

Another Resurrection Story
Ezekiel 37:1-14

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: Ezekiel prophesied from around 597 B.C. to 570 B.C. The book gives us at least 9 “sign posts” along the way to help us with the chronology of Ezekiel’s messages. Without taking you through all of these sign posts, I simply want to point out that these sign posts help us to understand the historical setting of Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry. We are reminded that the chronology of the Old Testament revolves around Israel being led off into exile as a result of their disobedience against God. This exile happened in stages. As we read the prophets of the Old Testament, it is important to note the timing of their prophecy.

So, in summary, Isaiah prophesied before the exile, Jeremiah prophesied before the exile and as the exile began, and Ezekiel prophesied after the exile was firmly in place. Ezekiel is part of the awful ordeal of being uprooted from his homeland and living in Babylon.

The text before us today is the signature message of Ezekiel, and as such, one of the signature messages of the Old Testament. After presenting a series of visions that have dealt with the cataclysmic destruction of Israel and Judah because of their disobedience, Ezekiel 37 offers a more hopeful picture of the future of this people now in exile.

Without question, Ezekiel 37 is the climax of this book. To the exiles, this vision of revival for Israel is the hope that sustains them in the dark days. For that reason, Ezekiel can serve as a message of hope for us today regardless of our present situation.

If God can bring bones together, is there anything He cannot do? This was to be the message to Israel. Even though things looked desperate now, take heart, God in His sovereignty can do exceedingly abundantly more than we could ever ask or think. What is it in your life that appears to be hopeless? What in your life would you say, “Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off (v. 11)? Let Ezekiel’s vision be a reminder to you that nothing is hopeless as long as God is sovereign.

Text: The hand of the LORD was on me, and He brought me out by His Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me all around them. There were a great many of them on the surface of the valley, and they were very dry. ³Then He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I replied, “Lord God, only You know.”

⁴He said to me, “Prophecy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live.

⁶I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you so that you come to life. Then you will know that I am Yahweh.”

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ As I looked, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man. Say to it: This is what the Lord GOD says: Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into these slain so that they may live!” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

¹¹ Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Look how they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off.’” ¹² Therefore, prophesy and say to them: This is what the Lord GOD says: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them, My people, and lead you into the land of Israel. ¹³ You will know that I am Yahweh, My people, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I am Yahweh. I have spoken, and I will do it.” This is the declaration of the LORD.

Introduction: Last Sunday, obviously, we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. Today, I want us to think about another resurrection story. The resurrection story is more of a vision than a literal resurrection, but it is a powerful experience for Ezekiel—whether literal or a vision.

You want to talk about hopelessness. Ezekiel knew hopelessness. Not only was he living in exile, but earlier his wife had died. Now alone, in exile, a called prophet to a people without a nation, Ezekiel meets God in the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.

Though specific in its original message for the restoration of Israel, this Bible passage serves as a reminder to us that God is the God of the resurrection. We are the Easter people. We are beneficiaries of the hope of the resurrection. In Christ, we always have hope of renewal—revival. We always have hope regardless of how hopeless things may seem. Notice these things with me.

The Greatest Threat to Hope: our present circumstances

We live between our present reality, which brings on skepticism, and our faith.

- Ezekiel’s Situation—Exile
- Ezekiel’s Vision—Verses 1 and 2 are meant to convey the total hopelessness of the situation—“middle of the valley,” “full of bones,” “all around them,” “great many of them,” and “very dry.” This is as dead a scene as you can imagine. God has Ezekiel move among the deadness.
- God’s Question (verse 3)—Even the question is meant to convey the hopelessness of the situation. The thrust of the question is “Son of man”—that is on a human level, Ezekiel, is there any way that these bones will live? The answer is obvious, but Ezekiel knows who is asking the question so he responds in the only way he could respond—“only God knows.”

The Conclusion: Desperation—One of the requirements for revival in our lives, in our churches, and in our nation is to see how dead we are. Until we can come to grips with the fact that things are not as what they should be, we are never moved to desire change.

The Greatest Reason for Hope: God

- God's Power—The vision of restoration has God as the only change agent. Verses 5-6 and verses 12-14 reveal God's power as the change agent. He is doing this. The hope of revival starts and ends with God.
- God's Word—What does God use to bring about the restoration? His word. We must hear and respond to God's Word. Revival in America will come as the result of the priority of the preaching of the Word of God.
- God's Spirit—We access the Spirit of God through prayer. This week is the National Day of Prayer. We are reminded again on this day of God being the change agent.
- God's Purposes—Our hope rests in the purposes of God. Notice how many times this passage reveals God's purposes—"Then you will know that I am Yahweh."
- God's Presence—The last verse of this book simply says, "Yahweh is There." Here is our hope!

The Conclusion: Dependence—If our greatest hope is in God, our dependence has to be in God.

So What?

Desperation is the point at which we move to dependence upon God.

Hope causes us to look at our circumstances in light of the cross, resurrection, and our future in Heaven. Hope causes us to know that better days are ahead. Such was the case for citizens in London in 1940. A play "Thunder Rock," which had flopped in New York City, captured the hearts of the citizens of war-torn London. The story focuses on a lighthouse keeper on Lake Michigan who reflects on the plight of survivors of a shipwreck in 1848. He reflects on the discouragement of the European immigrants who had lost what little they had in the wreck. He imagines himself personally addressing the passengers. To each survivor the lighthouse keeper gives a different reason they have to hold on to their hope. To one he tells them that a young Abraham Lincoln has been born. To another, Madame Curie has been born. To yet another, he says, "Florence Nightingale is alive and Pasteur is in Paris." One by one, this lighthouse keeper exhorts, "Lift up your spirits, there is good news just ahead."

A CBS commentator, Ben Robertson, would later say, "The citizens of London went to that show, night after night, and wept. It was a play for a city that had prepared itself to die." Unlike the citizens of New York City, these London citizens needed to hear that there were better days just ahead.

As believers in Christ, as believers in the resurrection, as believers in God who can do all things, we, of all people, should be people of great hope.

What do you feel hopeless about? But, God!