

Ezekiel

“The Faithful”



"I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise." Ezekiel 3:13

Ezekiel lived about 2600 years ago, during the time that the Babylonian Empire had subdued the nation of Judah and had destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. Ezekiel was a prophet and the people thought he was crazy at first, but when his prophecies started to become true, the people began to listen to him more intently. When I think about Ezekiel, I am reminded of a couple songs I sang as a child in Sunday School. I didn't understand them then, and I still don't understand them fully, but it is interesting to study what some people think they mean.

The first one is "Ezek'el saw the wheel," a well known Spiritual, often sung by Woody Guthrie. The chorus goes:

"Ezek'el saw the wheel 'Way up in the middle o' the air. Ezek'el saw the wheel 'Way up in the middle o' the air. The big wheel moved by faith. The little wheel moved by the grace o' God. A wheel in a wheel 'Way up in the middle o' the air."

People are still trying to put meaning to it today. Some of the most frequent interpretations think the four little wheels are mankind. The big wheel is the grace of God and without the little wheels being run by the grace of God, they don't operate. I think we can all agree that is a possible thought. Also, it made sense for the people of that time because they were getting away from what they were supposed to do and Ezekiel had been sent to tell them that if they didn't change their ways they would be persecuted. In fact, they were. He saw the destroying of Jerusalem and the Temple. He told the people, but they didn't believe him.

How are we supposed to see something in those words? How can we understand what God is saying to us in the Scriptures? Sometimes we don't understand, but with faith we believe.

Then later on in Ezekiel, we see another passage that has brought about another song with just as much confusion as the first about what God is trying to tell us today. It is called "Dry Bones" and I think many of you have sung it too. Some of the words to "Dry Bones" are:

"God called Ezekiel one mornin' Go down an' prophesy Ezekiel taught the Zion the powers of God and the bones begin to rise We going to walk around wit-a dry bones Why don't you rise and hear the word of the Lord? Tell me, how did the bones get together with Ezekiel, prophesy? Well, the toe bone connected to the foot bone, Lawd, the foot bone connected to the anklebone Now, don't you know the anklebone connected to the leg bone They tell me that the leg bone connected to the knee bone Lawd, Lawd, the knee bone connected to the thigh bone. We going to walk again with-a dry bones. We going to walk in the valley with-a dry bones. Tell me how, did the bones get together with Ezekiel, prophesy? Well, the thigh bone connected to the hip bone, Lawd, the hip bone connected to the back bone. They tell me the back bone connected to the shoulder bone Well, the shoulder bone connected to the neck bone Lawd, the neck bone connected to the head bone We going to walk around with-a dry bones. We going to hobble in the valley with those dry bones."

Many versions are available. This Spiritual is based on Ezekiel 37. This turns Ezekiel's prophecy into one of hope and comfort instead of the judgment we find in the other passages of Ezekiel. He has been referred to as a shepherd who protected his people, and a watchman who warned of their dangers ahead. Ezekiel tells us that God showed him a valley of dry bones and God said to him "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel 37:3. Ezekiel told him that only God could answer this, but God challenged him and told him that if the bones were preached the Word of God the bones would come alive, the tendons would join and flesh could cover them and they would breathe. God was referring to the people of Israel and challenged Ezekiel that if he told them about God they would become alive and be a vast army. The challenge today is seen that if we set out to tell the Good News just as Joshua did, the people of the world can come alive again to God's Word. It is a mission challenge to each of us, just as it was to Ezekiel.

We have to take the challenge. We have to bring those dry bones to life. We need to be satisfied with what God allows us to know. I was taught a Scripture at a very young age by my Grandmother because she said I asked too many questions. I think it applied to this story of Ezekiel and his writings. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." Corinthians 13:12.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I don't always understand Your challenge to me for each day. Help me to know that if I pray to be led by You, I must also be ready to accept the challenge to do Your will and help the dry bones within me and around me come to life again.

1. What is your interpretation of these two passages of Ezekiel?
2. Can symbolism be a great teacher to us? Think about some of the symbols for Christ.
3. Do these two passages apply to us today? How?
4. How can we bring the dry bones of others to life?
5. Can we bring our dry bones to our life?

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