

This Is the Only Way to Defeat Principalities Raging Against the Land

“‘Prophesy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you so that you live. And I will lay sinews upon you and will grow back flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you so that you live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord’” (Ezek. 37:4-6).

As believers, we have often used this story in Ezekiel 37 as a formula for declaring life into dead situations, relationships and various issues in our life that need resurrection power. Though faith is usually exercised in this pronouncement of life, I see another, more important factor that is behind the success of Ezekiel’s command. This was not just a demonstration of prophetic authority but a powerful result of a prophetic life.

Ezekiel had a history with God.

We need to realize that Ezekiel came to that valley with a history—an amazing journey of surrender, radical obedience and a sanctified life. It is this key ingredient that makes Ezekiel’s pronouncement so incredible and the single most important ingredient that is desperately needed today in the church for effective prayer. Without this ingredient, our prophetic pronouncements may be sincere and heartfelt, but lacking in power.

What is Ezekiel’s history? After Assyria conquered Israel, the Jews were scattered, and Ezekiel lived with the other Jewish exiles in Babylonia. They were lost, angry and without cause. Though Ezekiel came from a priestly line, the Lord called him as a prophet to his people. Unfortunately, God not only told

him that the people wouldn't listen to him (2:4), but also that things would get worse before they got better. The Jews would see Jerusalem fall before they were ready for God's intervention. Ezekiel's job was to warn his brethren about the impending destruction and call them back to God. In doing so, God asked Ezekiel to do some extremely insane things!

Ezekiel was to be a signpost to the people (Ezek. 12:11) meaning that he was supposed to demonstrate God's messages in very specific ways. He was not to simply speak prophetic words, but to live a prophetic life. As he demonstrated humility and a willingness to follow at all costs, people around him would see God's will in action.

Consider the things Ezekiel was asked to do:

- Eat a scroll of mourning and lament to have God's heart for intercession (3:1-4).
- Be tied up with ropes in his own home and not be able to speak until the Lord allowed him (3:25-27).
- Lay on his right side for 390 days and then on his left side for 40 days to symbolize Israel's years of rebellion (Chapter 4).
- Shave his head and beard, which was usually unlawful for a Jew (Chapter 5).
- Prophecy death and destruction to his brethren (11:10-13).
- Pack his belongings and hand dig through the wall to demonstrate what would happen to the Israelites in captivity (12:1-6).

As if these things didn't already test Ezekiel's resolve to humble himself before the Lord in complete surrender and obedience, he was told one more heart-wrenching command. The Lord told Ezekiel He would take his wife "with one blow" to be a sign to Israel of what would happen to Jerusalem, their beloved city. Ezekiel was told he couldn't even mourn her death (Ezek. 24:15-16).

Here was a prophet who had faithfully obeyed every command of the Lord, willing to suffer ridicule, scrutiny and prophesy doom and destruction to his fellow Jews. Now, he was told that the love of his life would be taken from Him—as a sign. Scripture doesn't indicate what Ezekiel's initial response was. All we can assume is that he faithfully trusted the Lord's directives just as before. The next chapter simply picks up with the next word the Lord gave him.

It is just three chapters later that we finally get to the Valley of the Dry Bones. This opportunity to see the power of God demonstrated before his eyes came after years of obedience and faithfulness to God's Word. It was not just the prophet Ezekiel who stood before those dry bones, but the man, Ezekiel. This was one who had a history with his God, living out every request and following every directive he was given. This is the key ingredient that gave him the authority to speak to those dry bones in the valley of death. He had already been there and knew what to do.

Because he had faithfully demonstrated humility, surrender and faith in God through the years, those bones immediately responded to his words and a vast army stood before him full of resurrection power! Because of his life of obedience and faithfulness, the man Ezekiel had the authority to raise the dead.

Today, we have a huge valley of dry bones before us in our communities, cities and nation. We see biblical values dying, the decay of morals and absolutes as well as a complete absence of the fear of the Lord. We desperately need supernatural intervention, the power of resurrection life and a revival of passion for the Lord.

Though we know that God can raise the dead to life, the question is, can our prophetic declarations be backed up by a personal history with God? Do our lives reflect consistent surrender and absolute obedience to what He's already said?

Have we so focused on the formulas of words or presumed rights to spiritual authority that we have totally missed the most important ingredient?

The strongholds we face today and the principalities that are threatening our communities and nation will not be overcome by a power confrontation. It will not be a test of the wills or the level of passion or the hours of prayer that will determine the outcome. The enemies of God will be defeated by a holy and humble people who have demonstrated the rule of God through their lives and practices.

It is a righteous life that will totally disarm the enemy and release the power to bring new life. These are not just values, but heart issues that must be tested and tried, just as they were for Ezekiel. I pray that the words God spoke to Ezekiel about Israel would be true for us today:

“I will vindicate the sanctity of My great name which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified among you before their eyes” (Ezek. 36:23). {eo}

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