

May 3, 2015

“Can These Bones Live Again?”

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The LORD took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the LORD to a valley filled with bones. He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. Then he asked me, "Son of man, can these bones become living people again?" "O Sovereign LORD," I replied, "you alone know the answer to that."

Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.'"

So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.' Therefore, prophesy to them and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the LORD has spoken!'"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVoPG9HtYF8> [Delta Rhythm Boys]

The nation of Israel, the holy city of Jerusalem, the sacred and magnificent Temple all lay in ruins and many people of that nation have been captured and are in exile. It was a tragic scene. But the prophet Ezekiel had a vision. In this vision he was led to a valley where there is nothing but old dried up skeletons. Bones covered the valley, dead dry bones were everywhere. It was a scene of total misery, sadness and despair. Ezekiel is standing in the middle of this scene in a valley of dry bones.

Have you ever been in a valley of dry bones? You many think not, I bet you have. It was in the middle of a troubled marriage. You woke up one day wondering what happened to the loving relationship you once had with your spouse. The marriage was

good at one time, but now no more. Dry bones.

It was in the middle of broken dreams. You had certain plans and aspirations but they are not realized. At one time your life seemed so promising, but one by one your dreams died. Dry bones.

Or it's your work, your job. Maybe it's your health, or perhaps you're discovering that what you've heard is true and aging is not for sissies; As you find yourself spending more and more of your time with doctors or waiting to see them. Dry bones.

Maybe it's caring for an aging parent. You love them but it gets stressful and it's affecting you emotionally and physically. Dry bones.

Or it's your relationship with your kids. Maybe your kids have become prodigals, reckless. It causes you many tears and heartache because though they were brought up in the church, taught about Jesus, now they are so far from him. A recent Barna research poll found that of those raised in Christian homes, 43% end up walking away from their faith in high school or college. Or if it's not your children it's others you know who are not where they once were with God. Dry Bones.

Maybe it's your own spiritual life. Yes you come to church, pray, but it all seems so routine. Maybe it's become easier to not pray or come to church. Dry bones.

Ezekiel looked around at all those dry bones and he understood that they represented his people, the people of Israel, scattered and without hope. He knew that only a miracle could bring together his people again and restore them and give them purpose. Only a miracle would make them live again.

As Ezekiel looked around at those dry bones scattered everywhere across the ground in that valley, he heard the voice of the Lord asking him, "Son of man, can these bones live again?" (v3a)

That's a great question. In other words, is there any hope? Is there any hope for that person, that nation, that relationship, that family, you, your future? Is there any hope? I love Ezekiel's reply. He says, "O Sovereign LORD you alone know the answer to that." (v3b). "Why are you asking me Lord? I don't know, only you know."

That's true. Only God knows. Ultimately only God has an answer for your pain. Ezekiel says, I don't know if these dry bones representing dry, dead hearts and desolate people can be revived. I hope they can; I want them to be, but only you know the answer to that, Lord. And look what the Lord says next.

"Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD!' (v4)

Speak, you speak a message to them and what should your message to them be? Say,

“Dry ones, listen to the word of the Lord! I love that. You who know the word of the Lord, you speak, give a message from the Lord. Let them see and hear your faith. You speak my message, you speak to these dry bones. Yes, it's God who works, it's God who revives, but He wants to use you, work through you, speak through you. But what does that assume? It assumes you are hearing from the Lord.

Think of the parable of the prodigal son. The church is filled with people like that prodigal son wandering from the love of God every time He doesn't meet their expectations. The church is also filled with people like the older son in the parable, angry, bitter, and grumpy. And you know what? I can relate to both.

Yet people are desperately looking for what we see from the father in the parable, faith, hope, love. There are desperate people who need to see followers of Jesus who are able to forgive freely, who are able to be present with God and then with people and who are able to love without conditions. Something the world knows nothing about. But becoming this kind of person does not come naturally. We need to first be present with God if we are going to be present to others. Just like Ezekiel, we need to wait on the Lord, to hear from the Lord, we need to know the Word of the Lord in order to live and share His message.

I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against His chest and listen, without interruption, to the heartbeat of God. Then and only then, can I say carefully and very gently what I hear. I know now that I have to speak from eternity into time, from the lasting joy into the passing realities of our short existence in the world, from the house of love into the houses of fear, from God's abode into the dwellings of human beings.

- Henri Nouwen...

We forget that the people Jesus chose to share His message were neither spiritually or emotionally mature. Like us they had a lot to learn. But most of them had one great quality. They were willing and that's all God asks of us. You, mature in your faith and speak to the dry bones.

What are you to live and speak? The word of the Lord for His word is a powerful word. The Lord merely by the power of His Word spoke life into being, “Let there be light!” and there was light. The word of the Lord is a life-giving word.

The Lord says to Ezekiel this is what I want you to say to these dry bones, This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.” (v5-6)

So Ezekiel spoke to those dry bones, just as he was commanded. And as he was speaking God's message, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones started coming together. And the toe bone connected to the ankle bone, and the ankle bone connected to the shin bone and the shin bone connected to the thigh bone... Oh hear the Word of the Lord!

Muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies. It was a miracle. **But they still had no breath in them.** (v8b). We have here a kind of play on words for the word breath can also be translated, "spirit."

Then the voice of the Lord said:

Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. **Speak a prophetic message and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.'**"  
So I spoke the message as He commanded me, and **breath came into their bodies.** They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army. (v9-10)

Can you see it in your imagination? Not only this seen from Ezekiel, but can you see people coming to life again, whether it's someone you love or it's your own life, can you see it? Can you imagine it? Can you believe it? This picture from Ezekiel ought to be exciting.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. **They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.'** Therefore, prophesy to them and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done what I said. **Yes, the LORD has spoken!"** (v11-14)

Doesn't that make you want to dance and shout? That which was dead will be brought back to glorious life. That which was without hope or promise will be restored to vitality and purpose. Yes, the Lord has spoken!

**God is the God of new life.** You think your life is hopeless, that your marriage is hopeless, that your future is hopeless? You look at the dry bones of your life, marriage, future and you despair that anything good could ever happen to you again? Well, hear the word of the Lord. Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones, dem bones gonna rise again. Our God is a God of new life.

**God is still doing miracles in people's lives today.** There would be reason to despair if we were only discussing ancient history. But Christ is still touching people's lives today. God can change and revive lives of people who will trust Him and give themselves to Him. Ezekiel heard the voice of the Lord asking him, "Son of man, can these bones live again?" Ezekiel answered, "O Sovereign LORD you alone know the answer to that."

Maybe you're asking that question about your life or the life of someone you love. Well, hear the word of the Lord. Dem bones gonna rise again.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuCLqoxigNA> ["Come Alive (Dry Bones)"]