Ezekiel 37:  
Reading #492 The valley of dry bones

This week we are told that Ezekiel had a vision in which he was taken to a large valley. Before him lay a dismal scene. Throughout its whole extent the valley was covered with the scrambled bones of men and women. What could the might and power of man accomplish with these dead bones? Nothing! For death is final to us. But let’s see what God can do!

***************(Begin Quote)***************(End Quote)

The first meaning we must glean from this scene is that it was a picture of the exiles who were scattered all over the world at that time. From God’s point of view they were “dry bones”, dead to the work of pleading with men and women for their salvation, because they were no longer in a position to show the living God’s power over the idols of mankind. Their expulsion from the “Promised Land” had made the heathen regard their God as powerless.

The second meaning is that the bones also represented all those living at the time (and since then) who had continued to reject His gracious plea. They too were “dead” in trespasses and sins and needed a new life. See Ephesians 2:1. Paul wrote about this situation to some Pagans who had been reborn in his day; “And you are [now] complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power: in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands [see Deuteronomy 30:6], in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has quickened [made alive] together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses [and given you a new heart]; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [the rituals of the Old Testament in the writings of Moses,] that was against us, which was contrary to us [they had been made a hindrance to the truth], and took it [the animal system] out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled [overcome]
principalities and [earthly] powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it”. Colossians 2:10-15.

Many today are also dead in trespasses and sins, but God would have us deal with them as though they are living and can hear His call through us. Were the question put to us, “Can these bones live?” our answer should also be the confession of ignorance, “O LORD, [only] You know”. To all appearance there is nothing to lead us to hope for their restoration. Yet the word of God must be spoken even to those who are like the dry bones in the valley. We are in no way to be deterred from fulfilling our commission by the listlessness, the dullness, the lack of spiritual perception, in those upon whom the word of God is brought to bear. We are to pray for the power to preach the word of life to those whom we may judge to be as hopeless as though they were in their graves. Though they may seem unwilling to hear or to receive the light of truth, without questioning or wavering we are to do our part as we are guided. We are to repeat to them the message. “Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light”, for there is power in God’s word. Ephesians 5:14.

There is also a third meaning:
These bones picture the situation in God’s kingdom in these last days – many among us are lifeless and need an infilling of God’s Spirit to enable us to witness to the people of our world of soon-coming events for which they are not prepared. Many who are without spiritual life have their names on the church records, but they are not written in the Lamb's book of life. They may be joined to the church, but they are not united to the LORD. They may be diligent in the performance of a certain set of duties, and may be regarded as “living men”; but are among those who have “a name that you live, and are dead”. Revelation 3:1.

Of course, if the people of God had done their part in the past regarding His plan then we would not be looking at a future fulfilment of this prophecy! Therefore we should pray that we also do not hinder His desire.

Let’s keep all three meanings in our minds as we read on.

***************(Begin Quote)

Ezekiel 37:
4 Again He said to me, “Prophesy upon [speak to] these bones, and say to them, O you dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. [There is life in the word of the Creator God. Psalm 33:9.] 5 “Thus says the LORD GOD to these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you 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 you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD [who gives life]”.

The prophet spoke God’s words to the bones (as we are to read the Bible to ours), and that caused a revival. But only through God can real life come. Jesus said, “The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”, meaning just that. John 10:10. Too often we give them our own words which cannot give life.

But there was a partial recovery to Ezekiel’s call:

History:
The exiles who returned after the seventy years were not the same people. They went into captivity as independent Hebrews with a king – they came out as Jews with a governor, under the control of another nation. The twelve tribes had shrunk to two, and one of those was so small that it does not even figure in their name, which was now “Jews” derived from “Judah”. Because of the lack of the breath of the Spirit their reaction was to sink lower and lower in spiritual life until they rejected the Messiah when He came.

Now we need to read the words as applying to our time.

Today:
What do the bones mean to us? Unless there is genuine conversion to God; unless the vital breath of God quickens us to spiritual life; unless as professors of truth we are actuated by heaven-born principle, we are not born of the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. Unless we trust in the righteousness of Christ as our only security; unless we ingest His character, labour in His spirit, we are “naked” and do not have on the robe of His righteousness. We are in the Laodicean CONDITION. Revelation 3:17.

In our branch of God’s kingdom the “dead” are often made to pass for the “living”; for those who are working out what they term salvation after their own ideas, do not have God working in them “to will and to do of His good pleasure”. Philippians 2:13. As we read last week, “Thus says the LORD
GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock”. Ezekiel 36:37. However, not just quantity, but quality, is what the LORD seeks. Thus it is written, “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own”. Romans 8:18-19, J. B. Phillips translation.

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Ezekiel 37:
9 Then said He to me, “Prophesy [call] to the wind, prophesy [call], son of man, and say to the wind [the Holy Spirit], Thus says the LORD GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath”, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. [As another prophet said; “O LORD, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy”. Habakkuk 3:2.]

10 So I prophesied [called] as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

***************(End Quote)

History:
Again the prophet spoke [this time with an urgency not present before], and again the word of the LORD worked – the exiles came back from Babylon, but they were not the “exceeding great army” that God wanted. The record states; “The whole congregation together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women”. Ezra 2:64-65. Compared with the nations of the day that was infinitesimal, but it could have been a start.

Today:
In the near future the LORD will be able to put His energy into an “exceeding great [strong in the Spirit] army” and they also will be raised as from the “dead” to fulfil His will of warning the world of the trouble that surrounds them. There will be a call such as never was before, “Come out of her, My People . . . that you receive not of her plagues”. Revelation 18:4.

This is how it will be:
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Joel 2:
28 And it shall come to pass AFTERWARD, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh [My people wherever they are]; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in
the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into
darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the
LORD come.

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the
LORD shall be delivered: for [in that day] in mount Zion and in Jerusalem
[representing the kingdom of God on earth] shall be deliverance, as the LORD has
said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

***************(End Quote)

On the Day of Pentecost which came ten days after Christ’s return to heaven
following the crucifixion, Peter was inspired to say these words as a partial
fulfilment of the prophecy;

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Acts 2:
16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
17 And it shall come to pass IN THE LAST DAYS, says God, I will pour out
of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy
[teach], and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream
dreams: 18 and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in
those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy [teach].

19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath;
blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 the sun shall be turned into darkness,
and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the LORD
come.

[Jesus said, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be
darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from
heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the
sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,
and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and
great glory”. Matthew 24:29-30.]

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name [understands
the character] of the LORD shall be saved.

***************(End Quote)

To Peter, the “last days” were the final days of the Jewish nation as
representatives of God. From then on the new branch of Christianity took
over that role. Although its record is one that we need not go into now,
nowhere in history do we find ALL the people of God stirred up with new
life. That obviously remains as a potential event, and this prophecy will have
a greater fulfilment in the future.

So the LORD continued:
***************(Begin Quote)

Ezekiel 37:
11 Then He said to 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’. [Nothing seems to be happening – it all seems hopeless.]
12 “Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the LORD GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your [metaphorical] graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you [back] into the land of Israel.

13 “And you shall know that I am the LORD [the living God], when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, says the LORD”.

***************(End Quote)

History:
The Jews came back from the “dead’ – but did not “live” well in their new world! Their time, from about 444BC to 34AD, was spent in fighting amongst themselves, and the invading Greeks and Romans!

Today:
There will be a second “Day of Pentecost” soon when we plead for it out of necessity, and after that the real graves will be opened and the people of God will enter into the joy of their LORD.

But first this parable must occur:
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Ezekiel 37:
15 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 16 “Moreover, you son of man, take you one stick, and write upon it,
   ‘For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions’:

then take another stick, and write upon it,
   ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim [the half Egyptian lad],
   and for all the house of Israel his companions’:

17 and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in your hand.

18 And when the children of your people shall speak to you, saying, “Will you not show us what you mean by these [sticks]?” 19 say to them, Thus says the LORD GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows [the northern kingdom], and will put
them with him, even with the stick of Judah [the southern kingdom], and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand. 20 And the sticks whereon you wrote shall be in your hand before their eyes.

***************(End Quote)

History:
As mentioned before, there was only one tribe of any consequence from then on. The northern and southern kingdoms were effectively incorporated in it, but not in the way God intended.

Today:
God is looking forward to the time when He can amalgamate all the loyal Jews and loyal Christians into one powerful army of witness for Him. He explained this to Paul, who wrote: “For I would not, brothers [and sisters], that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all [spiritual] Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob’ . . .” Romans 11:25-26.

Then will come the end:
***************(Begin Quote)
Ezekiel 37:
21 And say to them, Thus says the LORD GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, where they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22 and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.

23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them [as the sanctuary was cleansed on the Day of Atonement]: so shall they be My people, and I will be their God. 24 And [the Son of] David My servant shall be King over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them.

25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant [this time the new world], wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My servant [the Son of] David shall be their Prince for ever.

***************(End Quote)
This is His intention: to join all the God-fearing individuals together where they will be as one in their demonstration of “resting in Him” as Sabbath-keepers. They will do “wonders” in the time of the “latter rain”, which is the last outpouring of His Spirit in a last desperate effort to add to the remnant of His people. After that demonstration will come the great resurrection at the second coming.

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Ezekiel 37:

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

*************** (End Quote)

It is written in the New Testament, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more [great expanse of] sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away’. And He that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’. And He said to me, ‘Write: for these words are true and faithful’.” Revelation 21:1-5.

A basic part of this show of spiritual power (the revival of the “dead”), will be brought about by their understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and its Priest, for it is a working model of how God deals with sins in His people.

Bye for now, RonP

Some of the comments in these readings are adapted from books in my library. No recognition is given because they are not intended as authorities, but are used because they express my understanding clearly. All the ideas expressed in these readings, right or wrong, are my own. Some of these readings are available at http://www.geocities.com/weprotest.geo/BibleReadings/books_index.html