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Can These Bones Live?

EZEKIEL 37:1-10

Introduction

1. Where are you in your life at this moment in time?
2. Are you a Christian?
 - a. Does “the word of Christ richly dwell within you?” (Colossians 3:16).
 - b. Does God’s Spirit dwell within you? (Romans 8:9)
3. Are you living a life that honors Him?
4. Where is this congregation in its spiritual life?
 - a. Is it an army pressing the battle to the foe?
 - b. Or, is it an army in retreat?
5. Today, I would like for us to examine a vision which Ezekiel had, what it meant at the time and what application we can make from it today.

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I. The Vision of the Dry Bones

A. THE PROMISE (EZEKIEL 36:8-12)

1. At the time of this prophesy, Ezekiel and his fellow Israelites had been living as exiles in Babylon for at least twelve years (Ezekiel 33:21).
2. They had been living as captives in this foreign land, constantly expecting to return home any day.
3. However, word had just been brought to them that the city of Jerusalem had fallen and the temple had been destroyed some months before (586 B.C.).
4. With the destruction of their beloved city and the temple of God, their

hopes were dashed of ever going home again.

5. However, in the midst of their despair, God spoke through his prophet, Ezekiel, and promised the people that they would be restored to their land and be blessed once again by God.
6. Listen to what God said to them (Read Ezekiel 36:8-12).

2a

B. THE PROBLEM

1. Most of the Israelites doubted God's promise of restoration through Ezekiel.
2. Israel was a nation deprived of her land, her king and her temple.
3. Her people had been divided and dispersed among other nations for so long that unification and restoration seemed impossible.
4. They just didn't see any way of God's promise being fulfilled.

2b

C. THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROMISE (EZEKIEL 37:1-10)

1. God, however, stressed the fact of His sovereign power and ability to carry out these promises.
2. He intended for His people to understand that the fulfillment of these promises depended on Him, not on circumstances.
3. In a vision, "the Spirit of the Lord" transports Ezekiel to a valley (v. 1; cf. 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5):
 - a. "It was full of bones" (v. 1).
 - b. They are scattered across "the surface of the valley" (v. 2a).
 - c. They are "very dry" (v. 2b) — they had been bleached by the sun.
 - ❑ The valley is filled not merely with slain corpses, but with skeletal remains and dry skeletal remains at that. In other words, they were as dead as they could possibly be.
4. God asked Ezekiel a remarkable question: "Son of man, can these bones live?" (v. 3).

- a. In other words, “was there potential for life in these lifeless frames?”¹
 - b. From a human standpoint, Ezekiel knew that it was impossible.
 - c. Ezekiel knew that God had the power to bring the dry bones back to life.
 - d. The question is, “Does He will to do so?”
 - e. So it was that Ezekiel responded, “O Lord God, You know” (v. 3).
5. God then directed Ezekiel to “prophesy to these bones” a message of restoration: “. . . I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come to alive; and you will know that I am the Lord” (vv. 5,6).
6. As Ezekiel was speaking these words, he noticed something remarkable:
- a. First, “there was a noise,” then “a rattling” as “the bones came together” (v. 7).
 - b. As he continued to watch, “sinews connected the bones,” then “flesh grew,” and finally “skin covered them” (v. 8).
 - c. However, they were lifeless bodies because “there was no breath in them” (v. 8).
7. This time, God told Ezekiel to “prophesy to the breath” and say, “Thus says the Lord God, “Come from the four winds, O breath and breathe on these slain, that they come to life” ” (v. 9).
8. The word translated here as “breath,” is the same word that is translated as “Spirit” in v. 14.
9. It is also the word used in Genesis 2:7, when in creating man, God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the “breath of life” and he became “a living being

¹ Dyer, Charles H. “Ezekiel.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

(soul).”

10. God said that these bones in Ezekiel’s vision represented the nation of Israel (“the whole house of Israel”) which was at that time in captivity.
11. In their distress, the people were saying, “Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off” (v. 11).
12. Like the bones which Ezekiel saw in his vision, the people saw themselves as dead and dried up with no hope of resurrection.
13. However, God again spoke through Ezekiel with a promise of resurrection and restoration:
 - a. “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people’” (v. 12).
 - b. “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it.” (v. 14).
14. How are we to apply this to our lives today? Let me share with you two applications.

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II. God’s Working In Our Lives Today

A. HE MAKES US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST

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1. For those of us who are Christians, there was a point in our lives, prior to our coming to Christ, when, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-2, “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”
2. In verse 3, Paul adds that you and I “were by nature children of wrath” — we were destined to face the wrath of God (Romans 5:9).

3. If you are not a Christian today, you are cut off from God's life-giving presence.
 - a. You may not be aware of it.
 - b. You may even feel that life couldn't be better.
 - c. According to God, however, you are as dead in your trespasses and sins as were those bones which Ezekiel saw.
4. The question is not, "Can God raise dead people to life?" but rather "Will He raise rebels like us to life?"

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5. Paul's answer to that question is a resounding "Yes!"
 - a. "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions," (Colossians 2:13, NASB95)

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- b. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 2:4-6, NASB95)
6. How did God do this?
7. God's wrath against sin demanded that a just penalty be paid.
8. He could not simply wave a magic wand and make sin disappear — it had to be paid for.
9. Jesus paid that penalty through His death on the cross.
10. There, He took on Himself our sins and was cut off from God for us.
11. Now, your baptism and my baptism is a burial with Him in that death — it is an identification with His death in my place.
12. In Romans 6:8, Paul tells us "if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

13. Christ in us is our “hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).
14. As those who have undergone the “washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5), we should now walk in the good works which God prepared beforehand for us (Ephesians 2:10).

Slide 7**B. HE MAKES US “AN EXCEEDINGLY GREAT ARMY”**

1. In Ezekiel’s vision, he tells us that he prophesied as God commanded him and that “the breath came into” those lifeless bodies there in that valley, “and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10).
2. As many of you may know, for over a year and a half now our elders have been working with Travis Irwin in an effort to help us grow again.
3. Over the last fifteen years, a number of our members have passed away and others have moved to be closer to their children.
4. Next week, in anticipation of Travis’s coming to work with us in February, they plan to share with you their vision for this congregation as we move forward.
5. When you look back at Ezekiel’s vision, there is something which becomes powerfully apparent:
 - a. God is the One who initiated the vision involving the valley of dry bones.
 - b. God is the One who asked Ezekiel, “can these bones live?”
 - c. God is the One who directed Ezekiel to “prophesy to these bones.”
 - d. God is the One who brought them to life again.
6. It was Jesus who said, “all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27).
7. God is able to take this congregation and make it into a great army.
8. I personally believe He started doing that on August 21st of this past year.
9. Over the last five months I have seen so many of you give unreservedly of yourselves to the cause before us.
10. But there is still much to be done.

11. As God opens more doors for us, let us pray that he will give us the courage and strength to walk through those doors and accomplish what He wills.

Conclusion

1. In 1749, Charles Wesley penned the words to a hymn which we sing and know very well.

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2. We know it by the title, "**Soldiers Of Christ, Arise**"

**Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His beloved Son.**

**Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty pow'r,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.**

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**Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued,
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God;**

**That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts passed,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand entire at last.**

3. Are you a part of the army of God?
4. He calls each of us to a life that is abundant and eternal.
5. Will you come to Him in obedient faith, turning from the sin in your life, confessing Christ as your Lord and Savior, and being buried with Him in baptism, so that your sins may be washed away today?