

“The Birth of the Church”

(Acts 2)

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Chapel Pointe
May 23, 2010

I. Introduction

A. Let’s talk about “bones”

1. Under the streets of Paris
 - a. Tunnels filled with bones
 - b. Right after I got my pockets picked
 - c. People have gotten lost down there
2. Songs about bones
 - a. The old spiritual, “*Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones*”
 - b. “These are the days of Elijah”

“These are the days of Ezekiel...the dry bones becoming as flesh”

B. The prophet Ezekiel knew about “dry bones”

1. Like Daniel, Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon (Iraq)
 - a. 2600 years ago
 - b. The Jews had been taken from Israel
 1. Like bones scattered in exile
 - c. But God showed Ezekiel a picture of their return
 1. Like skeletons coming to life
 2. The coming restoration and salvation of the Jews

2. Ezekiel 37:1-14

(1) The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. (2) He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. (3) He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know." (4) Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! (5) This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. (6) I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" (7) So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. (8) I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. (9) Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" (10) So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. (11) Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' (12) Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. (13) Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. (14) I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'"

3. Partially fulfilled after the Babylonian Captivity
 - a. But then 2000 years ago.....scattered
4. We're still waiting for its complete fulfillment
5. Benjamin Netanyahu at site of concentration camp
 - a. The slaughter of 6 million Jews by Hitler
 1. Piles of bones
 - b. Survivors looked like skeletons
 - c. Yet from that Holocaust...Israel was reborn in 1948
 - d. Netanyahu said this is Ezekiel 37 being fulfilled
 - e. Israel emerging out of the bones

C. So what happens next?

1. The “next chapters”.....Ezekiel 38-39
2. Israel would be attacked by a group of nations
 - a. The key attackers will be Russia and Iran
 - b. And God will destroy their armies
3. And the Jews will finally accept Christ as their Lord

Ezekiel 39:25-29

(25) Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. (26) They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. (27) When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. (28) Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. (29) I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declared the Sovereign Lord.

D. The one prophecy the world can't ignore

1. Israel established on May 15, 1948
 - a. Jews coming together from all 4 corners of the world
 - b. Can't be ignored
 - c. Part of God's big game plan
2. Other pieces moving into place
 - a. We also see Iran and Russia working together against Israel
 - b. Talk of nuclear attacks
3. Should we be worried?
4. What happens next?

E. Jesus spoke of our time

*“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near”
(Luke 21:31)*

1. What things...and how near?
 - a. Will discuss the details when we get to Luke 21
2. But today is Pentecost Sunday
 - a. How does Pentecost fit in the big picture?
3. Today.... Eight Key Highlights in the story

II. The Big Picture

Chapter 1 “The Passover”

1. The “Passover lambs”
 - a. Deliverance from Egypt
2. Jesus was crucified....Good Friday
 - a. Deliverance from sin

Chapter 2 “The Resurrection”

1. Jesus rose from the dead...Easter
2. Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples
3. His promise before leaving (Acts 1:8)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth

- a. (John 7:39)—“By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”
 - b. (John 16:7)—“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”
4. And then He left
 - a. And they waited in Jerusalem as instructed

- b. But they also waited for the 3rd and final feast

Chapter 3 “Pentecost”

1. The day they received the “power”
2. The story was pictured for them in the Old Testament
3. The Feasts of Leviticus 23

a. Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5)

1. Commemorated the 10th plague
 - a. The Passover lamb
2. The Passover dinner
 - a. Last supper
 - b. (I Cor. 5:7)—“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”
3. Jesus was crucified as Passover lambs were slain

b. First Fruits (Leviticus 23:9-14)

1. Held the Sunday after Passover
 - a. The day Jesus arose....Easter
2. Tested samples from the barley harvest
 - a. Guaranteed the rest of the harvest
3. (I Cor. 15:20)—“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
4. Guaranteed your resurrection

c. Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22)

1. AKA “weeks” or “harvest”

2. 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits.....Easter
3. Tested wheat harvest
4. Pentecost came exactly 50 days after resurrection
5. Fulfilled in the baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - a. A guarantee—earnest of salvation

4. The day the church was born

(Acts 2:1-4)

(1) When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

- a. They were still waiting in Jerusalem.....v.1
- b. “Suddenly”.....v.2

(2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

1. Sound from Heaven
 - a. Source = Heaven
 - b. Sound = “Pnoes”
 1. (Pa Noisé)
 2. Blast of breath
 - c. But nothing moved
 - d. Filled their house only
 1. Yet the whole city heard
2. Tongues of fire.....v.3

(3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them

- a. Visible sign of invisible change

b. Baptized into body of Christ

c. Now occurs at salvation

d. How the tongues worked

3. Luke recorded—Paul explained

a. (Rom. 8:9)—“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

b. (Gal. 2:20)—“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”

4. Christ is in you!

a. What that means

b. The power available to you

c. The Spirit is God and is in you

5. In two weeks

a. The importance

5. The church was born

a. And God reached out to all people

6. What did the early church look like?

(Acts 2:42-47)

(42) They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. (43) Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. (44) All the believers were together and had everything in common. (45) Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (46) Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (47) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

7. The age of the church began 1977 years ago

- a. We're living in it
 - b. Salvation available to all nations....not just Jews
 - c. Jews scattered like dry bones
8. How and when will it end?
- a. What comes next?
9. God's unfinished business with Israel

III. Later in Luke 21

A. Jesus seated on the Mount of Olives

- 1. Watching the sun set over Jerusalem
- 2. The week of his crucifixion
- 3. Jesus is about to leave them
 - a. But will be back
 - b. To set up His Kingdom
- 4. He talked about His coming Kingdom

B. They ask when “these things” will happen

- 1. “Will it be soon?”
- 2. “And how will we know it's time?”
- 3. Jesus explains how his plan will unfold

******Future chapters include***

Chapter 4 “The Rapture”

- 1. The end of the Church Age
 - a. Mentioned elsewhere
- 2. Christ will call us to heaven

- a. Exactly when is hotly debated
- 3. Then God will focus on Israel

Chapter 5 “The Tribulation”

- 1. The seven years
 - a. A “time of Jacob’s trouble”
- 2. Purpose
 - a. The nations will be judged
 - b. The Jews will turn to Christ as Savior
- 3. Will include things like:
 - a. The Antichrist
 - b. The Abomination of Desolation
 - c. Seven bowls of wrath, seven trumpets, the seven seals
 - d. Great revival
 - 1. The nations
 - 2. The Jews
 - e. Battle of Armageddon
- 4. Will culminate with Christ’s return

Chapter 6 “The Second Coming”

- a. Christ will return to—
 - 1. Judge sin
 - 2. Establish His Kingdom on earth
- b. Luke 21:27-28

*(27) At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
(28) When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:27-28)*

- c. A time of—
 - 1. Agony
 - 2. Ecstasy

Chapter 7 “The Kingdom”

- 1. The thousand year Kingdom reign of Christ on Earth
 - a. The Millennium
- 2. “Thy kingdom come...thy will be done...on earth as it is in heaven

Chapter 8 “The New Heaven & New Earth”

- 1. Not the end.....rather the beginning
- 2. Beyond our understanding

IV. How close are we?

A. The Fig Tree

- 1. The fig tree in my neighbor’s yard in California
 - a. Looked dead during the winter
 - 1. Brown stems
 - 2. No leaves
 - b. But come spring?
 - 1. It began to come to life!
 - 2. Branches become tender
 - a. Sap begins to flow
 - 3. Green instead of brown

- c. Buds began to appear
- d. You could tell that summer was coming!

(29) He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. (30) When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. (31) Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21:29-32)

2. “When you see all these things” then his return is near.....v.33

- a. Which things?
- b. The signs of prophecy just seen

3. But the key is the “fig tree”

- a. And Israel is referred to as God’s fig tree
- b. Shock and awe in 1948

1. Looked dead for 2000 years

- c. The one thing that cannot be ignored

4. But there are other signs (Luke 21:29)

- a. “Look at the fig tree ***and all the trees***”
- b. “All the trees”

1. The other nations

2. Russia and Iran in Ezekiel 38-39

3. The attack prior to the Tribulation

5. My sense of urgency

(32) I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Luke 21:29-32)

- a. May be those of the Tribulation
- b. May be the generation that saw the rebirth of Israel

1. That would be you and me

B. How the world has gotten closer in *my lifetime*...

1. The dry bones have become as flesh
 - a. After 2000 years in exile
2. Seven major wars since then
 - a. But Israel is still there!!!
3. The other trees are lining up
4. Awaiting the return of Christ
5. Take God's promises seriously

C. The prophet Daniel got a glimpse of this day

(Daniel 7:9-15)

(9) As I looked, thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool, His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. (10) A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.....

.....(13) In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. (14) He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

D. Are you ready to meet the Ancient of Days?

1. Does the Spirit of God live in you?
2. Do you have his power in you?
3. Have you claimed Jesus as your Lord and Savior?