



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 2

*Theme: Ezekiel's call, preparation, and office  
as a watchman*

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**Theme:** Ezekiel's call, preparation, and office as a watchman

The book of Ezekiel starts as it means to continue. After the briefest of narrative introductions we are presented with the first in the series of oracles that constitute the book. This initial oracle belongs to the group of highly visual prophecies that are prefaced by the expression 'the hand of the LORD was upon me'.

Although not explicitly stated, this oracle represents Ezekiel's commissioning as a prophet. The vision was intense: we are told that the prophet sat stunned for several days after it (3:15). In the vision he sees a radiant being seated on a sapphire throne below which dash four futuristic creatures. He hears a voice which tells him that he is to be sent to declare what the Lord says to the people of Israel in exile. He is warned about the stubbornness of the people, yet he must speak, whether they listen or not.

There is much in this vision which is not explained, especially in relation to the cherubim and their accompanying wheel-like guides. The general sense of the symbolism is to convey the all-encompassing majesty of God. The fearsome cherubim each displayed faces representing the highest forms of life—man, the lion (king of the beasts), the ox (foremost of the domestic animals) and the eagle (chief of the birds of the air). They travelled 'like flashes of lightning' accompanied by their all-seeing wheel-guides. Yet these magnificent creatures were but throne attendants. They stood beneath the throne of God. If the attendants were awesome how much more so was the King himself.

Ezekiel was told that he was to be sent to the people of Israel and his message would contain warnings and woes, but he would find them sweet (3:1–4). The whole experience changed Ezekiel's life. He would be empowered to deliver his message, despite his people's resistance to it. He needed such strengthening, for his task would not be easy.

It was not through reason, or cold logic, or contemplation of long-term benefits that Ezekiel sensed his prophetic calling. It was because he had glimpsed the awesomeness and majesty of God. The commands of God are easier to follow when we contemplate who has issued them.<sup>1</sup>

Having seen a vision of God's glory, Ezekiel was now ready to receive his commission as the Lord's servant. "The essential coherence between the vision and the ensuing commission is that the God who has revealed himself in a theophany of judgment turns Ezekiel into a prophet of judgment."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Eze 1:1). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Constable's Notes on Ezekiel

## **Ezekiel 2:1**

**And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.**

**[Son of man]** Son of man. Hebrew: *ben* (HSN-1121) *adam* (HSN-120), son of Adam. This term is used of Ezekiel 93 times, always without the definite article. In the N.T. it is used of Christ, by Himself 86 times, and by John 2 times (John 12:34), making 88 times in all, and always with the definite article. Without it the term denotes a human being, a natural descendant of Adam; with it, it means the second Man, the last Adam, taking the place of the first Adam dispensationally in the plan of God (the place he forfeited by sin), and succeeding to the universal dominion over the earth, which was committed to Adam (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:4-8).<sup>3</sup>

**[Son of man]** found more than 90 times through the book, is an expression which is used by God to refer to Ezekiel. It calls attention to the prophet's humanity and frailty as opposed to God's deity and strength. The title appears once in Dan 8:17, where it designates the person who receives the kingdom from the "Ancient of Days" and offers it to the saints. Jesus freely used the expression in reference to Himself (Matt 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; Mark 2:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9; Luke 5:24; 6:5; 7:34; John 3:13; 12:23; 13:31). Cf. Dan 7:13, note. In using this title, Jesus may have in mind the usage by Daniel, or like Ezekiel He may be calling attention to His humanity, as He called attention to His deity with the title "Son of God."<sup>4</sup>

**[Son of man]** - a title. Not like the "Son of Man" title of Jesus Christ. This one shows up in this book and expresses "son of the dust."

**ESV:** Ezekiel is never addressed by name, but 93 times as **son of man** (Hb. *ben-'adam*), out of a total of 99 times for the phrase in the OT; Daniel is the only other person so addressed in the OT (Dan. 8:17). The Hebrew idiom "son of x" indicates membership in a class. "Son of man" identifies Ezekiel as a creature before the supreme creator. This highlights the humanity and thus the proper humility and dignity of the servant before Israel's almighty, transcendent God.

**[stand]** - it is interesting that Ezekiel had to be told to stand. Ezekiel was probably pretty overwhelmed.

**Clarke: And he said unto me**—In the last verse of the preceding chapter we find that the prophet was so penetrated with awe at the sight of the glory of God in the mystical chariot, that "he fell upon his face;" and, while he was in this posture of adoration, he heard the voice mentioned here. It is evident, therefore, that the present division of these chapters is wrong. Either the first should end with the words, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord," verse 28; or the first verse of this chapter should be added to the preceding, and this begin with the second verse.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>4</sup> Believer's Study Bible

<sup>5</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

**[stand upon thy feet]** Twenty commands commissioning Ezekiel (Dake):

1. Stand upon your feet (Ezekiel 2:1).
2. You shall say to them, Thus saith the Lord God (Ezekiel 2:4).
3. Be not afraid of them (Ezekiel 2:6).
4. Be not afraid of their words.
5. Be not dismayed at their looks.
6. You shall speak My words to them (Ezekiel 2:7).
7. Hear what I say to you (Ezekiel 2:8).
8. Be not rebellious like them.
9. Open your mouth and eat what I give you.
10. Eat what you find; eat this roll, and go to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 3:1).
11. Cause your body to eat, and fill your bowels with this roll (Ezekiel 3:3).
12. Go, get you to the house of Israel.
13. Speak My words to them (Ezekiel 3:4).
14. Go, get you to them of the captivity, to the children of your people (Ezekiel 3:11).
15. Speak to them and tell them.
16. Hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me (Ezekiel 3:17).
17. Arise, go forth into the plain (Ezekiel 3:22).
18. Go, shut yourself in your house (Ezekiel 3:24).
19. You shall not go out among them (Ezekiel 3:25).
20. You shall say to them (Ezekiel 3:27).

**[I will speak unto thee]** Note the position of the prophet in receiving the message from God. He was commanded to stand upon his feet—not kneel down or fall prostrate; he was already prostrate when God spoke to him (Ezekiel 1:28).

**LAN:** The immortal God addressed Ezekiel by calling him *son of man*, emphasizing the distance between them. It is amazing that God chooses to work his divine will on earth through finite, imperfect beings. We are made from the dust of the ground, yet God chooses to place within us his life and breath and to ask us to serve him.<sup>6</sup>

**McGee:** Apparently after the vision Ezekiel had seen, he was not standing up, but was down on his face. He will now receive a call and commission and an endowment with power for the office to which God has called him.

“Son of man”—God addresses him as “son of man.” This title is found exactly one hundred times in the Book of Ezekiel. Daniel, also, is called the son of man. Only these two men in the Old Testament were called by this title. This is also the title that the Lord Jesus appropriated to Himself; eighty-six times in the New Testament He used this title for Himself. It speaks of Him in His rejection, His humiliation, and His exaltation; He is the Son of Man.

Ezekiel did pass through a great deal of suffering. If someone were to ask me whose position I would rather not have—Daniel’s, Jeremiah’s or Ezekiel’s—I would say I would rather not have Ezekiel’s. Certainly Daniel was in danger in the court of Babylon—just ask the lions down there in the den where Daniel spent a night with them!

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<sup>6</sup> Life Application Notes, Life Application Bible

If God had not intervened, Daniel would have been lion food. But I would prefer his job to Ezekiel's because he at least had luxurious quarters there in the palace of the king of Babylon. Also, Jeremiah at this time was pretty much retired, although he had been in grave danger during his active ministry until the deportation of the people into captivity. However, this man Ezekiel was sent to do a hard job, a very difficult job. He had the job of speaking to an apostate people. He was sent to people who thought they were God's people, but actually they were in rebellion against God.

The Spirit of God now comes upon Ezekiel and prepares him for this office:<sup>7</sup>

**Constable:** Yahweh instructed Ezekiel to stand on his feet because the Lord wanted to speak with him.

"Not paralysis before him is desired by God, but reasonable service. . . . It is man erect, man in his manhood, with whom God will have fellowship and with whom he will speak."

"The expression "son of man" [Heb. *ben 'ish*] is a common Semitic way of indicating an individual man (Ps. 4:2; 57:4; 58:1; 144:3; Jer. 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43)."

"Son of man" (Heb. *ben 'adam*) is a distinctive title in this prophecy and stresses the humanity of the prophet in contrast to the supernatural creatures and the deity of the glorious Lord. The Hebrew title appears 93 times in Ezekiel and only once elsewhere in the Old Testament (Dan. 8:17). In Daniel 8:17, this title, *ben 'adam*, describes Daniel. In the New Testament, "son of man" describes a person who is both God and man (cf. Dan. 7:13, *ben 'ish*). This was the favorite title that Jesus used of Himself in the Gospels (Matt. 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; Mark 2:28; 10:45; Luke 19:10; et al.). In view of its use in the Old Testament, "son of man" stressed Jesus' true humanity and His dependence on the Spirit of God as well as His deity. "Son of" indicates a close relationship even when it does not describe literal son-ship (e.g., "son of peace," i.e., a person associated with peace, Luke 10:6).

"By this title Ezekiel would be reminded continually that he was dependent on the Spirit's power, which enabled him to receive the message of God (v. 2) and to deliver it in the power and authority of the Lord—"This is what the Sovereign LORD says" (v. 4)."<sup>8</sup>

Now you remember he fell on his face when he saw this whole thing, saw the throne of God and the brightness and the flashes and all. He fell on his face, and he heard a voice of one speaking. And the voice said, "Stand up."

## **Ezekiel 2:2**

**And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.**

**[spirit entered into me when he spake unto me]** The Holy Spirit entered into Ezekiel in the same sense He comes into men in N.T. times, so the theory that O.T. saints did not

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<sup>7</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (3:443). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>8</sup>Notes on Ezekiel 2 0 1 0 E d i t i o n Dr. Thomas L. Constable

have the Spirit in them—only upon them temporarily—is erroneous. See O.T. Spiritual Experiences.

When God told Ezekiel to **stand**, He also enabled him by **the Holy Spirit** to stand. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit did not indwell all believers but indwelt selected persons temporarily for divine service (cf. Ex. 31:1-11; 1 Sam. 10:9-11; Ps. 51:11; Ezek. 3:24).<sup>9</sup>

**Clarke: And the spirit entered into me**—This spirit was different to that mentioned above, by which the wheels, etc., were moved. The spirit of prophecy is here intended; whose office was not merely to enable him to foresee and foretell future events, but to purify and refine his heart, and qualify him to be a successful preacher of the word of life. He who is sent by the God of all grace to convert sinners must be influenced by the Holy Ghost; otherwise he can neither be saved himself, nor become the instrument of salvation to others.

**And set me upon my feet**—That he might stand as a servant before his master, to receive his orders.

**[set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me]** Eight things happened to Ezekiel (Dake):

1. He saw the vision of glory (Ezekiel 1:4-28).
2. He fell prostrate before God (Ezekiel 1:28)
3. He was commanded to stand up (Ezekiel 2:1)
4. The Spirit entered into him (Ezekiel 2:2).
5. The Spirit spoke to him.
6. The Spirit set him upon his feet.
7. He heard the Spirit speak.
8. He was commissioned (Ezekiel 2:3-3:27).

**LAN:** We can only imagine what it was like for Ezekiel to experience this vision. Certainly there was much he did not understand, but Ezekiel knew that each part had significance because it came from God. When God saw Ezekiel's open and obedient attitude, he filled him with his Spirit and gave him power for the job ahead. God doesn't expect us to understand everything about him, but to be willing and obedient servants, faithful to what we know is true and right.

**Holy Spirit, Leaders**—The Spirit frequently lifted Ezekiel up (2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) and transported him to other locations (3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24). Similar work of the Spirit appears in 1 Ki 18:12; 2 Ki 2:16; Ac 8:39; Rev 17:3; 21:10. The unusual action of the Spirit did not matter as much as the prophetic message that followed. The action of the Spirit drew attention to the prophet so that the message would be heard.<sup>10</sup>

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cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>9</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1230). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>10</sup>Disciple's Study Bible

**McGee:** The Spirit of God gave Ezekiel the power to do the job He had given him to do. I believe that when God calls you to do a job He will give you the power to do that job. In fact, God's work can *only* be done with the power of God. If God has called you to do a certain thing, He'll give you the power to do it. The best position you can come to is to recognize that you are not able in your own strength to do the job the Lord has given to you. Moses finally came to the realization—after forty years in the wilderness—that he could not deliver the people. God said to him, “I can do it through you.” God called him to deliver the people, and he was able to do it—not because there was anything in Moses, but because there was a great deal in God.

This is so practical for us today: it works in the ministry, in the pew, and on the mission field. A young couple once came to me saying they had been called to the mission field. I questioned them carefully because I frankly did not feel they were called, although I could not be sure and certainly did not want to stand in their way. They went to the mission field but came back a casualty. As I talked to them, I found they were bitter and felt that God had let them down. They had been willing to go, willing to be martyrs; yet God had not used them. I asked them, “Did it ever occur to you that if you had been called to the mission field, He would have given you the power to do the job?” They had never looked at it from that viewpoint. My friend, we need to recognize that, if we are called of God, He is going to give us the power to do the job. The important thing then is to make sure that we are truly called of God to do a certain thing.

Ezekiel was called to do a harder job than any man I can think of. God is going to tell him about his job. I think that if God had told me something like this when I entered the ministry I would have said, “Now wait a minute, Lord, I'm handing in my resignation right now. I think I'll continue in my job as a bank clerk and see if I can work myself up in the banking world.” I'm glad He didn't tell me what He told Ezekiel, because I must confess I am a coward and I come from a long line of cowards. I admire this man Ezekiel. Notice what God tells him about his job:

**ESV: 2–4** The characterization of the people of Israel as **rebels** sounds a distinctive note throughout the commissioning vision. This deep-seated trait (and their fathers; cf. [v. 4](#)) will be emphasized again in Ezekiel's retrospective of Israel's history in [ch. 20](#). Ezekiel is sent to speak on God's behalf (you shall say to them), but no content is given—yet.

**Constable:** The Holy Spirit, or perhaps a wind sent from God,<sup>80</sup> entered Ezekiel as the Lord spoke to him and enabled him to stand up and hear what the Lord was saying (cf. 3:24; Exod. 4:10-15; 31:1-11; 1 Sam. 10:9-11; Ps. 51:11; Jer. 1:4-19; Dan. 8:18; Acts 2:4; Eph. 5:18; et al.).

First he saw, now he is hearing this word of the Lord.

God addresses Ezekiel as mortal, or literally “Son of Adam” or “human,” ninety-three times in the book. “Son of Man” conveys Ezekiel's mortal status in contrast to God. Midrash Tanhuma, Zav 13 understands the term disparagingly as it notes that unlike Isaiah's restrained account of God's Revelation, Ezekiel relates everything that he saw.

The spirit (lit “wind”) of the Lord, elsewhere associated with prophecy (see 1 Kings 22:21-23), PREPARES Ezekiel to serve as a prophet (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 1 Kings 18:12).<sup>11</sup>

### **Ezekiel 2:3**

**And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day.**

This becomes particularly heavy when you realize that they had been sent prophet after prophet after prophet to get them to repent, and they did not repent.

**Missler:** They were supposed to keep (till) the ground for 6 years and then the 7th year was to be a Sabbath for the land. They did not keep that. So after 490 years, God said, “OK, you owe me 70.”

2 Chronicles tells us that is why they were enslaved in Babylon for exactly 70 years. It was to make up for those years when they had violated His laws with respect to the land. He took the land away from them for 70 years. (More on this in Chapter 4).<sup>12</sup>

**[I send thee to the children of Israel]** Four commissions to Ezekiel (Dake):

1. First commission (Ezekiel 2:3-3:3)
2. Second commission (Ezekiel 3:10-16)
3. Third commission (Ezekiel 3:10-16)
4. Fourth commission (Ezekiel 3:17-27)

**[to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me]** Eightfold description of Israel:

1. A rebellious house (Ezekiel 2:3,8; Ezekiel 3:9,26-27)
2. A sinful house (Ezekiel 2:3)
3. Impudent children (Ezekiel 2:4; Ezekiel 3:7)
4. Stiffhearted (Ezekiel 2:4)
5. Briers and thorns (Ezekiel 2:6)
6. Scorpions (Ezekiel 2:6)
7. Most rebellious (Ezekiel 2:7)
8. Hardhearted (Ezekiel 3:7)

**Clarke: Son of man**—This appellation, so often mentioned in this book, seems to have been given first to this prophet; afterwards to Daniel; and after that to the MAN Christ Jesus. Perhaps it was given to the two former to remind them of their frailty, and that they should not be exalted in their own minds by the extraordinary revelations granted to them; and that they should feel themselves of the same nature with those to whom they were sent; and, from the common principle of humanity, deeply interest themselves in the welfare of their unhappy countrymen. To the latter it might have been appropriated merely to show that though all his actions demonstrated him to be GOD, yet that he was

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<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Study Bible, Jewish Publication Society, Tanach Translation

<sup>12</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org.

also really MAN; and that in the man Christ Jesus dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When the acts of Christ are considered, it is more easy to believe his eternal Godhead, than to be convinced that the person we hear speaking, and see working, is also a man like unto ourselves.

**LAN: 3-5** The world of business defines success in terms of giving customers what they want. Ezekiel, however, was called to give God's message to the people, whether they would listen or not. The measure of Ezekiel's success would not be how well the people responded, but how well he obeyed God and thus fulfilled God's purpose for him. Isaiah and Jeremiah also prophesied with little positive response (see Isaiah 6:9-12; Jeremiah 1:17-19). God's truth does not depend on how people respond. God will not judge us for how well others respond to our faith, but for how faithful we have been. God always gives us the strength to accomplish what he asks us to do.

**Revelation, Faithfulness**—God's prophet represented God's faithfulness to His people even when they rejected Him. The prophet's task was to be faithful in proclamation and not worry about being rejected.

The resistance to Ezekiel as a prophet prefigures the resistance to Christ as final prophet (Luke 11:49–51; see Jer. 1:9).

**Constable:** The Lord explained that He was sending Ezekiel to the Israelites who were rebellious and had rebelled against Him. The current generation and their forefathers had transgressed against the Lord to the present day by violating the Mosaic Covenant. The history of Israel had been "one unbroken apostasy."

"The word 'rebellious' can be understood as the key to the attitude of Israel throughout the book."

"Though the technical language of covenant is sparse in Ezekiel, the notion of covenant is everywhere presupposed."

So, he is now commissioned by God to go, not to the house of Judah only, but to the whole children of Israel.

### **Ezekiel 2:4**

**For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.**

**[Thus saith the Lord]** - is a very heavy phrase. By saying that, one exposed himself to be charged guilty of a capital crime. The Nation Israel, even in its idolatry, took the concept of blasphemy very seriously, and if you pretended to be speaking on behalf of God Himself, you took your life into your hands.

Deut 18:20-22 deals with how they were to put you to the test, and if you failed the test, they stoned you. Here Ezekiel was instructed to declare that which he was going

to have to declare as the Word of God itself.<sup>13</sup>

**Clarke: Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord**—Let them know that what thou hast to declare is the message of the LORD, that they may receive it with reverence. Every preacher of God’s word should take heed that it is God’s message he delivers to the people. Let him not suppose, because it is according to his own creed or confession of faith, that therefore it is God’s word. False doctrines and fallacies without end are foisted on the world in this way. Bring the creed first to the Word of God, and scrupulously try whether it be right; and when this is done, leave it where you please; take the Bible, and warn them from God’s word recorded there.

**LAN: 4-5** God called the people “obstinate and stubborn” because they refused to admit their sin. Rebelliousness was the nation’s primary characteristic at this time. Even when God pointed out their wrongdoing, the people ignored the truth. Is God pointing at some sin in your life? Don’t be stubborn—confess your sin and begin to live for God. By obeying him now you will be ready for God’s final review of your life (Matthew 25:31-46).

**Sin, Rebellion**—Judah’s sin of rebellion had become so entrenched that her fate was sealed: exile in Babylon. God sent the prophet Ezekiel to proclaim the message of judgment upon Judah. Even when God’s people become hopeless rebels, He does not leave them without a prophetic word of warning and hope. For rebellion, see note on Isa 1:2-4. The parallel expression revolt (Hebrew *marad*) comes from Near Eastern laws and covenant treaties. It refers to mutiny against a legally-established vassal relationship. Sin is agreeing to be God’s servant and then actively backing out of and refusing to abide by the agreement. Only an obstinate and stubborn people (literally stiff of face and firm of heart) would dare mutiny against God.<sup>14</sup>

Ezekiel was called to speak God’s message to the children of Israel. God describes them as a rebellious nation and more specifically impudent and stubborn—literally “stiff-of-face and hard-of-heart children” (see 3:7). The Hebrew term for *rebellious* indicates a breaking of the covenant relationship. Thus says the Lord **GOD**: GOD told Ezekiel to emphasize the divine origin of his messages by using these words. Like Moses (Ex. 3; 4), Ezekiel would speak in God’s name only what God commanded him. The term *Lord GOD* combines a title indicating God’s sovereignty (*Adonai*) and His personal name (*Yahweh*) conventionally translated with GOD or LORD in small capital letters).<sup>15</sup>

**McGee:** This is a tremendous statement that God makes: “I am going to send you to these people—they are ‘a rebellious nation.’” The word *rebellious* occurs again and again in the Book of Ezekiel. They are a people in rebellion against God.

The word that is translated “nation” is not the word that God generally used for His chosen people. The word in the Hebrew is *goi*, and it is the word that Israel used to speak of the Gentiles, the pagans, the heathen. What has happened is that Israel has sunk to the

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<sup>13</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org.

<sup>14</sup> Disciple’s Study Bible

<sup>15</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

level of the heathen people who lived round about them. God says that they are “a rebellious nation”—they’ve rebelled against Him—and they are “impudent children.”

My friend, the hardest people to reach with the gospel today are church members—those who are in church and who have rejected the gospel and rejected the Word of God. Although they are in church, they are actually against God. They think that being a Christian means to be nice little boys and girls. They play at church—it’s a nice game for them. They seek to be sweet and to keep their noses clean. They want to live a life on the surface which is very sedate and comfortable. They don’t want anyone coming in and telling them they are lost sinners who need to be saved and to become obedient to God. They are hard people to reach, and my heart goes out to my brethren who are in the ministry today—they are sitting on a hot seat. And I would counsel any young man who is considering the ministry to be sure about his call. If he is not sure of his call, maybe he should sell insurance or something else rather than go into the ministry. To be in the ministry today is not easy *if* you are going to stand for the Word of God.

**Constable:** The people to whom God was sending Ezekiel were stubborn and obstinate (lit. hard-faced and hard-hearted), as children often are. The prophet was to announce to them what their master Yahweh said. Ezekiel used the title "Lord God" (Heb. *'adonay Yahweh*, Sovereign Yahweh) 217 times. It emphasizes both God's sovereign authority and His covenantkeeping faithfulness.

### **Ezekiel 2:5**

**And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.**

**Clarke:** Yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them—By this they shall be assured of two things:

1. That God in his mercy had given them due warning.
2. That themselves were inexcusable, for not taking it.

If the rebellious people refused to listen to Ezekiel’s message, Ezekiel would still prove himself a true **prophet** of God by continuing to proclaim God’s messages (see also v. 7). Read 2 Kin. 21 for an example of the nature of the rebellion that had led to their captivity.<sup>16</sup>

**McGee:** God says to Ezekiel, “I am calling you to go to these people, and whether they hear you or whether they don’t, they are going to know that there was a prophet of God among them—I’ll make sure of that.” After Ezekiel was gone, the people would say that he was certainly a prophet of God, although they disagreed with him.

I’ll be frank with you, all I want after I’m gone is for people to say that I preached the Word of God the best I knew how. That is what is important.

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<sup>16</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

**3-5.** Ezekiel's assignment was difficult. His message was to be directed to a rebellious nation ("rebellious" occurs eight times in chaps. 2 and 3, and eight times elsewhere in Ezek.), people who were obstinate (cf. 3:7) and stubborn. Rather than acknowledging God's judgment and confessing their sins, the Jewish exiles viewed their time in Babylon as a temporary setback that would be alleviated by their soon return to Jerusalem. They refused to admit their sin or to believe the threat of impending judgment on their disobedient nation.

Ezekiel's task was to declare God's Word. Whether they responded was the people's own responsibility. But in the end (when the events did transpire), they (the rebellious house; cf. comments on 3:9) would know that a prophet had been in their midst.

As a prophet Ezekiel would be a channel for the Sovereign LORD ('ăḏōnāy Yahweh). Ezekiel used this title of God 217 times. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it occurs only 103 times (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., s.v. 'ăḏôn, 'ăḏōnāy, 1:62-3). This name stresses both God's sovereign authority and His covenant-keeping faithfulness.<sup>17</sup>

**Response to God's message is no measure (2:5).** This is so hard for us to realize. It is so easy to become discouraged when others do not respond to our sharing of God's Word. Yet the Lord told Ezekiel, and through him us, not to measure the importance of our ministry by how others respond. God's people are called to faithfully communicate God's Word. It is faithfulness, not success, that is the measure of our worth as His servants.<sup>18</sup>

**ESV: 5-7** The label **rebellious house**, used almost like a refrain in these verses, is unique to Ezekiel (see also 3:9, 26-27; 12:2-3, 9, 25; 24:3). This label joins 2:2-4 in pointing to a deeply ingrained bent to rebellion, while treating the Judean nation as a whole. On the parallel of vv. 6b-7 to 3:9b-11, see 3:9b-11.

**Constable:** As a result of Ezekiel's ministry these people would know that a prophet had been among them, that God had sent a messenger to them, whether they chose to listen or not. They might not listen because they were a rebellious "house" (nation), but Ezekiel was not to change his message to accommodate his hearers.

I'm going to send you to speak in My name, and whether they listen or not doesn't matter. They are a rebellious people. When you're through, they're going to know that there was a prophet among them.

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chaps. chapters

cf. *confer*, compare

s.v. *sub verbo*, under the word

<sup>17</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1230). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>18</sup>Richards, L. O. (1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996). *The Bible readers companion* (electronic ed.) (487). Wheaton: Victor Books.

## **Ezekiel 2:6**

**And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.**

**Clarke: Be not afraid of them**—They will maltreat thee for thy message; but let not the apprehension of this induce thee to suppress it. Though they be rebels, fear them not; I will sustain and preserve thee.

**LAN: 6-8** God gave Ezekiel the difficult responsibility of presenting his message to ungrateful and abusive people. Sometimes we must be an example to or share our faith with unkind people. The Lord told Ezekiel not to be afraid and rebel, but to speak his words, whether or not the people would listen. He also wants us to tell the Good News, whether it's convenient or not (2 Tim. 4:2).

**LAN: 6-10** Three times God told Ezekiel not to be afraid. When God's Spirit is within us, we can lay aside our fears of rejection or ridicule. God's strength is powerful enough to help us live for him even under the heaviest criticism.

Apparently Ezekiel was going to be in danger, but God says, "Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words." The Lord really lays it on the line to Ezekiel just what his job was going to be like.

**Constable:** Ezekiel was not to fear the Israelites to whom he was to minister even though their reactions to him might be as uncomfortable as pricking thorns or stinging scorpions (cf. Josh. 1:9). Their words and actions would not be able to harm him even though they were a rebellious people (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 1:18-19).

**Chuck Smith:** Now, he's telling him, "Hey, they're not apt to receive you. They're rebellious, they're impudent children, and they may take the thorns and pull the thorns across you. A method by which they would punish people is take these thorns and pull them across a person's body. They have some really heavy thorn bushes over there. But don't worry about that."<sup>19</sup>

## **Ezekiel 2:7**

**And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious.**

**Whether they will hear**—Whether they receive the message, or persecute thee for it, declare it to them, that they may be without excuse.

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<sup>19</sup> Chuck Smith, Pastor and Founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

**6-7.** Three times God told Ezekiel, Do not be afraid. He needed this encouragement because the task was difficult (briers and thorns are all around you) and even dangerous (you live among scorpions). Ezekiel learned his lesson well. Nowhere does the book hint that he cowered in fear or hesitated to proclaim God's message.

God said Ezekiel was to speak His words. Verses 7-8 are a bridge between two major sections. The first section (1:4-2:7) reports the visions for the work. The next section (2:8-3:11) gives the message for the work. This One who gave Ezekiel the word is the Sovereign Lord whom Ezekiel had just seen in the vision.

#### THE MESSAGE FOR THE WORK (2:8-3:11)

Ezekiel's vision of God's glory provided the perspective and motivation for his task. But he also needed a message, the content of which came from the Lord (cf. the "word of the LORD," 1:3). The prophet was told to receive God's word (2:8-3:3) and then to deliver it (3:4-11).<sup>20</sup>

Whether these rebels listened or not, Ezekiel was to announce God's messages to them. "The measure of success in God's work is not always in terms of the amount and frequency of visible response. Success is to be measured in terms of our obedience to the words, commands, and will of God regardless of the visible results [cf. Matt. 25:21, 23; 1 Cor. 4:2]."<sup>21</sup>

"Rare is the person who can set out on a task knowing that people will hate him or her for doing it. But this is exactly what Ezekiel was called to do. His faithfulness stands as a challenge to ours."<sup>22</sup>

This pericope contains 10 commands, and it is the center of the chiasm in chapters 1—3. "The Lord's charge to Ezekiel emphasized the absolute necessity of hearing, understanding, and assimilating God's message prior to going forth as a spokesman for the Lord."

All the Lord's representatives must do the same (cf. Ezra 7:10).

### **Ezekiel 2:8**

**But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.**

[**eat that I give thee**] Ezekiel was commanded to eat a scroll on which were written within and without lamentations, mourning, and woe (Ezekiel 2:8-10). This was similar to what John did in Rev. 10, and with the same effect.

**Clarke: Open thy mouth and eat that I give thee**—Take my word as thou wouldst take thy proper food; receive it into thy heart; ponder it there, that it may be the means of strengthening and preserving thy soul, as proper nourishment will strengthen the body, and preserve from death. And the people to whom such messages of God may come

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cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>20</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1230). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>21</sup>Cooper p. 77

<sup>22</sup>Smart p. 39

should so hear it read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, that it may become efficient nourishment to their souls.

**eat:** In contrast to rebellious Israel, Ezekiel was to set an example by being receptive and listening to God's message. **hand ... scroll:** Compare Jer. 1:9.<sup>23</sup>

Israel had chafed under the bit of divine instruction and rebelled (v. 3) against God and His word. But Ezekiel was to **open his mouth and eat what** God gave him. He was to be receptive and responsive to God's words.<sup>24</sup>

**ESV: 8–10** The request to **open your mouth and eat** comes without any indication of what is to be given. The missing "content" of v. 4 is about to be provided, not as food but as the **scroll of a book**. This phrase (elsewhere found only in Ps. 40:8; Jer. 36:2, 4) emphasizes the scroll's physicality. When it is unrolled, the **writing** is visible front and back: the scroll is full, just as Ezekiel soon will be (Ezek. 3:3). Its **words** are all audible, though their precise content remains unspecified.

**ESV: 8–3:3** The demand to **eat** the scroll immediately tests Ezekiel's obedience, a matter of contrast with the rebelliousness of his compatriots. The progression from command to compliance moves through three moments of speech and response (2:8–10; 3:1–2; 3:3). The picture of eating, symbolizing an appropriation of the words of God, anticipates Rev. 10:9–11.

The Lord warned Ezekiel not to be rebellious like the people of Israel but to listen to Him and to receive the messages that God would feed him (cf. Deut. 8:3; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; John 6:53–58).

### **Ezekiel 2:9**

**And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;**

**[roll of a book]** The book was the ancient kind—written on skins sewed together to make a long piece which was rolled up from each end. The writing was usually on one side, but in this case it was on both sides—within and without, as if running over—to express the abundance of the lamentations, mourning, and woes with which the roll or scroll was filled (Ezekiel 2:9–10).

**LAN: 9-10** Ancient books were usually scrolls, one page (up to 30 feet long) rolled up simultaneously from both ends. Normally, scrolls had writing on only one side. But in this case, the warnings overflowed to the scroll's other side, showing the full measure of judgment about to descend on Judah.

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<sup>23</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

v. verse

<sup>24</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1230). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The phrase “scroll of a book” refers to a scroll, or rolled manuscript. The codex or leaflet format was not used for books until the first century A.D. This particular scroll was inscribed on both back and front, indicating an extensive message. The nature of that message was judgment.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ezekiel 2:10**

**And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.**

A few similar passages are: Jer 15:16; Rev 10:8-11.

Scrolls - only 2 in Scripture which were written on both the inside and the outside. One is here given to Ezekiel to eat. The other is in Rev 5, the 7 sealed scroll which also brings judgment.

**[written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe]** Compare with Rev. 5:1; Rev. 10:2-10.

The unusual feature of writing on both sides of a scroll indicates the magnitude of the nation’s transgressions and its need for lengthy **lamentations** (see Zech. 5:3; Rev. 5:1). Although Ezekiel would later bring words of comfort and consolation (see chs. 33–48), his first prophecies from God contained only sorrow and sadness.<sup>26</sup>

**9-10.** The specific word was then revealed to Ezekiel. **A hand** (probably God’s) **stretched out to** him from His throne with **a scroll**. This is supported by the fact that the One speaking, God, also gave Ezekiel the scroll (3:2).

The scroll had writing **on both sides**. Scrolls were the common means for recording and preserving God’s Word in Israel. Leather, papyrus, or parchment sheets were joined together in long rolls. The writing was in vertical columns, and very seldom was writing done on both sides of a scroll (but cf. Rev. 5:1). Many interpretations of why the scroll was written on both sides have been given, but the best explanation seems to be that God had much that He wanted Ezekiel to communicate to Israel.

The message consisted of **words of lament and mourning and woe**. This accurately summarizes the contents of Ezekiel 4-32. It does not, however, reflect the latter part of the book, in which the prophet spoke of Israel’s restoration. This could explain, in part, why Ezekiel was recommissioned (chap. 33)—the content of his message was substantially changed after his message of woe was fulfilled.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Believer’s Study Bible

<sup>26</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

cf. *confer*, compare

chap. chapter

<sup>27</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1230). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Constable:** Ezekiel then saw a hand extending a scroll to him. The Lord spread it out before the prophet and he saw that it was full of lamentations, mourning, and woes (i.e., bad news; chs. 4—32). Normally scrolls had writing on only one side, but this one had writing on both sides; it was full of revelation (cf. Rev. 5:1).

"This accurately summarizes the contents of Ezekiel 4—32. It does not, however, reflect the latter part of the book in which the prophet spoke of Israel's restoration. This could explain, in part, why Ezekiel was recommissioned (chapter 33)—the content of his message was substantially changed after his message of woe was fulfilled."<sup>28</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** So, the Lord says, "You know, now you're to eat what I set before you." And the Lord sets before him this scroll. And he opens it out and all of these woes and lamentations and mournings are written therein.

The eating of it, of course, is symbolic, even as in the book of John. John was given the scroll and he did eat it. And when it was in his mouth, sweet as honey, but in his belly it was bitter. Here he is told to eat the words. Now, you read of a person devouring a book. We say, "Oh, he really devoured that book." Now you don't mean that he roasted it and put ketchup on it and took his knife and fork and ate the thing. But he absorbed it, and even as your food becomes a part of your being, so words, ideas, thoughts can become a part of your being as you absorb them. They affect your life. So he is told to eat, to digest in a sense, or eat, devour the words that are here.

We are to feast on the Word of God that it might become a part of our lives. We're to have an appetite, a hunger for the Word of God. And as we partake or eat of God's Word, it is as it was to Ezekiel, sweet, it was good, the Word of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Dyer, in the Old ... pp 661-62