

The Largest Resurrection

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I remember some years ago, I was taking a class on public speaking. I was like most people with public speaking, scared to death with speaking to a crowd of people. The instructor had us do a presentation in front of the class on something about our past job or current job. I picked Weis Markets as my topic. I didn't like the thought of people looking at me, so I thought I would bring something and have it sit beside me so they could look at that instead. Weis Markets had a toy company make a few hundred Weis Market toy tractor trailers that year. They were a large size and all the trucks were numbered and they looked just like the Mack trucks they were using in real life. So, I brought the one I bought in for the presentation. I was so nervous that I had a hard time controlling my hands – they were shaking too much. As I was beginning my presentation, I picked up the truck to show the class and I dropped it. The trailer broke in several pieces. I thought I was shaking bad at the beginning of the presentation, but now it was much worse. After the presentation, the instructor told me maybe I could glue the trailer back together again. I took the mess back home and as I looked at all the broken pieces, I realized there was no hope in making it well again. I never bothered trying. Some people can look at their life and they may only see broken pieces. So many broken pieces that they see no way out of their broken life. I remember some years ago, a co-worker and friend of mine was talking to me and I asked him why he didn't go to church. He stated that he had done too many bad things in his life and there was no way Jesus was going to forgive him. He was looking at how broken his life had been and he saw no way that it could be fixed. Many people use this excuse to turn away from Jesus. It's a shame that they really don't want to know Jesus and they hold onto this excuse with a death grip. Well, Scripture tells us that we don't have to believe this excuse when Satan whispers it into our ear. Scripture tells us that there is always hope no matter how broken your life has been. Let's turn to some Scripture that can paint a good picture of the largest resurrection of brokenness of all time.

As we continue with this series on light in a dark world, we'll continue to dig into Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a priest that had turned into a prophet by God. God

changed Ezekiel into a prophet because now he was a captive in a pagan land where the other Jewish captives had no temple to worship God. Ezekiel had become the spokesperson for God to the Jewish captives in Babylon. So, let's turn to Ezekiel 37: 1 – 14. Here we have Ezekiel having a vision from God and this is what happens: "The Lord took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley filled with bones. He led me around among the old, dry bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground. Then he asked me, 'Son of man, can these bones become living people again?' 'O Sovereign Lord,' I Replied, 'you alone know the answer to that.' Then he said to me, 'Speak to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to breathe into you and make you live again! I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breathe into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.' So I spoke these words, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as they had been before. Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Speak to the winds and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so that they may live again.' So I spoke as he commanded me, and the wind entered the bodies, and they began to breathe. They all came to life and stood up on their feet – a great army of them. Then he said to me, 'Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones – all hope is gone.' Now give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the Lord. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I am the Lord. You will see that I have done everything just as I promised. I, the Lord, have spoken! (NLT, 1245)"

If you read the chapter before this one, you read God telling Israel that they will be restored. In chapter 36: 33, God tells Israel, "When I cleanse you from your sins, I will bring people to live in your cities, and the ruins will be rebuilt. (NLT, 1244)" Israel is being held captive because of their sin against God. God and only

God can forgive sin and from what we just read here, God will cleanse Israel from their sin. Then we come to chapter 37 where we just read about the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel is carried away by the Spirit of God to a valley full of bones. In fact, verse 2 tells us that the bones are very old and dry. They are scattered all over the ground in the valley. If you go to Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Utah, you can find a good example of old dry bones in a valley. It appears there used to be a river flowing through the park during dinosaur period and some kind of flood washed drowned dinosaur bones all in this area and they are scattered. If you go hiking on the trails, you can still see dinosaur bones sticking out of the ground. They are very old and dried out. So, this is what Ezekiel is seeing, but they are human old dry bones. Then God asks Ezekiel, "Can these bones become living people again?" Now, I like Ezekiel's answer. He tells God that He is the only one who can answer that. This was a very smart answer and I think the Holy Spirit helped him to answer this way. For one thing, a normal person would have said "no" quickly. There is no way for old, dry, and scattered bones to become live again. At Dinosaur National Monument, it's hard to find a whole skeleton. The flood had scattered all the dinosaur bones. Ezekiel is looking over a valley of human bones that are scattered as well so how can you piece them all together? It would be the impossible puzzle. In other words, it is humanly impossible to put together all these bones and put flesh on them and make them alive again. Ezekiel knows this, but he also knows the God he serves. He knows that his God can do anything. Nothing is too small for God. These dry bones represent the people of Israel and Judah who is scattered all over in areas other than the land of Israel and Judah. These old and dry bones represent a people that had become spiritually dead. In human terms, there is no hope for them. There is no longer any life in them. This is a very sad scene here. There is no hope for these people – they are totally dead. Do we understand that this is what sin does to us – it makes us spiritually dead? James tells us this about sin in James 1: 14, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (ESV)". Sin brings physical and spiritual death. We can't sugar coat this. If we continue to reject conviction and will not ask forgiveness from Jesus for our sins, when we die physically, we also die spiritually which means spending eternity in hell. We can't revive ourselves. We can't give ourselves spiritual CPR. I remember about three years ago when we were looking for someone who had

committed suicide by drowning in one of the parks I work at. About three weeks later, I found the subject floating in the lake. He had put rocks in a backpack so that he wouldn't float to the top of the lake. However, that didn't keep him permanently down. When the coroner came, we didn't do CPR on the subject. He had been dead for three weeks. There was no human way to revive him. When we become spiritually dead, there is nothing we can do to revive ourselves. We may try to do good works, but that is only to feed our selfish pride and to make ourselves feel good. The people of Israel had become spiritually dead after many years of drifting away from God and there was no hope for them – they were dried up and dead. We live in a country right now that seems to be following the same path as Israel did. Many church leaders are only preaching what itching ears want to hear. Many people within the church want sin to be watered down so that they won't feel so guilty. We have allowed the culture to shape that church instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to use us to shape the culture around us. It seems like each generation is getting further and further away from the true teachings of Jesus Christ. It may seem to us that we're almost to the point of no return. I heard someone this week say that if a certain person gets elected this election, we won't be able to turn this country around. Maybe that is what we need. Do we need to get to the point where we come to the conclusion that there is nothing left we can do to change our culture by our own works? Do we need to come to the point where we feel totally helpless? Is this what we need to finally realize and understand how powerful and great our Lord is who able to do what we can't do? We can't revive spiritually dead people. There is only one person who can do that.

We then read in Ezekiel that God wants Ezekiel to speak to the old dry bones, "Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! I am going to breathe into you and make you live again! I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord. (NLT, 1245)" The Lord is the only one who can bring life to spiritually dead people. No human or President can do this. God wants the people to know He can bring old dry bones back to life. Ezekiel would stand and watch first hand as God brings all the bones together and puts muscle and flesh on all the bones. When these bones finally come together, they become an army of people, but they are still dead. Verse 8 in Ezekiel 37 tells us that they still had no breath in

them. The Hebrew term used for “breathe” here is “ruah” which means by extension: spirit, mind, heart, as immaterial part of a person that can respond to God (Strong’s Concordance). In other words, God had to make breath enter into them to make them spiritually alive. God was the only one who can do this. No political power can change this country spiritually. It is only through Jesus Christ because He will allow His Spirit to breathe new life into His Church. He is the only One who can revive our spirit, heart, and mind! God tells Ezekiel He will make the people come alive and “then you will know that I am the Lord”. The Lord states this again in verse 13 and 14, “When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the Lord. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I am the Lord. You will see that I have done everything just as I promised. I, the Lord, have spoken! (NLT)” Even though Israel had sinned against God again and again, God had forgiven them even to the point where God will put His Spirit in them so they could be spiritually alive again in spirit, mind, and heart. If we pray for a spiritual awakening within us and the church, we must believe He is more than able to do this. The Lord sends revivals so we can “know that He is Lord”. This means we must be totally depended on Him and not on ourselves. Ezekiel was a witness to a great resurrection in that valley and it was done totally by the power of the Lord. We can witness that same thing in this nation – a spiritual resurrection where people become spiritually alive through the Holy Spirit. That is light in a dark world. You could be living a life full of sin, but if you give that sin to Jesus, He can make you alive again just like those old and dry bones. That is truly light in a dark world. Are you living in the light? If you are, then pray for a spiritual awakening within the Church!

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996.

The Strongest Strong’s Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.