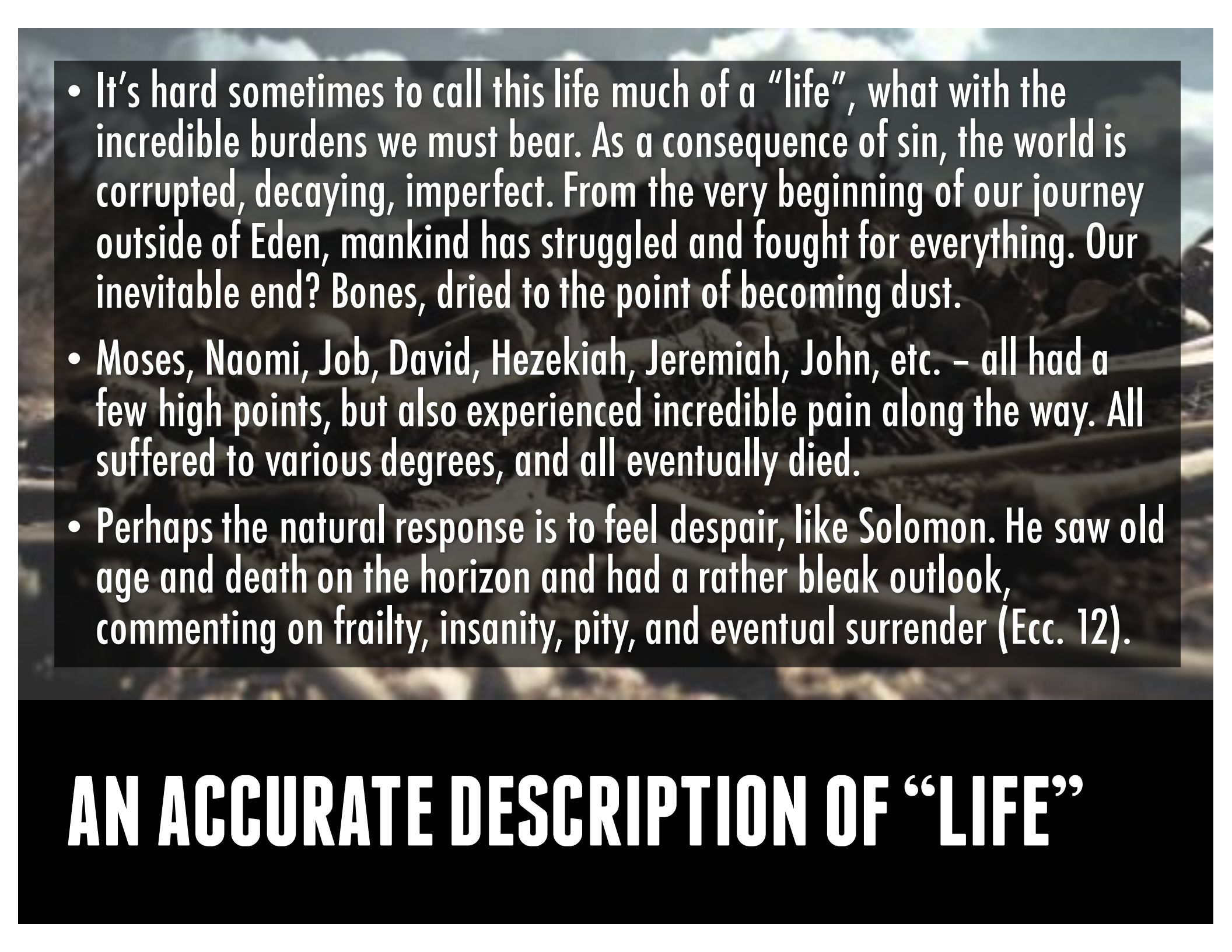




DRY BONES

- This scene takes place in the last phase of Ezekiel's prophecy. God wants to remind the people of Judah, now captive and far from home, that they have a future. While it might feel like they're a forgotten and forlorn people, they are, in fact, closer to the fulfillment of God's greatest promise – the coming of the Messiah and an incomparable time of spiritual rebirth.
- But the fact remains that the people currently feel like dried up bones. They are lifeless, hopeless, without vitality. This is an important point of understanding shown to Judah's remnant: God is not insensitive to the current spiritual and emotional state. He is not uncaring. There is no "get over it" or "not my problem" with Him. He understands their pain and the desire to be renewed and rejuvenated.

EZEKIEL 37

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- It's hard sometimes to call this life much of a "life", what with the incredible burdens we must bear. As a consequence of sin, the world is corrupted, decaying, imperfect. From the very beginning of our journey outside of Eden, mankind has struggled and fought for everything. Our inevitable end? Bones, dried to the point of becoming dust.
 - Moses, Naomi, Job, David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, John, etc. – all had a few high points, but also experienced incredible pain along the way. All suffered to various degrees, and all eventually died.
 - Perhaps the natural response is to feel despair, like Solomon. He saw old age and death on the horizon and had a rather bleak outlook, commenting on frailty, insanity, pity, and eventual surrender (Ecc. 12).

AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF "LIFE"

- Was this a real place? Was it just a vision? Battles in this time period were frequently epic and catastrophic, so the scope of this scene wouldn't have been unrealistic.
- "They were very dry" – An indication of how lifeless they were, as if there are degrees. They could not have been further from life.
- "Can these bones live?" – God wants Ezekiel to be very clear about the impossibility of bones coming back to life. Is there any conceivable way, with all that mankind has the power to do, to bring life back to the dead? This is an important point because there are some things we just can't do. All things are possible with God, though (Matt. 19:26, Isaiah 59:1). Give Him due credit and trust in His power (Jeremiah 10:12-16).

EZEKIEL 37:1-3

- “Hear the word of the Lord” – God’s mere words command the attention of all created material. Just as Abraham had faith in God’s power to animate the dead (Heb. 11:19), Ezekiel is going to witness His power on an epic scale.
- “Breath” – Hebrew “ruach”, which also means “spirit” or “wind.” It’s the life given to flesh by God, the same idea (different Heb. word, though) found when Adam was first formed in God’s image (Gen. 2:7).
- The bones are reassembled, with flesh regenerated in reverse order of decay. Still, there is no life in them without the breath that God grants as a final act of rejuvenation. This is something only God can do.

EZEKIEL 37:4-8

- The reader finally gets to see where this surreal scene is going. God's will is for the dried-up remnants of Israel and Judah to be renewed as a nation – one with a spiritual nature – and return to the promised land from the four corners of the earth. Their "graves" (the various and distant locations of their captivity) would be opened and they would come home to the Lord!
- The result of all this? "You will know that I am the Lord." Faith will be restored, spiritual life made new, their identity will never again be in doubt as God's chosen people ("My people" in verse 13).
- So what is the lesson? Is this nothing more than a prophecy about an important nation returning to a relatively small plot of land?

EZEKIEL 37:9-14

- The context clearly points toward the Messianic reign, not merely the restoration of Israel's physical kingdom. The army is an "exceedingly great" one (verse 10). The emphasis is less on the actual geographic location and more on the idea of "your own land." That is, land that nobody can take from you ever again. Land that cannot be ravaged by foreign powers. Land that cannot change hands with the rise and fall of dynasties. In addition, the prophecy is moving its readers away from physical forms of fulfillment toward an ultimate spiritual end. In essence, the physical will always fail us. We must be raised up as a spiritual people in order to break the hold of sin and death.
- This is exactly how Jesus viewed rebirth in John 3:1ff.

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

- While this prophecy is about the restoration of God's people in the New Covenant, it also illustrates why we should have confidence in the resurrection on the last day. Giving life is just what God does (1 Sam. 2:6, 1 Tim. 6:13, Ac. 17:25, Job 33:4). All the dead will be raised and judged together on that day. This isn't an empty claim or a silly, unfounded belief.
- God also has the power to confront your trials. If He can raise up a valley of dry bones, He will never be shocked or overwhelmed by what we bring before Him.
- Like Nicodemus, we must face the fact that God is the only one who makes the way of life possible. We must submit to His will!

WHAT IT ALL MEANS (PART 2)