

The Life-giving Spirit

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Introduction

This is one of my favorite stories in the Old Testament. Ezekiel was taken in the Spirit to a valley of dried out bones and told to prophesy to them, so that they came back to life. God told Ezekiel that this is what He was going to do for Israel. We want to unpack that story today, look at how it's fulfilled, and what it means for us, especially on this [DAY OF PENTECOST](#).

Fulfillments

What is the fulfillment of this prophecy? Many times, prophecies have multiple "fulfillments."

Fulfilled in Israel

Of course, the most obvious fulfillment, the one talked about by God in the story, is that this is a picture of God giving life to Israel in Babylon, where they are wasting away, and bringing them back to their homeland. This is the primary fulfillment, and it is how Ezekiel, along with the rest of Israel would have interpreted it. This prophecy took place early in their captivity, and Israel was going to be in Babylon so long that they would dry up. But God would breathe life into them again and bring them home to Jerusalem. This was fulfilled under Cyrus, the king of Persia.

Fulfilled in Jesus

Then there is the Messianic fulfillment. The redemption, revival, and resurrection of Israel were embodied in Jesus. The Davidic monarchy was restored, and the realities of Israel's faith were embodied in Jesus for all who believe in Him — Jews and Gentiles alike.

Fulfilled in the General Resurrection

This brings us to the ultimate fulfillment. The scope of this prophecy is far greater than just national Israel. The "four winds" shows that it encompasses the whole world, the four corners of the earth. The resurrection of Jesus was the first stage of God's wider plan to redeem fallen humanity. From the church fathers on, scholars have seen the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy in the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns, and the dead in Christ will rise and be clothed with incorruptible bodies.

A Pentecostal Fulfillment

Today, I want us to look at this prophecy through a different lens, the lens of [PENTECOST](#). Looking at it this way, we see that this prophecy is a picture of the way of salvation. As the valley of bones, we are dead in our trespasses and sins, as Paul says in [Ephesians 2:1](#). When God rebuilds the bodies, this is when He takes away our sin and brings us back to life. We read in [Revelation 20](#) (read [Revelation 20:5-6](#)). This first resurrection is the one Paul talks about in [Colossians 3:1](#), where he says, *if then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God*. The first resurrection is coming to faith in Jesus. When the breath is given to the bodies, it is like the Holy Spirit given to us, to educate, equip, and enable us to live this life. This is part of the first resurrection, as the Spirit is given to us at conversion. At the end, God will take us to our own land, to live with Him in heaven forever.

Things to Remember

As we consider the way of salvation, we must remember these three things that we learn from this prophecy.

God Is the Actor

Salvation is by grace alone. God is the Actor. There is nothing we can do to aid in our salvation. There is no penance to do, no gift or offering to give, no decision we can make. We are dead until He gives us the gift of faith.

His Promise Is Sure

God's promise is sure. *"I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:14)*. When God makes a promise, He keeps it. He never makes a promise He doesn't intend on keeping, for He is all-loving. Nothing can prevent Him from keeping His promise, for He is all-powerful. His promise is sure. These two points show us our salvation is sure. We don't have to depend on ourselves, and God is dependable.

He Works Through His Word

God has Ezekiel prophesy, or speak to the bones and to the wind to bring about the action. It is not by the power of the prophet. He is a mere human, a mortal man. God is working through His Word. Just as He did at creation, where He said, *"Let there be ..." and it was so (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)*.

Word and Sacrament

God continues to work through His Word today, as He works through the means of grace. When His Word is applied to the bread and wine, we receive the body and blood of Christ and are forgiven, enlivened, and strengthened by His grace. We are also reminded of the home to which He has called us, the life in heaven waiting for us to enjoy forever. Today, we celebrate the coming of the **LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT OF GOD**.

*And the Peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
