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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Ezekiel 37.

(2014)

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Ezekiel 37.

Topics.

- The LORD by the Spirit sets Ezekiel down in a valley of dry bones.
- Breath came into the dry bones and they lived.
- The interpretation of the vision.
- The LORD will open the graves of Israel.
- The LORD is about to join the stick of Joseph to the stick of Judah.
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- The Commonwealth of Israel.

Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD”. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

NOTE: Ezekiel’s message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

The LORD by the Spirit sets Ezekiel down in a Valley of Dry Bones.

Ezekiel 37:1-3 ----- ¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

The words, “The LORD brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD,” most likely, means Ezekiel had a vision, a vision can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind).

A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision.

Ezekiel Prophecies over the Dry Bones and the Bones came Together.

Ezekiel 37:4-8 ----- ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and *you shall know that I am the LORD.*" ⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

In these verses we have a picture of the dry bones of a human skeleton without muscle and without flesh and without life. This is a picture of the Judah (the two tribes) and of Israel (the ten tribes). At this time Israel's beloved city Jerusalem had been burned by the fierce armies of Babylon, the temple of God has been pillaged of all its sacred items its gold and its silver and taken to Babylon. Judah's and Israel's land and farms is laid waste and the people of Judah and Israel are in captivity to Babylon without hope.

Breath came into the Dry Bones and they Lived.

Ezekiel 37:9-10 ----- ⁹Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

The Interpretation of the Vision.

Ezekiel 37:11 ----- ¹¹Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.'

The bones are a symbol of Judah and Israel, the people of both Judah and Israel not only feel they have no hope and are forsaken by the Lord their God, but also that they are spiritually dead. At the time of this vision the land of Israel is lying waste, their farms are in ruin, Jerusalem is destroyed the temple of God has been defiled and all its sacred items, silver and gold have been taken to Babylon. The people of Israel are in captivity amongst a foreign people (Babylon) and living amongst all their idols and their gods. Israel is scattered, in bondage, without a temple and without hope.

The LORD will open the Graves of Israel.

Ezekiel 37:12-14 ----- ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. *Then you shall know that I am the LORD;* I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

God tells Israel He will: -

- Open their graves and raise them from the dead.
- Put His Spirit within Israel and cause them to live.
- Gather Israel into their-own land.

When these events take place Israel will know that the LORD is their God. This is a common expression throughout the book of Ezekiel. God's whole purpose in using Babylon as His servant to bring judgment upon the house of Judah and the house of Israel because of their gross wickedness and blatant rebellion was to mould them back to His original design for them as a master potter moulds a lump of clay into a beautiful clay jar. God the master potter is moulding Judah and Israel into one united nation standing once again together with one faith in the Lord their God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Following are three aspects of this vision of Ezekiel's valley of Dry Bones.

1. A local aspect.
2. A spiritual aspect.
3. A futuristic aspect.

The following are only a very brief outline of each of the three aspects of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, but they will give those who simply do not have the time for extensive Bible studies an overview of each of the three aspects and for the passionate and enthusiastic student who does have the time available an introduction for their own rewarding and exciting studies.

1. **The local interpretation:** when Israel returned to Jerusalem after their seventy years in captivity to Babylon they returned as one united nation, but instead of focusing on the rebuilding and establishing of their faith they spent their time building their own homes and their own lives, until God through the prophets redirected their focus to the temple which was lying in ruin. God gave the people of Israel a new heart and a new spirit, one that focused on God rather than self, they gathered together with one heart and gave willing to re-build the temple of the LORD and their faith was established in their God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. **The spiritual interpretation:** many Jews who confessed to believe in God had a heart that was fixed, it was legalistic and dogmatic. These people were like the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes of Jesus Day, they confessed to know God, but to be accepted into their religious kingdom they demand others to follow their rules, their doctrines their laws and their standards to the finest detail, if anyone did not adhere to their laws and their rules they were not accepted into their religious organisation and worse still were told they would be rejected by God. God sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ firstly to the lost sheep of Israel (the Jews rejected by the religious leaders) and multitudes of the Jewish population accepted him and in doing so their spirit was changed from the death of legalism and dogma to a spirit of compassion, kindness, mercy and grace toward others. They were delivered from the dead spirit their religious leaders were imposing upon the nation (legalism and dogma) to the spirit of God (i.e., love, grace, mercy, kindness, compassion and forgiveness etc.).

NOTE: Ezekiel's prophetic vision of dry bones is not limited to the Jewish nation only, by extension it spiritually applies to everyone who is spiritually dead and separated from God.

The Bible says: -

- If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe *in your heart* that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with *the heart* one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹²For *there is no distinction between Jew and Greek*; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom. 10:9-13).
- 3 **The Futuristic interpretation:** the following verses clearly show Ezekiel's vision of, dry bones, applies to the glorious return of the LORD Jesus Christ in glory and the resurrection of all who died in faith.

- Christ has been raised from the dead, *the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*.²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also *the resurrection of the dead*.²²For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ shall all be made alive*.²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26).
- So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; *it is raised a spiritual body*. If there is a natural body, *there is also a spiritual body*.⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became *a life-giving spirit*. (1 Cor. 15:42-45).
- Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but *we shall all be changed*,⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and *we shall be changed*.⁵³For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Here is the wonder and amazing glory of Bible prophecy, contained within the one prophetic prophecy is three stunning messages of hope for the faithful who lived at the time of Ezekiel and for all the faithful who live until Christ returns in glory.

The LORD is about to Join the Stick of Joseph to the Stick of Judah.

Ezekiel 37:15-19 -----¹⁵The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶"Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.'¹⁷And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.¹⁸And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?'¹⁹say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand.

The stick with the name, Judah, written on it refers to: -

- The two tribes of Judah (called the Southern Kingdom) who dwelt at Jerusalem prior to Nebuchadnezzar taking them captive to Babylon for seventy years.

The stick with the name, For Joseph, written on it refers to: -

- The ten tribes of Judah (called the Northern Kingdom) who dwelt in the land of Samaria prior to Assyria conquering them and Nebuchadnezzar conquering Assyria and Israel becoming under the Bondage of Babylonian Empire for seventy years.

Join them together refers to God uniting the divided kingdom of Judah and Israel into one nation called, Israel. While in the seventy year Babylonian captivity God moulded Judah and Israel like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later God brought them back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again).

The LORD will Gather Israel and Bring them to their Own Land.

Ezekiel 37:20-21 -----²⁰When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land.

When the fierce armies of Assyria invaded the land of Israel and the mighty armies of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and the land of Judah the people fled into the

surrounding nations for safety and those who were captured were taken captive into Babylon for seventy years. During these seventy years the people of Judah and Israel had established homes amongst the foreign nations they dwelt in. After the seventy year Babylonian captivity those held captive by Babylon returned to Jerusalem and multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned with great rejoicing to their beloved city Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

One King will Rule over all Israel.

Ezekiel 37:20 ----- ²²And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And *one king shall be king over them all*, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

The statement one King shall be King over them all, is contrasting their previous history of having two kings over them, when they were a divided kingdom, with ten tribes in the land of Samaria and two tribes at Jerusalem but, the following verses show that the statement, "One King shall be King over them All," carries within it an echo of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Israel and Judah shall all have One Shepherd.

Ezekiel 37:23-28 ----- ²³They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ²⁴"My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. ²⁵They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

The LORD says, a day is coming when Israel will: -

- Not defile themselves with their idols or with any of their transgressions (v23).
- Walk in God's rules and be careful to obey His statutes (v24).
- Dwell in the land that God gave to His servant Jacob (v25).
- Dwell forever in their land with their children and their children's children (v25).

The LORD will: -

- Save Israel from all their sins and cleanse them (v23).
- Be their God and they will be His people (v23, 27).
- Make His servant David king over Israel and Israel's prince forever (v24-25).
- Give Israel one shepherd (v24) and make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (v26).
- Establish and multiply Israel in their land (v26).
- Set His temple in the midst of Israel forever (v26).
- Make His dwelling place with Israel (v27).

When all these events take place then all nations will know that God is the LORD of Israel and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (v28).

These promises were partially fulfilled when Israel returned to Jerusalem after their seventy years in captivity to Babylon, the temple was rebuilt and their faith established. As multitudes of Jewish families returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel from the foreign nations they had been scattered amongst they greatly multiplied in the land.

The united nation of Israel had one king over them and they never turned to idols and pagan gods again, they became God's people and He became their God, but the LORD'S prophetic blessings and promises for His people are only partially fulfilled in these events and will not be completely fulfilled until God sets up over Israel one King and Shepherd called God's servant David (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ). The following verses show that the LORD is fulfilling His purpose in David through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The angel (Gabriel) said to her (Mary), "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And *the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David*, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33).
- The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the son of Abraham ---- NOW GO TO VERSE TWENTY-ONE ---- ²¹ Mary will bear a son, and call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place *to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet*: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matt. 1:1-25).

NOTE: Immanuel does not mean Jesus is God, but that God's favour and salvation is now with Israel and the world through the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states: -

- We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved.

Nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved.

In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim: -

- We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

And that say: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

For further information see the title: -

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity).
- In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Jesus Christ is the Son of David (meaning his descendant).

- The crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the *Son of David!* Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21:9).
- When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to *the Son of David!*" they were indignant (Matt. 21:15).
- Jesus said, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "*The son of David.*" (Matt. 22:42).

Luke in his letters tells us that Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:33). These verses show us that God will give to Jesus the throne of his father David which will be the ultimate fulfilment of this vision of Ezekiel.

The LORD'S prophecies through Ezekiel will be completely fulfilled when the Lord returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish.

The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

For further information see titles: -

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

FOOTNOTE.

The Commonwealth of Israel: it is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) this means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called, a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said: -

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to you: -

If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

End.