

**Text: Ezekiel 37**

**Theme: The Valley of Dry Bones**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during New Year's Eve Holy Communion Service on 31/12/2016 at 11:15pm**

The "Vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones," is a very familiar passage of Scripture. I have heard it used to preach about the need for revival in the church. That is a valid use of this passage. Yet, we need to remember that God is not speaking to the church in those verses. He is speaking to the nation of Israel (v. 11). He sees them as a dead nation. He promises this dead nation that a day will come when He will raise them from the dead and use them again for His glory. To the immediate recipients of the Vision, that was a Mission impossible.

Ezekiel was twenty-five years of age when he, his family, and his nation were carried off as captives of war, to the country of Babylon, 900 miles away. It was a dark, depressing and difficult time for all of Israel. Ezekiel had been in captivity for at least ten years when God gave to him this vision.

Just about everything was going wrong in his life, he was quite possibly wondering where the promise of God's blessing was fitting into all of this.

One day though, God speaks to him. He was feeling down and wondering what was going to happen next. God showed him a valley of dry bones. They were dry because they had laid exposed in a dry place for some considerable time. This could well have been the debris of a battle.

This vision of the dry bones was given to interject hope into a hopeless situation.

Like Israel, many of us are dejected, despondent, discouraged, disillusioned, defeated, and like walking dead. We desperately need the breath of God.

### **The shocking revelation**

What did God make Ezekiel see? A valley full of bones (v.1) and the bones were dry (v.2). This was God's assessment which Ezekiel agrees with. Defeated by their enemies and left to rot where they fell. Ezekiel saw a vision of death on a massive scale.

**What do you see when you look at the world around you?** Although the people around us may be living their lives, working at their jobs, enjoying their hobbies, raising their families; while they may be charming, intellectual, reasonable, and apparently fit, if they do not know Jesus Christ, they are spiritually dead. **Paul tells us that until the Holy Spirit quickens men and women to spiritual life they are "...dead in trespasses and in sins," Eph. 2:1.**

**(V. 11) He Saw Defeat** - "...behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost..."

The nation of Israel was defeated and had reached a place where they saw no way out of their captivity and no hope for their future. In a sense, they were not living; they were merely existing. Ezekiel saw their hopelessness and was moved by it.

The hopelessness in the world is easy to see. The restlessness of the nations, the upheavals in our culture, the horrible condition of our economy, and the constant threat of war, all speak to the fact that people feel hopeless. When there is peace in the heart, there is rest in the life. When peace is missing, hopelessness reigns.

This is very much a picture of many people in our churches today. They have gone to church and made some form of commitment, and when trouble comes, they have at first struggled, then just laid down for a rest, but they never got up again. From here they started to dry up, as they had run out of steam and lost their first love for Christ. Some lost direction and wandered into the desert of life, only to pay a very high price.

**God asks Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" v3. (Ezekiel 37:3) "Ezekiel, can this carnage of death, this expanse of waste, can it be reversed. Can those who are living dead, without life, these victims of this catastrophe be brought back to life? Can they live, Ezekiel?"**

For years, people have struggled on in their own way, trying everything they can to get some life. Yet all has come to little or nothing. But when God speaks, what a difference? Here we find God speaking to a very down cast and dejected Ezekiel, saying to him; "Can these casualties be brought to life? Can they once again have life restored to them? Can that first love be set alight once again? Can they be revived Ezekiel?" At a first glance the damage seemed irreversible. This was a valley of bones. Not one of the bones was in its correct position to make a skeleton, yet alone any sinew of flesh and blood. Just dry bones, mile upon mile of lifeless, parched, bleached bones.

**"O LORD God, You know."**

"You know everything Lord. I cannot do anything; I know the task is too big for me. If I were able to match these bones, all that I would have is skeletons. You know Lord, I don't."

As Ezekiel looked over that valley of dry bones, God spoke to the prophet and told him what to do. Ezekiel was shown that he had a personal responsibility to that valley of dead, dry bones. I want you to see this because the same responsibility that rested on Ezekiel's shoulders then rests on ours today.

**(V. 4, 9) He was commanded to prophesy, Preach (talk to)** - "...Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, "Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Nothing could be more foolish or ridiculous than to preach to a bunch of dry bones. There can be little doubt that Ezekiel was overwhelmed by the sight of all the death, the devastation and the defeat he saw represented by those dry bones.

Anyone who sees the true condition of a lost world can understand Ezekiel's response for, humanly speaking, what is more difficult than to confront a world of lifeless, useless, and hopeless men and women with the word of the gospel? Yet this is the clear obligation of the church. God has not promised to bless our theological systems, our superficial interpretations, or our philosophical theorizing, but He has committed Himself to bless the preaching of the unadulterated Word of God. He says, "So is my word be that goes out of my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Isa. 55:11.

**(Ezekiel 37:7,8)** "So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound; and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked and tendons and flesh appeared and skin covered them, **but there was no breath in them.**"

Notice that this was not just any movement, not just any old bone joining to another. Each bone came to the correct skeleton, in the correct place and order, but there was no breath in them.

**(V.9) He was commanded to prophesy to the breath** - "...breathe into these slain, that they may live." With the preaching, there may be a noise, a shaking, a coming together of bone to bone, and even the appearance of sinews and skin, but the Word says "...there was no breath in them," (v. 8). Ezekiel had preached the Word of God to the bones. They had the appearance of life, but they were still dead. They needed the touch of God before they could live. He was commanded to pray that the Lord would breath on them and make them live.

Through preaching people may be convinced of truth, but they will remain mere corpses until the Spirit of God breathes upon them and they are spiritually endued with power from on high.

This is still God's method of bringing the purpose of the gospel to fulfilment. It is our obligation to see that we not only preach with divine urgency, but pray with divine fervency. We must be satisfied with nothing less than the outpouring of the Spirit of God. The world of lifeless, useless, and hopeless men and women will never be changed unless the Holy Spirit breathes upon the preaching as well as upon the people.

(V.10) "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet- a vast army."

- (a) They were vitalized as the breath came into them and they lived;
- (b) They were energized and stood up upon their feet;
- (c) They were mobilized into an exceeding great army.

They were renewed v.12; They were restored v.13 and 14.

### **God loves it when we think like he does**

In verse 2 God asks Ezekiel: "Son of Man, can these bones live?" Why would He ask this tricky question? Isn't he the only one who really does know everything? Here's the deal: God cares about what we think, because He knows we can only release His power on earth to the degree that we are aligned with His perspective. God's about to rock Ezekiel's perspective on the hopeless situation of Israel by showing Him that nothing is impossible, if he partners with heavenly perspective.

### **God loves to release his power through us**

Did you ever ask yourself the question why God gave us the privilege of doing His work on this earth? It doesn't seem to be a very great deal for Him. Human beings are short sighted, often times irresponsible, make mistakes, get discouraged, quit... if you read the bible and have some experience with God yourself, I'm sure you know exactly what I'm talking about. In the midst of all of this it seems like God still likes to partner up with us in His heavenly purposes. Think of the Angel that appeared to Phillip in Acts 28:26-31, who told him to go down the straight road to talk to a guy who needs to get saved. Did you ever wonder, why the Angel wasn't sent directly to the guy on the street? Wouldn't that have been way easier and more impressive? Somehow God respects the authority He has given us over this planet (Genesis 1) and prefers to build His kingdom through us. He actually enjoys using you – believe it or not.

### **Your words carry incredible power**

One last thing God wanted to teach Ezekiel was that his words, spoken in the will of God have power. Note how God didn't do anything before Ezekiel spoke it out in the entire chapter. Our words truly are more powerful than what we think, especially when they're spoken in agreement with God's will.

Ezekiel remained faithful to God ... in spite of how things looked to the natural eye. He remembered ... that there are no limits ... to what God can do.

So, when God asked Ezekiel the question in verse 3: "... Son of man, can these bones live?..." he knew within his heart that the scattered dry bones had need of a resurrection miracle ...that only God could render ...so, he responded with a resounding ..."O Lord God, you know".

And he recalled that there is no limit to what can do ...

Ezekiel remembered Genesis 2:7 which says "... the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

My brothers and sisters, a man is said to be “inspired” or “possessed” by the Spirit when he is lifted beyond his normal self. And, he is enabled to do ... what at any other time ... would have been quite beyond him. Therefore, the Bible says Ezekiel preached ...and while he preached ... Despair turned into hope ... there was noise and then a shaking... And then from all over the valley ... Bones came together ... Bones to its Bones ...

I firmly believe God still wants to make Mission impossible possible through us if we only trust Him and are willing to yield what we are and have, to His service. Look at the Feeding of the 5,000 which is also known as the "miracle of the five loaves and two fish", because the Gospel of John (6:1-14) reports that five barley loaves and two small fish supplied by a boy were used by Jesus to feed a multitude. The crowds had followed Jesus on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus said they did not need to go away, and therefore the disciples were to give them something to eat. They said they only had five loaves of bread and two fish, which Jesus asked be brought to him. Jesus directed the people to sit down in groups on the grass. In Mark's Gospel, the crowds sat in groups of 50 and 100, and in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' instructions were to seat the crowd in groups of 50, implying that there were 100 such groups.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve baskets full of broken pieces that were left over.