

**Theme:** One Story – One God, One Plan, One Story

**Title:** Come Alive! Ezekiel 37:1-14

**Aim:** Revival, regeneration, resurrection in Christ alone.

**Intro:** You all may have seen this cartoon from Far Side, by Gary Larsen. Wouldn't it be amazing if you could raise boneless chickens? It would make it so much easier! But they would all look like this – unable to stand, not even able to flop around. Well, I have an idea that I'm sure will catch on: chicken-less bones! Here they are, picked clean, tho probably still w/marrow (didn't have time to dry them out). If I can just find the formula for making chicken grow on these bones, I could make a million! Eat the meat off the bone, grow it back. Of course, that would be impossible; that is, unless our Creator God was involved. He could do it! Theme: One story – one God, one plan, one story – God's redemptive story, the story of regeneration, of resurrection, of revival. The prophet Ezekiel had been taken away to Babylon, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of deportation, before the official start of the 70 yr exile God promised as punishment to Judah. Before Jerusalem & the temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 BC, God revealed it to Ezekiel & he saw in his vision the glory of God leave the temple & Jerusalem (as Pastor Derek shared last week). As Carol Kaminski wrote, "God [would] allow His own house to be destroyed;" & it was. Ezekiel 12-16 give us more evidence of Judah's rebellion against God leading to their demise: false prophets tolerated & listened to, idolatrous leaders, faithlessness. Yet there is hope. God promised that He would keep His covenant, atoning for His people (16:59-63). In chapters 17-23, God began to speak thru Ezekiel about Israel as a whole. 150 yrs before the destruction of Jerusalem & the temple & the exile of Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated by Assyria & the survivors taken away. Israel was divided & then the northern kingdom conquered & gone, leaving Judah, which became worse in their spiritual adultery than Israel. But God hadn't forgotten His covenants with Abraham & David. In chap.36 He promised to restore the nation, not for their sake, but for the sake of His

name. Ezekiel 36:22-28 [READ]. But how can you raise up a nation that has become all but extinct? That seems as impossible as making chickens out of chicken bones! Then God gave Ezekiel another vision (our text): Ezekiel 37:1-14 [READ]. Again, Ezekiel was lifted up by the Holy Spirit & set down in the middle of a valley full of bones – dry bones – long dead. David Gudzik wrote that “The lives represented by these bones were not only dead; they were disgraced. An unburied corpse w/exposed remains was a shocking disgrace; denied a proper burial & left for the scavengers.” The nation/people of Israel, southern Judah & northern Israel were now united again, but in disgrace. Kaminski wrote, “Ezekiel’s vision depicts God’s people under His wrath...their death is testimony to the absence of righteousness.” God asks Ezekiel his opinion: “Can these bones live?” Humanly speaking, no! But Ezekiel had heard & seen enough from God to know that nothing is impossible to Him. “O Lord God, You know.” God told him to prophesy over the bones & tell them in essence to “come alive,” responding to God’s regenerating, recreating command. As Ezekiel obeyed, he heard a rattling. Bones began to come together, in right sequence, mind you. Otherwise it would have been useless. But “the foot bones connected to the ankle bones & the ankle bone connected to the leg bones & the leg bones connected to the knee bones & the knee bones connected to the thigh bones, etc. etc.” And not only did the bones come together, but sinew – connecting cartilage & muscle & skin came upon them. The decomposition process was reversed! However, tho they looked whole & alive, they were still very much dead – like a lot of even religious people today, like a lot of churches today. God told Ezekiel to prophesy again, this time to the breath (breath & wind – same word), & he did & he watched as the breath of life came into the lifeless bodies & “they lived & stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army,” in Gudzik’s words, “an army of strong, courageous & well-ordered soldiers.” The meaning of this vision is given to Ezekiel & us in vs11-14. God intended this message for “the whole house of Israel” –

undivided, united once more, now in hope. It was hopeless, but God said, “I will open your graves & raise you.” Again, Kaminski points out, “The restoration of God’s people would require nothing less than resurrection of the dead.” “God’s plan of redemption thru history does not end w/exile, but life will be granted thru the vivifying work of God’s Spirit (I will put My Spirit w/in you & you shall live, & I will place you in your own land). It is the Lord God who breathes life into these dry bones, the same Creator God [who] breathed life into Adam & brought life out of the dead womb of Sarah.” Some would say that the fulfillment of this prophetic vision has not happened yet, but I believe it has been partially fulfilled. There was a return from Exile, as was promised & we shall see. Israel is a nation again, no longer divided north & south. The restoration of the corporate nation of Israel has had to happen several times, the most recent in 1948. But the greater fulfillment of the promised resurrection of corporate Israel has been & will be completely realized in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is raised from the dead & brings (& continues to add) all believers together as children of Abraham/children of God by faith in Christ. This is the true Israel. We were all “dead in...trespasses & sins,” deserving God’s wrath, but Jesus paid the penalty for us, dying on the cross for our sins, rising again as proof of the Father’s acceptance of His sacrifice. For those who believe/receive Christ as Savior/Lord, God in His mercy has “made us alive together w/Christ” (Eph.2:1-5). The promise of the rebuilding of the temple was also partially fulfilled in the return from exile, tho not to its former glory. The glory of the Lord returning is prophesied by Ezekiel in chap43, but we shall see that this is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the temple of God & in Him we are the temple of God, indwelt by God the Holy Spirit (not to get ahead of ourselves). It’s all one story! God’s story of redemption, regeneration & resurrection. Those who are spiritually dead can be made alive, by the Spirit of God. Churches which are like Sardis in Revelation 3 – dead, can by resurrected by the Spirit of God. Marriages that have

died & other broken relationships can be restored, by the Spirit of God. Even a nation that has turned from God can be restored, by the Spirit of God. Don't stop believing. Don't stop praying. God is the God of the living, even if He has to resurrect the dead.