


Blood and Bone

by Don Hoesel

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH DON HOESEL
1. *Blood and Bone* is the third book in the Jack Hawthorne series. Is this the final installment?

I think *Blood and Bone* is a suitable completion to the Jack Hawthorne story arc. Over the course of the three books, we've watched Jack's journey from young, unattached skeptic to older, grudgingly responsible believer. And during that process, he's traipsed across the globe, facing down some pretty powerful enemies. After all of that, he probably deserves to settle down and enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Also, when *Elisha's Bones*, the novel that introduced Jack, ended we were left with a lot of questions. And those questions overshadowed the events of the next novel, *Serpent of Moses*. With *Blood and Bone* we close the loop on what Jack started in *Elisha's Bones* and, to me, that seems a fitting place to end the series.

2. The title *Blood and Bone* has something of a macabre flavor to it. Why that title?

There's a thematic meaning to the title. Over the course of three books we've watched Jack evolve from a man only interested in his next archaeological find to a man who values the more important things, such as relationships. It's a theme touched on in *Serpent of Moses* and fully developed in *Blood and Bone*. The "bone" in the title is a clear reference to the bones of the prophet Elisha—the treasure that has dogged Jack's steps for years. The "blood" in the title isn't a macabre element; it's a reference to family—to the people in Jack's life who have become more important to him than the thrill of discovery.

3. Two of the three Jack Hawthorne books are wholly based on the bones of the prophet Elisha. But the bones of Elisha are mentioned only briefly in the Old Testament. Why base these books on such an obscure reference?

It's the obscurity that makes the bones such a compelling literary device. When we read the Bible, we have to understand that it's not exhaustive, that it doesn't provide an accounting for the entirety of the historical record. Consequently it's the gaps in the biblical record that provide such fertile ground for fiction.

I've always been inclined to ask questions, to wonder about the things we don't know. And so when I was looking around for a story idea, the "incomplete" story of Elisha fit the bill. I just had to ask the logical question: If you were an Israeli priest at that time and you were told the bones of Elisha had raised a man from the dead, what would you do? Answering that question birthed the Jack Hawthorne books.

4. What message would you like your readers to take away from reading *Blood and Bone*?

There are a few themes I tried to infuse into the story, the two most pronounced being that growing in faith can be a messy business and that no man can do it by himself. Jack's the consummate loner, who was dragged practically kicking and screaming into the faith, and so part of what I wanted to convey was the way a born skeptic develops a relationship with a God he can no longer deny, yet who also challenges his deeply held convictions. In the process I wanted to force Jack to take a long, hard look at his priorities, and the place his family and friends have among them, and make some hard decisions.

5. Why do you write *Christian* fiction?

At its core, fiction deals with truth—defining it, uncovering it, even reminding people of some of the universal truths they may have forgotten. And Christian fiction, with its focus on the truth-giver, offers a unique jumping-off point from which to deal with these ideas.