

The Spirit Through the Gospel, Raises the Dead

Ezekial 37:1-14, Easter Sunday I

March 30, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....Can you imagine what the Day of Resurrection will be like? Imagine being in a large and wide valley as Ezekial was, and witnessing all the dead bones in the valley reassembled, coming back to life! What would that be like to see such a glorious and at the same time dreadful thing? For the Day of Resurrection, will be both glorious and dreadful, depending on whether one is a believer or unbeliever. Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Jn. 5:28-29

"Marvel not!" For the believer it is no surprise that God through His Word alone has the power to raise the dead to life. For while it is true that the sins of men bring death to the body and damnation to the soul, Christ Jesus the Son of God came to this earth to bring forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting to all mankind. God is not willing that any perish. Jesus said, "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Jn. 6:40 What sweet comfort this sentence gives! God will raise us up on the Last Day! Also, all our loved ones who died in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, will rise again! The trumpet shall sound! "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." When Christ our Savior returns in all His glory, by the grace of God we will see our brothers and sisters alive and well again!.....our believing father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, pastor or friend! For where there is forgiveness of sins and faith in Christ, there is also life everlasting and salvation!

We begin today with this curious and unique vision. God carries Ezekiel in the spirit to a large valley filled with dead men's bones. Ezekiel does not walk through the valley, but is transported through the air over the bones, so that he sees every last detail. "Can these bones live again?" God asks. Ezekiel answers "O Lord you know!" God knows and can do all things. His Word alone has power to raise the dead! When Jesus said, "Lazarus come forth!" the dead Lazarus arose to life!

It shouldn't surprise us then that God commanded Ezekiel to speak to the dead bones! He is to tell the dead bones to hear the "word of the Lord." God Himself speaks to the bones saying, "Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." God will breathe life back into the bones, "and ye shall know that I am the Lord!" Ezekiel then did as the Lord commanded. "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone!" Throughout the valley, by the simple power of God's word, the dead bones miraculously reassembled onto

their original skeleton. Likewise the sinews and muscle and flesh appeared, the skin covering them all! But they are still dead on the ground. God then says, "Son of man, say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" Ezekiel then speaks to the wind, and suddenly the breath of life brings life to the dead bodies!

Let us consider now the spiritual pictures behind the physical. First, there is an upcoming general resurrection of the dead. As all the bones in the valley rose up, so all the dead in the graves on Judgment Day will rise again. The quick and the dead will then face God's judgment, whether they want to or not. Those who died trusting in the forgiveness of sins through Christ, such will be resurrected to glory. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Since the righteousness of Christ is upon each believer by faith, in the resurrection our bodies are raised up and glorified, much like the body of Christ was raised and glorified Easter morning. But this is not so for the unbeliever on Judgment Day. Those who died on earth without repentance of sin and faith in Christ, such will be resurrected to their own damnation. "He that believeth not shall be damned." While indeed all men are by sin worthy of everlasting condemnation, those who die in unbelief are damned because they spurned the Son of God who had come to save them from their sin. Since they did not desire the forgiveness of sins through Christ's body and blood, nor did they permit Christ to clothe them with the garment of faith, they are lost for all eternity. It is their own fault they are damned. But just the opposite is true for the believer. The Bible says, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Those who die in the faith of the Lord Jesus go to heaven by God's grace alone, for God through Christ has justified and declared them righteous! I Corinthians 6 says, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Each true believer therefore takes no credit for his salvation, but gives all glory to God. "Thanks be to God which GIVES us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Consider now the second spiritual picture of our lesson. Remember that God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy and speak to the dead bones. This is a spiritual picture of the preaching of the Gospel to all men. For the Gospel is the preaching of the life of Christ, to the dead souls of all men. The valley filled with dead men's bones is the picture of all the sons of Adam, born in sin. It is our own sin, our own rebellion against God and His Word, which has brought about our death. And so the Bible teaches that all men are spiritually dead until repentance and faith. Those who live in the pleasures of sin are yet unconverted.....they are the living dead. I Timothy 5:6 says, "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Yet God in His mercy preaches the word to the spiritually dead souls of men. The preaching of the law is to come first, for the work of the law is to make every man realize

first that he is dead. For we cannot live in Christ until we first realize we are dead without Him.

Beloved of the Lord, God wants us to live, and we live by the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The Gospel Word reveals to us not only that God earnestly desires our salvation, but He proves His merciful and compassionate nature to us by giving, by sacrificing His only-begotten Son upon the cross! "He gave His only-begotten Son" for you. Since man could not save Himself, moved by mercy God came to save man! And so there hanging upon the cross is both God and Man, in one God-man Jesus Christ! Suffering and dying in our place, Jesus made our sins His own. His blood had to be shed, if there were to be remission of sins. But through this great suffering and death, the heart of God was moved in reconciliation toward us. Through Christ, God now loves you, and knows of nothing else! Colossians 1 explains, "It pleased the Father.....by Him [Jesus] to reconcile all things unto himself." Truly it pleased God, it made the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost happy, to reconciled ALL THINGS to Himself through the shed blood of Christ! This means dear sinner, that God through Christ has reconciled you unto Himself! You are a part of the ALL that Christ died for! When the dead hear this Gospel song of Jesus,.....the bones in the valley begin to quake. The Holy Spirit breathes faith into our soul when the Gospel tells us, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin!" In our text, the breath of the four winds is the Holy Spirit, who through the Gospel Word breathes faith and life into the souls of men! This is the first resurrection, being born again of water and the Spirit. The Bible says, Ezekiel prophesied to the dead, "and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." In like manner today, when we learn the Gospel song of Jesus, our dead heart begins to beat and have hope! Jesus is our hope, and His forgiveness is not something we hope for in the future, but we own and possess His forgiveness even now, by His holy blood as a free gift from God. This Gospel message is so powerful that it can raise up to life, a whole valley of dead sinners. Indeed the preaching of the Gospel today is so powerful, that it carries in itself the power to convert all men from death to life! We rise from the grave when the strong and certain compassionate love of God converts and turns our souls to Jesus who says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." These things are written, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

So while the Gospel carries in itself the power to convert the whole world from spiritual death to life and faith in Christ, the only reason why not all believe, is because this Gospel message can be resisted by the stubborn hearts of men. Though all men are saved through Christ and His blood, not all believe it. The Gospel Word can be resisted. This is what happened to many Jews in the days of Paul. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge

yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13

You and I stand here as Gentiles today. This brings us to our last spiritual picture. God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off from our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." The physical picture here is the Israelites who in Ezekiel's day were in captivity. God smote and punished His people due to their rebellious ways and idolatry. A foreign army invaded and conquered them. But there was a remnant, the true spiritual Israel of believers who in the midst of affliction lifted up their hearts and prayed to God for help. God here promises them that He will open their graves, raise them up again, and allow them to return to the land of Israel. God returned His people to Israel so that the Messiah would be born in the little town of Bethlehem....so that the Savior of all nations would be born a Jew, and suffer and die on the cross for Jew and Gentile alike.

Again, you and I stand here as Gentiles today. Our last spiritual picture is this. God hears the prayers and the cries of the afflicted. He knows what you are going through, dear child of God and He is with you every step of the way. But He does not want you to despair or give up hope, for Jesus is your hope, and that is a hope no man can take away. Therefore God will in the future open up your grave so you can live again. He promises to give you the relief you need, and He will never give you more than you can bear. With Christ there is always hope. We even have the hope of everlasting life which is yet waiting above. Our land of promise is yet to come, which is heaven. Therefore be patient in your days of affliction. Continue to cry out to the Lord in prayer, for He will hear you for the sake of His Son. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Jms 1:12 Amen.

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