

## **Title: Restoration of Dead Bones**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

We live in a fast changing world. Where technology, fashion and prices of commodities change every other day. Not only is there an advancement in technology but we also see a decay in spiritual, moral and ethical values.

Living in this fast changing world also demands that we catch up with it's pace. Most often we do manage and adapt to keep up with the pace.

The Test comes when we face various challenges eg; our loved one is diagnosed with a sickness or when we lose a loved one. When we lose our job, or when we are struggling with a difficult boss, spouse or friend or may be demands at the work place, unfulfilled dreams and desires... we can keep adding to the list. When we face these challenges, discouragement, depression, hopelessness, frustration sets in and sometimes we find ourselves at a point of a virtual stand still. The world around us keeps moving at the same pace but our little world comes to a stand still.

We begin to wonder – Is God angry with me? Is God punishing me for some sin that I committed? Does God really love me? Where is the joy I once had, will my health be restored, will my relationship with my spouse or loved one be restored, will my situation at work place or financial situation be restored.

The Israelites who were exiled to Assyria and Babylon found themselves in a situation of hopelessness and discouragement. They were looking forward for the time when they will be restored back to freedom back in their own country Judah and Israel.

Why were the Israelites who were God's covenant people and who had God's protection and covering over them be taken as captives to Babylon? The Israelites had taken God for granted. They assumed that God's covenant with their forefathers was irrevocable - final and unchanging, the ownership of the land was permanent, and that they were immune to any foreign captivity as long as God was in their midst because of the temple in Jerusalem.

In 597 BC to their utter shock King Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and Israel was exiled to live in captivity in Babylon. The Israelites thought, how could this happen? Is our God impotent before the Babylonian gods? Has He forgotten us? Why has He abandoned us? They were angry became disillusioned, bitter and cynical.

Ezekiel who was in his mid-twenties was one among the exiles. Ezekiel was from a priestly family and was training to be a priest. He was looking forward to serve in the temple. But as an exile in the plains of Babylon, far from Jerusalem, meant the end of all his hopes.

Five years later, when he was 30 the age when he was among the exiles by the Kebar river God called him into service as a prophet. God asks Ezekiel to deliver his message to the exiled Israelites whom He calls a rebellious, stubborn and obstinate nation. The message that God gives Ezekiel is two-fold - message of judgment and the message of Restoration and hope.

For the first seven years Ezekiel faithfully relayed to his fellow Jews the stern, heart-rending, hope-crushing word of divine judgment: Because of her idolatry and all her sins, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed.

During the seven years God informed Ezekiel that Jerusalem was under siege and would surely fall, Ezekiel was told that his beloved wife would soon die. The delight of his eyes would be taken from him just as the temple, the delight of Israel's eyes, would be taken from her. God asked him not to mourn for his wife, as a sign to his people not to mourn for Jerusalem. The next evening his wife died and he did just as God asked him to.

11 years after Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylonian laid siege to Jerusalem in 587, the city and temple were plundered and burned.

Only after the city and temple of Jerusalem were destroyed did Ezekiel begin to stress God's intention to 'resurrect' and restore the faithful ones back to the land - Israel, back to the worship that will come from their hearts and that He will be their God and they will be His people.

In spite of Israel's sin of idolatry and forsaking God yet God was faithful to his covenant he made to Abraham . His desire to save Israel again was so great that he would revive his people once more, shepherd them with compassion, cleanse them of all their defilement, reconstitute them as a perfect expression of his kingdom, crush all the enemies arrayed against them, display his glory among the nations and restore the glory of his presence to the holy city.

Just as it was God's desire to restore the Israelites it's God's desire to restore those of you who are broken, weary, depressed and those who have come to a point of even giving up in life. Are there areas in our lives that are like "dead bones" that are in a state of hopelessness, despair, beyond repair, etc...this morning, God wants to give us hope and encouragement. He wants to restore, revive and resurrect the dead bones.

That's why I've titled my sermon as restoration of dead bones.

But we must partner co-operate with God in the restoration process.

### **Three things that we can learn from how Ezekiel partnered with God in His and Israel's restoration:**

#### **First, Ezekiel**

##### **I. Saw the glory, greatness and power of God:**

When Ezekiel was 30yrs, during his fifth year of exile in Babylon, he had a vision. We can read this in Ezekiel chapter 1. In his vision he sees the heavens open and an immense cloud with flashing lightning, surrounded by brilliant light and a fire in the center. In the fire he saw what looked like four living creatures.

The space above the four living creatures He saw what looked like a throne of sapphire and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. He looked as if he was full of fire and brilliant light surrounded him. There was the radiance around him.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. Ezekiel was so overwhelmed by this sight of the glory of God! It stunned him, he fell on his face! He heard a voice of one speaking. Ezekiel 2:3 - He said "Son of Man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me."

Ezekiel saw God in all his awesome glory and majesty. He didn't understand all the details. But he knew that he had seen the glory of God and his glory was bigger than the prophet could possibly grasp.

Against this dazzling brilliance and glory God revealed to Ezekiel the sin of His people.

When Ezekiel saw the sin of Israel, in chapter 3 verse 14 he says he went in bitterness and in anger in His spirit of how Israel had treated God. Ezekiel then understood why God had allowed Israel to be defeated by Assyrians and Babylonians and the people taken as captives to other nations.

The rest of Ezekiel's life was coloured by the vision of the glory of God that he saw.

The Prophet Isaiah had a similar experience. King Uzziah who ruled Israel for more than 50 years had died. His death had left Isaiah feeling shocked and hopeless. Everything in Isaiah's world was in confusion, the king was dead, his nation was in peril, and he could do nothing to change it!

Isaiah chapter 6 we see here that Isaiah had a vision of God. In his vision he sees God high, exalted and holy. In the light of His holiness Isaiah was able to see his sinfulness and the sin of his people and so he cries out (read vs 5).

Notice when Isaiah "saw the Lord" his eyes were opened and he was ushered in to see the real King of the Nations. Isaiah saw God seated upon an eternal throne with all power and all dominion. Yes! The earthly king is dead but the King of Kings who owns and rules Israel is still seated on the throne and is still in control. He finds hope in his hopeless situation.

When both Ezekiel and Isaiah see the vision of the glory of God their situation is changed from hopelessness to hope, they received answers to their problem and they were able to see their own sin and the sin of their people.

When the Israelites had camped in the desert God told Moses to send 12 spies to spy the land of Canaan. They returned after 40 days they told Moses what they saw - that the land is good and fertile but the people living in the land are like giants. If they go to war against them they would be surely killed. 10 spies spread a bad report to the Israelites. All the Israelites mourned and grumbled against God and Moses. But Caleb silenced them saying—Numbers 14:9: Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

What was the result? — God sent a plague and all the 10 spies were struck dead. The rest of the entire Israelite community lived in the desert for 40 years till all who were 20 yrs and above died. After 40 yrs Caleb and Joshua and with the rest of the Israelites entered the promise land.

Caleb and Joshua like the rest of the 10 spies saw the giants but they saw God greater than the giants. Caleb saw God's promise of protection on him and his people and not on the giants. He had seen God's glory and power when God brought them out of Egypt and divided the red sea. He knew that God would yet again show glory and power by defeating the giants. He knew that God kept His promise when he delivered the Israelites from Egypt and trusted God to keep His promise of giving them the land of Canaan. And we need to learn to THINK that way too.

**ILLUSTRATION:** One professor wrote this on a blackboard: **GODISNOWHERE**. He asked his students to tell him what they saw there.

The majority of the students said they saw this: "God Is No Where".

But a few of the students saw: "God Is Now Here".

You see: it all depends on what you're looking for, as to what you see.

Like Peter the whole time he was looking at Jesus he was walking on the water the sec he took his eyes of Jesus and saw the wind, the giant size waves he began to sink.

When you're conflict or struggles look like giants or like 'dead bones', it IS hard to see God sometimes. But at such times it's important to focus our eyes on God and presence and His power and His promises.

How can we see and experience God presence and power when we face challenges.

We can see and experience God's presence only when we live in His presence and are in constant fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Everything changed for Ezekiel, Isaiah and Caleb when they saw the glory, power and greatness of God. It was as if the glorious presence of God coloured the rest of their life. By seeing the glory of God, they were taken from their experience of isolation, frustration and hopelessness to a place of hope, confidence and joy God.

It was not that they did not face any challenges, they did. Eg. If you read the book of Ezekiel you would see that after his call Ezekiel faced painful trials and challenges. It was not easy for him to prophecy and deliver those messages of judgement for seven long years. God asks him to do some strange things by enacting the prophecies. People watching Ezekiel enact those prophecies would have surely thought he was out of his mind or an insane person.

The difficult part was when God told him in Ezekiel 24:16 he said with one blow I'm going to take away from you the delight of your eyes but God asks him not to weep or shed any tears. Ezekiel was able to face the loneliness, pain of death and separation, hostility of his own people. All this seemed small compared to the greatness of God he had seen in the vision.

He was not overwhelmed by any problem he faced because he was overwhelmed with the presence of God in His life. When you and I are people who are living conscious of God's presence in our lives we will not be overwhelmed by the challenges we face because we know that we have His strength, support and help. We will not feel drained of our energy because we will experience His supernatural strength energises us.

We will not feel depressed, frustrated, and suicidal but we experience His hope, His encouragement, His joy and His peace and His love.

The problem will not leave us feeling bitter, angry and bitter with God and others or grumbling against God. But it will transform you into Christ likeness.

Romans 5:3-4 - Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

God is just not interested in solving our problems but He is more interested in me and you as individuals. In restoring us in His likeness and holiness. Eph. 5:27 says – God is working in us to present us before Himself without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

**Secondly**, Make it your desire and the cry of your heart for God to show you His glory so you can live in His presence. It's not God's desire to show His glory to only the Israelites – Jews but he wants us to experience and see His manifest glory.

**Thirdly**, Reading God's Word will also reveal His glory and power through all his miraculous works that He Has performed. And when you face challenges remind yourself of some of his miraculous works and exercise your faith and trust in God.

We spend so much time reading books like

How to overcome depression

How to win over anxiety and worry

How to keep your spouse on your side

Principles are taken from God's Word. I'm not against reading books. Spend time reading and meditating on this book – BIBLE. In this book are the words of life and the power of God.

This book has guided me, encouraged me, corrected me, strengthened me, counseled me and given me the hope and strength I need to face my challenges in life.

Your seeds of faith and trust in God will be activated when you read and meditate on His Word. When you begin to apply it in your own life it will help you grow in your walk of faith and trust in Him.

## **Secondly, Ezekiel**

### **II. Spoke the Word**

Let's look at the passage we read earlier in Ezekiel 37 read from Verse 7 'So I prophesied as I was commanded.' Ezekiel prophesied what God had commanded him and as he was prophesying there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

It's important what you declare and speak when you are in a difficult situation. As you are speaking things are working for you or against you depending on what you confess or profess with your mouth.

Prov. 18:21- the tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

When you speak life into your situation You will eat it's fruit of life, healing, restoration of dead situations and positive results.

In the example I gave you about the 12 men who went to spy on Canaan - When the whole Israelite community heard the report of the ten spies they grumbled against Moses and Aaron and said if only we had died in Egypt or in this desert. God heard their grumbling and punished them saying Read Num. 14:28-30 "I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. <sup>28</sup> So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: <sup>29</sup> In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. <sup>30</sup> Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

God did exactly what the Israelites declared with their mouths. Though God had plans for them to live in Canaan.

Even when we pray our words not only have power to touch the heart of God, but our words affect us as we say them and hear them.

In Psalm 31 the writer is lamenting – mourning his situation. He is under attack by the words of those around him. He says, "For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side" (v. 13). But then, just as it looks at though he will fall he writes, "But I trust in you, O Lord; I said, "You are my God" (v. 14).

He doesn't just write it, He tells us he said it. He vocalized it and he heard himself say out loud, "You are my God!" Those words changed things for the Psalmist. He goes from almost falling to standing, to encouraging others. The last verse says, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" • (v. 24).

With our words we can talk ourselves into depression or we can talk ourselves out of depression. We can talk ourselves into a healthy marriage. We can talk ourselves into failure or we can speak words which remind us that we are here for a purpose, we are here by the divine will and plan of God.

Beginning of 2012 I attended a seminar the man of God who was ministering to us narrated an incident that took place in his life. His mother had a couple of miscarriages, She had a heavenly visitation and the angel told her that she will have a son and told her what to name him and said that he will minister God's Word to the nations.

Just like the angel said she conceived gave birth to a son. When she returned home after the delivery he developed an infection in his stomach or intestine (I don't remember) and had to be rushed to the hospital. The doctors did everything they could but couldn't save him. When the doctors declared that the baby was dead the mother told God that He was not a God who lies and not a God who does not keep His promise. She reminds God of His promise that her son will preach the gospel to the nations. God did the miracle her son came back to life. If his mother had believed the doctors and not claimed the prophesy /promise of God I'm not sure if he would be alive today.

Words of prophecy that you receive are not to be just journal but to speak, declare and claim it over your life till you see it happen.

God's Words are not just to be lying here in print but for us to declare. Most mornings I wake feeling tired and exhausted. I know I have so much to complete that day so I begin declaring God's Words over my life...

Ps 68:35 – The God of Israel gives power and strength to His people.

Ps 29:11 – The Lord gives strength to his people and blesses His people with peace.

Col 1:29 – to this end I labour struggling with all His energy that works so powerfully in me.

Last two years I began speaking God's word over problems of my health. - Ps 73:26 -...God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

When I feel sometimes that I lack something in my life

I speak Ps 23:1 – The Lord is my shepherd I shall be in want

When things are good as dead in your life, speak Romans 4:17- the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

To speak the right word don't just read your Bible but memorise scripture so you can declare and profess it over your life over your giants over the situation which look like 'dead bones'.

**Thirdly, As an assurance for Israel's restoration God promises not only to restore Israel physically but also spiritually God promises to pour out His Spirit**

### **III. Spirit of God**

In Ezekiel 37 We see God ask Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones and when he does the bones come together and flesh and skin cover them.

God again asks him to prophesy again and breath enters them.

Then God tells him to prophesy and say to them: In Ezekiel 37:14: <sup>14</sup>“I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.

God only promises to restore Israel back to their land and restore His relationship with Him, He also promises spiritual restoration – He says ‘I will put my Spirit in you.’

In the previous chapter 36 where God is declaring hope and restoration to Israel He says – in vs 26 - I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>7</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. <sup>28</sup> Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Why does he say he will remove the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh?

Heart of stone is a heart that is  
Hardened by sin and confirmed in it  
Self-reliant  
Self-centered  
Dead to the things of God  
Stubborn  
A Heart that is corrupt in nature and filled with the desires of the flesh

This kind of heart cannot be removed by men themselves: nor by ministers of the word; but by the power and grace of God;

A Heart of flesh is a heart that is  
Sensible of sin,  
Spiritual and sanctified  
Submissive to the will of God  
Submissive to the commands of Christ  
A heart where the laws of God are written  
Where the word of God dwells richly  
A heart that desires the things of God.

New Spirit – Is the Holy Spirit that changes the heart to cause the individual to "follow" the Lord (v. 27). Causes us to walk in His statutes and help us to be careful to observe His ordinances. What Moses law could not do God does through His Spirit within us. His dwelling within us enables the "new heart." The heart of stone has been removed and replaced with a "new heart" and "a new spirit."

### **Conclusion:**

God not only restored Israel physically but He restored His relationship back with them and promised to restore them spiritually. Similarly, God does not want to just revive, resurrect and restore situations that seem like dead

bones in your life but He wants to restore you spiritually as well. Are you willing to partner and cooperate with God in the restoration process?





**USEFUL RESOURCES**



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

**YOUTUBE:** <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

**WEBSITE:** <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

**CHURCH:** <https://apcwo.org>

**FREE SERMONS:** <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

**FREE BOOKS:** <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

**DAILY DEVOTIONALS:** <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

**JESUS CHRIST:** <https://examiningjesus.com>

**BIBLE COLLEGE:** <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

**E-LEARNING:** <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

**WEEKEND SCHOOLS:** <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

**COUNSELING:** <https://chrysalislife.org>

**MUSIC:** <https://apcmusic.org>

**MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP:** <https://pamfi.org>

**CHURCH APP:** <https://apcwo.org/app>

**CHURCHES:** <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

**WORLD MISSIONS:** <https://apcworldmissions.org>