



Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones



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

Suggested Emphasis:
God gives us 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 (statesmen, soldiers, craftsmen - [2 Kings 24:14](#)). His hopes of being a priest like his father before him would have been dashed when he was taken away from Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was married ([Ezekiel 24:15-18](#)), and he 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. Ezekiel was in Jerusalem for about five years when God called him a prophet.

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, they continued in their rebellion against God.

When Ezekiel received his call from God, he began to prophesy about the things happening back in Judah. These prophecies make up the first part of the book of Ezekiel. His teachings included condemnation of 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.

After Ezekiel learned of the fall of Jerusalem, his messages changed to contain hope of deliverance for God's people. Because of his priestly background ([1:3](#)), he was able to teach and guide the captives. He never lets the hope of freedom and restoration die. This is reflected in the second part of his book.

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, and then, through the passage of 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 ([verses 7-9](#)). They looked like a vast army, for there were many of them ([verse 2](#)).

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, cut off from their homeland and the life they once knew as a people. But God was going to 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?"

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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 message to the people. 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 a long time 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. He told him to prophesy to them and 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! There were many live people 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 will 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.

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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, student interaction and/or emotion.

[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 Questions:

1. Which prophet prophesied to the people when they were in Babylonian exile? Ezekiel
2. In Ezekiel's vision, what was the valley filled with? Dry human bones
3. What did God tell Ezekiel to do to the bones? Prophecy to them
4. What sound did Ezekiel hear when he began preaching? Rattling bones as they came together
5. What did God make out of the valley of dry bones? An army

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 options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Try to obtain actual x-rays or photos of x-rays and let the student guess which bones they are.
- Find books in the library with good illustrations of the human skeleton. Bring the books to class to look over. Verse 8 also mentions tendons, flesh, and skin. Find books illustrating these.
- Costume shops or Halloween decorations are good sources for skeleton paraphernalia.
- Discuss the difference between a "wish" (desire for something or event) and "hope" (a feeling of expectation and desire for something or event). God gave the people hope because they knew he was able to give them back their land.
- One fun teacher served roasted chicken wings to the students in class. As each child finished their pieces of chicken, she had them place the bones on a plate. She then asked them what the chances would be that the bones could be put back together into wings. The pile of bones was gross, and the kids just loved it. I think they'll remember that night for a long time!

Crafts:



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

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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