

V. Revival in Biblical Perspective
Revive Us Again!
“Revival in the Valley”
Ezekiel 37:1–14
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In our study we will be looking at Ezekiel 37 but Ezekiel 37 must be understood in light of the prophetic promise of God in Ezekiel 36. So let's look first at Ezekiel 36:22–27 which says [22] *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. [23] And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. [24] I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. [25] I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. [26] And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This past January we embraced the theme that our session has put before us of focusing upon revival. Our theme verse is Psalm 85:6 this is interestingly written by the sons of Korah inspired by the Spirit of God. It is interesting because the sons of Korah had been disciplined by God and many of them had lost their lives when they had committed treason against Moses yet God even when He brought discipline on them revisited them and revived the sons of Korah. That is why they write such things in Psalm 85:6 which says [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* They go onto record some of the revivals that God had visited upon them. Therefore that has become our fundamental, foundational verse for year. Revive us again O Lord – revival of God's people as they have descended into ineffectiveness and death like, zombie like living as God's people and you call upon the Lord to revive us again.

I have counted 28 clear revivals in the Old and the New Testament and my desire is to walk you through ten of them this year. Then we will look at the revived church in this world as the portrait painted in I Peter for us. That is kind of the trajectory we are on this year. So here is how I would like to get us back on track with this them and that is to go to this great picture of revival in Ezekial 37 – the valley of dry bones. We can't jump into that without understanding the context of first of the all the chapter that preceded it and really the whole book in and of itself.

First I want to remind you of the definition of revival. Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. Death is brought to life. What once was alive is now dead and God brings what once was alive that's now dead back to life, thus re-vive. This isn't talking about evangelism directly for that's when God 'vives,' when He brings dead sinners to life. Revival is when God brings His people who now have been reduced to a death like existence, individually and corporately His churches, it is when God comes to do an extraordinary work to

bring them back from death unto life through His extraordinary grace yet when He does it He uses instruments. He uses ordinary people, like an Ezekiel, a Nehemiah, a Peter, a George Whitfield, a Jonathan Edwards, in ordinary places using ordinary means – preaching, prayer, worship, fellowship – to do this extraordinary work of His grace for an extraordinary consequence for His glory. He has a big purpose in it.

I believe this text in Ezekiel gives us the scope of history but starts with Ezekiel 36 which by the way comes from Ezekiel. Now who is Ezekiel? When the book of Ezekiel is written Ezekiel is about 30 years old. He is just beginning his ministry because he is a Levite, a priest and 30 years of age is when a priest begins his ministry. He finds that he is not in Jerusalem but in Babylon because the hand of God's judgment has fallen upon Israel. Why is he recording it? When you study the book of Ezekiel the first 33 chapters are gloom and doom. After Moses died the Lord told His people not to worship or live like the nations. They were to worship Him rightly and live rightly and the way they worship would determine the way they would live. The way they would live will compel them to the way they would worship so they were not to do like the nations that surrounded them. They were different for they had the God of glory. They were to worship Him in His glory. They had a big God and therefore they were to live as having a big God with big lives for that God.

If they decided to go the way of the other nations then God would use those nations to bring the hand of judgment and discipline upon them. He would not bring condemnation but discipline. That is exactly what has happened to Israel. One hundred years earlier Assyria has come in and the ten northern tribes had been taken away under the hand of God's judgment. Now Judah and Benjamin, the southern tribes, have been taken away to Babylon. You can even see all this in the writings of the extra Biblical historians. The Solomonic temple is now destroyed. Everything is gone. The people are scattered and they are demoralized. The walls are down at Jerusalem and people are walking in and out. The people have been deported into bondage and into slavery throughout Babylon. They have put up their instruments and they are not even singing anymore.

It is Ezekiel that brings to them this judgment of God because they wanted to be like the nations instead of serving the God of glory. Therefore they are now among those nations and He has used those nations to bring discipline upon them. In other words, they now have what they wanted for God gave them over to it. Then in Ezekiel 34 there is a movement where Ezekiel now brings a glorious truth that God is a God of grace. Even though they did not seek Him God will still relentlessly pursue you. He is going to come for them and revive them. He is going to bring them back and won't simply be to get them ceremonial clean but He is going to do an extraordinary work. He will bring this covenant of grace that He has been unfolding in the Old Testament. He is now going to bring it to a glorious fruition.

Then He gives a promise/prophesy in this New Covenant in Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 36 is quoted throughout the New Testament that a New Covenant is coming where God is going to bring a New Covenant people from all the nations into a new land called the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom will be established among all of the nations. He will mark them out by sprinkling clean water upon them, this ceremonial cleansing but they will not only be an externally cleansed people but He is going to do a work in them internally. In this New Covenant there will be a Redeemer and that Redeemer is going to take your heart out and give you a new heart. He will cut away the heart of stone for a new heart. This Messiah will also give them a new record for their sins are going to be nailed to a cross and paid for by this Redeemer. He will give them His perfect righteousness. He will then give them His Spirit. He will give them a new heart, a new

record, a new life and will put His Spirit within them and bring them from death unto life. This won't be an external life but an internal life that is then lived out eternally. His Spirit will cause them to walk in His Word. That's what I will do with you in this New Covenant.

How is He going to do that? He is going to keep bringing what is dead to life. So He then gives a vision that is the rest of the history of humanity until we get to a new heavens and a new earth. That vision is God coming to what is dead and making it alive. So let's walk through this vision in Ezekiel 37 in three sections. So the first thing is that God leads us through the valley as He does with Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 37:1–6 says [1] *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones.* (Clearly what struck Ezekiel here were the number of bones in this valley) [2] *And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry* (meaning no life in them). [3] *And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."* [4] *Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. [5] Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. [6] And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."*

Here the Lord is leading Ezekiel personally through this valley. He then moves from a tour of this valley to a tutorial as He asks Ezekiel a rhetorical question – can these bones live? Your natural answer to that question would be 'no' but that's not Ezekiel's answer. Why? It is because Ezekiel knows his Bible. He knows that back in Genesis from the dust of the ground God made man who was nothing more than a corpse and then God breathed the breath of life into him and became a living being. So Ezekiel knows the right answer for 'if we're just dealing with bones' no, we're not dealing with bones we're dealing with God. You know O Lord, whether these bones can live because You are the Giver of life, not the bones. Then He tells Ezekiel to preach to the bones.

What does he preach to the bones? Ezekiel, an ordinary man, through the ordinary means of preaching is to preach 'hear the Word of the Lord.' It is a supernatural reality that when God's Word by His Spirit is preached it is not a preacher speaking but God Himself. God Himself begins to speak to the bones. It is not Ezekiel. It's not the preaching. It's not the bones. It's God who has designed the preaching and speaks Himself and when He speaks the dead receive new life. So after the tour and the tutorial God gives Ezekiel the task to preach the Word. When this is all done these bones are going to know something. The last phrase read in Ezekiel 37:1–6 says 'I am the Lord.' The objective is not the bones coming to life. The objective is to bring the bones from death unto life that they will know the Lord and that He is the Lord.

The next section is that we now find Ezekiel in obedience in the valley to the Lord, ministering in the valley. Ezekiel 37:7–10 says [7] *So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. [8] And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. [9] Then he said to me, "Prophesy to **the** breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."* [10] *So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.*

Ezekiel is obedient in the valley and the first thing he does is he preaches to the bones. God, owning the preaching, begins to move upon the bones and there is a sound. The sound is called a rattling. I'm not sure why they chose that word rattling for the same word is used three times in the book of Ezekiel and the other times it is a great earthquake. We get the Greek word *seismos* from it. An earthquake is a *seismos* event. God does an extraordinary work. The earthquake is bone on bone, then sinew upon sinew and then flesh on flesh.

So the first thing we have is bone on bone but the only thing we have here is skeletons then. Then He puts a body on it. Then He has Ezekiel to call out for the breath. Then 20 times in the text we see the *ruach*, the breath of God, the Spirit of God. Ezekiel calls for the Spirit of God to come with the Word of God to bring not only bone upon bone and flesh upon flesh where the skeletons not only become bodies but they then become soldiers in a living army with the breath of life that is within them. Now God has raised up this exceedingly great army from what He has done and He has done it gloriously. He uses ordinary means of preaching and prayer and then the Spirit of God with the Word of God brings that which is dead that cannot live in and of itself and breathes the breath of life into them. Together they become an army of the Lord that is there to do the purposes of the Lord and they know that the Lord is the Lord.

The third section is that Ezekiel will be taught from the valley. Ezekiel 37:11 says [11] *Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel (God's people). Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.'* In other words, God's people finally got to the place they know they are hopeless and helpless. Until you get to that place you won't look to Him for help. You'll be glad to have Him as a coach or counselor. Every time I see one of those stickers on the back of a car that says 'God is my copilot' I want to pull up to the car and say 'would you please change seats?' God doesn't just come along side of us but He is there for us. We are there for Him and He is the Lord. There is none like Him. You will know that I am the Lord.

Ezekiel 37:12-14 says [12] *Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. [13] And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. [14] And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.*"

What are you learning Ezekiel? God's people are dead and the first thing they have to realize is that they are helpless and hopeless. When they see that they come to Me and then I come to them. The reason they come to Me is because I have already gone to them to show them that they are helpless and hopeless and I used you Ezekiel to preach to them that they were helpless and hopeless. I have already taught you Ezekiel that these are dry bones and they cannot live but I can bring them life. Now through the preaching of the Word and the work of God they see their helplessness and hopelessness and they now call on Me because I have come. You think that when the bones come and rise up that, that is the revival but no the revival already started so they could see their helplessness and hopelessness and come to Me. The revival started when I started with you Ezekiel to bring you to them. Then the revival came when I sent My Spirit upon you Ezekiel to send you to them and then I came upon them through that preaching, praying, My Word and My Spirit.

I want to give you five lessons from the valley that we will be revisiting throughout this entire study on revival but these will be good, foundational lessons to draw from. The first one is revival is God's work and only God can do it. That's why it's a rattling, an earthquake, an

extraordinary work for only God can bring life and bring life to that which needs to be resuscitated. We see this as we see how God teaches Ezekiel in this tour, tutorial and task. He led Ezekiel by His Spirit and taught him in the valley. This is My work Ezekiel and only I can bring revival. You can't schedule, program, hold, preach up or pray up a revival. You can preach a revival and pray for a revival. Revival is God's work that comes down. God uses preaching, praying and leaders but even in that it is God already coming down to raise up the leaders for that preaching and praying. Revival is God working through His people but He is the only one that originates revival and then He uses us to accomplish His revival.

Part of the burden I have for this entire year is the burden for my nation. I make no apologies for it. The Reformer John Calvin loved France, Knox loved Scotland and they wanted the Gospel to go to the whole world but they didn't want to skip their own nation. So I have a burden that God will do a Gospel awakening in this nation. We are under the judgment of God. We shed innocent blood by the millions. We have committed sexual anarchy and call what is evil good and what is good evil. We are not only positioned under God's judgment but what we are doing is the evidence of God's judgment for He has given us over. Our only hope is a Gospel awakening.

Historically we have had two Gospel awakenings, 1735 to 1780 and 1795 to 1880. I am praying for that Gospel awakening to happen again and many people reading this are agreeing with me but I want to know if you really believe that or is it that it would be kind of nice to have one. I believe we need one and I don't think the answer will come through an election or in the Supreme Court Justice appointment or in legislation or successful boycotts. I do a ten minute program everyday on the Biblical perspectives on politics, culture, science and everything. I'm not saying those issues aren't important but I'm saying we don't need a patch-up job in the culture, we need a life-giving work of the Gospel awakening from the ground up of evangelism and discipleship that permeates throughout this land, dare I use the phrase from 'sea to shining sea.' It doesn't stop there for it goes throughout the world. I believe that with all of my heart and being away these past six weeks has only intensified it.

I know that will never come because God's means is His church and the church in this country is spiritual impotent. They say 'let's get number, nickels and noise' and I'm for numbers, nickels and noise but our objective is not statistics. Our objective is the presence and power of God. It is that He is with us and that we know He is the Lord. I don't believe that Christians in this country really believe we need a Gospel awakening or a revival. They certainly don't think it would hurt if we had them. We are powerless. We are Biblically illiterate and spiritually impotent. The answer is not in a program and nobody likes programs more than me. I'm just telling you they are not the answer, they just accommodate the answer. The answer is not personalities. The answer is the power and presence of God. The answer is revival. So for me revival is not just a good idea. I am asking God for the revival to get the Gospel awakening because only God can do this. We can't for it's not within us but we're not really convinced.

Most of us think we're Peter. We think like him. Jesus tells His Disciples that He is going to be crucified and that they all will leave Him and forsake Him. Peter said 'They may leave You and forsake You but I won't leave You or forsake You. I'm with You, thick and thin, to the end, I'm Your friend. You can count on me Jesus.' Peter thought 'I don't need Jesus for I'm as good as He is.' Jesus told me to go and make disciples of all the nations and He said He would never leave me or forsake me. Do you believe Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you? Do you believe I will never leave you nor forsake you? Say 'no.' You see Peter thought

he was Jesus. In 12 hours from that event Peter will find out he is not really Jesus but Judas. Peter will deny Him three times but Peter will find out that even when he is really Judas and not Jesus he'll see that Jesus is still Jesus and He will come after Peter when He leaves Him. Christ will bring Peter from his denials back to Christ and He will use him. He will see a revival in Jerusalem like he never thought he would see and God will use Peter. We have to get to the point where we are helpless and hopeless and know that it's God's work and not God coming along and assisting us. I'm sorry I just got carried away here so let's get back to the lessons.

The second lesson from the valley is that when God brings revival He first brings and sends revival leaders. In other words, as I look at the Bible, the people do not become helpless and hopeless and say 'we're nothing but dry bones' until God raises up a leader who says 'dry bones, O God only You know whether they can live.' In other words, until a leader who preaches and prays faithful to God, His Word, loves the Truth, the people and Jesus so that he'll speak the truth to tell them they have to have Christ to be saved and God alone, then there won't be people like that and that is why when He brings a revival He'll always raise up a leader.

The third lesson is that God sends and bring revival through His Word and by His Spirit. He says 'Preach the Word and call for the breath, the Spirit.' Without the Spirit the Word will not profit us but the Word always works with the Spirit and the Spirit always works with the Word. Philippians 3:3 says *[3] For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—* Jesus said in John 6:63, *[63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* It is God's Word preached and God's Spirit called out upon through persistent, intercessory prayer. Lord come. Spirit of God come and bring life to these bones. Spirit of God breathe life into them. We preach and proclaim the Lord, why?

Romans 10:13–17 says *[13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* This Word and Spirit brings dead sinners to life and dead churches back to life. It is that revival work that works through preaching and prayer.

The fourth lesson is God sends and brings revival, not for the experience of revival but for the purpose of God. I know we all want to get on the mountaintop of revival and let's have a revival experience. I'm all for a revival experience but the whole point of a revival experience is not the mountaintop but to send us into the valley. The whole point of revival is that we will know He is the Lord and we will be the army of the Lord. The point of revival is not to have a revival but to get us back where we ought to be with the presence and power of the Lord day by day and moment by moment and life by life so the mundane is never mundane anymore. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:13). He is overflowing and His presence is so glorious yet you even want more of that overflowing presence when He is with you.

The fifth lesson is that only God can bring revival because only God can bring life and death. If you're reading this and you're a Christian you're already a participant in Ezekiel 37 but there was a day you were dead in your sins and God called you forth from the cemetery of sin to everlasting life in Jesus. God causes us to be born again to a living Hope. We were not sin sick

but sin dead and He brought us from death unto life. The history of life is full of churches that died but God brought them back to life. There was a day that the Word of God and the Spirit of God came to us when we were dead and we were born again.

Remember the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus? John 3:4–10 says
[4] Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” [5] Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7] Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ [8] The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” [9] Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” [10] Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

In other words, Jesus is asking Nicodemus “Don’t you remember Ezekiel 36 and 37? You ought to already know what I’m talking about.” We are dead in our sins until God’s Word and His Spirit brings us to life by breathing it into us. Churches die constantly because we are faithless but God is faithful. God raises up a preacher and prayer warriors and brings dead churches and revives them from death unto life. There is coming a day when Jesus Christ comes again and His Word will be spoken from heaven from the voice of the archangel and the Spirit of God will come forth and all those graves will issue forth those bodies and we will be deposited in a new heavens and a new earth and will inherit them because He speaks and the dead hear. The dead hear in their conversion, in revival and for all eternity. That is God’s work done through God’s means for God’s purposes for God’s glory.

Here is your takeaway. All of history stands as a record of God’s sovereign grace raising His people from the cemetery of sin to life in Christ by the Spirit of God with the Word of God. A few decades after Ezekiel 36 God will raise up an Ezra and a Nehemiah and they will have a whole day of revival and Jerusalem will come alive again just as was prophesied. Then hundreds of years later Peter and 120 will go into an Upper Room and the Word of God and the Spirit of God are going to come upon them. Then they will stand and preach and 3,000 are going to come to Christ. This valley of dry bones has been repeated in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, Peter and in church after church and in the life of every single believer that has been brought from death unto life. It has been done because we’ve been born again in regeneration and because churches that were dead have been brought to revival. It will be done when Jesus Christ comes again and the graves shall be opened and they will give them up. Now will be a new body for a new heavens and a new earth with a new heart, a new record, a new life, a new body, a new heavens and a new earth.

How do I know this? This is why I preach, pray and do what I do because I know it’s true. How do I know dead sinners are converted and dead churches are revived? It is because I have a Savior that makes it a habit of emptying tombs. That Savior brings life from death. He empties the tomb of sinners and brings them to life. He empties churches that have entombed themselves in self-righteousness and self-absorption and He brings them to life by His Word and His Spirit. The reason I know He will do it is not only does history record that He has brought men and women from death unto life and dead church to life in revival but He has emptied tombs. I know He does for He emptied His own tomb. Vainly they sealed His tomb, He lives and He brings life to those who are dead and flee to Him alone.

From the hymn O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing;

*He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.
He speaks, and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive. Let's pray.*

Prayer:

I cannot tell you what a great blessing it is to be with all of you but if you're reading this, is it because of a rattling, the earthquake of grace, breaking the tomb to bring you from death unto life? Perhaps you want to come to Jesus Christ who died for you for you hear His voice, new life the dead receive. If you want to pray with someone about that commitment to Christ then please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 but where you go to is Jesus. He will give you life. He will give you a new heart, a new record and put His Spirit within you now and for eternity. Dear friends, would you pray with me that His church might hear His voice and the Spirit of God would hear the prayers of His people who say 'God only You can make bones live, come and bring us life. Raise us up with the armor of God and the weapons of the Spirit. Bring us and set us free that we might know You are the Lord and we might make You known as the God of glory and grace to a world that desperately needs You, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. {note}

A WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY

Led through the Valley

Obedience in the Valley

Taught from the Valley

Revival Lessons from the Valley

LIFE TAKEAWAY

History stands as a record of God's sovereign grace, raising His people from the cemetery of sin to life in Christ by the Spirit of God with the Word of God.

- Regeneration
- Revival
- Resurrection