

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Rev. Peter M. Buss

Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel was a prophet who lived during an unhappy time of the history of Israel. The people of Judah had been taken captive by the Babylonians, and Ezekiel was one of them. They were carried away into a far land, and there they felt that their nation was ended. They were very sad, and they had no hope left. They thought that no longer would they be a nation chosen and led by the Lord; but because of their sins, the Lord had forsaken them altogether.

It was because they felt that they were a dead nation that the Lord showed Ezekiel this wonderful vision. He took Ezekiel in the spirit to a valley where there were dead people's bones—all very dry and old, really dead. Then He asked Ezekiel if he thought these bones could possibly live again. The prophet gave the right answer; he said, "O Lord God, You know." Only the Lord knew the answer to that.

The Lord told him to prophesy to these dead bones, and tell them to listen to His Word, and they would come together, and flesh would come upon them, and they would live. Then that wonderful thing happened. Ezekiel watched, and saw the bones come together, and join together, and he saw flesh come upon those bones, and cover them over, so that the bodies looked like the bodies of people. Still, there was no breath in them; but the Lord told him to prophesy to the four winds, and tell them to come from every part of the earth, and breathe into the bodies. The bodies came alive, and stood up, and made a huge, great army.

Then the Lord told Ezekiel why He had shown him this vision. The people of Israel thought they were dead people, they had no hope left and so they thought their nation was dead. They must have more trust in the Lord, and know that He would make them live once again. He would make them come up out of their graves and live. Now they weren't in their graves, but they felt themselves to be dead, and so the Lord said He would make them come alive again.

It wasn't too long after this that the Lord caused the people of Judah to be sent back to their homes, and there they started to build their nation again. They were not dead, they began to live again.

This vision of the dead bones didn't really happen. The Lord gave it to cheer up the children of Israel. But, more important, He put it into the Word because it cheers us up as well. In the internal sense He is not talking to the people of Israel, He is talking to you and me. He is saying that He can make something live in us too, something we think is dead.

You know, there are times when we feel that some of our good feelings are dead. For example, you know that you ought to work hard, don't you? But sometimes you don't have any wish to work hard at all. You know you must, but that feeling seems dead in your heart. Or, you know that you ought to have unselfish feelings, but sometimes you feel very selfish, and the good feelings just aren't there. And you feel sad, deep inside you, and you wonder why those feelings are dead. You wonder if you're really a bad person, because you don't have the right feelings.

There are times when you do something wrong, and you know that it was because you didn't want to do the right thing. Is the good feeling dead?

These things happen to all of us. We know we ought to have good loves and feelings and thoughts, but when the hells can, they try to steal these things away from us. They love to do this. They find it far more exciting than stealing things, because when they steal our good feelings, they are taking something terribly important from us.

That is why the Lord cheers us up, with stories like this one in Ezekiel. In the vision, Ezekiel saw dead bones come alive, and stand up and become a strong army. He'll do the same in us too. When our feelings seem dead, He is going to put flesh on them, that is, He is going to make us feel good again. And He is going to breathe His life into them, so that we love to do what is good again. He will do this, if we will have courage, and try to do what is right, even when we don't feel like it.

Remember the children of Israel saying: "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost." When we seem to have no good loves in our hearts, remember what the Lord said to them: "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live." It is a small thing for the Lord to make a valley of dead bones live. Even more easily will He make our hearts live, full of the loves of heaven. *Amen.*