

The Valley of Dry Bones

Message 1 of 2 in the series: "Awakening"

A. God gave an amazing vision about spiritual awakening to Ezekiel, a Jewish priest who had been carried off to Babylon with the people of Israel because they had turned away from God.

"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 all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. 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 a prophetic message 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 put breath 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.'" So I spoke this message, 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 complete skeletons. 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 a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.'" So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army. 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. Our nation is finished." Therefore, prophesy to them and say, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 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 again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done what I said..."' Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NLT)

B. Five ways Ezekiel's vision applies to us if we want to see spiritual awakening:

1. If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that God is life and can bring dead things back to life.

"Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus told her, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'Yes,' Martha said, 'he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.' Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?'" John 11:21-26 (NLT)

2. If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that everyone is spiritually dead apart from a personal relationship with Jesus.

"Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved.)" Ephesians 2:1-5 (NLT)

"...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 (NIV)

3. If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that God wants to give new life to people who are spiritually dead through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Breath = ruwach (ancient Hebrew) = Wind = Spirit

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel 36:25-28 (NLT)

“The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise (to return), as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”

2 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

4. If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must recognize our part to play and confidently speak the message God has given us to proclaim.

“...’Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.” Mark 16:15 (NLT)

- The Good News is powerful. “...I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.” Romans 1:16 (NLT)
- We must be ready to proclaim the Good News anytime, anywhere. “Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not.” 2 Timothy 4:2a (NLT)
- We can’t make people respond. “The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” John 6:63 (NLT)

5. If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must keep praying for spiritual awakening and not give up hope.

“O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls; they will pray day and night, continually. Take no rest, all you who pray to the Lord. Give the Lord no rest until he completes his work...”

Isaiah 62:6-7a (NLT)

“...the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.” Psalm 33:18-22 (NIV)

“...we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him.” 1 John 5:14 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 and then discuss the following questions:

1. How would you respond if God told you to speak His Word to a valley filled with dry bones?
2. Do you think we need a spiritual awakening in America today? If so, what are the key indicators?
3. Discuss the following ways Ezekiel’s vision in the valley of dry bones applies to us:
 - If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that God is life and can bring dead things back to life. (John 11:21-40)
 - If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that everyone is spiritually dead apart from a personal relationship with Jesus. (Ephesians 2:1-5, John 14:6)
 - If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must believe that God wants to give new life to people who are spiritually dead through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ezekiel 36:25-28, 2 Peter 3:9)
 - If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must recognize our part to play and confidently speak the message God has given us to proclaim. (Mark 16:15, Romans 1:16, 2 Timothy 4:2, John 6:63)
 - If we want to see spiritual awakening, we must keep praying for spiritual awakening and not give up hope. (Luke 11:5-13, Isaiah 62:6-7, Psalm 33:18-22, 1 John 5:14)
4. Discuss the following verses about the Holy Spirit.
 - John 3:8
 - John 14:15-17, 26
 - Acts 2:1-5
 - Genesis 2:7

Why do you think the word for Spirit used in the Bible can also mean “wind” or “breath”?

5. Spend some time as a group praying for spiritual awakening in our homes, church, city, state, and nation.