

Graves into Gardens Ezekiel 37:1-14

Introduction:

The first mention of bones in the Bible is Genesis 2:23 – *“Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my **bones** and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

The next time the word ‘bones’ is mentioned in the Bible is Genesis 50:25 – *“Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my **bones** from here.”*

Exodus 13:19 - *Moses took the **bones** of Joseph with him*

Joshua 24:32 - *As for the **bones** of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem*

Shechem, about 30 miles north of Jerusalem, is mentioned 60t in the OT.

- It’s where God promised to give the land of Palestine to Abraham (Gen 12:7).
- Jacob camped within site of the city (Gen 33:18), purchased land in Shechem and built a well there.
- Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery from Shechem (Gen 37).

Picture of present-day Shechem

- Four hundred years later, Joshua read the law from Mt. Ebal to Israel at Shechem (Deut 11). Ebal and Gerizim form a natural amphitheater where the law could be heard).
- Years later, Joshua challenged the people to serve God there (Josh 24)
- Joseph is buried there (Josh 24:32).
- Shechem became a center of idol worship
- Samaritans began living there during the captivity
- Sychar is built near the ruins of Shechem and that is where Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4).
 - It is interesting that Jesus, the greater Jacob, (not a deceiver but the Truth personified), and the greater Joseph (the bread of life, spiritually and eternally saving his people from slavery to sin) should meet this woman there. He is the fulfiller of the law, the true and living God and not an idol. He is the end, the land foreshadowed.

John 4:24-26 - *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* ²⁶ *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."* (To know where Jesus said this, gives you chills when you read the text).

(The hottest day you will spend in Israel is at Beth-shan from where David took the bones of Saul and Jonathan from the public square – 2 Samuel 21:12-14. John McMurray climbed a hill there).

2 Kings 13:21 - *And as a man was being buried, behold, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.*

This is one of the strangest texts in the Bible and the only one in which the bones of a dead man give life to another dead man.

Note: This year, as we've read through the Bible, we too have been brought to life by our contact with the OT prophets.

But this is what God is doing in Ezekiel. He is giving life to dead bones.

Matthew 23:27 - *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's **bones** and all uncleanness.*

Luke 24:39 - *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and **bones** as you see that I have."*

John 19:36 - For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his **bones** will be broken."

TEXT

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon 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."

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no

breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ ¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

Job 10:11 - You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with **bones and sinews.**

What can be said about this grand text?

First: God is the Source of Life

1 - From the opening chapters of Genesis, a close connection is made between life and dwelling before God in the land of His blessed presence. Adam and Eve enjoyed intimacy with the Lord and life before Him while they lived in Eden. But when they broke the covenant, they were cast out of God’s presence and subjected to death (Gen. 1–3).

2 - Israel’s punishment for breaking the covenant was exile—being kicked out of the Promised Land where the Lord granted life to His people and sent among the Gentiles to experience slavery, suffering, and death (Deut. 28:64–68).

3 - Paul spoke of life outside of the “covenants of promise” as life “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

The worst thing about Hell is that it is outside of the ‘felt’ presence of God (Ps 139:18). The exiled Jews thought of themselves as ‘dead.’ They were not just bones. They were ‘dry’ bones. In captivity to the Babylonians, Israel cannot bring themselves back to life. Only God can. This is why God prophesied that Cyrus would release them

Isaiah 44:24-28 & 45:1-7 - *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ²⁵ who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, ²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’; ²⁷ who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’; ²⁸ who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be*

laid.” Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: ² “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³ I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Read this: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/264-cyrus-the-great-in-biblical-prophecy>
In the OT, unburied bones signified shame and disgrace.

God removes Israel’s shame and disgrace by returning them to the land in accordance with his prophecy and rebuilding the Temple.

But again, these bones show how dead Israel is. There is no hope apart from God.

- 1 – The Lord promises to bring these bones back to life. 3-6
- 2 – His Holy Spirit will give life to the nation. 7-14

According to Ephesians 1:

- The Father planned our salvation. 4
- The Son purchased our salvation. 7
- The Holy Spirit produces and protects our salvation. 13

Did this indeed happen? Just as God prophesied!

Second: God Keeps His Word

Isaiah 45:1 – *“Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus....”*

Cyrus is a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Christ.

“anointed” = *mashiyach* = *Messiah*

Matthew 11:2 - *Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of **the Christ**, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”*

And, resurrection is, of course, central to Jesus’s ministry. It is at the heart of the Miller’s hope, who just two days ago, buried the matriarch of their family.

1 – He began his ministry in Galilee, the former Northern kingdom of Israel gathering them, along with the descendants of Judah in Judea (Matthew 4:12-17) – literally resurrecting a new nation from among the dead

2 – He resurrected the physically dead

- Luke 7:11-17 - Son of the widow of Nain (2 miles south of Mount Tabor)
- Luke 8:49-56 – Jairus’s daughter
- Lazarus - John 11:24 – *I am the resurrection and the life*

(Jesus resurrected 3 people in the NT: one for each, Father, Son & Holy Spirit; one for each day he was in the tomb. While he lay dead in the tomb, three people could testify he had risen them from the dead).

- Of course, when Jesus was resurrected –

Matthew 27:50-54 - And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

3 – And that is exactly what the apostles preached

Romans 1:4 – [Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead,

Conclusion:

It is no coincidence that Jesus’s grave is in a garden. This is what he does. He turns graves into gardens. He is doing it with the whole earth and he is doing it with you and me – with anyone who will repent of self and trust him as Savior.

The resurrection of Israel finds its fullest realization in the resurrection of the saints in the new heaven and the new earth. As Christians, we are the Israel of God, the one community of believers united by faith in Jesus Christ that is made up of believing Jew and believing Gentile alike. Our resurrection and inheritance of the restored creation—through the resurrection of Christ—fulfills Ezekiel.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How are you doing during this season of the pandemic?
- 2 – What are your greatest challenges right now?
- 3 – What are your greatest blessings right now?
- 4 – What have you learned through thus far in 2020?
- 5 – What are your hopes for the future?
- 6 – Does Gen 2:23 have anything to offer to our modern gender discussion?
- 6 – Say a word about the importance of the Samaritan women believing on Jesus in Shechem/Sychar.
- 7 – What is God saying to Ezekiel through the valley of dry bones vision?
- 8 – Is there any importance to the bones being ‘very dry?’
- 9 – What does the ‘breath’ of God symbolize in this passage?
- 10 – Talk about the role of the Holy Spirit in the conversion process.
- 11 – What is the worst thing about Hell?
- 12 – Why is the prophecy about Cyrus important?
- 13 – Why do people deny that the words about Cyrus are a prophecy?
- 14 – How does Cyrus foreshadow Jesus?
- 15 – Talk about the role of the Trinity in our salvation from Ephesians 1.
- 15 – Does the valley of dry bones have anything to do with or say about Jesus’s resurrection?
- 16 – How does Israel’s resurrection in the valley of dry bones connect with the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem?