



Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus A Discipleship Journey

The OLD TESTAMENT- Their Story is Our Story

Dry Bones

The Israelites spent 70 years in Exile, in a land not their own, governed by foreign sovereignties, struggling to re-discover and renew their identity as God's Chosen People. The prophet Jeremiah encouraged them to take wives, build houses, plant gardens and take advantage of their situation while in Exile but also to learn from the experience and maintain hope for the coming redemption. Keep hope alive without assimilating into the Babylonian culture – quite the challenge indeed. By all accounts, this small group of Israelites should have faded out of world history, but they didn't. Rather than give into the polytheism of the culture, the Israelites re-affirmed their belief in God. Rather than diluting the people's faith, their time in Exile actually strengthened their faith and solidified their identity.

The prophetic writings of Ezekiel and Isaiah offered promises of restoration and renewal. Ezekiel's beautiful vision of dry bones on the desert floor and God's breathe breathing back to life assures them of God's ongoing presence:

I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel...I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land.

Ezekiel 37:12 - 14

In 538 BC, the Persian ruler Cyrus allowed the Israelites to return home and rebuilt Jerusalem. What would they return to? What would they need to do to re-establish themselves as a people? What did they learn about what was important and what wasn't? What would restoration look like? How can they stay true to God so as not to fall into the same temptations and suffer another devastating loss as a people? Imagine pondering these questions during their 100 mile pilgrimage back to Jerusalem.

The Israelites returned and settled once again upon their land, the land God promised them. They returned renewed, strengthened and restored as God's Chosen People. Next week we will begin to explore events around the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple.

As we begin our own return from exile to "normalcy", what will our new normal look like? What have we learned? What will help us stay close to our Lord? What are the "dry bones" of our spirits that need God's breathe to bring back to life?

