

Ezekiel
Ezek 3:1-11
SS Lesson for 07/23/2017

Devotional Scripture: 2 Tim 4:1-5

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Ezek 3:11

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

DIVINE WORD GIVEN (EZEK 3:1-3)

Accepting God's Word (1)

Accepting God's Word as the actual word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

Accepting God's Word with its power (1 Thess 1:5)

Accepting God's Word and being born again (1 Peter 1:23)

Accepting God's Word like pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:2)

Accepting God's Word and let it bear fruit (Col 1:6)

Understanding God's Word (2)

Understanding from God's precepts (Ps 119:104)

Understanding from following God's Word (Ps 111:10)

Understanding from the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-17)

Understanding from God's mouth (Prov 2:6)

Delighting in God's Word (3)

Delighting in God's commands (Ps 112:1)

Delighting in God's decrees (Ps 119:16)

Delighting in God's statutes (Ps 119:24)

Delighting in God's Law (Ps 119:174)

DIVINE MISSION ASSIGNED (EZEK 3:4-7)

A mission to preach God's Word (4-5)

Preach eagerly (Rom 1:15)

Preach where the gospel is not known (Rom 15:20)

Preach the gospel (1 Cor 1:17)

Preach voluntarily (1 Cor 9:17)

Preach in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2)

A mission that will be rejected (6-7)

A rejection that is a rejection of God (1 Thess 4:8)

A rejection of God as king (1 Sam 8:7)

A rejection that will condemn man (John 12:48)

A rejection that will bring God's wrath (2 Chron 36:16)

A rejection that displays conceitedness and a lack of understanding (1 Tim 6:3-5)

DIVINE ASSURANCE PROVIDED (EZEK 3:8-11)

Assurance to have courage (8-9)

Courage because there should be no fear (Josh 1:9)

Courage because through prayer God can make one bold (Acts 4:28-31)

Courage because of entrusting oneself to God (1 Peter 2:23)

Courage because God will rescue (Jer 1:8)

Assurance to be faithful (10-11)

A faithfulness that is based on a Divine promise (Heb 11:11)

A faithfulness that should be committed to (1 Peter 4:19)

A faithfulness that is irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

A faithfulness that means it will be done (1 Thess 5:24)

A faithfulness that cannot be disowned (2 Tim 2:13)

A faithfulness that is unswerving (Heb 10:23)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examine the details and the implications of the call of **Ezekiel**. The **study's aim** is to teach that a call from God requires that the one called respect the details. The **study's application** is to ensure that we are always sensitive to the call of God and its implications.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Ezek 3:11

And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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).

2:8. 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.

2:9-10. 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.

3:1-3. God had already told the prophet **to eat** what He would give him (2:8). Now God repeated the order, specifically telling him to **eat** the **scroll** he had just received. The purpose was so he could **then go and speak to the house of Israel** (cf. 3:4 about "Israel"). His task as a prophet was to deliver God's word to God's people. As Ezekiel **ate** the scroll, **it tasted as sweet as honey**. Though his message was one of judgment, it was still God's word. The sweetness came from the source of the words (God) rather than the content of the words (judgment). This same thought was expressed by David (Ps. 19:10), Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16), and the Apostle John (Rev. 10:9-11).

3:4. After receiving God's word, Ezekiel was told to proclaim it. His hearers were to be **the house of Israel**. Does this refer to all Israel (including those still in Palestine) or only to those in exile in Babylon? The parallel command in verse 11 implies that only those Israelites "in exile" were in view. Yet the phrase "house of Israel" cannot be limited to them. In many of the 101 occurrences of this expression (or variations of it) in the Book of Ezekiel, more than Israelites in captivity were included (cf. 6:11; 8:11-12). Ezekiel's message was for the entire "house" (i.e., people) of Israel, though he specifically proclaimed it to a small portion of that household then in captivity. God's specific task for Ezekiel was to **speak** God's **words to them** (Israel). At first these verses seem to repeat 2:3-7, but the focus of this passage is different. In 2:3-7 Ezekiel was commissioned as a prophet, and in 3:4-9 he was equipped for his task.

3:5-6. Ezekiel's task did not involve linguistic obstacles. He was **not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language**. **Obscure** (lit., "deep") **speech** suggests words that are unfathomable or difficult to comprehend (e.g., the language of the Assyrians, Isa. 33:19). The words **difficult language** (lit., "heavy tongue") can denote speech that is thick or sluggish. Moses used this expression to describe his lack

of eloquence (Ex. 4:10). In Ezekiel 3:5 it probably means **words** that are hard to **understand** because of a language barrier (v. 6). Ezekiel faced no such hurdle. His message was not for some distant land with an exotic language; it was for **Israel**. Though going to another culture and nation would have been difficult because of the language problem, the results elsewhere would have been more rewarding. Had Ezekiel gone to another nation, **they would have listened** to him. Amazingly those who knew nothing of the true God of the universe would have been more responsive than those who claimed His name.

3:7. At the outset God warned Ezekiel not to expect dramatic results from his ministry (cf. Isa. 6:8-13; Jer. 1:11-19). In contrast with the open reception Ezekiel would receive from other nations, **Israel was not willing to listen** to him. She would reject him because she had rejected God. The people were not prepared to “listen to” or respond to Ezekiel **because they were not willing to listen** to God. Their spiritual deafness was acquired over long years of exposure to and rejection of God’s word given by the prophets. Israel’s response to God in the past was a harbinger of the response Ezekiel could expect. The nation’s malady extended to **the whole house of Israel**. This does not imply that every Israelite had rejected God, for Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were all ministering faithfully. God was referring to all parts of Israel rather than every Israelite. Rebellion had made its way into the royal household, the temple, the courts of justice, and into every city and town in the land. Though individuals here and there were still responding to the Lord, the nation as a whole had turned from Him.

3:8. Taking God’s message of judgment to an unyielding people was a tough task. God encouraged Ezekiel by offering him the needed strength. The prophet need not worry about the weight of his assignment. God promised to **make him as unyielding and hardened as they were**. The word for “hardened” (*hāzāq*) is the same word that forms part of Ezekiel’s name—*yehezqē’l*, “God will strengthen” or “God will harden.” When he heard his name he was reminded of God’s promised strength.

3:9. God also said He would **make Ezekiel’s forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint**. Figuratively “forehead” expresses determination or defiance (cf. Isa. 48:4; 50:7, “face” is lit., “forehead”; Jer. 3:3, “the brazen look of a prostitute” is lit., “a harlot’s forehead”; 48:45). Ezekiel’s determination would not waver when beset by opposition. “Flint,” the hardest stone in Palestine, was used by Israel for knives (cf. Josh. 5:2-3) and other implements. Ezekiel’s God-given strength and determination would withstand any opposition (cf. Jer. 1:18). Because of God’s empowering of Ezekiel, He could command him **not to be afraid of them or terrified by them** (cf. Jer. 1:17). Though opposition was certain to come, Ezekiel had nothing to fear. God’s power was more than adequate to overcome the expected resistance. **Rebellious house** is a term for Israel that Ezekiel used 12 times (Ezek. 2:5-6, 8; 3:9, 26-27; 12:3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3; 44:6), apparently to underscore the people’s defiance against God.

3:10-11. To be an accurate channel of God’s revelation Ezekiel was to **listen carefully and take to heart** God’s word. The recipients of his message were his **countrymen in exile**, though the scope of his pronouncements went beyond that group to include all Israel. Ezekiel was to proclaim to these exiles, **This is what the Sovereign LORD says**. In words that harken back to 2:4-5 Ezekiel was reminded of his task. He was responsible to proclaim God’s word accurately regardless of the response. Some would **listen**, that is, obey, and others would **fail to listen**, that is, refuse to obey (cf. 2:5).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

The Prophet Ezekiel lived in troublesome times. Judah and its capital of Jerusalem had come under the dominance of Babylon, whose king took Daniel and other capable young men captive in 605 B.C., transporting them to Babylon (Dan. 1:1-4). When Judah rebelled, the Babylonians returned in 597 B.C., taking more captives, including Ezekiel. Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry took place in Babylonia, but it was directed at both the Israelite captives in that land and those who still remained in Judah. While he spoke of glorious days in the future, Ezekiel “informed his listeners about the impending and final judgment coming at the hands of the Babylonians” (Benware, Survey of the Old Testament, Moody). That would come in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem and the temple would be leveled and the bulk of the remaining population taken into exile. This message of doom was not what people wanted to hear. In fact, the Lord told Ezekiel the people would not heed the message (Ezek. 3:7). Perhaps this resistance was what led to the two emphases we find in our text. First, the Lord told Ezekiel to go to his own people who were in captivity. This was the third time in the account of Ezekiel’s calling the Lord had stated this (cf. Ezek. 2:3; 3:4). Ezekiel’s ministry was to the people of Israel alone (3:5). As a priest (1:3), Ezekiel was particularly qualified to speak to his people, but this was no easy task, given their rebellious character (2:3). Thus, the Lord told him over and over again to go to the people. He had nothing to fear because the Lord had equipped him and strengthened him to face the attacks (3:8). The second emphasis we see in our text is that Ezekiel was to speak to them

the Lord's message, regardless of their response. He was to tell them, "Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." The Lord already had said this twice before in this context, telling Ezekiel to say to them, "Thus saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 2:4) and to speak the Lord's "words unto them" (3:4). He was not sent to argue with them or to impress them with his knowledge, wisdom, or power. He was merely to repeat to them what the Lord said to him. For the third time, the Lord told the prophet that he was to speak the divine message whether they would "hear" or whether they would "forbear" (cf. Ezek. 2:5, 7). To "hear" means to hear in the sense of heeding, or obeying. "Forbear" means to refrain from doing something. Ezekiel was to present the Lord's words whether the people obeyed them or not. While the Lord had said the people as a whole would not listen (3:7), the wording here leaves room for the hope that some few individuals would. Ezekiel's specific mission was unique, but his ministry was not so different from ours. It is liberating to know that the Lord does not expect us to change people's hearts; He simply wants us to faithfully deliver His message. Many will reject it, but by God's grace, some might believe.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Foods considered delicacies in some parts of the world may turn stomachs in others. For example, in Mexico City you may be offered a dish called escamoles. At first glance it may look like some sort of cooked grain. Don't ask, or you will be told that escamoles are ant larvae! Casa marzu is a traditional Sardinian cheese. You may balk when you learn that the Italian name for it is formaggio marcio, meaning "rotten cheese." If it seems to you that it is moving, it is. This "delicacy" is a sheep-milk cheese filled with live maggots! Coffee lovers may be tempted to try kopi luwak, the most expensive coffee money can buy. Some specialty coffee shops sell the brew for \$80 per cup. The reason this Indonesian delicacy is rare is that the coffee beans are first eaten by a type of wild cat, then collected after the beans have made their way through the animal's digestive system! At one time or another, our reluctance to eat a certain food was met by someone saying, "Just try it!" The call of Ezekiel held forth a similar challenge. Ezekiel was commissioned to prophesy to people who found God's Word unappetizing. Therefore God offered Ezekiel a taste test.

The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah (see lesson 7). Both were living at the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC. Jeremiah was likely some years older than Ezekiel since (1) Jeremiah saw himself as "too young" when he received his call from the Lord (Jeremiah 1:6) in 626 BC and (2) Ezekiel was 30 years old (if that's the correct reference of the text) in "the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin" (Ezekiel 1:1, 2), which was the year 592 BC. Thus Ezekiel would have been born in 622 BC. Perhaps there was some personal contact between Ezekiel and Jeremiah prior to Ezekiel's captivity. But the Scriptures are silent on that. Ezekiel is introduced as "the priest" (Ezekiel 1:3). And that is what he would have been had it not been for the tragic turn of events in the southern kingdom of Judah. The first stage in these events came in 605 BC, when Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:1, 2; Daniel 1:1-6). Ezekiel's relocation to Babylon was a part of the second stage of exile; he was among the 10,000 of the elite citizenry taken in 597 BC (2 Kings 24:12-14). Daniel and other Jews were taken to serve "in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4), while Ezekiel found himself in a completely different setting: "among the exiles by the Kebar River" (Ezekiel 1:1). Even so, "the hand of the Lord was on him" (1:3). It was there that the Lord proceeded to call the priest to a task he undoubtedly did not anticipate. The call began with an intense display of what Ezekiel describes as "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord," which caused Ezekiel to fall facedown (Ezekiel 1:28). Then followed this command: "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you" (2:1). As with other call accounts in this unit, Ezekiel's included both sounds and sights. The sound was the voice of the Lord. The sight was, first, the awe-inspiring glory of the Lord, then an outstretched hand that held "a scroll" (2:9). As we recall from lesson 6, taste was the one bodily sense of five that Isaiah did not experience in his call. The situation was different with Ezekiel, however!

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Divine Word Given (Ezek 3:1-3)

1 Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."

2 So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.

3 And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

Accepting God's Word (1)

Accepting God's Word as the actual word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Accepting God's Word with its power (1 Thess 1:5)

5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

Accepting God's Word and being born again (1 Peter 1:23)

23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Accepting God's Word like pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:2)

2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Accepting God's Word and let it bear fruit (Col 1:6)

6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

Understanding God's Word (2)

Understanding from God's precepts (Ps 119:104)

104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Understanding from following God's Word (Ps 111:10)

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Understanding from the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15-17)

15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Understanding from God's mouth (Prov 2:6)

6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Delighting in God's Word (3)

Delighting in God's commands (Ps 112:1)

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.

Delighting in God's decrees (Ps 119:16)

16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Delighting in God's statutes (Ps 119:24)

24 Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

Delighting in God's Law (Ps 119:174)

174 I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight.

Divine Mission Assigned (Ezek 3:4-7)

4 Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

5 For you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel,

6 not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you.

7 But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.

A mission to preach God's Word (4-5)

Preach eagerly (Rom 1:15)

15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.

Preach where the gospel is not known (Rom 15:20)

20 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

Preach the gospel (1 Cor 1:17)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Preach voluntarily (1 Cor 9:17)

17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

Preach in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2)

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

A mission that will be rejected (6-7)

A rejection that is a rejection of God (1 Thess 4:8)

8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

A rejection of God as king (1 Sam 8:7)

7 And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.

A rejection that will condemn man (John 12:48)

48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

A rejection that will bring God's wrath (2 Chron 36:16)

16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

A rejection that displays conceitedness and a lack of understanding (1 Tim 6:3-5)

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Divine Assurance Provided (Ezek 3:8-11)

8 Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.

9 Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

10 Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.

11 And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

Assurance to have courage (8-9)

Courage because there should be no fear (Josh 1:9)

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Courage because through prayer God can make one bold (Acts 4:28-31)

28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Courage because of entrusting oneself to God (1 Peter 2:23)

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Courage because God will rescue (Jer 1:8)

8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Assurance to be faithful (10-11)

A faithfulness that is based on a Divine promise (Heb 11:11)

11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

A faithfulness that should be committed to (1 Peter 4:19)

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

A faithfulness that is irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

A faithfulness that means it will be done (1 Thess 5:24)

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

A faithfulness that cannot be disowned (2 Tim 2:13)

13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

A faithfulness that is unswerving (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Verses 1-3

The Lord told Ezekiel to eat the scroll, a symbolic way of telling him to consume mentally and assimilate emotionally its contents. [Note: E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p826.] After he did this he was to go and speak to the Israelites, to tell them what the Lord had revealed. So the prophet consumed the contents of the scroll as the Lord fed it to him. The words of the Lord were sweet to Ezekiel's taste as he took them in (cf. Revelation 10:9-10). The word of God has an intrinsically pleasing and satisfying quality to those who, like Ezekiel, receive it gladly (cf. Psalm 19:10; Psalm 119:103; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 24:13-14; Jeremiah 15:16).

"No matter how painful the labor, there is satisfaction in finding and doing the will of God and in realizing service in fellowship with the living God." [Note: Feinberg, p27.]

Verses 4-6

Ezekiel was to go to the Israelites and tell them exactly what the Lord had revealed to him. They would be able to understand him because they spoke the same language as the prophet. God was not sending him to people who could not comprehend what he would tell them. The Israelites should listen to him because they could understand him.

Verse 7

Nevertheless the Israelites would not listen to Ezekiel since they refused to listen to the Lord who sent him (cf. Numbers 14:1-12; 1 Samuel 8:4-7). All of them were very stubborn and obstinate. The Lord had similarly told Isaiah and Jeremiah not to expect dramatic positive response to their ministries (Isaiah 6:8-13; Jeremiah 1:11-19).

"There is none so deaf as the person who does not want to hear." [Note: Allen, p42.]

"The difficulties of cross-cultural communication are nothing compared to the obstacle of spiritual blindness." [Note: Cooper, p80.]

Verse 8-9

The Lord had made Ezekiel as hard-nosed as the Israelites; he would not give up speaking to them any more than they would refuse to listen to him. Therefore the prophet should not fear his audience. The meaning of Ezekiel's name, "God strengthens (or hardens)," reminded the prophet and others that the Lord would strengthen him and harden him against the attacks of his critical enemies.

Verse 10-11

The Lord Yahweh instructed Ezekiel further to take to heart all that He would tell him and to listen closely to Him. He was to go to the Jewish exiles and relay God's messages whether they paid attention or not.

God's word must become a part of the messenger before he or she can go and speak to others about it (cf. Ezekiel 3:1; Ezra 7:10).

"The most difficult task of a prophet is to change people's minds. This means pulling up the weeds of false theology and planting the good seed of the Word of God. It also means tearing down the flimsy thought

structures that false prophets build and constructing in their place lasting buildings on solid foundations of truth (... 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)." [Note: Wiersbe, p164.]

Verse 12-13

The Lord's Spirit next lifted Ezekiel up and he heard a loud rumbling sound behind him. The sound was the sound of voices that blessed God for His glory (cf. Revelation 4-5). He also heard the sound of the cherubim's wings and the sound of the wheels rumbling. He was having another vision. [Note: See Edward J. Young, *My Servants, the Prophets*, pp182-87.]

"This was no psychic levitation, but a subjective experience of feeling airborne ..." [Note: Taylor, p66.]

Verses 12-15

4. The conclusion of the vision 3:12-15

"Ezekiel's vision of God's glory had provided the needed *perspective* for his task (Ezekiel 1:4 to Ezekiel 2:7). The *message* he was to deliver was provided by God (Ezekiel 2:8 to Ezekiel 3:11). Then he needed *motivation* to direct him to the task. That motivation was provided by the "hand of the LORD" (cf. Ezekiel 1:3). He was first guided by the Spirit to his place of ministry (Ezekiel 3:12-15); he was then formally appointed as God's watchman to Israel (Ezekiel 3:16-21); then the Lord imposed several physical restraints on Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:22-27)." [Note: Dyer, " Ezekiel ," p1232.]

Verse 14

The Spirit lifted Ezekiel up and took him away from where he had been in his vision. He did not want to go and carry out the ministry that God had given him. His would not be a "successful" ministry in the eyes of people. But the Lord influenced him so strongly that he felt he had to obey (cf. Jeremiah 20:9; Jonah 1).

"The prophet was lifted up into sympathy with God and shared his righteous indignation against Israel." [Note: Davidson, p21.]

Scholars of a more liberal persuasion often believe that references to the Spirit in the Old Testament indicate the power or influence of God, not the third person of the Trinity. Some conservative scholars believe that, though the Spirit was really the third person of the Trinity, people living during the Old Testament period did not associate the Spirit with God Himself. They thought of the Spirit as a power or influence of God. However there are several indications in the Old Testament that informed Israelites identified the Spirit with God (cf. Genesis 1:2; 2 Kings 2:9; Psalm 104:30; Ezekiel 3:12-14; Ezekiel 11:1; Zechariah 4:6). [Note: See Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, and idem, *The Prophets ...*, pp85-87.]

Verse 15

Ezekiel physically traveled to the Jewish exiles who were living by the Chebar River at the Tel-abib settlement (lit. "hill of ears"). Since "Tel" can mean "ruined mound," it is possible that the Jewish exiles lived at the site of a destroyed or abandoned city. The Babylonians may have situated them there to rebuild and repopulate the site and to reclaim its land. [Note: Stuart, p29.]

When Ezekiel arrived, he sat for seven days among the exiles, and his presence disturbed them. Seven days was the length of time that the Jews usually mourned for their dead (Genesis 50:10; Numbers 19:11; Job 2:13), and it was the time it took to consecrate a priest (Leviticus 8:33).

"Ezekiel was being consecrated for the priesthood on his thirtieth birthday and commissioned to proclaim Judah's funeral dirge." [Note: Alexander, " Ezekiel ," p764.]

"For a week he struggles inwardly with Yahweh, with his calling, and with the message he is charged to proclaim. Whatever the prophet's relationship to the rest of the exiles in the past, when he finally submits, he is a man set apart, under orders from God. Hereafter his people could expect no more idle or mundane chatter from him. His call to prophetic ministry was not only an invitation to be the spokesman for the glorious God of Israel; it also involved a sentence to a life of loneliness, alienation, and desolation. Physically he lived among his own people, but spiritually he would operate in another realm, a zone governed by divine realities." [Note: Block, *The Book . . .*, p138.]

(Adapted from URL:<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/ezekiel-3.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

God called Ezekiel to walk a prophetic tightrope. On one hand, he was given a message that was filled with mourning and woe. On the other hand, he noted that the message was nourishing and sweet. God's harshest rebukes are given for the eternal good of the hearer. Christians today are faced with a similar balancing act. Some complain that Christianity is a religion of no and that we are defined only by what we are against. On the other hand, some look at positive, affirming messages and then grumble that the church does not take sin seriously anymore! How do we preach the sweetness of the gospel without compromising what the Bible says about the seriousness of sin? The prophecies of Ezekiel contain some of the bleakest words in Scripture regarding the fate of those who resist the truth of God's Word. But the same prophecies contain great words of hope and conclude with the promise, "The Lord is there" (Ezekiel 48:35). May we seek to offer that same balanced message today.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. We must fully digest the Word of God (Ezek. 3:1-2)
2. God's Word adds sweetness to bitter situations (vs. 3)
3. We should consider God's people brothers and sisters, not strangers (vss. 4-5)
4. Do not be discouraged when people reject God's truth. Sinful men naturally defy God (vss. 6-7)
5. God requires us to remain strong against rebellion (vss. 8-9)
6. When we deliver God's Word, some people will obey, while others will disobey (vss. 10-11)