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INTO YOUR FAVORITE BIBLE STORIES

13 – Dry Bones Rise Again: The Valley of Dry Bones

God's People are Like a Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹ The LORD took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the LORD to a valley filled with bones. ² He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. ³ Then he asked me, “Son of man, can these bones become living people again?”

“O Sovereign LORD,” I replied, “you alone know the answer to that.”

⁴ Then he said to me, “Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, ‘Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD!’ ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! ⁶ I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”

⁷ So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. ⁸ Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, “Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.’”

¹⁰ So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army.

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¹¹ Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, ‘We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.’ ¹² Therefore, prophesy to them and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the LORD has spoken!’”

Background

The *NIV Quest Study Bible* says Ezekiel wrote this book to the Israelites who have been exiled to Babylon.

They needed to know that the God of Israel was still their God even in pagan Babylon.

Ezekiel’s vision concerned their idolatry and that they had seen the judgment of God’s wrath.

God spells it out in **Ezekiel 36:16-21** (NIV)

¹⁶ Again the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷ “Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions...

¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. ¹⁹ I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. ²⁰ And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave his land.’ ²¹ I had concern for my holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.

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Later, after Jerusalem's destruction, he wrote to encourage them that God would bring them back to Judah and Jerusalem.

These dry bones will declare three things about themselves.

- (1) ***They were dry***, an obvious condition of bones from people who have been dead for a very long time with an emphasis on spiritual deadness.
- (2) ***The bones declare that their hope has perished.***
The people of Israel have lost all hope of becoming a nation again or of seeing God's covenants fulfilled.
- (3) The bones say that ***they were separated from one another***, i.e., the people had been separated and dispersed - their current condition.

The vision itself is rather self-evident and needs no interpretation once the bones are identified.

The vision clearly demonstrates the restoration to life of a people who have been dead for some time.

It is in two stages: first physical (or national) restoration and then spiritual renewal.

This national and spiritual restoration is elaborated through another figure, that of a resurrection from graves.

Both the imagery of dry bones becoming live people and the figure of resurrection from a grave illustrate the same truth.

- Israel will be brought back to life physically as a nation in their own land.
- Just as the events in the vision were miraculous, so will be Israel's restoration.

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- Once in the land they will be renewed spiritually when God places his Spirit within them.

As Israel goes, so goes a nation who has abandoned God's instruction.

We are The Walking Dead.

On the surface of recent polls, Christianity may seem alive and well in the United States. They say around 65% of Americans identify as Christians.ⁱ

But a little deeper dig reveals that not all is as it seems. According to podcaster and author Natasha Crain, a mere 10% of the population actually understand or engages in a Biblical worldview.ⁱⁱ

A Biblical Worldview is an overarching view of the world based on God's revealed truth, the Bible, which directs our life in this world.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our Bones are Dry

Romans 5:12

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, **so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.***

But, Grace brings Hope

Romans 5:15

But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.

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And Hope Leads to Life

Romans 5:20-21

*“...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**”*

Not just eternal Life – But a New Life today!

Romans 6:1-4

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:8-11

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We have a Responsibility to Grow in Christ

Colossians 2:6-7

6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

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You don't have to do this alone.

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people 1.) to do his work and 2.) build up the church, the body of Christ.

The Believer's Goal

¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

*¹⁵ Instead, **we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church**. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

The Holy Spirit's Work

John 3:6

"Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life."

John 16:7-11

"...it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, 1.) he will convict the world of its sin, and 2.) of God's righteousness, and 3.) of the coming judgment.

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⁹ *The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. ¹⁰ Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. ¹¹ Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.*"

Acts 5:32

"...the Holy Spirit, ...is given by God to those who obey him."

Galatians 5:22-25

"...the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."*

Paul's directive to the leaders of the church,

Acts 20:28

*"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the **Holy Spirit** has appointed you as leaders.*

ⁱ Pew Research 2016-2018

ⁱⁱ While two-thirds of Americans profess to be Christians, only 10% hold to a Biblical worldview (noqreport.com)

ⁱⁱⁱ The Biblical Worldview Institute, 815 21st St SE, Puyallup, WA 98372, 253.841.1776

All Scripture references will be New Living Translation unless otherwise noted