

# PM Ezekiel 37:1-14 Preach to the dead bones

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[0:00] It's good singing, wonderful singing.! A portion of Scripture.

Chapter 37 of the book of Ezekiel. Just bow your down at all.

Okay. 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. 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.

And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, you know.

Then he said to me, Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

[1:41] Thus says the Lord God to these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live, and I will lay sinew 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.

So I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones became together, bone to its bone.

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. 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 of O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.

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.

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.

[3:05] We are indeed cut off. 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, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

When I open the graves, and raise you from the graves, O my people, and I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place in you, I will place you into the land.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have spoken. I will do it, declares the Lord. We thank the Lord for his word to us this evening.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We ask, Holy Spirit, that you will come and help us. Help me, as I bring this word, and help the people, that we might all have ears to hear.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I don't know if you remember these two pop songs. Some of you are too young. Some of you are too young.

[4:11] Two pop songs. And they could have been written by the prophet Ezekiel. The first one was called Dem Bones.

D-E-M Bones. Dem Bones, Dem Bones, Dem Dry Bones. Dem Bones. And it was sung by an African-American group called Delta Rhythm Boys.

But they didn't write it. It was sung by them. It's an old African-American spiritual song. And when the slaves in the deep south of America were feeling miserable, they would remember this word of the Lord, that the dry bones would come to life.

And the other song that came to mind was a song that some of you might, you younger ones might remember. It was sung by a group called Boney M.

And it was by the rivers of Babylon. And it was written in 1978. It was a big hit by the rivers of Babylon. And it's taken directly from Psalm 137.

[5 : 24] And of course we know that. I would have danced to that song not knowing a single thing what it meant. I had no idea what it meant. But now I know.

The prophet Ezekiel was the son of Buzai. Ezekiel means God will strengthen. He was a priest in the temple in Jerusalem.

He was taken into captivity in the year 597 BC. When the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar came, King of Babylonia, he came and he captured Jerusalem after a brief siege.

And he carried away 10,000. He carried away 10,000 of the cream of Jerusalem. And we read this in 2 Kings 24-14.

When Ezekiel arrived in Babylon, he was resettled outside the city in one of the many provinces of Babylonia. And then in the fifth year of his exile, which was 593, he was called by God to be his spokesman to the exiles.

[6 : 37] In chapter 33, before the exile, Ezekiel was called to be a watchman to warn them, to warn the people of the impending judgment of God.

And God tells him that if he fails, in fact, if any watchman fails to warn the people, then the blood of the people would be on his hands.

When the watchman, they kind of took it in turns. They weren't a watchman all the time. When it was your turn to be a watchman, you would be on the battlements.

Or you could be up somewhere quite high, looking out the way and looking in the way. They weren't just watchmen looking for the enemy. They were watchmen looking for fires.

House fires. Because they didn't have a fire service in those days and the buildings were made of wood. And so they had to watch both outside and inside.

[7 : 42] And of course, you know that in that part of the world when it was dark, it was pitch dark. They didn't have any streetlights like we have. Or perhaps you live outside in the country, you don't have any streetlights.

But normally, we have streetlights and we take it for granted that we can walk down the road and it's well lit up. But in those days, out in the country, it was pitch dark. And so the watchmen would be peering out into the darkness and looking for the enemy.

And occasionally, he'd look back to make sure the place wasn't on fire. And quite near the watchmen, they had these big kind of cradle things and it would be full of tinder.

And if they heard anything of the enemy coming, they would light the tinder and it would cause light. But you see, the idea was it didn't light up the enemy because they were still in the darkness.

But what it did do was it lit up the watchmen. And so the enemy, when they approached the walls in the darkness, when the light went up, they would see all the watchmen and think better of attacking the wall.

[9 : 01] We are watchmen. We are watchmen. That's what we do. We look out into the darkness to see the enemy.

It's not the people. that when the enemy comes, we are meant to. We are meant to. We are meant to put some light.

We are meant to light up the place. We are meant to be illuminated by the light. And God says, if you fail, if you fail to be a watchman, let's say, if you fall asleep at your watch, that was a big thing in the army.

You cannot, ever, no matter how tired you are, no matter if you have not slept for four or five days, and I mean not slept, you cannot fall asleep when it's your watch.

It's an absolute no-no. And it's the same with us. We are watchmen. And we cannot fall asleep at our watch. And so, we need to be illuminated with the word of God.

[10 : 22] Ezekiel is called to be a watchman. He's also called the son of man. I looked this up. He's called the son of man in this book 90 times. The son of man, which means to be humble, to be righteous.

Of course, we know that the Lord God is the son of man. And like all other true prophets, Ezekiel is given a message from God. And there are two main parts to Ezekiel's message in the book of Ezekiel.

The first one is God will destroy. And the second is God will restore and build. And we know by reading the book of Ezekiel that Ezekiel saw many visions.

And I personally have to rely heavily on commentaries on Ezekiel. Sometimes when I read Ezekiel, I just can't understand it.

but the good thing is that men have written really good commentaries on Ezekiel and to shed some light. And Ezekiel was asked by God to do some unusual things in chapter 3.1.

[11:37] God asked Ezekiel to eat a scroll. He asked Ezekiel to eat the word of God. And it would be like God asking us to tear out some of these pages and eat them.

And you think well that's a bit strange. But you know when you get to look at this you say of course. It makes sense. It's as if you're eating the word of God.

You're digesting the word of God. You're devouring the word of God. And I was telling the folks this afternoon when I got saved someone pressed a wee!

Gideon New Testament into my hand and that was the first time I ever read the Bible. First time ever I read the Bible a wee Gideon New Testament and I devoured that wee book.

I devoured the word of God. In fact the next day when I went to work I was supposed to be working. I was actually sitting in the toilet reading the Bible and the radio come on asking where is David Murray?

[12:39] I was in reading the Bible. And so in chapter 4 Ezekiel was told to lie down for 390 days and pray for the northern kingdom that they would turn back to God and after 390 days he's told to lie on the other side for 40 days and to pray for the southern kingdoms and then in chapter 5 he's told to cut off all his hair and his beard and he's to take it into the city and he's to burn it.

I mean it's strange this is strange and then he's to cut off the rest of it but he's not to burn that he's to throw it up and the wind is to catch it and so that's what Ezekiel was told to do by God but surely one of the most strange things that Ezekiel is asked to do is to preach to these dead bones.

there are several key parts you can get this from the commentary there are several key parts to Ezekiel's prophetic ministry one the holiness of God two the sinfulness of Israel God's judgment the responsibility of the people and God's promise of restoration and it's this restoration that we're going to look at in Ezekiel chapter 37 the vision of the valley of dry bones and the question is can these bones live can these bones live the vision Ezekiel saw is in two stages in the first stage Ezekiel is told to prophesy to preach the word of God to the dead dry bones he's commanded he's commanded the dead dry bones to hear the word of the Lord the second stage of his ministry here as he's told to prophesy to preach into the wind the word the Hebrew word is ruach

R-U-E-H I think that's how you pronounce it ruach which means breath or spirit Ezekiel is to appeal to the spirit to come and breathe upon the dead dry bones the dead dry corpses that they may live so verses 1 and 2 the hand of the Lord was upon me this is an authentic vision the hand of the Lord was upon me the vision starts by Ezekiel telling us that the hand of the Lord or telling the people the hand of the Lord was upon me they then know we now know we know that this is an authentic vision why does Ezekiel start by telling the people that he's writing to those in exile that the hand of the Lord is upon me well because there were many many false and bogus prophets prophets there were many bogus and false prophets the place was awash with men pretending to have a word from the Lord and of course the people for years for decades actually for centuries actually the people flocked after these false prophets these false priests and we know the priests used to cry out peace peace when there was no peace and no wonder the people were confused 2026

Christian churches evangelical organizations moving away from a word from the Lord many many church congregations hear nothing but God loves you and he's got a plan for your life and these poor people hear that week in and week out when I was an army scripture reader there was one regiment one Scots they were the only regiment that had a monthly church service it was on the last Friday of the month and the whole battalion would meet in the gymnasium about 500 men and women and the chaplain would come and the colonel would be piped a piper would pipe in the colonel and it was all done with pomp and ceremony and the scripture was read by usually a captain and then it was the turn of the chaplain to give the word at best his word would be how he went for a coffee during the week with the

[18:10] CO or how he went fishing during the week or how he gave somebody a lift or how he did something and I used to stand at the back of these 500 men and women and I would almost weep he was saying peace when there is no peace and they heard that month after month after month so it's not just for the old testament the vision of the valley of the dry bones isn't just a nice spiritual song sung by African slaves the vision of the dry bones is the centerpiece I believe the centerpiece of the message of

Ezekiel that he had for the exiled people in Babylon the vision God gives to Ezekiel is about an act of hope because the people in exile had lost hope they had lost hope living in Babylon or near

Babylon or in Babylonia the vision that God gives to Ezekiel is that the people would respond to his word the bones represent the Israelites in exile and they've been in exile for about 10 years when Ezekiel has this vision and the hope that the exiled would one day return to their beloved Jerusalem but that hope was almost gone their faith in God was like was like a sand timer where you turn it over and it runs out and you can't prevent it all running out you just can't you can't get in there to stop it it eventually runs to the bottom and their faith was like that their faith had ran out away to nothing they were like dead dry bones that the prophet

Ezekiel was seeing in the valley and for 10 years Ezekiel had been trying to encourage them but it seemed it was hopeless they just were not listening they were as spiritually low spiritually dead as a person can be and so the question is asked how can these bones live and so Psalm 137 4 how can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land the problem was they'd stop singing they'd stop singing all we can do paraphrase all we can do is weep and remember our beloved homeland but if they just thought for a minute if they just stopped for a minute and thought why they were there if they stopped for a minute and asked themselves why are we here then they would know the answer I'll tell you the answer because God is a God who keeps his word and God had sent as I said prophet after prophet warning them about their idolatry warning them about the fact they were listening to these false teachers false prophets false priests and so God sent prophet after prophet but they didn't believe them and now they were reaping they were reaping now what they had sown and God's promises are still true today those of us who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved are saved and those who reject the son will feel the full force of God's wrath on the day of judgment not God loves you and he's got a plan for your life we are saved from the wrath of God we are saved from an eternal destiny in hell that's what we're saved from so Ezekiel in the vision is transported by the spirit and the valley is covered with the bones of dead people it looks like an army that has been slaughtered and left to rot the bones have been there so long that they are bleached white with the sun these are my words that's the picture I get from the valley of the dry bones and when

Ezekiel sees this sorry scene the question is asked in verse 3 can these bones live it's a question that God asks Ezekiel doesn't ask the question God asks can these bones live these dead dry bones God asks the question of course he knows the answer but under normal circumstances they can't live without God they can't live on their own they can never live they will remain dead forever God then commands Ezekiel to preach to the dead and dry bones the only thing that can bring these bones to life is the word of God that's it that's it Ezekiel has to Ezekiel has to by faith be obedient and preach the word of the Lord to these dead dry bones and by the grace of [24:01] God and by the will of God he will cause these dry bones to live verse 5 God God could say God could say bones live and they would have lived they would have came together and they would have lived one word from his mouth and all the dry bones could have came to life but God in his sovereign wisdom has deemed God has deemed that the word has to be preached the word of God has to be preached by his servant Ezekiel that's it that's the way as it is today God has deemed in order to be saved the gospel has to be preached you have to hear the gospel you have to hear the truth the truth has to be told we talked about it this morning the life of Jesus the death of Jesus the resurrection of Jesus the coming again of

Jesus all this has to go into the ears of the sinner whether it's from a church platform whether it's from your home from the pavement in Tesco's it doesn't matter it doesn't matter as long as it's preached as long as the gospel is preached I think we would all agree I hope we all agree that generally speaking that Scotland has lost sight of the word of God it's no longer on people's radar you know talk to people on the street and say well I've got a bible most people I talk to say I've got a bible and without being too cheeky I say where is it holding up a wardrobe or something you know is it under the telly is it behind your couch do you read it most people would testify to having a to having a bible but by and large the nation is spiritually dead by and large we've got a dead dead communities dead councils dead parliament just like these valley of dry bones verse 6 when Ezekiel was preaching the word of God he starts to preach and it tells us the bones start to move and start to come together the rattling he calls it they start to come together to make a body and in verse 8b there's a but and there's you know when you see the word of God and it says but you know something good is going to happen there's a but but there's no breath in them the word of God has raised them but not to life it seems it seems that these bodies that have came together with the sinew and the bones and the blood and everything that makes up a body but it seems that they're

still dead a dead body lifeless motionless

Ezekiel's best expository sermon preached with passion and vigour and the bones have no life in them then in verse 9 there's another command from God prophesy to the breath prophesy to the wind preached to the wind the Hebrew word ruach means breath wind or spirit Ezekiel has to preach to the wind preach into the spirit thus says the Lord God come from the four winds of breath and breathe on these slain that they might live Ezekiel obeys the word of God and starts to preach with all these thousands of bodies lifeless bodies and then suddenly as he's preaching the breath comes into them the spirit comes into them and they stand up on their feet and they are now alive it's just what we were talking about this morning the people standing in

Cornelius's living room and they hear the word of God and Peter's preaching his best sermon with vigour and gusto but what makes the people come alive it's the spirit of God and it's still the same today the breath comes into them the spirit comes into them and they stand up on their feet was this Ezekiel's doing well of course Ezekiel had to be faithful of course he was he was preaching into the wind preaching into the dry bones but what if Ezekiel had given the dry bones his personal testimony what if Ezekiel had stood and told all these thousands of bones how he became a Christian his personal testimony personal testimonies are wonderful things they're not the word of God should never get mixed up with a personal testimony being the word of God because it isn't what if

Ezekiel had told him a few funny stories about how he'd went fishing during the week or how he'd went for a coffee with his best friend during the week surely that wouldn't make the dry bones come alive and what if Ezekiel was the best motivational speaker in the world would these dry bones come to life the answer is no they wouldn't God said to Ezekiel prophesy preach over these bones and hear the word of the Lord the gospel has to be preached spoken nothing else Paul says I preach Christ and him crucified and by and large people don't like it they would rather hear a wee story about how you went fishing during the week they'd rather hear your testimony they'll say that's a really

[31:07] I've told my testimony hundreds of times and people have actually said to me I prefer you before you were a Christian really yeah I much preferred you then because my testimony is not the word of God it's God's word it's God's gospel nothing the preacher can do but preach God's plan of salvation for those to hear God's word it's all of God it's all of God preach to the four ones everyone is to hear God's word everyone all peoples everywhere and we thank the Lord even today young couples leaving their mothers and fathers leaving their homes selling their homes leaving their jobs called by God to go away somewhere to preach the gospel to some

African country we can't even spell because the word of God has to be preached to the whole world I mean I felt called to go into Sazra I only went to Edinburgh but let me say this I didn't go to darkest Africa but I certainly went to darkest Edinburgh without a word of a lie those three battalions that I served were godless almost godless if it wasn't for a few Africans or a few Fijians the place would be utterly godless so I felt I was away I was away doing God's work in a land which had never heard the word of God verse 10 as Ezekiel preached the word of God the breath came into them and they lived and by the grace of

God and the mercy of God there was deliverance and restoration preach the gospel we all know this don't we faith comes by hearing Romans 10 14 13 14 15 faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God and when we do preach it when we do speak it when we do in our own way it doesn't have to be massively theological it doesn't have to be everything that you know about theology it just has to be simple words and then we pray if you ever speak to somebody about the gospel you should always pray never leave that even if it's a one minute two minute conversation or an hour's conversation you should never just leave it there you should take time even standing in the street while people are going past just to pray that that word that you spoke that the Holy Spirit would use that word because we are hopeless at times sometimes we just blabber it out other times we are nervous and we maybe know what to say but we must pray when you speak to somebody about the gospel pray pray for that person pray that the Holy Spirit would use your words our words to bring salvation to that poor soul again the conversation that Nicodemus between Nicodemus and Jesus the Spirit is an absolute necessity for salvation being born again born of God the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit the inner invisible transformation done by the Holy Spirit you know you sit there and you hear the word of God you come in the door you come in the door a sinner bound for hell and you go to the door a sinner saved by grace it's absolutely wonderful and

like the wind that blows you you can't see the

Spirit as he makes the dead sinner alive but all you see are the effects all you see are the effects of their Spirit's work and that's how people can say what happened to you what happened to you and the reason they say that is because they can see they can hear well you're speaking differently really you're you're not the same what happened what an opening what an opening he affects the profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the repentance the turning away from sin you know going into the prison on a Thursday night talk about repentance all the time and even after talking about it 50 times they still don't know what it is so you have to give that wee demonstration of how you're walking away from

[36:36] God you know God's everywhere you have to say that but God's over here and I'm walking away from God I'm a sinner and I'm walking away from God and when I hear the gospel and I repent I'm turning away I'm turning away from my sin and I'm now walking towards God that's my illustration of repentance and that's the evidence that we see when a sinner is saved by grace a real change the evidence of change the way you speak the way you go about your business and here Ezekiel under the power of the Holy Spirit refers to the cleansing that Israel would receive with the people going back after 70 years they go back from Babylon back they don't all go back some of them choose to stay and the people would be purified they would receive new birth Ezekiel 33 hearts of stone taking away hearts of flesh a new life revived and it's the same message today you could be up here your whole life and it's the same message it doesn't change preach to the people nowadays the people say we are not accountable

I'm not a sinner how dare you say I'm a sinner I don't know how many times I've heard that don't you don't you dare say I'm a sinner I'm not a sinner people think they're no longer accountable for their actions people say there is no God there is no judgment but by the way I am going to heaven really and they say what is the point of looking for hope when we know there is no hope just let us live our lives but there's another side to this I think the other side is this that we might say we might be so despondent we are evangelism so despondent that we think we're just preaching into the wall that nobody's listening I don't mean in church I mean out of church you know fewer and fewer people are taking our gospel message fewer and fewer people are receiving a wee bible a wee new testament bible

I get all my bibles for the Gideons they're called good news for everyone I get all my bibles for them wee new testaments and it could take me an hour to give one bible away and you can get despondent you can get despondent you think well no one's listening why are we doing this why are we coming here these folk couldn't care less if there's a god but we do care don't we we do care because we know what it's like to be lost we know what it's like to be on the precipice of hell we know what it's like to be saved and all that goes with that and so the nation is dead and dry our families are dead and dry our towns are dead and dry and some churches are dead and dry they need to hear the word of god it has to be the power of god unto salvation for those who believe that's the only thing that will bring dead spiritually dead people to life the unconverted sinner spiritually dead read that in

Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 don't we while you were dead in your trespasses and sin but god made you alive in christ what a gospel and so friends it's no it's no easy we preach christ we preach the cross we preach the blood we preach christ and him crucified and then we pray we pray the holy spirit would do his work the only thing that will revive a person is the word of god the only thing that will revive a nation is the word of god the only thing that will revive a church or people is the word of god nothing else nothing else will do we thank the lord for his word to us this evening