

# The Book of Ezekiel

## Lesson 17: The Valley of Dry Bones and One Nation Restored -- Ezekiel 37:1-28

After the long oracles of judgment, chapter 37 opens one of the most glorious visions in all of Scripture. The hand of the LORD sets Ezekiel down in a valley full of bones, very many and very dry, a picture of a people who had said, Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, we are cut off (37:11). To human eyes their case was past remedy.

Yet at the word of the LORD the bones come together, sinew and flesh cover them, and the breath enters them so that they live and stand on their feet, an exceedingly great army. This is a vision of resurrection, of God breathing new life into the spiritually dead and raising up a people that had no power to raise themselves.

The second half of the chapter takes two sticks, one for Judah and one for Joseph, and joins them into one in the prophet's hand, that they may become one nation under one king, no longer two kingdoms divided. God will gather a scattered, broken people and make them one flock under one shepherd.

We read this restoration not as a political program for a future earthly nation but as the spiritual resurrection and gathering of the people of God, fulfilled in the church, the true and spiritual Israel, where Jew and Gentile are made one new man in Christ. The everlasting covenant and the one shepherd, my servant David, point us to Christ and His everlasting kingdom.

**Group Discussion:** As a class, trace the two great pictures in this chapter, the dry bones brought to life by the breath of the LORD and the two sticks joined into one. Discuss what each teaches about God's power to raise the dead and to gather the divided into one, and consider carefully how the New Testament shows these promises reaching their fullness in the church of Christ rather than in a future earthly kingdom.

**Personal Reflection:** Reflect on times your own hope has felt dried up and cut off, when your faith seemed as lifeless as bones in a valley. Confess any place where you have despaired of God's power to revive you, and ask the LORD to breathe His Spirit into you afresh, that you may stand and live as part of His one gathered people under the one shepherd, Jesus Christ.

*Read Ezekiel 37:1-28*

### Study Questions

1. The LORD asks Ezekiel, Can these bones live? and Ezekiel answers, O Lord GOD, you know (37:3). What does this exchange teach about where the power of restoration lies, and why is it important that the prophet does not presume on his own ability or despair of God's?

2. When have you looked at a situation in your own life or in someone you love and concluded that hope was lost, only to find that God could still bring life?
3. The bones come together only when Ezekiel prophesies, that is, when he speaks the word of the LORD over them (37:4–8). What does this teach about how God brings spiritual life today, and how does it connect to the preaching of the gospel?
4. Where has the word of God spoken to you, whether read or preached, been the means by which God awakened or revived your own dead heart?
5. The bones are joined and covered with flesh, yet there is no life in them until the breath enters (37:8–10). Why is this two-stage picture significant, and what does it teach about the difference between mere outward form and the inward life that only the Spirit of God can give?
6. In what ways are you tempted to settle for the outward form of religion, the body without the breath, rather than the living power of the Spirit at work within you?
7. God explains the vision plainly, These bones are the whole house of Israel, who say our hope is lost, and He promises to put His Spirit within them so that they live (37:11–14). How does this promise of being raised, gathered, and given God's Spirit find its fulfillment in what God does for His people in Christ?

8. Where do you most need to hear God's word, I will put my Spirit within you and you shall live, spoken over a dried and discouraged place in your own walk?
  
9. In 37:15–28 the LORD has Ezekiel join two sticks, Judah and Joseph, into one, promising one nation, one king, my servant David as their prince, His Spirit poured out, His sanctuary in their midst forever, and an everlasting covenant of peace. Working carefully through these verses, explain why we understand this restoration to be fulfilled spiritually in the church, the true and spiritual Israel, rather than in a literal future restoration of a political national Israel. Show from the New Testament how the one true Israel is defined by faith and not by flesh (Romans 2:28–29; 9:6–8; Galatians 6:16), how Jew and Gentile are made one new man in Christ (Ephesians 2:14–16), how my servant David points to Christ the one shepherd and king, and how the everlasting covenant is the new covenant in His blood (Hebrews 13:20). Why must we resist the dispensational and premillennial reading that looks for a rebuilt earthly kingdom and temple, and how does the sanctuary set in their midst forever speak rather of God dwelling among His people in Christ?
  
10. Having studied the valley of dry bones raised to life and the two sticks made one, how will this vision of God's power to resurrect the dead and gather the divided shape your hope, your unity with fellow believers, and your confidence that the LORD who began this work will bring it to its everlasting completion?

## **Digging Deeper**

**Reflect on these passages:** Romans 2:28–29, the true Jew is one inwardly, circumcision a matter of the heart by the Spirit; Romans 9:6–8, not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, the children of promise are counted as offspring; Galatians 6:16, peace and mercy upon the Israel of God; Ephesians 2:14–16, Christ made the two one, breaking down the dividing wall into one new man; John 10:16, other sheep I have, one flock and one shepherd; Hebrews 13:20, the God of peace who brought again our Lord Jesus by the blood of the eternal covenant

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