

Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones



Scripture Reference: [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)

Suggested Theme: God gives us hope. When life seems hopeless, remember God brings hope.

Memory Verse: “But the people who hope in the Lord will become strong again. They will be able to rise up as an eagle in the sky. They will run without needing rest. They will walk without becoming tired.” [Isaiah 40:31, ICB](#).

Story Overview:

Ezekiel was a Jewish priest who was captured and taken to Babylon a few years after Daniel. God chose him to prophesy about all of the things that were happening back in Jerusalem. After Jerusalem was destroyed, Ezekiel began prophesying about the hope that God would restore the Jews to their land someday. God showed Ezekiel how he could bring a bunch of old dry bones to life. In the same way, God could bring His people back to life if they would turn to Him.

Background Study:

Ezekiel was born and raised in Jerusalem before it was conquered. He had trained as a priest and was looking forward to a future as a priest. Ezekiel would have been in his mid-twenties when he was captured and taken away to Babylon in 597 BC, along with 10,000 others. His hopes of being a priest like his father before him would have been dashed when he was taken away from Jerusalem.

But God called Ezekiel to be a prophet to His people while they were away from their homeland.

“It was the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month of our captivity. I, Ezekiel, was by the Kebar River in Babylon. I was among the people who had been carried away as captives from the land of Judah. The sky opened, and I saw visions of God.” [Ezekiel 1:1, ICB](#)

As a young man back in Jerusalem, he could have very well heard the prophet Jeremiah preach. Now, as God’s prophet to a people in exile, Ezekiel’s messages were often like Jeremiah’s because they were dramatically acted out. His book is one of visions and symbolic actions. Ezekiel was devoted to passing on God’s message to the people.

God’s people had been captured and led from their homes in Judah to the country of Babylon. Their exile had come about because of their failure to commit themselves to obeying God’s laws. Despite the concentrated teachings and warnings of God’s prophets, the kings and people alike continued in their rebellion against God.

Ezekiel was married ([Ezekiel 24:15-18](#)) and lived in a house of his own ([3:24; 8:1](#)). He was an exiled prisoner in the foreign nation of Babylon, but he seemed to have the freedom to come and go within the country.

Prophecies Before the Fall of Jerusalem

When Ezekiel received his call from God, he began to prophesy about what was happening back in Judah. These prophecies make up the first part of the book of Ezekiel. His teachings included condemning God's people for their sins. He prophesied that Jerusalem would fall and that the temple would be destroyed. This prophecy came true eleven years after Ezekiel was exiled from Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem to the ground and destroyed the temple and city walls in 587 B.C.

Prophecies After the Fall of Jerusalem

After Ezekiel learned of Jerusalem's fall, his messages changed to contain hope of deliverance for God's people. Because of his priestly background (1:3), he could teach and guide the captives. As reflected in the second part of his book, he never let the hope of freedom and restoration die.

The Vision of Dry Bones Coming to Life

Today's story is a lesson that Ezekiel learned through vision- a special dream caused by God. The vision explains why God sent His people into exile in Babylon and other lands. They had done wrong in many ways, but two ways are mentioned - they had shed blood (killing many innocent people), and they had worshipped idols instead of God. The exile was their punishment.

The hand of the Lord took Ezekiel to a valley full of bones. It looked as though many people had died in a terrible disaster, but over time, only bleached bones remained.

Ezekiel was God's prophet. He knew God's power, and he trusted God's Word. So whatever God told him, Ezekiel obeyed, even when it seemed as absurd as prophesying to bones. Ezekiel did as God instructed, and the lifeless bones came to life and stood up. God gave them flesh, skin, and breath. They looked like a vast army, for there were many of them.

Ezekiel must have wondered what all these things meant, and God explained. The nation of Israel was as dead and as hopeless as the bones in the valley. They had no hope. They were exiled to Babylon and cut off from their homeland and the life they once knew as a people. But God would rescue the people and bring them back to their homeland. He was willing to forgive all the sins the people did against Him. Then, they would recognise God as the Lord. Now, the people had something to hope for.

Way to Introduce the Story:

"How many of you know what a skeleton is?" Explain as needed. "How many of you have seen a skeleton?" Kids often enjoy talking about gory events (dead animal they saw on the road that was just a skeleton, etc.) If they don't have a story, share one of your own. Of course, adapt it to your audience. Don't give little ones nightmares. After you have talked about an actual or real skeleton, ask them what they would think if the bones started rattling together and then flesh and skin started appearing. "Wouldn't that be scary? Did you know that one time someone in the bible had a dream about skeletons that came back to life?"

The Story:

The people of God were still prisoners in Babylon. They lived far away from their home country. Sometimes, the people were very sorry that they had not obeyed God. If they had obeyed God, then they would not be prisoners. It was like the nation of Israel was dead. The people were so sad that they did not even have any hope that things could change.

Ezekiel was a prophet of God. God gave Ezekiel messages, and Ezekiel told the people the messages. Even when the people were prisoners in Babylon, Ezekiel preached about God.

One time, Ezekiel had a special dream. It was not a sleep kind of dream. It was a special dream sent from God. This kind of dream is called a vision.

In Ezekiel's vision, the Lord took him to a valley of dry human bones. The Lord set Ezekiel down right in the middle of the bones! Ezekiel looked at all the bones and knew they must belong to people who had died long ago. The bones were all white and dry.

Then Ezekiel heard the voice of God say, "Ezekiel, can these bones come to life again?"

Ezekiel must have thought to himself about how powerful God was. It would be impossible for bones to come back to life, but God could probably do it. So he answered the Lord, "Only you know if they can."

Then, the Lord told Ezekiel to do something very unusual. He told Ezekiel to talk to the old dry bones, to prophesy to them, and to tell them words from the Lord. Ezekiel did just as the Lord said. He prophesied to the bones!

The Lord told Ezekiel to tell the bones that God would make breath enter them, and they would come back to life. He would put tendons and flesh on the bones and then cover them in skin. He would make them breathe and be alive.

When Ezekiel prophesied to the bones just as God had said, the bones started rattling and shaking! Soon, the bones started coming together, and flesh and skin appeared on them. Ezekiel was amazed to see and hear all of this in his vision!

"Prophesy to the breath (or wind)," God's voice commanded Ezekiel. Ezekiel prophesied to the breath, and the bodies started breathing. Then, they stood up! Many live people were standing around. Ezekiel saw that they were a big army. It was amazing. God took a bunch of old dry bones and made an army!

Then, the Lord told Ezekiel that the nation of Israel was like the valley of dry bones. Their nation had been conquered, and all of the people were prisoners. The beautiful city of Jerusalem and the temple had been knocked down and burned. The people of Israel felt like they were dead since their country was dead. They thought there was no hope.

But God can do anything! He can take a bunch of old bones and make an army. He can also take the nation of Israel and make it strong again. He could take the people back to their land and rebuild the temple.

Now, Ezekiel understood the vision. Ezekiel would keep prophesying to the people of Israel. They might be prisoners now, but someday, they would get to go back to their homes. Ezekiel was happy to tell the people the good news. Now, they could all have something to hope for.

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- Which prophet prophesied to the people when they were in Babylonian exile? (Ezekiel)
- In Ezekiel's vision, what was the valley filled with? (Dry human bones)
- What did God tell Ezekiel to do to the bones? (Prophecy to them and tell them God would bring them life)
- What sound did Ezekiel hear when he began prophesying? (Rattling bones as they came together)
- What did God make out of the valley of dry bones? (An army of people)
- What is hope? (a feeling of expectation and desire for something or an event)
- What was God's hopeful message for the Israelites? (He could gather the Israelites and put them back in the land of Israel, and put His Spirit in them and give them new life)
- What did this story show you about God?

Reflection:

- What question would you ask God about this story?
- Imagine you are Ezekiel, and you see the dry bones come together and come alive. What would amaze you most?
- How many people do you think Ezekiel saw come to life?
- How do you think Ezekiel felt when he saw this vision? What do you think he was thinking?
- How do you think the Israelites reacted to God's message when Ezekiel prophesied?
- Is there something you feel hopeless about? (Suggestion: Pray together about anything the children bring up)
- What hope has God given us for the future and our daily lives?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [He's Got the Whole World in His Hands Song](#)
- [I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Song](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- If possible, obtain actual X-rays or photos of X-rays and let the children guess which bones they are.
- Find human skeleton illustrations online or from books in the library and show the children. Verse 8 also mentions tendons, flesh, and skin, so illustrations of these would also be helpful.
- Costume shops or Halloween decorations are good sources for skeleton paraphernalia.
- Discuss the difference between a “wish” (desire for something or an event) and “hope” (a feeling of expectation and desire for something or an event). God gave the people hope because they knew He could give them back their land.
- One fun teacher served roasted chicken wings to the children in children. As each child finished their chicken pieces, she had them place the bones on a plate. She then asked them what the chances were that the bones could be put back together into wings. The pile of bones was gross, but the kids just loved it. I think they’ll remember that night for a long time!

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Provide an illustration of a skeleton and guide the children in drawing their own version. Write a caption across the bottom of the picture, such as “God Gave Life to Dry Bones, Ezekiel37:1-14.”

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page of human skeleton \(Crayola\)](#)
- [Craft: Pasta Skeleton \(Enchanted learning\)](#)
- [Craft: Various skeleton crafts \(be sure and scroll down once you are on the page\) \(Artists helping children\)](#)
- [Printable Wordsearch \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)
- [Printable Decoder puzzle \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)
- [Interactive group activities \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)

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