



## THE JEWS IN HISTORY (Part 2)

**Reading:** Ezekiel 37

### The Valley of Dry Bones

In Ezekiel 37 we read about a vision that God gave to the prophet Ezekiel. It was a message for the people of Israel. What Ezekiel saw did not actually happen – it was a prophecy using picture language. Ezekiel lived at the time of the captivity in Babylon, so this vision was given almost 600 years before Jesus’ birth.



The vision has three separate stages.

1. In the vision Ezekiel saw an open valley with a huge number of very dry bones scattered over the valley floor.
2. In the vision God told Ezekiel to prophesy to these bones and, with a great noise, the bones came together, until there were many complete skeletons. Ezekiel saw muscles and flesh come upon the skeletons and then skin covering them, to form dead bodies.
3. In the final part of the vision God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind so that the dead bodies would be filled with breath. As the breath entered, so the dead bodies came to life and stood up, and became an enormous army.

God explained the meaning of this prophecy to Ezekiel in verses 11-14, where it clearly states that the bones represent the nation of Israel.

STAGE	WHAT EZEKIEL SAW	WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT THIS STAGE	MEANING OF THIS STAGE
1	Dry bones scattered in the valley.	<i>Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely’ (verse 11).</i>	The nation of Israel scattered throughout the world and without hope.
2	The bones come together to form skeletons and then dead bodies.	<i>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 (verse 12).</i>	God bringing His scattered people back to the land of Israel – a rebirth of the nation.
3	The dead bodies were filled with breath and brought to life.	<i>I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it (verse 14).</i>	The spiritual rebirth of the nation – they will recognise the authority of the Lord God over their lives.

### The fulfilment of the vision

**Stage 1** – This has already taken place. Soon after New Testament times the Jews were scattered among the nations of the world (as explained at the end of Lesson 13). They were scattered for nearly 2,000 years and suffered terrible persecutions during this time.

**Stage 2** – From about 1850 onwards, the people of Israel started to return to their land. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was signed by the British government, which was at that time in control of the land of Palestine (Israel). This was a promise that Britain would make the land of Palestine a national home for the Jews. However, it was only after



Hitler came to power in Germany that the Jews started returning in large numbers. These were mainly European Jews who had survived terrible persecutions under Hitler. Because of their sufferings they wanted to move to the land of Israel and have a country of their own, where they would be free from persecution. In 1948 the State of Israel was declared. Jews are still returning to the land.

These events happened under God's control. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah

**Jeremiah 30:11** For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end.

**Jeremiah 31:10** He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.

showed that the Jews would survive and return to their land. So stage 2 is being fulfilled now, in our lifetime!

**Stage 3** – This has not happened yet. Most Jews today do not accept that Jesus Christ is God's Son and their promised Messiah. They are still waiting for a different Messiah. They do not recognise that God is in control of world events and working out His purpose through them. But the time will come when the nation of Israel will have a change of heart. Zechariah 14:2-4 shows why!

ZECHARIAH 14:2-4	MEANING
<i>For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.</i>	The time is coming when all nations will be gathered against Israel. Israel will suffer defeat and be desperate.
<i>Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.</i>	God will rescue Israel from complete destruction.
<i>On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northwards, and the other half southwards.</i>	Jesus Christ will return from heaven and will come to the Mount of Olives. There will be a great earthquake.

God will rescue the Jews by sending the Lord Jesus. They will realise that he has returned from heaven and saved them. At last they will recognise him as God's Son and their promised Messiah, and they will realise how wrong their nation was to crucify him. The prophet Zechariah tells us:

*"... when they (the Jews) look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child" (12:10).*

Many of the people of Israel will repent of their nation's sin – they will have a change of heart and accept Christ Jesus as their king. In Ezekiel 37:21-25 God says,

*"... I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone ... I will make them one nation in the land ... one king shall be king over them all ... **They shall not defile themselves anymore** with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions ... **I will cleanse them**; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God ... **They shall walk in my rules** and be careful to **obey my statutes**. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there for ever ..."*

The previous chapter (Ezekiel 36) contains the same message as the prophecy of the Valley of Dry Bones, and has the same three stages:

Ezekiel 36:16-20	Stage 1	The people of Israel are scattered and punished for their wickedness.
Ezekiel 36: 21-24	Stage 2	God regathers Israel.
Ezekiel 36: 25-28	Stage 3	The people of Israel are changed so they recognise God.





### Approximate number of Jews in the land of Palestine / Israel

DATE	NUMBER
1839	6,000
1914	60,000
1931	175,000
1941	474,000
1948	716,000
2005	6,950,000

Here is a prophecy about the sufferings of the Jews. It was written about 1,500 BC.

**Deuteronomy 28:64-67** And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other ... And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.

### The Jews are God's witnesses

God wanted the Jews to show the other nations how to serve Him, but they failed and let Him down. But they are still God's witnesses. God has made many prophecies about them so that other nations can see that He is the living and true God:

*"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 the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And **the nations will know that I am the LORD**, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land" (Ezekiel 36:22-24).*

The prophecies about God regathering the Jews to their land were made thousands of years ago. Almost all of the nations that existed when these prophecies were made have disappeared long ago – but the Jews have survived. People have done their best to destroy the Jews. During the Second World War, Hitler tried to destroy all the Jews in Europe and over six million died in terrible circumstances. Yet the Jews are still here – and back in their land as prophesied, despite the fact that they have been unfaithful to God. The Jews are witnesses to God's power and authority. They are a sign in today's world that God does exist and that He is working out His plan for the earth.

But, as shown earlier, the Jews will change and not stay unfaithful. As explained in Lesson 11, they will learn God's ways at the return of Christ. Jeremiah also foretold this:

*"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:33,34).*

### What about the Gentiles?


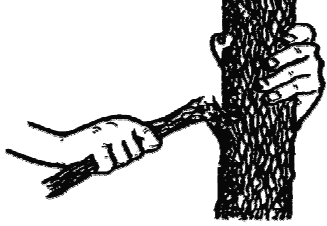
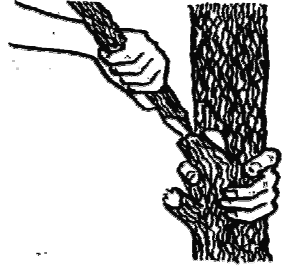
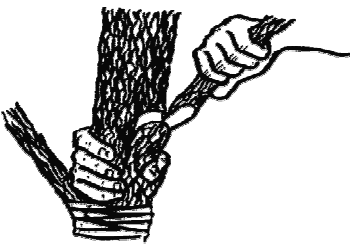
In Old Testament times Gentile believers like Rahab and Ruth were allowed to join the Jews in worshipping the true God. Many Jews in the time of Jesus wrongly thought that God was not interested in the Gentiles. They thought that they alone deserved God's blessings because they were Abraham's descendants through Jacob. But God wants everyone, Jews and Gentiles, to repent and be saved. God showed the apostle Peter that Gentiles were included in His plan of salvation (Acts 10).

The apostle Paul spent many years travelling to preach to Gentiles. When writing to Gentile believers in Rome, Paul used the picture of an olive tree to show that Gentiles can share the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants. They, like Abraham, can be given immortal life on earth when Christ Jesus returns.

Read about the Parable of the Olive Tree in Romans 11 (especially verses 13-25) and note the warnings Paul gives. The parable is about Jews and Gentiles in the purpose of God, and is explained in the following pictures.





<p>1</p>  <p>Israel represented by an olive tree</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Some branches broken off. These broken branches represent the people of Israel who do not believe God (verses 17-20)</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>Branches from a wild olive tree can be grafted in. This represents Gentile believers joining in (verse 17)</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Some of the original branches can be grafted back in. God can welcome back Jews who turn back to Him and believe Him (verse 23)</p>

The Jews are often in the news because they are still God's witnesses. The struggle between the Jews and Arabs continues and will draw in other nations. Zechariah 12:3 describes Jerusalem as:

*"a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it".*

This is when the Lord Jesus will return and bring peace to the earth. Jews and Gentiles will enjoy the blessings of living during the Millennium. Isaiah 19:23-25 shows that this includes people from Arab nations:

*"In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance'."*

### Summary

1. The Jews were scattered throughout the world for nearly 2,000 years. They suffered terrible persecutions during this time.
2. God is now regathering them to the land of Israel, as prophesied long ago.
3. In 1948 the State of Israel was declared.
4. The Jews are God's witnesses. They show that God exists. They also show that God is working out His plan for the earth.
5. Many Jews will have a change of heart when Christ Jesus returns and accept him as their king.
6. God wants everyone, Jews and Gentiles, to repent and be saved.

### A verse to learn: Psalm 72:8

*May he (Jesus) have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!*

**Verses to read: Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Ezekiel 36; Zechariah 14; Romans 11**

Christadelphian Bible Mission, Box CBM, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, BIRMINGHAM, B28 8SZ, UK

