

This chapter describes Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones in which the LORD once again declares His promise to restore the Jews as a nation to their land. Like many Biblical prophecies, this one has already been partially fulfilled but it will have a complete fulfillment in the future with Jesus Christ as Israel's King and Shepherd.

¹ 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, ² And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD” - Ezekiel describes that everything he saw was because he was in the hand of the LORD. He was under the influence of the “spirit of the LORD” Who showed Him this vision. **“and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, ² And caused me to pass by them round about”** - In the vision the LORD brought Ezekiel to a valley that was full of bones and apparently carried him through the valley so he could see the number of bones and their condition.

“and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry” - The two notable things Ezekiel observed in this vision was the great quantity of bones and that they were very dry. Apparently the valley was completely full because of the sheer number of bones. He also noticed that the bones were not “fresh” but had apparently been bleached by the hot sun until they had no remnants of tissue or moisture on them. Ezekiel wants us to understand how completely dead and lifeless that these bones were.

³ And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

The emphasis on the lifelessness of the bones is apparent by the question the LORD asks Ezekiel. Could bones as dead, dry and lifeless as these live again? Ezekiel's response shows that he knew of no way humanly speaking that these bones could live again and that the question could only be answered by the LORD. These bones could only live again if the LORD willed it and at this point Ezekiel apparently did not know what was the LORD's will for the bones.

Verses 4-10: The LORD commands Ezekiel to preach to the dry bones and proclaim the word of the LORD. The word of the LORD promised to cause sinews, flesh and skin to come upon the bones so that they would live again. When Ezekiel obeys, the LORD did as He said and the bones became covered with sinew, flesh and skin. The LORD then commands Ezekiel to preach to the wind, proclaiming the LORD's command to the wind to blow on the lifeless bodies to give them breath so that they may live. Once again Ezekiel obeys and the wind filled the bodies with breath so that a great multitude of living people stood before him as if they were an incredibly large army.

¹¹ Then he said unto 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.

“Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel” - The LORD now gives Ezekiel the meaning of the vision. The bones represent the “the whole house of Israel.” The phrase “whole house” refers to the fact that both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah are included, as indicated by the lesson of the two sticks later in the chapter (vs. 15-22).

“behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” - The captive Jews had given up hope of ever being a nation in their own land again. They had given in to the idea that they would eventually intermarry with their captors and thus lose their identity as a distinct nation and people forever. In the Bible, the expression “cut off” typically refers to death, so here they believed that they were dead as a nation. The phrase “we are cut off for our parts” could be better translated “for our part, we are cut off” or “as for us, we are cut off.”

¹² Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; 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. ¹³ And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

“Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD” - The LORD instructs Ezekiel to preach to the Jews this message of hope that they do indeed have a future because the LORD will insure that they will return to their land.

“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” - The LORD is not predicting the resurrection of individuals in this vision, but the resurrection of Israel as a nation. He will open and bring them up out of the “graves” of the nations where they have been scattered and return them to their land.

“And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves” - When the LORD enables them to return from the many nations where they have been scattered and return to the land to become a nation once again, then Israel will know that it was the hand of the LORD that caused it to happen and not the hand of man.

This portion of the prophecy was fulfilled when the Jews returned to their land under the decree of Cyrus the king of Persia (Ezra 1:1-4). The remainder of the prophecy will not be fulfilled until Christ returns as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Then the LORD will not use the hand of king Cyrus or the hand of the United Nations to return His people to their land, but He will do so Himself directly.

¹⁴ And 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, saith the LORD.

“And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live” - This phrase likely refers to the promise in Ezek. 36:26-27 where the LORD promises to give them a new heart and put His Spirit within them. They will be spiritually alive as well as being alive as a nation.

“and I shall place you in your own land” - Not only will the nation be spiritually alive but they will once again be in the land that the LORD has given them.

“then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD” - It will be obvious that it was not the United Nations, the Israeli military, the negotiating skills of their politicians, nor any other human hand that returned them to their land. They will understand that it was the LORD Who had promised (“spoken”) it and it was the LORD Who performed what He promised.

Verses 15-20: The LORD instructs Ezekiel to take two sticks, one representing the northern kingdom of Israel and the other representing the southern kingdom of Judah and show them to the Jews. Ezekiel then bound the two sticks together to illustrate the LORD’s promise to reunite the kingdoms as one nation. The 12 tribes of Israel had been split into two kingdoms since 10 tribes had rebelled against Rehoboam’s leadership in 1 Kings 12, but the LORD will reunite them as one in His kingdom.

²¹ And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither 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:

“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD” - Ezekiel is still speaking to the Jews with the bound sticks in his hand.

“Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land” - Ezekiel repeats the promise of the LORD to gather His people from all over the world and bring them back to the land He gave them.

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all” - The Jews will be united as one nation in the land of Israel and one King will rule over them. This King will be Jesus Christ, their Messiah.

“and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all” - The united kingdom will be a permanent feature. They will never split into divided kingdoms ever again because they will be under the eternal rule of Jesus Christ.

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: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

“Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions” - The LORD predicts a level of holiness in Israel that will only be possible through the new birth He promised in v. 14 and in Ezek. 36:35-37. This has not been true of Israel at any time in their history thus far and will only happen when Christ is their King in the future.

“but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them” - When the Jews return to their land, the place where they previously dwelt and committed the sins that got them exiled, the LORD will save them from returning to their old ways for He will cleanse them and prevent them from defiling themselves once again.

“so shall they be my people, and I will be their God” - The result will be the unity of the people with their God. They will have the relationship with the LORD that He has always intended.

²⁴ And 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.

“And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd” - The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will be their King and He will be their Shepherd to care and provide for them.

“they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” - Under the leadership of King Jesus they will obey the LORD and do as He commands.

Verses 25-27: The LORD continues by describing how that Israel will dwell in the land eternally with Christ as their King under an everlasting covenant of peace. The LORD will set His sanctuary in the midst of the people and will “tabernacle” (dwell) with them forever.

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.

The nations of the world will understand that Israel is God’s chosen people, sanctified (“set apart as sacred”) unto God because of the sanctuary (“consecrated place” - the temple) of the LORD will be located in Israel forever.