

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Water from Rock, February 28, 2017, Tim Smith

“Live by the Spirit.”
Galatians 5:16a

CAN DRY BONES LIVE?

The Background of Ezekiel 37

1. Ezekiel ministered as a prophet of Yahweh during the catastrophic Babylonian Exile.
2. He was also a priest of Yahweh although it is not known if he ever ministered in the temple.
3. Ezekiel witnessed the Babylonian invasion of his country in 597 B. C. and was likely among the first Jews deported in chains to Babylon in that year.
4. Jerusalem was finally destroyed in 586 B. C., the temple burned, the Davidic kingship lost, and starving people resorted to cannibalism. They lost any confidence that Yahweh had any power compared to the gods of Babylon.
5. Ezekiel’s wife died while he was in exile. He began his prophetic ministry when he was 30 years old and ministered during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Ezekiel was likely a few years older than Daniel who was also in Babylon.
6. Note in Ezekiel’s vision the repeated use of ruach (variously translated as “breath”, “wind” and “spirit”); context determines the meaning. See an equivalent use of the Greek word pneuma by Jesus in John 3:8.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O LORD God, you know.” ⁴Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the LORD God to these bones: I will cause

breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.” ⁷So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ¹¹Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’” ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the LORD God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE TO AND GUIDES HIS CHURCH

Acts 13:1-4

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, [javascript:void\(0\)](#); and Saul. ²While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

1. This story is a demarcation in the Book of Acts, marking the turning of the Church towards the Gentiles, the “ends of the earth”. This initiative is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus promised His disciples in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
3. In the previous chapters (2-12) the Gospel has gone out, primarily to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Now, from the city of Antioch

the Spirit is propelling the disciples and Gospels to the ends of the earth.

4. Note: it was through persecution that the Spirit propelled disciples from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 11:19-20) where they planted a church among the Gentiles.
5. There were five prominent “*prophets and teachers*” in the Antioch Church at this time.

- Barnabas was a Jewish man from Cyprus (Acts 4:36);
- Simeon who was called “Niger”, meaning “dark complexion”. Some commentators suggest that this Simeon was “Simon of Cyrene” (in North Africa), who carried Jesus’ cross (Luke 23:26); there is not enough information to prove this.
- Lucius of Cyrene was from North Africa.
- Manaen was “a member of the court of Herod”: this was Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist and tried Jesus.
- Saul of Tarsus, not yet known by his Roman name, Paul.
- William Barclay says of these five men in the Church at Antioch: “There in that little band there is exemplified the unifying influence of Christianity. Men from many lands and many backgrounds had discovered the secret of ‘togetherness’ because they had discovered the secret of Christ.” (*Daily Study Bible*)
- Note in verses 3 and 4 two different uses of the word *sent*”.
 - “*they laid hands on them and sent* (*apoluo* = to release) *them off*”
 - “*sent* (*ekpempo* = to send) *out by the Holy Spirit*”

MARKS OF THE CHRISTIANS AT ANTIOCH

1. They were devoted to the Word.
2. They listened for the Spirit’s prophetic speaking.
3. They worshipped, fasted and prayed.
4. They were generous in their missional vision and giving.