

(Ezek. 37:1-2) - This is the vision that God, by His Spirit, showed to the prophet Ezekiel concerning the valley of dry bones. These dry bones are a picture that describes all of us by nature, as we are fallen in Adam and naturally born into a state of spiritual death and depravity. As there was no physical life in these dry bones, there is absolutely no spiritual life in any of us as we are born of sinful flesh (*John 3:6*). This is why that, in salvation, we must be born again of God from above. This means we must be given spiritual life and all things that accompany spiritual life (*John 3:3-7*). Apart from this new birth, we have no will or desire to believe in Christ and follow Him. Faith in Christ is not natural to us, and it is not the product of our so-called "free-will." It is the gift of God given to us through Christ (*Eph. 2:8-10*).

(Ezek. 37:3) - There are two great questions that man by nature cannot answer. One is the question of how sinners can be justified before Holy God - "*I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?*" (*Job 9:2*). To be "*just with God*" is to be righteous in God's sight, and it includes the complete forgiveness of our sins on a just (right) ground. The next question is what is what is posed to the prophet here - "*And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?*" There was no question that "*these bones*" were dead. So, this question is so important as it applies to spiritually dead and depraved sinners. Can such people live spiritually and eternally? Ezekiel immediately admits that the answer can only come from the Lord God - "*And I answered, O Lord GOD, Thou knowest.*"

Sinful man's answer to these questions always involves salvation conditioned on the works and wills of men. This is always utter failure. But God's answer for both questions is by His grace through the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver of His chosen people. Just as sin demands and brings death, righteousness demands and brings life (*Rom. 5:21*). The righteousness of Christ, revealed in the Gospel of God's grace, is the ground upon which God justifies His people. Their sins are forgiven, and God declares them righteous based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death imputed to His people (*Rom. 4:1-8*). And it is from Christ as the Lord our Righteousness that He gives spiritual life by the Spirit in the new birth as applied to all for whom He died and arose from the dead (*John 6:37-45; Rom. 8:10*). Christ is our justification before God, and our Life-Giver from Whom we receive spiritual and eternal life.

(Ezek. 37:4-6) - As stated, in salvation we must be born again, from above, given spiritual life from Christ. We must be "*quickened*" by the Holy Spirit Who is the sovereign Agent to give us spiritual life. This is a sovereign, irresistible, and invincible work of the Spirit that cannot fail. It is not accomplished by man's works or decision. It involves the work of "*regeneration*" (*Titus 3:5*) where the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life, knowledge, faith (a willingness to believe in Christ and repent of our dead works and idolatry), and convinces us of the truth that God reveals (*John 16:8-11*). And the instrument the Spirit uses is the preaching and the call of the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; James 1:18*).

So, the Lord commands Ezekiel, "*Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.*" Our natural reasoning always questions God's wisdom and way. Why preach and command dead people when they cannot hear or believe? But what is impossible with man is truly possible and sure with God - "*Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I WILL CAUSE BREATH TO ENTER INTO YOU, AND YE SHALL LIVE.*" All of

salvation is of the Lord, and no part of it is of man's power or will. The Holy Spirit empowers the preached word to give spiritual life to spiritually dead sinners. Some may ask, "Then shouldn't we only preach to the elect?" God's way of calling and identifying His elect is through the preaching of Christ whereupon they are given spiritual life to believe in and rest in Him (*John 10:11-27; 1 Thess. 1:4-5*). Just as Christ's Word to Lazarus brought him out of the grave, His Word to His elect brings them to spiritual life (*Ezek. 36:22-31*).

How, then, can it be said that people "*resist the Holy Ghost*" (*Acts 7:51*)? This is the general call in which the Spirit does not give life and faith to believe. It leaves sinners to their own sinful wills and becomes to them "*the savour of death unto death*" as God's judgment against them for their unbelief. But to God's elect, it is "*the savour of life unto life*" to the praise of the glory of God's grace (*2 Cor. 2:16*). So, what then should we do when the true Gospel is preached? We should seek the Lord and believe on Him knowing that if we do, it is not our work or goodness but God's alone in Christ our Life-Giver.

(Ezek. 37:7-10) - This is the building of the true church upon the Rock Christ Jesus by bringing all of God's elect into His kingdom. We see here the effectual calling of God's people by the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. For salvation to be fully accomplished by the grace of God in Christ, first, God must choose His people because man by nature will not choose God. Secondly, as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's elect, Christ had to assume sinless human nature, obey unto death to redeem them from sin and bring in righteousness by which God justifies them. Thirdly, Christ must send His Spirit to bring His sheep under the preaching of the Gospel and give them spiritual life. Fourthly, Christ must intercede for them and preserve them forever in bringing them unto eternal glory.

(Ezek. 37:11-14) - The Lord tells Ezekiel that "*these bones are the whole house of Israel.*" Although this has a limited and temporal application to the physical nation of Israel, it ultimately refers to SPIRITUAL Israel under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, the physical nation of Israel had been divided into two nations since the end of Solomon's reign. The northern kingdom called "*Israel*" had already been destroyed and scattered. The southern kingdom called Judah would be brought back to the Promised Land and be preserved in that land until the Messiah would come and do His great work. Secondly, the name "*Israel*" literally means "those who have prevailed with God." The majority of national Israel rejected the true and living God and did not prevail with Him. The only ones who have spiritually and eternally prevailed with God are those sinners who have been circumcised in heart (born again by the Spirit) and who come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 2:28-29*). Thirdly, the people of Judah, while in captivity in Babylon, cried that their "*hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.*" This is where the Spirit brings God's elect when He convicts us of our sin, our inability to save ourselves and give ourselves life, and drives us to Christ for all salvation by His grace.

Fourthly, although the nation would be taken out of the death of captivity and brought back into the Promised Land, this ultimately can only apply to spiritual Israel, God's elect, being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life and being brought into the eternal kingdom of God through Christ. *Verses 13-14* can only ultimately describe born-again people who have been brought to know the Lord savingly through Christ and in whom the Spirit of life resides permanently (*John 17:1-3*). Being taken out of our graves can and does refer to the first resurrection, our new birth, but it can also refer to the last resurrection when Christ comes again and takes us up unto Himself in our glorification (*John 5:24-29*).