

The valley of dry bones

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[0 : 00] We shall read a portion of God's Word in the prophecy of Ezekiel, and in the 37th chapter. Now let us turn for a few moments to the portion of Scripture we read together. Here we are in the prophecy of Ezekiel, and the 37th chapter.

And we shall read again at the 9th verse. The 9th verse of chapter 37 in the prophecy of Ezekiel. And they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army.

The Bible contains illustrations, allegories, and parables.

[1 : 52] In this portion of the prophecy of Ezekiel, we have an illustration of the Church of Christ in spiritual deadness.

And it is possible for a living Church to decay and go into this kind of state gradually.

Not immediately, but gradually. We see that in connection with the seven churches in Asia.

When the Spirit is sending a message from the Lord Jesus Christ to the seven churches, we have seen how some of them have deteriorated and lost their first works.

And some of them deceiving themselves, unlike Lodicea. They had, the professing Christians in that church had no knowledge of their own needs.

[3 : 14] But they had a form of religion. And they, perhaps, they thought they were glorifying and enjoying God.

Now we see many of these in our own day. And we have the Bible as the Word of God to instruct us how we may be delivered from such a state.

At the time of this prophecy, the Israelites, that is, the Church of God of the Old Testament, they were, for 70 years, under the dominion of Babylonian monarchs.

And when they were first brought into captivity, they thought it would be for a brief period. And then they would be released and come back.

But as the years went on, and they were there for 70 years, and eventually their hope of deliverance seemed to decay away.

[4 : 30] And they state that in this chapter. And it is God reading their minds and informing the prophet accordingly.

They say that they are, behold, they say, our bones are dried and our hope is lost.

We are cut off on our part. Now they had concluded that God had given them over, that they were lost, and they had adjusted themselves accordingly.

Now the prophet Ezekiel was among them in captivity. And they had the messages that God sent to the Church, delivered to them by him.

Now I would like to draw your attention to two or three things that are before us in these worlds.

[5 : 48] Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

Now I would like to draw your attention to a few things in order that we might grasp the situation and that we might be able to deliver ourselves and others from falling into the same condition.

First, I would draw your attention to the vision granted to the prophet. And secondly, the question which was addressed to him, can these bones live?

And thirdly, the command given to him. And lastly, the result. Now, the vision granted to him.

He tells us, The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.

[7 : 12] Now, it does not mean that the Spirit of the Lord took Ezekiel bodily and carried him to a certain valley where he actually saw this.

the word the word is quite clear in another way if we understand that he means he was taken there in the Spirit only.

I mean, he was in the Spirit himself and he saw these things with his spiritual sense. and he and he was still wherever the Lord spoke to him and perhaps many, many, many miles away from where he actually had seen this vision.

and he was carried in the Spirit and set down in the midst of a valley which was full of bones.

And there were two things that that caught his attention. He was made to walk round about them and two things he observed that they were many and that they were very dry.

[8 : 50] They had been as it were there for a countless number of years under a blazing sun under all kinds of weather and they had become so dry and so brittle that they were seen as old old bones and the valley was full of these bones.

He took note that the large number of bones and their state of decay that they were very dry. Now that is a very graphic description of the state of the church as it was in captivity in Babylon.

If we would know something of the way of worship that was given to the Old Testament church, there were many things that couldn't be done but in Jerusalem itself.

They were deprived of the sacrifices and of most of the ceremonial law. They were deprived of the prophets and all these things and without them they cannot really they didn't know how to worship.

Now there are churches like that. Members of the Roman Catholic Church are in a very difficult condition if they are separated from their church.

[10 : 24] Perhaps I mentioned this before here that I was traveling with a middle aged man who was working at Gerloch and I was traveling from Kyle to Inverness with him and there were only two of us in the compartment and he said to me when I asked how was he liking the place he was working in he said I like the place and the conditions very much but he said what is difficult he said is there is no access to a church and I asked him I said have you got a Bible and he said no and I asked him then a few more questions I said do you know the New Testament no do you know the epistle to the Romans anything about it no he never heard of it and the man was middle aged and he didn't know anything about the Bible he was highly dependent is he on the priest now the

Israelites were in similar condition when they were separated from the ceremonial laws of the church that were under the Old Testament they felt completely lost they didn't know how to worship God or how to approach him or anything and without that worship they were drying up they were like burns cast out into the field now they weren't all like that though the large majority of them were so Daniel continued to pray to God three times a day and he opened according to the rules given to them when King Solomon consecrated the temple he said if they were cast away even to the ends of the earth if they turned their faces toward this place

Lord hear and answer and Daniel was doing this thing three times every day and they knew this that he was opening the window that was facing towards Jerusalem and pray towards that spot where God had set the worship before they were carried away into captivity and so were others like Shatroch Misho and Tabetnico they were prepared to go into the fire rather than cease to worship the God of heaven but the large majority of the people were completely lost they didn't know how to approach God they didn't know how to pray they didn't know anything at all of themselves they had to be taught perhaps there are many here and they do not know perhaps you're here and you cannot approach

God you don't know what to say or what to ask him or how to do it or anything concerning your own salvation many a person have confessed that they did not know really what to ask God or how to ask it or anything concerning other salvation now there was when the prophet in his vision was going round these dead decayed dooms and he was asked a question and he couldn't answer it the question was can these bones live and how could they how could the prophet answer such a question if it were someone else whom he knew another person in captivity or if it were any other human being would have asked him can these bones live he could at once say it is impossible it would need a new creation and therefore he says when he was asked the question can these bones live he says thou knowest he believed that

God could use these bones again that these bones could live and how they were to live and how they were to stand he couldn't understand nor could not tell but he knew something of the power of God and when God asked him such a question he just answered thou knowest thou knowest what to do because he understood that here was a picture if we can use the illustration that here was a picture of the church of God in captivity and could they live again now the command given to him was to prophesy to these dead bones now if you could imagine yourself in the place of

[16 : 15] Ezekiel commanded to preach to thousands and thousands of bones they weren't just mere skeletons were bones scattered all over the fields and numerous these two things arrested him how numerous they were and how dry they were and it was to them that he was to preach to preach to those who had no hearing or eyes or anything to see to preach to real dead decayed bones that was withered as I said by the sun and by the wind and the rain for years and years to preach to such now the preacher of the gospel is going forth to preach to such people who are as dead spiritually as can be they do not understand anything spiritual or how they can what they not understand what they can do in order to be saved we find the same ignorance concerning those who are taught in

Israel as well as the pagans in Rome when they come under concern for their eternal salvation they do not what to do the jailer we hear him the Roman jailer calling what shall I do the lawyer in Israel is again coming running unto Jesus and saying what shall I do to inherit eternal life the same ignorance is in the sinner's mind and heart irrespective of the training he might get now the prophet began to preach to these dead bones and there is no word about his expectation what was going to happen but he obeyed the command that came from heaven and he says ye dead bones hear the word of the

Lord so I prophesied as I was commanded and as I prophesied there was a noise behold a shaking and the bones came together bone to his spoon now you would see that they were out of joint and here there was a movement and there was a noise and as he continued to preach bone came to bone and then flesh and then sewers and then skin covered them and he continued to preach till at last they were real people they assumed the form of real people but still there was no breath in them now there is a revelation to us there you would assume if it ceased there that nothing happened that new life came and there are such revivals things when there is a whole study of the church and movement and attending services and singing his praises and all that going on and testimonies given and there is no life in them there is more than that required this is a mighty reformation a reformation of a whole church not a tiny congregation but the whole house of Israel and there is an movement and they have the real form and the bone come into bone and skin covered them and they are lying there but the scripture says there is no breath in them but there is a preparation for breath as we find here then he said unto me son of man then he said he unto me prophesy into the wind prophesy son of man and say to the wind thus saith the Lord come from the four winds all breath and breathe upon these men that they may live now here we have a new development he was now not to preach to the bones nor to those who had formed up into into the similitude of a living person with flesh and skin upon them and yet there was no breath in them and now he is going to prophesy to the wind now what is implied in this is that he is going to pray to the wind and it is a prayer to the spirit of

God that preaching however faithful and however scriptural and however thorough it is that it must always be accompanied with prayer to God whatever whatever a man may do and whatever we may attempt to do it is without any avail without the spirit of God and he prophesied to the wind and it is one or other strangely stated then he said prophesy to the wind prophesy to the wind thus saith the Lord come from the four winds all breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live now if we take time to consider the revelation that we have here he is praying to the wind to come and to pray to come from the four winds now the four winds are no doubt what we would say the four cardinal points of the compass from the north south east and west that the wind would come from the north south east and west east now the wind the same word is used for the wind and for the spirit it's the same word that is used in the original languages for wind and spirit and here is a prayer for the spirit of

[24 : 13] God to come now if it were natural wind as we have here and if it were blowing from the four winds that is from the four directions from north south east and west it would be dead calm if they were of the same strength and velocity it would be really calm but here we are dealing with spiritual things and we have statements in scriptures which indicate the differences between the north and south and east and west revealed to us in various ways those who are led by the spirit of God are not led in the same way there are various kinds of experiences in bringing a soul from a dead state and being without

Christ and without God from a dead condition to a living condition in union with Christ now Christ is the door through and to which everyone who comes to God must come there is only one door and we have we have in scriptures we have a vision of John showing the church of Christ has a huge

temple or a huge city and if you look at its dimensions it is we cannot understand it it is so many furlongs wide and broad it is four square and it is as high as it is long now if you try to think of the picture that the scripture gives us of the city of

God it is like a cube but you cannot think of a city that is four furlongs high as well as four furlongs long and wide and it is square and up and on each side of the city there are three gates on the west and on the east and on the north and the south and three gates on that city of God and of course the city is only another illustration a symbol and but those who enter the city of God the city whose maker and builder is God there are entrances into that city now Christ is the only as I mentioned the only door into the city into the city of God there is no other way of entrance he himself taught this again and again in other words there is no way whereby we can approach

God but through the mediation of Christ he is the mediator because God as he is is a flaming fire to sin and we are sinful in our nature and there is no way in which we can therefore come to God as such but through the mediator Christ Jesus and he is the door now the spirit of God that was working through the prophecy of Ezekiel where bringing the wind or the spirit of God to work and lead some to the north and leading others to the south and leading others to the east and leading others to the west and so forth and what we understand from this is the various ways by which the spirit of

God is leading people unto the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved and that apart from the spirit it doesn't really matter what you hear or what you do it avails nothing but the spirit of God is working through his own word and that is why the apostle says by the foolishness of preaching it pleased God to save those who believe it is not the preaching but the power of the spirit using the word of God to lead people unto the door of salvation and Christ is the only door and the only savior provided now there are some who are led by the north side to the north gate of the city of

[29 : 41] God we're keeping to the illustrations that we have in the scripture and what does that mean well some become aware of their sins and come aware then of the heinousness of having of having sinned against God and broken his law and that we are under his wrath and his curse and when that comes it is a terrifying experience to the one who feels his guilt and his condition the apostle declares it the commandment came sin revived and I died it was a terrifying experience he couldn't see how could he get away from the blast of the wrath of God against him as revealed in his law and they come by the north wind feeling the cold and the deadness of themselves as the law reveals to them how they have sinned and how they have come short of the glory of

God and then you have others and they do not understand that experience at all they come to the south door by the south wind and they are aware first of the appealing love of the Lord Jesus Christ they are led to him not by the law but by his gospel and the love that he has revealed to us in what he has done he was the second person of the god dwelling in that glorious state when he agreed to come down into the world and be a sin offering that sinners might be delivered from the curse of the law and he endured the curse and the cursed death and all the other miseries that accompanied that in this world the crucifixion of

Christ began when he took upon him a nature in this world he made the contradiction of sinners and he was bearing their iniquity upon himself the sins of the church imputed to him and he was bearing this burden and the sinner will see through the spirit of God working in them they come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ bearing their burden and carrying and suffering in their room and in their stead and they are brought by that south wind into the church of Christ and perhaps it is after they have come into the church and begin to serve him that they realize the sinfulness of their nature and how lost they are apart from him and learning so more and more and then you have others who are brought in by the east gate into the church of

Christ you see it's the four winds in other words same wind but blowing from a different direction it's blowing from the east wind and if we look at the scriptures the east wind was the wind that brought blight and destruction with it it was through the east wind actually that a wave was opened through the sea through which the Israelites came out and we find various things that the east wind was producing it wiped away the flowers and withered the fruit from the trees and so those who are coming in by the east gate into the city of God the spirit of God leading in there they find that there is no good in them that they are poor and desolate and needy they have nothing of their own they can put before

God that he would look upon them in mercy they cannot point to one good thing in their life

[38 : 25] once once once we receive

Christ we are justified and adopted into God's family these are the wonderful privileges connected with the salvation of a sinner raised up from the degradation of sin now I mean by degradation that you render the dominion the rule of sin sin is worn in your heart however respectable you may be outwardly there are many such but here we have a power that comes from God that raises you up from that state and sets you in God's family and may join days with Christ of an inheritance that will never fade away surely that is something worth hearing well there is no message to be heard in the world in comparison to the message of the gospel of

Christ that God is reconciled through Christ Jesus to those who believe the sinners who believe in him Christ is as mighty to save today as he was at any stage he is he doesn't grow old his work doesn't grow old the blood he shed is calling us loud today as at the day in which it was shed he is the same yesterday today and forever and he is mighty to save to the other most and the question that I would put to you is are you prepared to accept him as he is freely offered to us in the scriptures are you prepared to count the cost and to estimate that you are that this is the most important thing in the world and the most important thing to you for we are all sojourners in the world our course in the world might be long or short but at its longest it's like a day and if we have misused if we have neglected our salvation we are the greatest

I should say the most foolish people on the face of the earth who have heard the invitation Christ has come as it were to your door and he has knocked there and are you prepared to count all things lost in order to obtain that salvation which is freely offered to us in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal saviour if so you have reasons to rejoice and to look forward to a blessed and glorious eternity may he bless his word let us pray O eternal God we seek thy blessing upon us the blessing of which we are holy and worthy and we acknowledge our unworthiness of it and may it please thee to open our eyes in order to behold the

Lord of glory who came into the world and who died a cursed death that we might partake of eternal life and enjoy the presence of thy glory through the endless ages of eternity bless thine own world and apply it effectually to our hearts though we would speak with tongues of men and of angels we shall be like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal but thou art able to speak a word in season and may it please thee to do so bless us now and help us to sing thy praises in parting and thine shall be the glory now and forever more Amen