

The Church of the Servant King

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Prophecy Series

(Proph17C_Ezekiel 37)

Introduction – Vision of the Bones (vv. 1-2)

In this chapter, Ezekiel is transported in a vision to a valley littered with the dried bones of humans. There are different views regarding what the bones represented. One author indicates that the bones represent the Israelites slain during the conquest of the Land and those who had been in exile for a long time.¹ I believe that this view is at least partially correct; however, I believe a better interpretation is that the bones are symbolic of the spiritual status and the hope (v. 11) of the Israelites to experience the blessings of the Messianic kingdom at the time of their Babylonian Exile – the time during which Ezekiel lived and ministered. The revival of the dry, lifeless bones symbolized Israel's national restoration. The rebirth of the nation and her restoration was primarily to be a spiritual restoration which only God could accomplish.

Command to Prophecy & Ezekiel Obeys (vv. 4-10)

Ordinarily, one would just answer “no” to such a question as was posed by God to Ezekiel (vv. 3-4). However, Ezekiel doesn't want to limit God. He knew if God was asking such a question of him, God had a reason and could have easily created life using the bones as a starting point. The Lord instructed Ezekiel to prophesy over the bones and instruct them to hear His word.

The Lord would cause breath (*ruah* – wind, breath, spirit, Holy Spirit)² to enter them so that they would come back to life (cf. Hos 6.2). He put sinew and flesh over the bones (vv. 5-6), but they were not alive (vv. 7-8).

The Lord then commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath (v. 9) and in the name of the Lord have the breath come from the four winds (i.e. every direction) and give life to the bones (e.g. Isa 43.5-6; Jer 31.8). When Ezekiel followed the Lord's instructions, breath came into the corpses (Gen 2.7 cf. Rom 8.1-17). There were so many of them that they formed a group as large as an army.

Why did this take place in two stages – first, the gathering of the bones and covering them with sinew and flesh and second, the breathing of life into them? Why didn't the Lord accomplish it all at once? It is possible that the answer to these questions rests in the direction of Ezekiel's prophesying – first, to the bones and second, to the wind or Spirit? If so, Ezekiel's prophesying to the bones was similar to his prophesying to the Jews of his generation – spiritually dead people who were as dead men in their comprehension and acceptance of the prophet's message. Dead men don't comprehend anything. Spiritually dead men don't comprehend spiritual truth. However, when men become alive through the Spirit (*ruah* – breath or wind), spiritual truth is understood and appropriated. The *ruah* of God entering these people was tantamount to an act of re-creation (cf. Gen 2.7). What Ezekiel's preaching and prophesying had failed to achieve (i.e. restoration of the spiritual life of a nation), prayer and the Spirit of God would achieve. The breath of life that the corpses would receive symbolized the Holy Spirit, promised in Israel's New Covenant (cf. 36.24-28).

¹ Thomas Constable, “Notes on Ezekiel” (Sonic Light: 2002 Edition), CD.

² In 37.14, *ruah* is translated “Spirit” – a reference to the Holy Spirit and the same object promised to Israel and Judah in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.31-34.

The Lord's Explanation (vv. 11-15)

The Lord explains to Ezekiel that the bones represented the house of Israel (vv. 11-13). They had been complaining that they were like dry bones because they had been dead for so long – no hope for the future, no hope for becoming a nation again and no hope of seeing God's promises to them fulfilled (i.e. the promises to Abraham which were reiterated and expanded in promises to David and through Jeremiah). Through their exile in Babylon, they were in effect cut off from the Lord. The spiritually dry bones of their lives were scattered in a valley apart from the Land of Promise. However, the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, would insure that a spiritually redeemed people would be brought back into the Promised Land. They would be indwelt by the Spirit of God and they would know that He is God and that He fulfills His Word and promises.

This vision and the prophecies contained therein include both a physical and spiritual restoration of Israelites and a future time is in view (cf. Matt 24.30-31). At that future time when the nation is restored, it will consist of three major elements that are at the crux of God's Promises to His people – a restored Land (chps. 35.1-36.15); a redeemed people (chps. 36.16-37.28); and a theocratic government ruled by the Lord Himself (chps. 40-48).

The Sign of the Kingdom Re-United (vv. 15-28)

Amazingly, Satan has even tried to distort the meaning of this passage. Mormons claim that the two sticks represent the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph). This interpretation ignores both the greater context and the immediate context (vv. 18-28) of the passage and super-imposes a totally different agenda upon the passage.

In the Messianic Kingdom, both Israel and Judah will be reunited as a single nation (Hos 1.11). When re-united, Israel will be led by King David himself and he will be their one shepherd (see 34.23-24). God's covenant of peace (36.15 cf. Isa 54.10) will be with them forever in contrast to the departing of His shekinah glory from the Temple and Judah that was pictured earlier by Ezekiel (see 9-11). God will dwell with them forever.