



April 2022 Newsletter



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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NEWS & EVENTS

INDUCTION OF REV. KENNETH STEWART

The induction of Rev. Kenneth Stewart will take place on Friday 15th April 2022. The service will be held in the Town Hall at 7.00pm, followed by a reception at the County Hotel.

ORDINATION OF REV. JOSEPH DUNLAP

The church was full on the evening of Friday the 25th February, as Mr Joseph Dunlap was ordained and installed as minister of Loughbrickland RP Church. Rev. Philip Moffett, the moderator of Synod, opened the worship with the singing of Psalm 107 followed by prayer. Dr. Tim Donachie preached on John 15 and bearing much fruit through abiding in Christ. After the singing of Psalm 80, an offering was taken up in aid of the denomination's education fund.



Rev. Joseph Dunlap



Rev. Stephen McCollum and Presbytery

INDUCTION OF REV STEPHEN MCCOLLUM

The induction of Rev. Stephen McCollum to Airdrie RPCS took place on Saturday 19th March. Rev. Stephen Steele preached from Zechariah 8:14-17. The service was followed by a lunch in the hall afterwards.

We wish God's richest blessing on the McCollum family and on the new ministry in Airdrie.

THE VALLEY OF DEAD BONES

(Written during lockdown)

Ezekiel here is given an amazing vision which I believe is highly relevant for today.

1 Hopeless situation

Ezekiel is taken by the Spirit of the Lord into a valley which is full of bones. He had to walk among them to be convicted of the dire reality of the situation. There were many bones and they were very dry. What a horrible sight! All these skeletons around! Then he is asked a question: "Can these bones live?". Surely the answer is obvious. Common sense says, No. The prophet however wisely replies: "O Lord God, thou knowest" (v3). God says to him: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts" (v11). Israel is in captivity in Babylon, Jerusalem is destroyed, the temple is burnt with fire and the Promised Land is empty. Israel is cut off and her hope for the future is lost. It is like the situation in which we find ourselves today: the churches are closed, the majority of church members are dead, the true people of God are few and sadly there is scarcely a prophetic voice to be heard in the land.



2 Strange Preaching

Ezekiel is given a strange command: "Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 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" (vv4-6). The prophet is to proclaim God's word to the heaps of bones. Similarly, you and I are called upon to preach in the land today to a valley full of dead men and women.

3 A Remarkable Response

As Ezekiel was prophesying we are told, "There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them

above: but there was no breath in them” (vv7-8). What a remarkable, indeed hair-raising sight that must have been! All round the valley bones were moving, finding other bones, sinews and flesh growing on them and skin covering the bodies, so that now there was a valley full of dead bodies. So many and yet still so dead!

4 A call for the Spirit of God

The prophet is now commanded: “Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” (v9). Remember the word for breath, wind and spirit in Hebrew is the same, “ruach”. Now Ezekiel tells us: “So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (v10). God’s Spirit came down upon them causing a wonderful resurrection. What a sight, thousands of soldiers ready for battle!

5 God's Promise

The vision is then explained to the prophet: “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord” (vv11-14). Though at that specific point in time the situation seemed hopeless, yet God was going to do great things. Israel was to be spiritually resurrected, returned to their own land and become a mighty army for God.

6 How was this Prophecy fulfilled?

After seventy years the Jews returned, the temple was rebuilt on a more modest scale and eventually the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt. But it was only a few Jews that returned. Their enemies said of them, “What do these feeble Jews?” (Nehemiah 4:2). God helped them but there is no sign of the mighty army. The Messiah came and was crucified by the Jews. A second fulfilment was at Pentecost when many Jews were saved but not the whole valley by any stretch of the imagination. Some spiritualise it and say it refers to the Gentile church and yet there is a specific reference here to the Jewish people, their captivity and their land. God says, “Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land” (v21)

7 How will this passage be fulfilled?

We are awaiting the conversion of the Jews as a people. Paul says with reference to the Jews rejecting the Messiah: “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Romans 11:15). They are to be received back. There is a wonderful mystery here, a secret yet to be revealed, “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:25-26). The Jews, “as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Romans 11:28-29). After 2000 years, now almost half the Jews in the world are back in their own land, after having been scattered among the nations by God's judgment. We await the Lord raising them from the dead and converting them into a mighty army for Him in evangelising the world.

8 The Two Sticks

Ezekiel is to take one stick for Judah and one for Israel. In the prophets hands they become one. God explains: “Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand” (v19). In the words of Isaiah, “Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isaiah 11:13). There will be a coming together of all Christians in the truth. Christ's great prayer for unity the night before He died, John 17, will be fulfilled. The one little bit of encouragement we have in these dark days when the churches are shut in Scotland is that Reformed, Bible-believing Christians from many different denominations have come together to pray and to hear God's Word in online meetings. Is this too a signal of the coming dawn?

Children's Corner



Dear Children

We are now well into the Spring, the clocks have gone forward an hour and the days have lengthened with more daylight. Are you not as happy as I am that the long dark nights of winter are disappearing? What a joy it is to have more light! Darkness brings fear. We are afraid what might be lurking around in the dark. In the dark we can't see our way clearly. We need torches or street lights or the lights on in our homes. It is not a comfortable experience to be in the darkness as you may have experienced if you have had a power cut.

Our world has been darkened by sin and that darkness has affected us not just physically but mentally and spiritually. The Bible speaks about our minds being darkened or blinded by the god of this world, that is Satan. He is the one who caused Adam and Eve to sin from the beginning. What havoc he has caused in the world!

But there is good news! In the midst of darkness God had mercy on us and sent His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to dispel the darkness. He says of Himself: "I am the Light of the World". He has also said: "I am come as a light into the world that whoever believes in Me will not abide in darkness". What a gift God has given us! To those who believe in Him He gives light to be able to understand better about God and His salvation, about themselves and about the world they live in. They will also have someone who will be their guide throughout life, help them in moments of darkness in their lives and, above all, be their guide to their heavenly home.

In our world there are many foolish people and they do not realise that they are foolish. Why? The answer is that Satan has blinded them. We all enter this world blinded by Satan but the good news is that God can take away the blindness from our hearts and help us to see two things – first that we are blind and need a Saviour and secondly that God can give us light to see who that Saviour is. Satan does his best to keep us in the darkness. Only the Lord Jesus can take us out of that darkness. Who would want to remain in the darkness when there is light available? Only a foolish person. Are you one of these foolish people? I hope not. My dear children, pray to God to take away your blindness and help you to see the Saviour of sinners. The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus (Ephesians 5: 8) and told them, 'you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord' and exhorted them to 'walk as children of the light'. I pray that will be true of each one of you.

In the Gospel of John and chapter 3 Jesus told Nicodemus that those who do not believe in Him are condemned because the Light has come into the world, that is Jesus Himself, and yet men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. Isn't that sad? I do pray that you will not make such a serious mistake as to reject the Light because those who do will be condemned to a dark and lost eternity. My sincere prayer for each one of you is that you will receive Jesus who is the Light and that you can then look forward to a place in heaven with Him forever, a place where there is no night and where there is no need of the light of the sun because the Lamb (that is Jesus) is the Light there. (Revelation 21). I also pray that you can say with David in Psalm 27, verse 1: The Lord is my Light and my salvation.

May God richly bless you with His salvation.

With my love.