

# Can These Dry Bones Live?

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**Ezekiel 37:1–14 (NKJV) “The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.<sup>2</sup> Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.<sup>3</sup> And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord God, You know.’”<sup>4</sup> Again He said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.<sup>6</sup> I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’ ”<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.<sup>9</sup> Also He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’ ”<sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.<sup>11</sup> Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ ”<sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.’ ”<sup>13</sup> Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.<sup>14</sup> I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,” says the Lord.’ ”**

The question that God asked Ezekiel of Israel in his day is the same question we might ask of the church today, “Can these bones live?” Many churches today are little more than decorated spiritual tombs filled with dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Matt 23:27). Where is the living and thriving church that Jesus promised to build?

Ezekiel likely felt the same way about Israel. Israel, according to the flesh, was the chosen nation of God that God intended would become His channel of blessing to the world. However, the nation had departed from God and had experienced the spiritual death associated with it. There seemed to be no future and no hope. Yet God had not forgotten His promise or His people and still had a plan. In the same way, Jesus Christ has not forgotten His church no matter how things may seem at the moment.

In order to restore His people, God showed Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of dry bones. It was a spiritual vision revealing a spiritual condition. God’s people were lifeless (“we are cut off”), scattered (“our hope is lost”), and very dry (“our bones are dry”). Does this describe the general condition the church today?

God asked Ezekiel: “Can these bones live?” This question was not about God’s ability but about Ezekiel’s faith. God didn’t show Ezekiel the problem to discourage him. He showed him

the problem in order to get him to face reality, to inspire vision for a better future, and to generate faith for spiritual change.

If the church is to experience new life today, it requires people with spiritual vision and faith. Anyone can see the problems in the church today. There are plenty to see—whether it is problems in the pulpit or problems in the pew. Anyone can be critical and faultfinding. But it takes a visionary leadership and people to see and pursue positive change. God is asking His church today, “Can the dry bones in the church live again?”

Interestingly, Ezekiel had little faith and answered according to God’s sovereignty: “O Lord God, You know!” Ezekiel had faith in God’s ability but he struggled with God’s will. The same is true today. God can bring revival to His church, but is He willing? Our faith becomes inactive because we are not confident of His will.

How does God begin to change the spiritual condition of His people? God commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the problem, i.e. the dry bones! If spiritual change is to take place, we must prophesy or declare God’s word (which is His will) rather than what we see. We must prophesy the answer instead of the problem. We must prophesy life rather than death. We must begin prophesying while nothing is happening. Historical revivals are characterized by people who believed, declared, and acted upon their conviction based upon God’s word that He would bring revival if they would meet His conditions. The same is true today!

The fruit of revival will only come as we first prophesy the seeds of God’s word. What seeds are we sowing? Are we sowing into the problem with words of pessimism and doubt? Are we sowing into the answer with words of faith in God’s promise?

In obedience, Elijah began to prophesy to the bones to live! Only after he obeyed did things began to happen. The first, a SOUND of change was heard. In revival this becomes evident as people begin to talk differently. People begin to see and speak the answer instead of the problem. People begin to be more vocal in praise and prayer.

Second, a SHAKING or rattling began to occur. In revival, God will begin to shake everything that is out of order. God will begin to reveal what He has not planned or established.

Third, a REORDERING began to take place. Bones came together in their proper place with other bones. In revival, God will restructure church government, leadership, and members in order to be properly “jointed” together with one another. There has to be proper structure in order for the body to stand and function correctly.

Fourth, the BODY began to form around proper structure as sinews, flesh, and skin appeared. Sinews speak of lasting connections between members as covenant relationships begin to form. Flesh speaks of the muscles that provide strength to the body enabling the members to work together. Skin refers to the spiritual covering of mutual submission to Christ that prevents harmful things from threatening the body.

At this fourth stage there was form but no life. The LORD then commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the BREATH. The breath speak of the Holy Spirit who brings life back into the church. A body without the spirit is dead and so a church without God’s Spirit is dead. When God’s Spirit is released in the church, revival is the result.

When revival came to the valley of dry bones, the people rose up an exceedingly great army. Can the church in America rise again as God's mighty army? It can if we refuse to allow negative conditions to define our faith, embrace God's promises on revival, and begin prophesying the word of the Lord to the dry bones. "Oh dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!"

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