

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSETutor's Name: Date: Student's Name: Ref No.: **LESSON 14 • THE JEWS IN HISTORY (Part 2)**

Reading: Ezekiel 37

The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel was given a strange vision. It is recorded in Ezekiel chapter 37. There are three separate stages.

1. Ezekiel saw an open valley with an enormous number of very dry bones.
2. Ezekiel had to prophesy to these bones and, with a great noise, the bones came together, until there were many complete skeletons. As Ezekiel continued watching, the bones became covered with muscles, flesh and skin. But they were still dead bodies.
3. God now told Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind so that the bodies would be filled with breath. Ezekiel did so, and as the breath entered them, so they stood up - and were an ENORMOUS ARMY.

So, what is it all about? Ezekiel was told:

"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" (Ezekiel 37:11).

So Stage 1:

Dry Bones MEANS

Israel without hope (scattered throughout the world and persecuted)

God continues to say in verse 12:

"Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."

So Stage 2:

Bones coming together and being given bodies MEANS

God bringing back His scattered people to the land of Israel

Lastly, referring to giving them breath, God said (verse 14):

"(I) shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it."

So Stage 3:

Lifeless bodies are given breath MEANS

God giving His Spirit to Israel so that they recognise He is in control

Stage 1

This has already taken place. Israel has been scattered and in despair, fulfilling prophecies like Deuteronomy 28:65-67:

"And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

Stage 2

It is only recently that the people of Israel have been going back to their land. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was signed. This was a promise that the British would make the land of Palestine (now called Israel) a national home for the Jews.

When Hitler came to power in Germany he set out to destroy all Jews and over 6 million were killed in terrible circumstances. Because of their sufferings they were filled with a great longing to go back to Israel and to have a country of their own where they would be free from persecution.

In 1948, after fierce battles, Israel declared itself a nation. Against all the odds, Israel has survived. Why? Because God said they would - remember verse 12 of Ezekiel 37!

Also Jeremiah prophesied this:

"For I am with thee saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee..." (Jeremiah 30:11)

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"He that scattered Israel will gather, him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than, he." (Jeremiah 31:10-11)

So stage 2 is being fulfilled now, this century!

What about that third stage?

Does the nation of Israel recognise that God is in control? Sadly, no. The time will come, though, when the nation of Israel will have a change of heart. Zechariah chapter 14 shows us why! Read verses 1 to 4.

The time is coming when all nations will be gathered against Israel. From what is happening in the world today this cannot be far away.

Just when everything seems hopeless for Israel a wonderful thing will happen.

Zechariah 14:3 says:

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle."

The next verse shows us how God will help them - He will send Jesus back!

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...."

Just imagine how the Jews will feel when they realise what has happened. Jesus Christ, whom they crucified, has come back from heaven, and saved them! At last they will recognise and accept him. It is the prophet Zechariah who again tells us:

"... they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (12:10).

So Israel have to change. They have to recognise their own sin as a nation in putting Jesus to death and accept him back as their leader. Ezekiel chapter 37 also mentions the fact that "Israel will be cleansed" (verse 23). Look at Ezekiel chapter 36, where the same message is given.

Stages

Stage 1

Israel scattered and punished for their wickedness
Ezekiel 36:16-20

Stage 2

God regathers Israel
Ezekiel 36:21-24

Stage 3

Israel is changed
Ezekiel 36:25-28

Establishing God's Kingdom on earth again

After the Jews have repented, Jesus will reign from Jerusalem. When Jesus is King and God's laws are in the earth, it will be a different world. But how will this time of peace be brought about?

All through human history, nations have gone their own ways. They have pleased themselves and ignored God. They still do! When the Lord Jesus Christ is established in Jerusalem, he will command all nations to "fear God, and give glory to him" (as Revelation 14:7 says). Those nations which accept the Lord will be richly blessed in His Kingdom.

But the Lord Jesus Christ will have the power to punish any nation that rebels against him. Zechariah chapter 14 tells us that any nation which refuses to go up to Jerusalem to worship once a year will have no rain. And if a nation, like Egypt, which normally has very little rain, refuses to obey, they will be smitten by a plague.

So it will be a time of peace and happiness for the whole world. There are many beautiful pictures of this time in the Bible. One of them is given to us in Isaiah 11:6,9:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. "

Do not forget the Kingdom is not just for the people of Israel. Gentiles (non-Jews) can also have a place in that Kingdom, by God's grace, if they accept Jesus and follow in his footsteps.

When the Apostle Paul was writing to the Romans, who were Gentiles, he used the picture of an olive tree to show that Gentiles can join in that which has been promised to the Jews.

Read about it for yourself in Romans 11 (especially verses 13-25) and note the warnings which he gives!

JEWS AND GENTILES IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD - ROMANS 11

Chapters to read: Ezekiel 36; Zechariah 14; Romans 11

A verse to learn: Psalm 72:8

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."