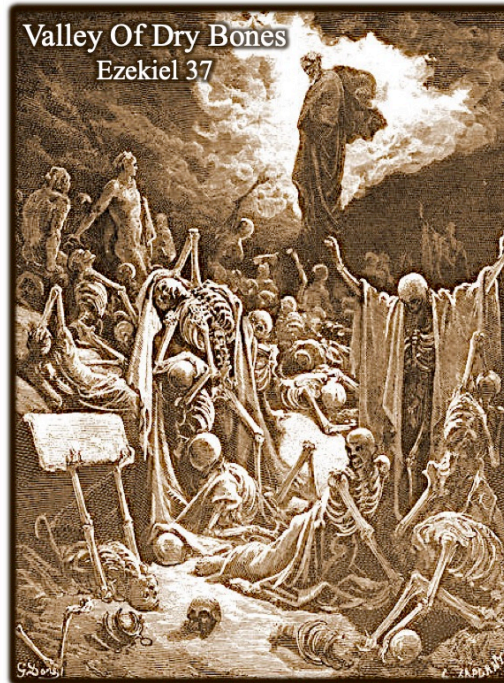


How Can The Dead Believe In Christ?

A Brief Look At Salvation And The Doctrine Of Total Depravity



Introduction

In this study, we are looking at how God saves sinners (not how sinners get themselves saved). Much of the material this study is based on comes directly from Scripture as well as from John Gill's commentary on the Bible [1] which has got to be one of the most extensive and most scholarly of all English Bible commentaries in the

entire world. And John Gill was no amateur theologian by any means. His knowledge of Scripture and other ancient writings and his knowledge of many biblical languages may have surpassed all other theologians before him and after him. More about John Gill can be found [HERE](#) [2]. If you think that Bible commentaries are a bad thing, perhaps some are, but the Bible itself tells us that there is “much safety in a multitude of counselors” in Proverbs 11:14.

Understanding what it means to preach “the Gospel”

Many Christians think “the Gospel” (God’s plan of salvation) consists of nothing more than a sinner exercising his free will to

“BELIEVE in Jesus”. But there are many problems with that overly simplistic thinking. The primary problems I will enumerate here...

1. WHICH Jesus are they to believe in? One that they don't know and whom they can't know if they are not yet regenerated by the Holy Spirit?

2. HOW can they believe in the REAL Jesus if they are in spiritual darkness as the Bible teaches? Don't they need “eyes to see” and “ears to hear”? Can they gain these abilities without God's intervention?

3. If they are God's enemies [3] and don't even know it, how are they going to get the desire to believe in Jesus? Where is that desire going to come from?

So telling a lost sinner to “just believe” in Jesus is not an accurate nor is it an adequate means of sharing the Gospel with sinners. God must definitely intervene in the sinner’s life and He does that with:

1. Preachers preaching God’s Word (primarily the law of God to show that sinners are lawbreakers) - “Through the law comes the knowledge of sin” [4] and “Faith comes through hearing God’s Word” [5].

2. The Holy Spirit convicting and converting the sinner who is under the hearing of God’s Word. (Titus 3:5 [6], John 16:7-8 [7])

I think a good place to find out more about how God saves sinners

is found in the story of the “valley of dry bones” mentioned in Ezekiel chapter 37 starting at the first verse:

“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, 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. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.” (Ezekiel 37:1-3)

In the book of the prophet Ezekiel, the prophet was prophesying about “the Jews’ return from captivity to their own land; of the union of the each tribes with one another; and of the glorious kingdom of Christ

among them.” [8]. Yet there is more to this prophecy than that. As we examine it more closely, we see spiritual analogies to the salvation and conversion of sinners, from spiritually dead beings to spiritually alive beings - new creatures in Christ [9].

The Valley of dry bones: A picture of GOD regenerating sinners

This valley of dry bones is a picture of the world that we live in, a picture of the spiritually dead sinners all around us. The commentator John Gill eloquently describes these dry bones here in his commentary on Ezekiel 37, verse 2:

“these [dry bones] are a fit emblem of men in a state of nature and unregeneracy, who have no spiritual life, but are dead in trespasses and sins; have no sense of sin or danger; no strength to redeem and regenerate themselves, or do anything that is spiritually good; have no spiritual motion; no inward desires after God, or affection to him; no lifting up of the heart to him, or going out of the soul in faith and love to Christ; but in themselves entirely lifeless, helpless, and hopeless.” [10].

As we read just ONE verse further in this chapter we see more about what God is doing here with these dry bones:

“Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto

them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” (Ezekiel 37:4).

God is telling Ezekiel to prophesy (preach) to the dry bones. And this is what he said to those bones:

“Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 37:5-6).

These verses (Ezekiel 37:5-6) are a picture of the preacher of the gospel, any preacher or any person sharing God’s Word to spiritually dead sinners. Then at that point, if it is God’s will (note the use of “I will” in that verse, referring to

GOD's will, not the dry bones' will), those who hear the preaching will be convicted and converted (made spiritually alive) by God the Holy Spirit. — *RM Kane*

REFERENCES

[1]