

One week has passed and we have experienced another Sunday without meeting together. So, exile continues and this week I wanted to look at the way the Lord God used a time of exile to give a vision of the future. A vision of promise and hope.

Ezekiel was a priest in the temple at Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1 verse 3). He was taken into exile in Babylonia in 597 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, along with King Jehoiachin and the “upper-classes” of Jerusalem.

He was a man who lost everything of value! The Temple worship was no more. In his exile he had a vision of the glory of the Lord abandoning the Temple and moving to rest on the Mount of Olives (Chapter 11 verses 22 -25). The Glory of the Lord paused in the very place where Jesus was later to weep over the doomed city (Luke 19 verses 37 – 44).

Not only did Ezekiel lose his ministry and place of worship, his wife, “the delight of his eyes” died suddenly (Ezekiel 24, verses 15 -18).

Here we have a faithful man of God suffering so much pain!

But – in Ezekiel we have a faithful man of God given visions of the future. Visions of a hope and a glory for the people of God.

The Valley of Dry Bones is a familiar reading – Ezekiel chapter 37, verses 1 – 14 – please read carefully!

Verses 1 – 3:- Even before this our “exile” from worshipping together, I have asked myself “how dry is my worship?”. Why is it that sometimes for me it never seems to ‘get off the ground’?

How close do I feel to the Lord as I come before Him?

How alive is the Church body – here in Chudleigh? In Devon? In the country?

How far can we use the present as an opportunity to pray for a true revival? Not just ‘renewal’ but a real move of the Holy Spirit bringing in new believers, building up the Body of Christ. In traditional terminology “Saving Souls”!

Verses 4 – 8:- The restoration of the People of God requires more than just a “re-organisation”. The church has tried that, time after time, and it doesn’t seem to make much difference. We can re-organise, put things together again, try something different BUT it is only the Spirit which can give life!

Verses 9 – 10:- The coming of the Spirit (same word is used for “wind”, “breath” and “spirit”) brings new life.

Verses 11 – 14:- The meaning of the prophetic vision is given to Ezekiel, the “son of man” the representative of the human race. Israel, the People of God will be restored to life. They will dwell in their own land and at the end of Chapter 37 they are promised the continuous presence of the Lord God, dwelling among them. A prophecy yet to be completely fulfilled!

So – in these days of isolation, days of waiting, hoping and trusting in the Lord God, we pray for our Church! Its ministry, its leadership in the future, for revival here in Chudleigh, in Devon and in the country. Pray for each other and for ourselves, that we may be available for whatever ministry we are called to serve.

Above all, pray that we may be open to the cleansing, reviving, life-giving Holy Spirit of God, given by the Lord Jesus Christ, for the equipping of His Church to His praise and glory.