

O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD God to these bones: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live." (Ezekiel 37:4-5)

Lord God, in the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus, you have shown your power to make all things new. Just as your Holy Spirit brought life to the dry bones seen by Ezekiel, we pray that you would breathe life into us. Raise us up to new life in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

At the time when God's people lived in exile far from home, they had lost their hope of ever returning home. But God gave the Prophet Ezekiel the vision of a valley of dry bones. God showed Ezekiel that he had the power to restore his people and raise them up again.

Read: Ezekiel 37:1-14

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

Ezekiel was a prophet called by God during the time of the Exile in Babylon. Ezekiel was given many visions, including the vision of the Wheels and Living Creatures described in Ezekiel 1.

In today's story, Ezekiel was shown a resurrection vision, giving the people hope that God had not abandoned them. This vision has overlapping meanings:

In the near future, it was a prophecy of the return of God's people to Jerusalem, which happened when God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to rebuild their temple and their nation.

But this vision also pointed forward to the promise of Christ himself. In his resurrection from the dead, Christ has given us the promise that on the last day, he will raise us all to new life by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. This story took place during the time of the Exile; God's people were living far from their homeland. How do you think the Jews felt at that time? What might have been some of their worries and doubts?
2. What does it mean that sinews and flesh came on the bones? Why was that not enough to bring them to life? What more did they need?
3. In the Bible, the single Hebrew word "ruach" can be translated as spirit, wind, or breath. How does this story illustrate the way God's Holy Spirit works in our lives? What does the Spirit give us?
4. By using the dry bones as an object lesson, what was God promising to do for his people at this time in history? Did God fulfill his promise?
5. What part did God choose Ezekiel to play in all this? What did God want Ezekiel to do? In what sense does God call *all* his followers (including us) to do the same kind of thing?
6. Read what Jesus says in John 5:24-29. What does Jesus say will happen in the end, on the last day? Who will make this happen? How does the Ezekiel story foreshadow that future event?
7. Read Romans 6:5-11. What does it mean to say we are "dead in sin"? What has Jesus done that gives us faith and hope in the face of this reality?
8. Continue reading in Romans 6 through verse 14. What does all this talk of death and new life mean for the way we live our lives of faith in the here and now? In what sense are we already living our eternal life in Christ?