

AWAKE MY SOUL

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Ezekiel 37:1-14

September 18, 2011 ♦ CCS Dedication Sunday

God's heart is to bless you, to prosper you, to grow you and to fill you. You know you belong to Him and that His promise, guarantee is that "all things work together for the good of those who love Him."

But even though you know, even though you believe, you may still be struggling, in light of the promise.

1. Hopeless ... Lifeless/loveless marriage. dead, for years (decades), since 3rd day of honeymoon.
2. Powerless ... Child hurting. depression, learning issues, rebellion/destructive lifestyle.
3. Wondering ... Grad school. dream of landing a great job in worst job environment in 20 years.

Ready to give up on God. Asking WHY? Why this, why me. Hope dying, soul shriveling, heart despairing? Living in desert, wandering in wilderness, lost in a graveyard. God has words for you, hope.

Today, we make a journey to the valley of dry bones ... as we conclude treasure hunt to find HS in OT

Please open your Bibles and Background: **Page 614.**

Ezekiel in exile in Babylon, one of the captives taken from Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, preaches and writes to remind exiles (devastating loss) that God is not finished, that though they may be hopeless, powerless and wondering, ready to give up on God, God has plans for their future.

Ezekiel 1:1 heavens open, vision of God. **Ezekiel 2:1,2** Spirit comes on Ezekiel, raises to his feet/speaks.

Contemporary of Jeremiah (Jeru). Yet like Jeremiah writes to give hope to hopeless.

While the Key verse in Jeremiah is **Jeremiah 29:11**

Key verse is **Ezekiel 36:26,27** Restoration, redemption and resurrection. Fulfill hopes and dreams.

Ezekiel shares God plans to awaken the souls of lifeless, powerless dead people ... and then tells us how God plans to accomplish this awakening.

Exposition:

Read vv. 1-3

"the hand of the Lord was upon me" ... when was the last time you felt the hand of the Lord on your life?

"brought out by the Spirit" ... same with Jesus in the desert (Matt 4).

"valley full of bones" ... necropolis, catacombs, graveyard, SPOOKY.

"very dry" ... these bones had been sitting in the sun for quite some time.

God asks Ezekiel a question ... "can these bones live?" Too much to hope for? Answers "God only knows."

Read vv. 4-8

"preach to these bones" ... dead audience. I've had the same experience. Only sign of life was kid acting up in third row, mother trying to get him to sit quietly as smiles at those who are seated behind them."

"say this" ... I'm going to give you your message. Happens to me every week. May not always connect with you. May feel it was for someone else; yet, it is the message God gives. He tells me what to say every week. And my soul is never more alive than when I'm gripped by the Word of God.

"bones came together" "flesh on them" ... but still on the ground. Nordstrom mannequin that fell down.

"NO BREATH IN THEM" ... flesh and bone, but no life.

QUOTE "These people were still dead - absolutely dead, positively dead, utterly dead."

Read vv. 9,10

There is no spiritual life apart from the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

God awakens our souls through the Holy Spirit. God gives us the Holy Spirit so we can come alive.

QUOTE "The whole work of the whole gospel of Jesus Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, and there is no work apart from the Holy Spirit."

“prophesy to the breath” ... Hebrew ruach; the name of the Holy Spirit. v. 1 Spirit is the same word for breath used four times in vv. 8,9.

The flesh-clad skeletons suddenly woke up, stood up and became a vast army.

As individuals they were now joined together and became a formidable force. Miraculous enough to resurrect one dried out skeleton, but 10 or 100's or 1000's or tens of thousands?

Gives us the interpretation of this prophetic utterance. **Read vv. 11-14**

The Spirit breathes life into us so that we might be the body of Christ, the family of God ... filled with God's presence and power. Set apart for service.

Our hope and God's plan is that we will come alive. Not only as individuals, but the church as well.

Application:

v. 14 “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.”

Ill. Narnia. CS Lewis. Aslan in Ice Queens palace, turned to stone. Aslan breathes, nostrils.

The Spirit (breath) gives us life and awakens our souls.

If you have not asked Jesus to come into your heart, you will never know what it is to be spiritually alive.

And if you have, but you are quenching the Spirit, grieving the Spirit who lives in you, heart shrinking.

Ill. This week, miracle of breath. Jack. Right lung. No life. Breath. Oxygen. Resurrection.

Spirit breathes life into us and resurrects dead hearts. Animates so that we can live life to the fullest.

1. We are spiritually dead until the HS rushes into us ... lifeless mannequins, fallen over. Who wants that?

2. Our church is spiritually dead until the HS rushes into our church ... fabulous school, incredible faculty staff and administration, great buildings, programs, small groups, BS. Without SPIRIT, no life.

The Spirit (breath) gives life to Christ's Body, the church, and makes it come to life.

A stroll in the courtyard could be like a trip to the valley of dead people.

v. 8 They had structure and they had skin, but there was still no life.

1. Like a car without an engine. Can't go anywhere. Polish, shine, sit. Adjust seats, listen to stereo.

2. Like a cellphone without a cell tower. Can't call anyone. Carry it in pocket, take it out/look at screen.

3. Like a guitar with no strings. Hold it, strum it, no sound. Expert player, no music.

4. Like a professing believer without Spirit. No transformation, no animation, flagging energy, no life.

Nothing deader than dead orthodoxy. To believe right things without experiencing the transformation.

Nothing more tragic than a dead church. I'm not going to be a part of one. Beautiful structure, generous funding, excellent theology, great music ... More than anything else, most ESSENTIAL – power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Main Idea & Conclusion:

Next week we kick off our Fall Small Group Study, “Forgotten God” and move from the OT to the NT.

Focusing on the Spirit, learning more. Greater understanding, greater experience.

Ask you to pray for two things.

First, that we will be filled with the Spirit, ... if you pray anything for me please pray that. Praying the same thing for you. Fresh filling, awake my soul. See, hear and do. Filling requires Baptism. RECEIVE

Second, Calvary Church would come alive. Transformed. That we might become the body of Christ, animated by the Spirit. Moving from the army, to the family. Sharing life together.

As we survey the valley God is asking us ... “can these bones come to life?”

And the answer is ... Yes, Lord. Bones ... our great hope, wrapped up in the words of a song.