

Nigerian Resurrection Story Spreads Quickly Through Taped Testimonial

Dan Ekechukwu, who reportedly rose from the dead during a Reinhard Bonnke crusade, says he has a message for the church

Evangelist Dan Ekechukwe projected an almost subdued demeanor as he prepared for yet another preaching engagement. With his hands clasped together and his head slightly bowed low as if to avoid attention, it was hard to imagine that he is the same person at the center of what has been described as the world's 21st century resurrection miracle.

He mounted the pulpit of the main parish of The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos and, for the "umpteenth" time, began to share the story of his alleged comeback from the dead in December of last year.

While Ekechukwu, 31, was still speaking, shouts of joy erupted in the auditorium as a man dropped his crutches and began to walk around. There were many other diverse miracles, and during the altar call, thousands of people jammed the altar in loud confession and repentance.

Such outpourings have become the trademark of the young evangelist's ministry since his alleged miraculous resurrection some nine months ago. Churchgoers there report that the blind have received their sight, the lame have walked, and people have felt demonic oppression leave, all during the course of his testimony.

Since his alleged resurrection miracle in December 2001, the

evangelist has been on a crusade against what he termed the "spirit of unforgiveness" in the church. He narrated to Charisma what he said was a guardian angel who took him on an excursion tour of heaven and hell and told him to warn this generation about the dangers of unforgiveness.

Ekechukwu quoted the angel as saying that many Christians stand the risk of missing heaven for holding grudges against fellow Christians, and even their spouses. Consequently, Ekechukwu has launched a new ministry, Message From the Dead, through which he is calling the church to shun divisive tendencies and rekindle her passion for the lost.

Claiming that unforgiveness "is hindering a lot of people and God's work in the church," he urged Christians, particularly church leaders, to break free from the trap of denominationalism in order to foster unity and reconciliation.

Christ For All Nations ministry, headed by German-born evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, recently released a videotape giving the detailed account of Ekechukwu's reported death and resurrection. The tape featured Ekechukwu's testimonies, his wife's, as well as those of the doctors who confirmed him dead and pastors of the Grace of God Church, Onitsha, where the resurrection occurred.

Ekechukwu was returning from a trip when he had an accident after losing control of his car. He lost consciousness and was later pronounced dead by two different hospitals where he had been taken. Subsequently, he was laid in the mortuary. But on the third day, his wife, Nneka, demanded the release of his body upon hearing that Bonnke was preaching in Grace of God church in Onitsha.

Nneka told CFAN officials that she acted on Hebrews 11:35, which says that “women received their dead raised to life again.”

Despite objections from the church’s security officials, Nneka forced her way into the church where pastors removed the stiff, lifeless body of Ekechukwu from the coffin and laid it on a table and went into fervent prayers.

Since the release of the tape, which is selling quickly all over Nigeria, the hitherto unknown evangelist from eastern Nigeria has acquired some celebrity status. Invitations are pouring in from all over the country from churches and ministries who want him to share the alleged heavenly encounter with them. He has already traveled to some European countries and is billed to appear with Benny Hinn on Trinity Broadcasting Network in November.

Some are suspicious of the alleged miracle because of Nigeria’s reputation for hoaxes and scams, including the questions raised recently about alleged miracles at the ministry compound of controversial minister T.B. Joshua. But Ekechukwu stands firm that his testimony is valid.

He said he felt compassion for skeptics who have expressed doubt that he ever died. “Heaven is real and hell is real,” he said. “My experience is also real, but my fear for those who doubt is that they will believe when it is too late—at the junction of death.”

Charisma could not verify at press time that the evangelist had indeed been issued a death certificate. Bonnke’s video release did show Ekechukwu holding what was said to be his

death certificate after his alleged resurrection.

Jackson Ekwugum in Nigeria