

Sermon, August 14, 2011
“The Army of God”, Ezekiel 37:1-10
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The Books of Prophecy

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Overview of Ezekiel¹:

- Named for its author, Ezekiel (1:3; 24:24), who is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture.
- His name means “strengthened by God”
- Ezekiel uses visions, prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to proclaim and dramatize the message of God to His exiled people
- His ministry began in 593/92 B.C. and extended until 571/70 B.C. (cf. 25:17).
- Contemporary of Jeremiah (who was 20 yrs older) and Daniel (same age).
- Ezekiel and his wife were among 10,000 Jews taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C. (2 Kin. 24:11–18). Ezekiel even had his own house (3:24; 20:1).
- They lived in Tel-Abib (3:15) on the bank of the Chebar River, probably SE of Babylon more as colonists than captives, permitted to farm tracts of land under somewhat favorable conditions (Jer. 29)
- **Overall Outline of Ezekiel² :**
 - I. Ezekiel’s call and commission (1:1-3:27)**
 - II. Judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (4:1-24:27)**
 - III. Judgment against the nations (25:1-32:32)**
 - IV. Preparation for restoration (33:1-39:29)**
 - V. Renewed worship (40:1-48:35)**

Major Themes of Ezekiel³:

- The “glory of the Lord” is central to Ezekiel, appearing in 1:28; 3:12,23; 10:4,18; 11:23; 43:4,5; 44:4.
- Graphic descriptions of disobedience of Israel and Judah, despite God’s kindness (chap. 23; cf. chap. 16).
- Many visions and symbols illustrate spiritual principles.
- Chief theological theme is God’s holiness and sovereignty.
- God’s purpose of triumph so that all may “know that I am the Lord,” mentioned more than 60 times.
- God’s holding each individual accountable for pursuing righteousness (18:3–32).
- He deals with the necessity of God’s wrath to deal with sin (7:1–8; 15:8);
- God’s grace pledged in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3) being fulfilled by restoring Abraham’s people to the land of the covenant (chaps. 34,36–48; cf. Gen. 12:7).
- God promises to preserve a remnant of Israelites
- From ch. 34 through the end of the last chapter he prophesied about the restoration of Israel, the people of God... Revival begins one heart at a time responding to God’s call, following the obedience of Christ and serving in the great army of the Lord.

1. Vision of a dry bones...the picture is that of a dry, lifeless, dead nation of people in the world (valley) from which there appears to be no hope left (Ezekiel 37:1-2)

- Corporate sense of God’s people verses individual...the “church” is lifeless and not moving...
- Because they did not look to the Lord and turn and seek His face, they found themselves in this dire predicament...exile and the destruction of their home...

2. The Lord then puts forth a question of impossibility... (Ezekiel 37:3)

- Can these bones live? ...*on their own?*
- Ezekiel was reluctant to answer because he knew the answer in any reasonable, natural sense was...no. So he answers safely and truly...*O Lord God, you know.*

¹ MacArthur, John Jr: The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S.

²NASB , 1995

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3. The solution to lost hope, to exile, to hearts turned from God is to stop, listen...and hear Him
Ezekiel 37:4

- First, Ezekiel had to listen and hear God. He was instructed to get these dry bones moving.
- By the Word that God wanted proclaimed. God instructed him to talk to a bunch of dry bones...then they had to listen and hear God's word proclaimed...sounds impossible!
- Have you ever talked to dry bones?
- You can shout all day long from the rooftops, you can witness to those around you...to people who do not seem to care, who listen but do not hear and it will be like talking to dry bones...
- But, what appears impossible to you...dry bones cannot possibly hear...the impossible is proclaimed.

4. God can take the worst of situations and turn them around and give them life... (Ezekiel 37:5-6)

- **Isaiah 55:11** ¹¹ *So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty,*
- God can make it happen when you are obedient to His direction...when you first hear him and act...
- What did Ezekial do?

5. Ezekiel first listened to God and acted upon God's orders... (Ezekiel 37:7)

- Pay attention to His Word, you pray (converse) with God...
- Listen to what He has to say (through His word, in prayer, thru other Christians, thru circumstances...),
- “hear” him, act upon His orders **and things start to happen!** (Ezekiel 37:7-8)

6. When you listen to the word of God and act...you can see His activity. Lifeless forms start to react, start to move, start to look alive.

- Upon hearing His Word the church begins to awake from its slumber, starts to rouse up from death, but it is not complete without God breathing life into it. (Ezekiel 37:9-10)
- Word study: Hebrew - רִיחַ *ruach* (924c) **Meaning:** *breath, wind, spirit* **Genesis 2:7** ⁷ *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (first birth)*
- Word study: Greek - πνεῦμα *pneuma* **Meaning:** *wind, spirit*
- **John 20:22** ²² *And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (second birth)*
- **1 Corinthians 6:19** ¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*
- Without the breath of God (the Holy Spirit who changes our hearts and gives us new life) we are but dead people walking...
- With His Spirit the church is animated, lives to “hear” His Word and act, jumps up on its feet...an exceedingly great army...the salvation army...what the Church is
- The church is inspired by God, formed and shaped by God...not a crowd of people who get pumped up by the manipulations of man (like basketball/football game) but God's people who are revived **one heart at a time responding to God's call, listening and hearing Him and following in the footsteps of the obedience of Christ and serving in the great army of the Lord.**

Conclusion:

- God is calling our church,
- God is calling you
- ...as He calls all churches to revival, new life, fulfilling His mission, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ...
- **Seek** the face of the Lord, **be** a disciple of Christ, **hear** His call to you and **respond**...rise up as the great army of the Lord.
- **Revival begins one heart at a time responding to God's call, following the obedience of Christ and serving in the great army of the Lord.**