners life.

Here is the third lesson God always teaches his prophet – “*Salvation is of the LORD!*”

A. **When God asked, “Can these bones live?” Ezekiel considered the condition of those dead, dry bones,** and concluded that they cannot give themselves life.

B. **He considered his own abilities** and knew that he could not give them life.

C. **Then he thought upon God’s power** and said, “*O LORD God, thou knowest!*”

“*All things are possible with God!*” “*Salvation is of the LORD!*” It is God’s work alone and God’s work altogether! (Rom. 9:16; Eph. 2:1; John 1:12; 6:63).

(Romans 9:16) "So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

(Ephesians 2:1) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

(John 1:12) "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:"

(John 6:63) "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."

Salvation must be God's work because...

1. It is a New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. It is a New Birth (John 3:3).
3. It is a Resurrection (John 5:25).

(John 5:25) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

4. It is a Revelation (1 Cor. 2:7-10; 2 Cor. 4:4-7).

(1 Corinthians 2:7-10) "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: (8) Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

(2 Corinthians 4:4-7) "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

IV. **THE LORD’S COMMAND** (vv. 4-6, 9).

(Ezekiel 37:4-6) "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."

(Ezekiel 37:9) "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."

The fourth lesson God taught his prophet is the necessity of preaching the gospel to dead sinners and the necessity of that preaching being made effectual by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

A. **The Lord commanded Ezekiel to Preach.** — “*O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!*”

I am sure Ezekiel thought God’s command strange. And many today think this is a strange, outdated, unsophisticated method of grace. But God’s commandment is clear. He commands us to preach the gospel to sinners (Mark 16:15-16).

(Mark 16:15-16) "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

This is God’s method of grace (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; James 1:18; Rom. 10:17).

(Romans 1:16) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

(Romans 10:17) "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

(1 Corinthians 1:21) "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

(James 1:18) "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

(1 Peter 1:23-25) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Notice what Ezekiel says in verse 7. – “*So I prophesied as I was commanded!*” “*He that hath my Word, let him speak my word faithfully!*” (Jer. 23:28). **God requires no more and will accept no less from his preachers!**

Notice this too. – The message God gave Ezekiel was not a commandment, telling the bones something they must do. It was a declaration and promise of grace declaring what God would do (vv. 5-6).

(Ezekiel 37:5-6) "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."

Gospel preachers declare God's Works (Isa. 52:7-10).

(Isaiah 52:7-10) "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (8) Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. (9) Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. (10) The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

- “We preach Christ crucified!”
- We preach what Christ has done!
- We preach what Christ is doing!
- We preach what Christ will do!

B. **Then the Lord commanded his prophet to pray** – (v. 9).

(Ezekiel 37:9) "Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, 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."

God's grace might have saved his elect without our preaching, but our preaching could never save a flea without his grace!

- “Come, O Breath!”
- “Breathe upon these Slain!”
- “That they may live!” John 3:8

(John 3:8) "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

V. **THE GLORIOUS RESULTS** (vv. 7, 8, 10, 13, 14).

(Ezekiel 37:7-8) "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."

(Ezekiel 37:10) "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."

(Ezekiel 37:13-14) "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."

Here is the **fifth lesson** God taught his prophet –
1st The Condition of Man

2nd The Miracle of the New Birth.

3rd “*Salvation is of the Lord!*”

4th The Necessity of Gospel Preaching.

5th “*Your labor is not in vain in the Lord!*” (See Isa. 55:11; 2 Cor. 2:15-16).

(Isaiah 55:11) "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."

(2 Corinthians 2:15-16) "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: (16) To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?"

Quickly notice three things that happened...

A. **There was a commotion among the bones** (vv. 7-8).

(Ezekiel 37:7-8) "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."

There was something happening. It looked like life. Yet, the breath of life had not been given. – Is not this comparable to Holy Spirit conviction?

Illustration: Saul of Tarsus – “*Trembling and Astonished.*” “*Who art thou, Lord?*”

B. **When the Spirit of God came, there was life** (v. 10).

(Ezekiel 37:10) "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."

Illustrations: Lazarus (John 11).
The Infant (Ez. 16).

C. **The Lord God was known and glorified** (vv. 13-14).

(Ezekiel 37:13-14) "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."

- The power of God gave these bones life!
- The Spirit of God gave them breath – faith!
- They give God the glory!

Application: Ephesians 2:1-5; Psalm 127:1-3

((Ephesians 2:1-5) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)"

Psalms 127:1-3) "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. (2) *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: *for* so he giveth his beloved sleep. (3) Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward."

1. We must do what God commands us to do...

- Preach the Gospel!
- Pray for his blessing upon it!

2. We must wait for God to build his house and be content with the way he does it.