



Hello again! I am glad to see you are back for our third lesson on the Book of Ezekiel. Remember that this is an interactive study, and you may ask questions or comment at any time.

Let's pray.

A vertical banner on the left side of the slide featuring the name 'EZEKIEL' in white capital letters, with a background of a bright, glowing sun or fire.

OVERVIEW

A Prophet's Commission (Ezek 2-3)

- 1st - Rebels plus Scroll
- 2nd - Poor Listeners
- 3rd - Lifted by The Spirit
- 4th - Watchman for Israel
- 5th - Unable to Speak

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In this lesson we will look at Chapters 2 and 3 of Ezekiel, and we will learn how the LORD commissions Ezekiel to be His prophet.

In fact, the LORD has 5 different commissions for the prophet. We will discuss each in turn.

First, however, I want to point out that Ezekiel never tells us that he wanted to be a prophet. Ezekiel did not seek the out the LORD. In fact the text does not even say that Ezekiel was praying. Rather, the LORD sought out Ezekiel and commissioned him in a very dramatic way.

Why did God choose Ezekiel? The answer is I don't know. Why did the LORD choose to save any of us?

In Isaiah 55:9 the LORD says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

We often know what the LORD does, but we rarely know why. The LORD is under no obligation to tell us why He does anything He does or chooses anything or anyone that He chooses.

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Review

- Ezekiel is a priest in exile in Babylon
- Has vision of God in 593 B.C.
- Sees the Chariot of God
- Hears a voice speaking to him
- The Spirit sets him on his feet

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As a quick review, remember that the priest Ezekiel was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon 5 years ago. Ezekiel is with other exiles by the Chebar canal, and he is having an incredible vision of God. He is seeing the LORD on a mind blowing chariot powered by cherubim and riding on unearthly wheels.

When we left Ezekiel last time, he was overwhelmed by the vision, and he had fallen face down before the throne and the figure seated there. He then heard a voice speaking.

So, let's read verses 1 and 2 of Chapter 2. I am reading from the ESV. (*Read 2: 1-2*)

Although verses 1 and 2 don't directly say that it is the LORD speaking, it is apparent that the LORD is the speaker, and verse 4 will confirm this.

The term "son of man" (with a small 's') appears some 107 times in the King James Version of the Old Testament. However, other than one time in Daniel 8:17, only the prophet Ezekiel is referred to by God as the "son of man". In fact, the term is used 93 times in the Book of Ezekiel. This is not meant in the same way as the title "Son of man" was used by Jesus. In Ezekiel, "son of man" was used to remind Ezekiel of the frailty of men and his position in relation to the LORD. Jesus used the term to indicate His dual nature as He carried out His mission.

Most translations capitalize the Spirit in verse 2. The Hebrew word is ruwach, but in this case it is referring to the Holy Spirit entering Ezekiel and setting him on his feet. Yes, the Holy Spirit is found in several places in the Old Testament. In Numbers 11 God had Moses appoint 70 men to aid Moses in judging the people, and God takes of the spirit (i.e. ruwach) upon Moses and places it upon the 70 men plus two others in the camp and they prophesied. In 1 Samuel 10:10 the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he prophesied. And there are several other examples as well.

Now that the Spirit has entered into Ezekiel, he is on his feet and he hears the Lord speaking to him.

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1st Rebellious House

- Rebellious = מְרִי mriy – bitter or rebellious
- Rebellious house 14 times in Ezekiel
- “Thus says the Lord GOD” = Adonay Yhovich
- Don’t be afraid

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Now let’s read Chapter 2 verses 3 to 8. (*Read Ezek 2:3-8*)

This is the LORD’s first commission to Ezekiel.

The LORD says that He is sending Ezekiel to the people of Israel even though they are transgressors and they are a “rebellious house”. The term “rebellious house” (or bayith meriy in Hebrew) is used 14 times in Ezekiel in the ESV, including 4 times in Chapter 2 and 3 times in Chapter 3.

When Ezekiel is told to say “Thus says the Lord GOD” it is very serious! If Ezekiel’s statement from the LORD was found not true, then Ezekiel would be a false prophet. The punishment for being a false prophet was death by stoning. As a priest, Ezekiel would know this.

God says that, whether the people will listen or not, the people will know that there has been a prophet among them. So, God is stating directly that He, the LORD, will show the people that Ezekiel’s words are coming from GOD!

The LORD warns Ezekiel not to be afraid of the people no matter the circumstances. He also commands Ezekiel not to be rebellious as the children of Israel are rebellious.

The LORD then makes a strange request... The LORD says “open your mouth, and eat what I give you.”

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Scroll

- A hand = יָד yad – open hand
- Scroll = מְגִלָּה mgillah – roll or volume
- Book = סֵפֶר סִפְרָה cepher – writing, book
- Written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe.
 - Rev 5:1
- Eat the scroll – sweet as honey, fill stomach Ps 119:103, Jer 15:16, Rev 10:10

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Now let's read Chapter 2, verses 9 and 10 and Chapter 3, verses 1 through 3. (*Read 2:9-10 and 3:1-3*)

An open hand holding a scroll appears to Ezekiel. The scroll is spread out before Ezekiel. Typically a scroll had writing on the inside. However, this scroll had writing on the inside and the outside. And, although Ezekiel doesn't tell us what the words say, he does tell us that they were words of lamentation, mourning, and woe, which in Hebrew are synonyms. The only other place that I know of in scripture where there is a scroll written on the inside and outside is found in the hand of The Father in Rev 5:1. That scroll is the title deed to the earth, and it is also full of lamentations, mourning, and woe.

The LORD then tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll, and then go speak to the house of Israel. Just so you will understand, this would have been a substantial roll of papyrus or leather! So eating it was a miraculous event. Ezekiel is told to fill his stomach with it.

When Ezekiel eats the scroll, he reports that it is as sweet as honey in his mouth. This should sound familiar. Here are some similar verses from elsewhere in the Bible.

Ps 119:103, "How [ev](#) sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Jer 15:16 "¹⁶Your words were found, [ai](#) and I ate them, and [ai](#) your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, [ak](#) for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts."

Rev 10:10, "And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter." Notice that John ate a little scroll and John's stomach was made bitter, but we are not told that Ezekiel's stomach was bitter, even though the words were of lamentation, mourning, and woe.

We should all be filled with the Word of God. And it should be sweet to us. In Ezekiel's case, I believe he has now been filled with the Word of God concerning the judgement to come on Judah and the other nations.

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2nd Poor Listeners

- Commanded to speak God's words to the "house of Israel"
- God states they will not listen to Ezekiel because they will not listen to God
- If God had sent Ezekiel to a foreign nation, then they would listen (e.g. Jonah)
- God hardens Ezekiel against the hardness of the people

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We come now to Ezekiel's second commission from God. Let's read Chapter 3 verses 4 through 9. (*Read Ezek 3:4-9*)

How would you like to have someone ask you to speak to a group that you knew ahead of time were not interested in what you have to say? Would it make you feel better if you knew that your message was vital to them? What if you knew that they would be angry at you for your message, even though it could save them? How about if you knew that there was a different group you could speak to who would happily receive the message, but you can't speak to them?

Well this is exactly what the LORD is directing Ezekiel to do in the LORD's second commission to the prophet. God tells Ezekiel that the house of Israel, Ezekiel's own people, won't listen to his words, because they won't listen to God's words. However, if God had sent him to a foreign nation, then those people would have listened. This is in fact the way the story of Jonah plays out, with the result that the entire city of Nineveh repents. That would be like everyone in Washington D.C. repenting and turning to Christ!

God tells Ezekiel again not to fear them, and that God has made him even harder and more focused than the people Ezekiel will talk to.

We have a commission from the LORD as well. We are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature and make disciples. We are not to be afraid of them just as Ezekiel was not to be afraid. He was filled with the Spirit and he was in God's hand, and so are we.

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3rd Lifted by The Spirit

- Ezekiel told again to go and speak to “your people”
- Ezekiel told to hear and receive God’s words into his heart – remember them
- The Spirit transports Ezekiel to Tel-avib
- Hears the LORD behind him leave amid the sound of an great roar or rumbling
- Ezekiel sits “overwhelmed” for 7 days

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We have now come to Ezekiel’s third commission. Let’s read Chapter 3 verses 10 through 15. (*Read Ezek 3:10-15*)

Once more the LORD tells Ezekiel to go and speak God’s word, which Ezekiel is to hear with his ears and to receive into his heart (i.e. to commit it to memory). Ezekiel is to speak whether the people will hear him or not.

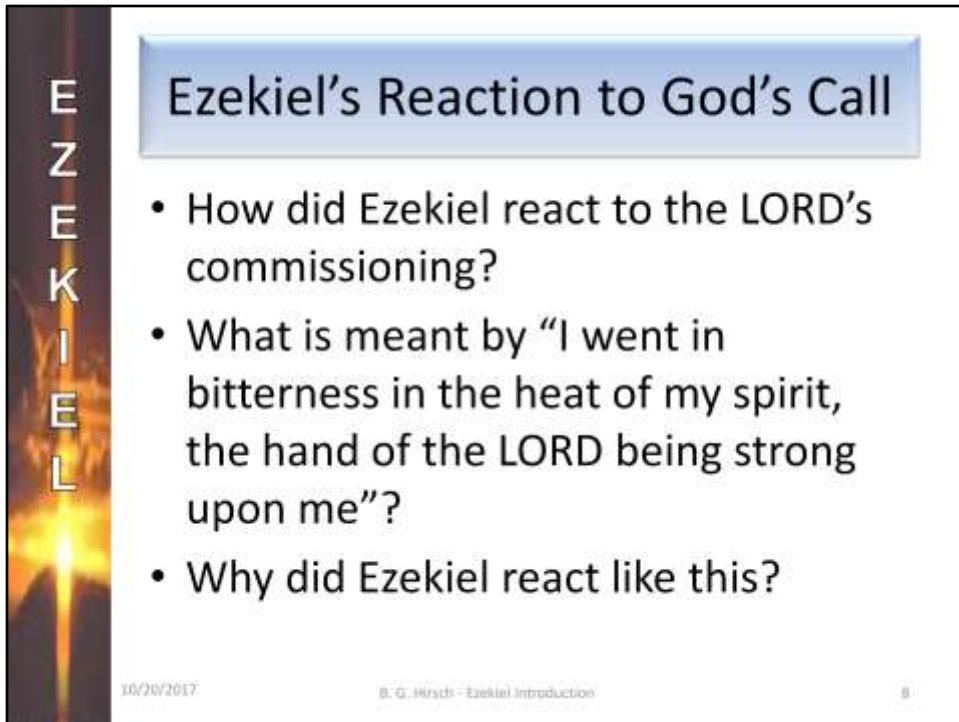
Then, the Spirit lifts Ezekiel up and transports him from his location, we are not told exactly where he was, to Tel-avib. This is similar to Philip the evangelist’s experience after he witnesses to the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.

While Ezekiel is being lifted up he hears the cherubim and wheels and then a tremendous roaring sound behind him.

There is most likely a scribe’s copy error in verse 12. The word “Blessed” was probably the word “Arose”. The ending letters of the words in that day were very similar (Hebrew *berum* vs. *barak* – *mem* vs. *kaph*). This would change the text from, “I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake. Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!” to “I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake as the glory of the LORD arose from its place!”

The Spirit delivers Ezekiel to the location of the exiles in Tel-avib. And Ezekiel sits “overwhelmed”, *מַשְׁמָם* *shamem* in Hebrew, which means stunned or stupefied. I suspect that anyone who experienced what Ezekiel experienced would be similarly stunned.

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The slide features a vertical title 'EZEKIEL' on the left, with each letter of the name aligned with a corresponding image of a flame. The main title 'Ezekiel's Reaction to God's Call' is in a blue box at the top. Below it, three bullet points are listed. At the bottom, there is a date '10/20/2017', a name 'B. G. Hirsch - Ezekiel Introduction', and a small number '8'.

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's Reaction to God's Call

- How did Ezekiel react to the LORD's commissioning?
- What is meant by "I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me"?
- Why did Ezekiel react like this?

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I left something out on the previous slide. And that was Ezekiel's reaction to the call of the LORD to Ezekiel.

In verse 14 the second part of the verse says, "and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me." What does this mean?

Ezekiel was actually angry and bitter at God's calling him to be a prophet. Ezekiel said the hand of the LORD was strong upon him, which means in Hebrew that it was fastened like a restraint on Ezekiel.

Why did Ezekiel feel this way? Shouldn't he have rejoiced in the call of God?

We don't know what Ezekiel's life was like in the last 5 years. It may have been relatively peaceful. But now, Ezekiel knew that the LORD had assigned him a terribly difficult task, which he was constrained to perform. He also knew from history that being a prophet for the LORD was a dangerous, difficult, and intense calling that would turn his life upside down. Furthermore, Ezekiel's message was to be one of doom and destruction for quite awhile.

Think of others that the LORD called, like Moses, Gideon, and Paul. Were they eager to serve? No! But, they all glorified the LORD and fulfilled their calls despite the hardships. And God was with them as Jesus is with us.

How do we feel about God's call on our lives? Do we, like Isaiah say, "Send me LORD"?
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4th Watchman for Israel

- Watchman = תִּצְפֹּה tsaphah - to peer into the distance
 - 2 Samuel 18:24-27
 - 2 Kings 9: 17-20
- Give Warning – blood required at Ezekiel’s hand?
- Wicked turns from wickedness
- Righteous turns from righteousness

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We have now arrived at the Lord’s fourth commissioning of Ezekiel. And in some respects, this is the most intense and unsettling of the five.

So let’s read Chapter 3 verses 16 through 21. (*Read Ezek 3:16-21*)

After 7 days of being overwhelmed, the LORD speaks to Ezekiel again. And the LORD tells Ezekiel that Ezekiel is now a watchman for the house of Israel. In the Hebrew, watchman is tsaphah, which means to peer into the distance. This is significant, because as we will see a watchman’s job is not to defend or deliver but to observe and to warn. You can read 2 Sam 18:24-27 and 2 Kings 9:17-20 to see what a watchman does.

When the LORD speaks to Ezekiel, Ezekiel is to give God’s warning to the people.

In case Ezekiel doesn’t understand the seriousness of this commission, the LORD explains it to him in verses 18 to 21. If Ezekiel does his duty and warns the wicked and the righteous, then Ezekiel has delivered his soul. In Hebrew the word for delivered is נָצַל natsal, which means to snatch away, and the word for soul is נֶפֶשׁ nephesh, which means a breathing creature. So in some sense, which is not explained, Ezekiel is snatching his very life and breath from judgement by giving warning as he has been directed.

Note that the LORD says that when a righteous person, in this case under the law, turns from their righteousness that they will die in their sin and their prior righteousness will not be remembered. Unless they heed Ezekiel’s warning and turn back. The LORD also says that the life of a wicked person who turns from their wickedness will be saved.

Does this apply to us today in the age of Grace? Paul in 1 Cor 10:12 says, “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”. So, I think it is important to know and follow Jesus’ commands and to warn those who are perishing.

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5th Unable to Speak

- Ezekiel see the glory of the LORD again
- Ezekiel is to shut himself in his house
- Ezekiel is to be bound so he can't go out among the people
- Ezekiel is rendered mute except when the LORD opens his mouth
- Those who will hear, let them hear
 - Mark 4:9, 4:23, 7:16; Rev 2-3

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We come now to God's fifth and final commission to the prophet Ezekiel. Let's read Chapter 3 verses 22 through 27. (*Read Ezek 3:22-27*)

The hand of the LORD fastens once more on Ezekiel, and he is told to go out into the valley. Ezekiel obeys and there he sees again the glorious vision of the LORD as he had seen in Chapter 1.

Once more Ezekiel falls on his face. And once more the Spirit enters into Ezekiel and sets him on his feet.

The LORD then orders Ezekiel to shut himself within his house. This is both for Ezekiel and for a witness to the people. The LORD intends to confine Ezekiel to delivering to the people only what the LORD has told Ezekiel to say.

In addition, Ezekiel is to be bound so that he can't go out among the people unless the LORD allows it.

Lastly, to prevent Ezekiel from criticizing the people apart from God's words, Ezekiel is rendered mute. Ezekiel is only able to speak when the LORD opens Ezekiel's mouth, at which time Ezekiel is to tell the people "Thus says the Lord GOD." You can imagine that the people would become aware of the significance of Ezekiel speaking.

God then says something to Ezekiel that should be familiar to you. The LORD says, "He who will hear, let him hear, and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse." Jesus used very similar words in Mark 4:9, 4:23, and 7:16, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." or "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." In Revelation chapter 2 and 3 The glorified Jesus says to each of the 7 churches, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" We also need to be listening for what the LORD is saying to us.

Questions?

Read Chapters 4 and 5 for next time.

Let's pray.