

## Aim of lesson

To show God's knowledge of the future and his power to raise an individual or a nation to life.

## Bible background

Ezekiel 37.

## Outline of lesson

### The valley of dry bones

Use the workbook to clarify the basic points of the vision of the valley of dry bones as, or after, you read Ezekiel 37:1-14. The class should be able to find the details for the questions from the chapter. The question about the bones being dry is to point out that a long time is implied, since bones become very dry after being left for a long time.

### The message

The message about the return to the land of Israel and the resurrection of Israel as a nation, may not have been heard by some of the captives who left the land with Ezekiel. The class have learned of this message from God's teaching to Jeremiah, especially from the time when Jeremiah was told to buy a field, Lesson 58. However, Jeremiah was preaching to the people left in Jerusalem just before it was destroyed. Ezekiel and those he was with, were taken captive years before, though they had later heard of the fall of Jerusalem and the end of their nation (Ezekiel 33:21). They might have felt that all hope of a return was now lost, see Ezekiel 37:11. God gives them this vivid picture of the coming back to life of their nation.

### The return

Though there was a return to the land under Zerubbabel seventy years later, some of the details in Ezekiel 37 are not fulfilled until a future re-gathering, Ezekiel 37:14 says that Israel will be in their 'own land'

This was not the case between 587 B.C. and 1948. Though many Jews lived in the land, it was owned and governed by others. It was occupied territory.

### The two sticks

Ask the class to note what should be written on the two sticks that Ezekiel is holding. Read together Ezekiel 37:15-22 or 15-28. The main points that the class should find from this sign are that there will be one nation in the future. It will not be divided into Israel and Judah. Also there will be one king over them. From that time to this, there has not been a king over Israel. The class should refer to God's words to the last king of the nation, Zedekiah, in Ezekiel 21:25-27. It would be helpful to compare it with the claim made by the angel in Luke 1:32 and 33 that Jesus is the one 'to whom it rightfully belongs' being the son of David who will fulfil Ezekiel 37:24-25.

### How would you have felt?

A class to whom this chapter is new, may like to write a dramatic account of Ezekiel's experience in seeing the valley of dry bones. This could be in the form of a letter from Ezekiel to a friend, or a tape recording of Ezekiel's account. The tape recording would allow sound effects to be produced for v7-9.

### How would Ezekiel feel?

A class to whom this chapter is familiar, may like to look briefly at the next two chapters which refer to an attack by group of nations on the re-gathered nation of Israel; and God's judgment of the nations that attack. Zechariah 14:2-4 speaks of all nations gathering to fight against Jerusalem with clear reference to the return of Christ at that time. The class could consider what Ezekiel would say if he were here today and could see some of this prophecy wonderfully fulfilled. What would he say to us to warn and encourage us?

## Digging deeper

### Scattering and gathering

God had predicted that his people would be scattered but always gave them hope for the future if they remembered him. This section also looks to the return of Jesus, and reference is made to Ezekiel's temple.

## Relevance to our lives

There is a clear message to us never to underestimate God's power. He can bring life out of death. Not only for an individual but also for a nation. If our lives are in his hands, no situation should make us completely hopeless. The class could think of the worst situation that they encounter or are aware of during the week and consider what Ezekiel might have said about it.

## Prayer

The class could write a prayer they think Ezekiel might have said after seeing the vision of dry bones, or they could write a prayer about being ready for the return of Jesus.

## Other suggestions for activities

- Pictures showing the terrible conditions in the concentration camps at the end of the Holocaust under Hitler could be compared with the words of Ezekiel. It is particularly telling because three years later the State of Israel was declared.

- The newspaper of the time of the exile could be continued.
- The class could find information about the return of the Jews to the land over the past 100 years.