

PASTOR SCOTT: Hey, Freshwater.

Good morning to you all, or good evening, whenever you're watching this. I'm going to jump right into it. I've got -- I've got some bones here on my table, like really old bones. They're, like, really old. No meat on them, no nothing. They've been out in the forest.

These aren't human bones, just to make clear. It's from a deer. Isn't that cool? This is a vertebrae. It kind of looks like the Imperial Transport, Sean was telling me. It looks like the Imperial Transport. Sorry.

Anyway, when you look at bones, there's a couple assumptions that you make. Bones, we come across, like, a pile of bones, what would we think? We automatically think, "Those things are so dead," right?

They're never going to come back to life. They're just dead. They're probably going to decompose over time and become part of the soil, right, part of the dirt. We would never think, "Oh, wow, that thing has got a chance of life."

It'd be like this: Imagine you're

at an accident, a car accident, and there's two bodies on the street. Actually, there's a skeleton and somebody else who has been injured. The EMT comes up, and the person injured stops breathing, right in that moment. Who is the EMT going to rush to? Is he going to rush to the skeleton that is really dead, or is he going to rush to the person that just stopped breathing?

Imagine if he goes to the skeleton to do CPR. Everybody would be looking, like, "What are you doing? It is a dead skeleton. It is never going to live. You're a little too late to the scene for that one."

He is going to rush to the one who has a chance to live. The reason I'm talking about bones and dead bones, like, really dry, dead bones, is because that's the chapter we're in here, in Ezekiel 37. If you have your Bible, flip to it, turn it on, whatever.

You're going to need to be in chapter 36 and 37 as we read through this story here of God and Ezekiel and this valley. So let me read it to you.

Says this in chapter 37:1, Ezekiel

said, "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. And it was full of bones. He led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O God, you know.'"

So we have this opening scene of Ezekiel 37, in a valley, filled with dry bones. If you're just jumping in here, and you haven't been a part of Freshwater, back pre-Covid-19, we were going through Ezekiel. We're just about ready to finish it here. We have this Sunday and a couple more, and we'll be done with Ezekiel. Let me catch you up to speed on why Ezekiel is in this valley with the Spirit, God the Spirit, looking at all these bones.

What has happened is, from chapter 1 all the way up through chapter 35, God has been bringing judgment against Israel. It's a whole host of things that Israel has done, but, essentially, Israel has rejected God. It's the southern kingdom at this point,

and that's a whole other story. There were two kingdoms, and now there's a southern kingdom. It's the only one left.

God has judged them, conquered by Babylon, and they're in exile because they rebelled against God. They started to worship idols. They brought the idols into their homes. They brought them, actually, into the temple. If you flip over to chapter 36, he says, "There's blood in the land."

They've murdered people. They've killed babies. They killed children to worship idols. It's -- they've taken advantage, like, the leadership, those in power have oppressed the poor. It's awful, what's happened in Israel.

God made a deal with Israel. Deal, covenant, better word, right? There is a covenant he made with them. In Deuteronomy 4, he says, "Look, if this stuff happens, I'm taking you out of the land. This is the promised land. You're destroying it, and I'm taking you out."

They raised their right hand and said, "We're in for the deal. Not only are we

and our families, but every family and generation that's passed down from us is part of this covenant," so they signed up for this.

God comes along and says, "Guys, I'm kicking you out of the land. You've gone so far, you've rejected me."

We catch up, actually, in verse, I think, around verse 20 -- or verse 18 of chapter 36. God says this, he says, "So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they'd shed in the land, for the idols which they defiled it, and I scattered them among the nations."

There's another reason they're standing in the valley though. When they got thrown out of the land, they went to the other nations and listened to what happened. It's like the double -- there's a double whammy here on God's reputation.

Because he says, This is what happens -- or what happened, "I scattered them among the nations. They were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds, I judged them. When they came to the nations, wherever they came, they

profaned my holy name, in that the people of those nations said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord -- or these are the people of Lord,'" right?

"And, yet, they had to go out of his land. I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among nations to which they'd came."

It is not only they rejected God, rebelled against God in all ways possible, but when they left the land, everybody is mocking them and ended up mocking God. You ever heard somebody say, "There's no way I'm going to follow Jesus because of the way that Christian acts"?

Have you ever heard somebody say that? What they're doing, they're not only insulting the Christian, they're really insulting God. They're saying, "This is that kind of God? Why would I follow that kind of God?"

It's the same thing. God had had enough. There's these 35 chapters that spanned over years of judgment. 15 years for them, the nations destroyed. But if you wrap in the

northern kingdom, which happened in 750 BC, you're talking about a lot of years of judgment and people being exiled and people being enslaved.

So imagine this: They're standing in this valley of dry bones. He says, "There is a lot of dry bones everywhere."

And in the valley, when he says, "Can I do this," and Ezekiel's answer is, "Well, only you know," it's this answer of a helplessness.

The field represents -- the dry bones represent utter hopelessness, utter despair. No possibility of return. It is like saying, "Oh, yeah, this deer is going to come back to life."

Like, who would say that? You walk over. I mean, we see deer along the road all the time getting hit, but none of us ever go, "Yeah, that deer can come back to life."

Why? It's beyond hope. That's where Israel was, completely hopeless, lost cause. I wonder if some of you right now imagine this. You're in this valley, and I wonder if this is possibly the story of your

life, or maybe something you're facing right now. It's like you're standing in a valley of dry bones, and God, the Spirit, is walking with you. Everywhere you step, you're trying not to step on bones that just reminds you, this is impossible. There's no way out. There's no way that I could be rescued from this.

This vision that God gives Ezekiel is the beginning. It's actually a description of what God has already started to give to Ezekiel in chapter 36, hope. Chapter 36:1-15, he starts to talk about the land, and he says to the land, the promised land, he says, "I'm going to restore you. I'm going to heal you. My people won't be cursed when they walk on you anymore. I'm going to restore you," he says, "even better than before."

In fact, if you go through chapter 36 and you get to the end, he says this, he says this in verse 35, he says, "It's going to be like Eden," which is a staggering promise. Pulling it all the way back before the curse, like, it is full restoration of the land. That's important. Part of the covenant had to do with the land, and God says, "I'm

going to restore the land."

It's not only the land, it's the people. He says this in chapter 36:24, he says this, he says, "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

It's this promise of spiritual restoration to the people. It's amazing, "I'm going to restore you, and I'm going to give you the ability to obey me. You don't have it, so I'm going to live within you."

It is an unbelievable promise. He goes on with this promise to the people. At the end of chapter 36, he says this, in verse 37, he says, "I will also let the house of

Israel ask for me -- or ask me to do for them," and he goes on to list these requests.

What it is, God has stopped listening to Israel. He stopped listening to them. He said that, "I'm done. I'm done listening to you. You guys have rebelled against me. You've made it clear you don't want me. I'm done."

What he says right here is, "I want relationship with you. I'm going to hear your heart's desire. I'm going to restore that connection where you and I talk to each other again."

It is an unbelievable promise, unbelievable restoration. So you have the land, and you have the people. Over in 37, you then have the nation. You have national promises, the covenant. In verse 22, he says, "I'm going to make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. One king shall be king over them all, and they shall no longer be two nations, no longer divided into two kingdoms."

He is going to reunify the kingdom. No longer this civil war. All Israel will be

one, one nation.

Then he brings in another part of the covenant, the covenant he made with David with the everlasting line of kings that would come through his name, his family line. He says this, "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall have one Shepherd."

That is a big deal to Israel. There's two thrones, two kings, all vying for power, with the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. Everybody is wanting power. He says, "What is going to happen, the line of David is restored to the throne."

That's Jesus, the Messiah, Son of David, from the tribe of Judah, and he is the one that's put on the throne. It is an amazing restoration of all the covenants that God had made with Israel. It's staggering.

Not only that, as we look at these things, we could look and say, "Well, that's great for Israel, but what does that mean for us?"

The part that's really -- I would say, for us, when you go back and you look in chapter 36:24-27, that's the new covenant,

where Jesus comes, and he puts within us -- changes our heart of stone to a heart of flesh, and the Spirit comes to live within us.

I mean, that is totally the new covenant. I mean, Jesus -- in Hebrews, it talks about Jesus, how he will sprinkle us clean with his blood. He washes us clean. That's Christ. That's the new covenant. John 16, Jesus says, "Hey, when I go, I am going to send the Spirit, who is going to live within you."

That had not been fulfilled up until Jesus. All these prophecies, Jesus is the fulfillment of those prophecies. It is incredible. It is for the church. There's parts of this -- and I could be tipping my hand, how I look at these things -- but there's parts of this that's for Israel, he makes expressly for Israel, and, yet, within that, God is saying, "This is the new covenant, as well. This is for anyone who would call on my name."

It is an unbelievable moment. The possibility of life. Jesus actually says, "I am the resurrection. I am the life. This is

for anyone who would call on the name of the Lord."

It's both. So he, with all these in mind, he brings Ezekiel to this valley. It's a vision. It's the Spirit of God in him. A valley filled with bones. It's a vision of Israel. It's the dead people of Israel. All those who have died spirituality, physically. It's just the vision of all the death. He asks Ezekiel, "Do you think these dry bones can live?"

Ezekiel is like, "Well, only you know."

It's not unbelief. It's not doubt. It's just, what do you say, when all you see is death? So he said to Ezekiel to verse 4, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews upon you, and you 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," Ezekiel said, "and as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came 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, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that you 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."

He gives the interpretation of what's going on in verse 11. Spirit says, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are indeed cut off. Therefore, prophecy to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. I will bring you into the

land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people."

The prophecy, this vision, happens in two stages. One is prophesy to the bones life, or to come together, right? Can you imagine in that moment? They're standing in the middle of all of these things, and imagine and hear the sound. It is not just seeing it. It is hearing.

Hearing the rattle of bones, right? Like, what is that? He is hearing it across a whole valley. Are bones whizzing around in the air? Are they going across the ground? Like, what does that look like?

Bones are moving and rattling, sinew, muscle, tendons, organs, all these bodies are put back together. They're not breathing, but they're all put back together, whole. Then he says, "Prophesy breath, breathe on them."

In that moment, they all breathe and stand up. It's this stunning vision of what God wants to do. It's resurrection. Now, I want you to imagine if you were in

exile. You were hearing this message for the first time. Because God makes it real clear, he knows the state they're in when they say this, "Our bones are dried up. Our hope is lost. We're cut off. We're cut off from God, cut off from help. We have no hope."

Can you imagine the first time Ezekiel describes this vision? People in exile, people who lost so many loved ones, people who think it's all over and there's no hope. I've got to think so many of them were like, "Please, don't tell us this if this isn't true. Please don't jerk us around with this kind of news. My heart can't handle that. I can't handle being disappointed anymore. I can't handle another moment of disappointment, loss, death. This -- don't joke around with this."

I wonder if some of you who are listening right now, you're in that same point. Like, you can't afford to hope again. Whatever you're facing, and maybe it's life in total or maybe there's a circumstance here, and you're just looking at this going, "I don't dare hope because it's just been -- it's been a life of

loss and death and defeat and suffering.

Please, do not tell me that."

Maybe some of you, it is so bad, like, you contemplate death. You contemplate taking your life because you can't take anymore of this life where there is no hope and there's no way out.

Here's this vision, where God comes along, and he says, "I have got resurrection power. I am the God who can pull bones together and breathe life. I am the God with all power and resurrection. I can make bones rattle. I can make people breathe again. I can bring life into anything, anything that's dead and beyond hope. I am the God who restores hope. I can do this."

What's interesting is, as we look at the new covenant, he says, "Call on the name of the Lord."

It's this moment, the Spirit of God, Ezekiel, but I think it could be you and God, in this moment. God is standing by you, and I wonder if he is even asking you the question, "Do you think I can do this? Do you want me to do this?"

Imagine yourself, you and God, in this valley. He's asking you the question, and what's your answer? What's your answer? And before you give that answer, before we talk about it, I just want to show you one more thing. Because it flips everything on its head. It really does.

Because in this moment where God starts to say, "Hey, hope is now coming. I'm coming. I'm coming to rattle some bones. I'm coming to open some graves."

But he says, "I want you to understand what's driving all of this."

He says this over in verse 22, he says this, chapter 36, "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among them. And the nations will know I am the Lord. I will vindicate my holiness."

It is an "I statement" after another, I will, I will, I will. Verse 27, "I

will put my Spirit within you. I will do this. I will do that. I will, I will, I will."

Then he says it again, "It is not for your sake that I'm going to act, declares the Lord. Let that be known to you."

He goes on and keeps saying this, "So the nations who are left will know I am the Lord."

Says it again, "You will know I am the Lord."

"I have spoken," says the Lord.

Chapter 37, it is more of these things. Verse 13, "You shall know I am the Lord."

One verse later, "You'll know I am the Lord."

And he ends verse 28 and says, "The nations will know I am the Lord."

See, what God is doing is, in this moment, he is coming in and he says this, "I want everyone to know, I am the Lord. I have resurrection power. I have the power to redeem. I have the power to forgive. I have the power to take what is dead, what could never come back to life, and I can rattle some

bones. I can open some graves. I'm going to do it because I am the Lord, and I want everybody to know it."

He wants you to know that he is the Lord. Like, it's the best thing that could ever happen to you and to me, is to know he is the Lord, and he is the Lord of the grave. He is the Lord of life. He is the resurrection. He is the one who can put the Spirit in us, and we have connection with Him.

So Christ and you in this field, what are you going to say? Maybe today is the day, for some of you who have never thought of this, that God wants to come in and do this thing. It's not just you, it's about him and you getting to know him. And he's probably -- not probably -- he is right next to you, just like this vision with Ezekiel. He is not far away. He's saying, "What do you think? Live again?"

Maybe your answer is, "I don't know;" it's okay. What if today, you said, "Let's do it. Let's do it, Lord"?

What if today is the moment where maybe you, for the first time, tell the Lord,

"I need you. I have no hope. I've just -- this is my life. I'm standing in a valley of dead bones, all kinds of death. I need you to rattle these bones and bring life. I need you to open the graves. I need you to come and save me. I want you in me. I want you to clean me."

If you're living with guilt and you're living with shame, there is this moment in Ezekiel -- not in Ezekiel -- actually, it's after, it's about 50 years -- 40 or 50 years after Ezekiel, where a lot of the Israelites are brought back to the land. There is a moment they hear the law. They haven't heard the law read.

It is in Nehemiah, they gather, and they hear the Word of God. They hear what God says about how to live, and they just start weeping. They just start weeping. They're overwhelmed because they know what they've done. They know they've totally messed it all up. They knew, they knew, they totally walked away from God as a nation. They start weeping.

I love what God does there, he says, "No, nope, no. We're not doing that."

This is not a time to weep anymore. That was then. It is a time for joy because I am restoring."

And if you're sitting there, and you know what you've done, you're like, there is no way God can do this because of who I am and what I -- I'm telling you right now, God is the one who raises people from the grave. He gives them a new heart.

It is simply saying, "Lord, I believe that you are the Lord. Come and save me. I receive your forgiveness. I know I need it. Come and make me live again. Or, Jesus, come and bring this power to raise people from the dead, to raise hopes again. Lord, would you come, and would you begin to speak into the things that are dead in my life, relationships."

God can do it. He's still the same God as back then as he is now, and he can do this.

Let me pray. Holy Spirit, would you speak right now. Would you give each person that sense that you are there? Your Word says it. It is true, so, therefore, you

are there. Would you be so close to each person who is listening. Would you have mercy, and would you invite each person into this moment of seeing you as Lord. Would you show them or even mention to them the things that you want to now bring life, things back from the dead to life, things that you want to restore.

Would you begin to pour hope into people who lost it a long time ago and are scared to hope again. Just give them hope. Jesus, I don't know how this goes. Like, I'm doing this in a room, and it is a different time and, yet, I know what you can do. You span time and you span places, like, you're not limited by that.

Jesus, when they hear this right now, would you fill them with hope. Would you show them that this could be a new season of joy and a time, Lord, to start hearing some bones rattle and seeing some graves open.

Amen.

God bless you guys.