

Dry Bones Can Live!

Ezekiel 37

¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!' ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' "

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹ Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land' ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.' "

Certainly, we know that things can seem one way to us and then in actuality the situation that we are in might be something that is totally different. If you have had some prank pulled on you, or a surprise party, or even seen some sort of elaborate con job as in a movie (hopefully you've never been involved in one!), then you know that what might look and feel like a real scenario... might not actually be!

I remember a line in a movie, a bad guys and cops type movie, and the main character (Samuel Jackson) is in the middle of some elaborate ruse and, in trying not to give away his whole ruse, he is attempting to communicate to another police officer that same concept of "appearance" and "reality". He says the line "Things are not as they appear

to be." That can be our theme statement to have concerning what the Lord in conveying through the prophet Ezekiel. "Things are not as they appear to be."

In this chapter 37 of Ezekiel, we have the famous prophecy about the valley of the dry bones. Picture bones. When we think about bones, they are a clear representation of something lifeless to us. Skeletons...bones = no life! We even use a skull and bones to warn of poison. It is a clear symbol for us. These bones that are prophesied about in this story seem hopeless. There they are scattered and piled about in a dry valley, with no appearance of any hope of life.

In looking at the context of what is going on at the time of Ezekiel, hopelessness is the lament of the nation of believers. Israel, God's Nation that was set up as a shining light to the world around, has had a strong enemy march against it, and defeat it, and carry off the people into exile. Later, Jerusalem is sacked and the Temple of the Lord destroyed. To those who are there, things certainly seem to be hopeless.

A sense of utter hopelessness is what you feel when you look at a valley of dry bones. And that is what the Lord states Israel is saying to Him (v 11) "*Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone.*" Have you ever felt that way before? I know that many of you have had challenges happen, you've lost loved ones, and we know that some people had their world turned upside down in seconds with a tsunami wave hitting shore.

God poses the question to Ezekiel and to us, as you look at this valley of dry bones, as you look at what seems like a totally hopeless situation, "Can these bones live???"

The answer is YES! There is HOPE for us all!

In our walk in life, a challenge for us, is to trust beyond what seems like apparent reality to us. We can look around us at what we see, and feel, and touch, and say to ourselves, "This is what is real"! I know this is what is real...I can feel it! And in one way of thinking, that is true. There is no denying that when you are whacked in the knee by the lady with the cart at the grocery store that it is real. Or, the big dog that chased you down the street and wanted to take a bite out of you. Or, the pain inside that comes our way sometimes in life, with an illness, or a relationship, or a loved one dying. There is no denying that this pain is real. At times like this, it might seem that this is all that is real. In the midst of troubles, questions are naturally posed inside. Is there any purpose to it? Is there any hope? A situation might seem hopeless. In our simple human approach, we look at what seems real. We look at the guilt of some sin that we might have, or we might look at the troubles that we face in life. Even more challenging, we look at the reality of death, and the question is posed, "Can these bones live?". Is there hope?

God gives us the answer. Yes, there is forgiveness for sin...all sin! A seemingly hopeless situation is conquered by God! What seems like death is not! There is new life because of Jesus. All people that are dried up in sin have hope because of God's life breathing Word.

God's Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, came to face death on our behalf so that all people, even though imperfect and with sin, have the promise of being able to rise to New Life! These dry bones can live! Even though it doesn't seem that way.

An interesting story about things seeming to be one way and reality being something different concerns a building in Windsor, England. Sir Christopher Wren was an architect in England and in 1689 he designed Windsor Town Hall near London. In his design of this building he used some new thoughts and some unique designs and he built a ceiling of a large open room supported by pillars.

Now, when the building was done and the city fathers came and looked through for inspection, in their view the ceiling would not stay up the way it was and they ordered Wren to put in some more pillars. Well, England's greatest architect didn't think that the ceiling needed any more support...but he also wanted to get paid. So he pulled a fast one. He added four more pillars just as they ordered, and when the authorities came and inspected the building passed its inspection review. However, the four pillars that he added didn't do a thing. He made them so that they didn't reach all the way to the ceiling. The four pillars were a sham, and to the glance of passerby's and some inspectors it seems like they are the real thing!

Things are not as they appear. Dry bones, in our human view, are an utterly hopeless situation to us. This is where it seems like only death can be! And yet, dry bones can live! Because God makes it so!

God brought us all hope to carry through our days because of our Savior Jesus. Even though you have sin, you also have the promise of forgiveness. Jesus faced and conquered sin and death. Resurrection and New Life are yours through a relationship of faith in Jesus as Savior. Carry a peace inside you all your days through the comfort of knowing that he has made the way to your home in heaven already for you.

And nothing... no matter now it seems... can take that hope and that promise away from you!!!

Amen!