

EZEKIEL

Segment 3

Ezekiel 2 & 3: Ezekiel's Commission/Response

The Glory of Yahweh

Ezekiel 1:28 – The vision that Ezekiel saw in chapter one culminated in what Ezekiel describes as “the appearance of the likeness of **the glory of Yahweh [the LORD].**” The phrase, “glory of Yahweh” appears 9 times in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28; 3:12; 3:23; 10:4; 10:18; 11:23; 43:4; 43:5; 44:4). Throughout Scripture when the glory of Yahweh appears, it is very dramatic, very significant.

- The glory of Yahweh appeared when the children of Israel received manna (Exodus 16:7, 10)
- The glory of Yahweh appeared on Mount Sinai when the law was given (Exodus 24:16, 17)
- The glory of Yahweh appeared at the inauguration of the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35; Leviticus 9:6,23)
- The glory of Yahweh appeared when God's judgment came on the children of Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 14:10, 21; 16:19, 42; 20:6)
- The glory of Yahweh appeared at the inauguration of the Temple (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chronicles 5:14; 7:2-3)
- The glory of Yahweh appeared at the birth of His Son, Jesus the Messiah (Luke 2:9)
- The glory of Yahweh will be revealed and all will see it when the Kingdom comes to earth and the servant, the branch, a righteous king rules the nations (Isaiah 35:2; 40:5; 58:8; 60:1)

This was a 3D, IMAX, Technicolor, surround sound vision of the glory of Yahweh. Ezekiel fell on his face.

Ezekiel 2:1

Son of man

Ezekiel hears a voice speaking, and he is addressed as “Son of man”. The name, “Ezekiel,” appears only twice in the entire book (Ezekiel 1:3; 24:24). He is referred to as “Son of man” over 90 times. A son of man is just that, a son of man. God is not a man. The celestial beings, the cherubim, the angels, are not men. This title distinguishes man as being a human being, born through the normal birth process, descending from mankind. (Numbers 23:19; Jeremiah 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43) – It is used in Hebrew parallelism to being a “man.” (Psalm 8:4; 80:17; Isaiah 51:12; 56:2). Jesus is referred to as “Son of man” 85

times in the New Testament. He was not God. He was of the human type, the Son of man.

Why is this usage in Ezekiel? It indicates to Ezekiel that he is a created being – a frail, weak human, who is humbled before the almighty God, Yahweh, and totally dependent on God. In the English translation of the Hebrew Tanakh, these words are translated as “O mortal”. Having this designation, Ezekiel would be constantly reminded of his weakness and ineptness as compared to the everlasting God.

Ezekiel chapters 2 & 3

Ezekiel 2:1-7

“I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate.”

“As for them, whether they listen or not...they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

“Do not fear them nor fear their words, nor be dismayed at their presence.”

“Speak My words to them whether they listen or not.”

Ezekiel 2:8-10; 3:1-3

A hand extended to him with a scroll written on front and back with lamentations, mourning, and woe. He ate the scroll. It was sweet as honey (Revelation 10:8-11).

Ezekiel 3:4-7

They should listen to you, yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen. They are stubborn and obstinate.

This is a message seemingly repeated among the prophets (Isaiah 6:8-11; Jeremiah 1:7-19).

Ezekiel 3:8-11

Again,

“Do not be afraid or dismayed.”

“They are a rebellious house.”

“Go to the exiles, speak to them, whether they listen or not.”

Ezekiel 3:12-13

A great rumbling from the cherubim!! “Blessed be the glory of Yahweh in His place.” This is the end of the vision. Ezekiel has been commissioned!

Ezekiel 3:14-15

He went away “embittered in the rage of his spirit”

When he came to the exiles, he sat there seven days, “causing consternation among them.”

Ezekiel 3:14b & 3:15b – King James Version

and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit (Ezekiel 3:14 KJV)

I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. (Ezekiel 3:15 KJV)

Ezekiel 3:14b & 3:15b – New English Translation

I went bitterly, my spirit full of fury, (Ezekiel 3:14 NET)

I sat dumbfounded among them there, where they were living, for seven days. (Ezekiel 3:15 NET)

Ezekiel 3:14b & 3:15b – New International Version

and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit (Ezekiel 3:14 NIV)

I sat among them for seven days – overwhelmed. (Ezekiel 3:15 NIV)

Ezekiel 3:14b & 3:15b – New Jerusalem Bible

and I went, bitter and angry, (Ezekiel 3:14 NJB)

and there I stayed with them in a stupor for seven days.

(Ezekiel 3:15 NJB)

Ezekiel 3:16-21

Son of man, I have appointed you a “watchman”

Ezekiel 3:22-23

He sent him away, and again Ezekiel sees the vision from the river Chebar; he again falls on his face.

Ezekiel 3:24-25

"As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them."

Ezekiel 3:25 – English Standard Version

And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people.

(Ezekiel 3:25 ESV)

Ezekiel 3:25 – Jewish Publication Society

But thou, son of man, behold, bands shall be put upon thee, and thou shalt be bound with them, and thou shalt not go out among them;

(Ezekiel 3:25 JPS)

Ezekiel 3:25 – JPS Tanakh

As for you, O mortal, cords have been placed upon you, and you have been bound with them, and you shall not go out among them.
(Ezekiel 3:25 TNK)

Ezekiel 3:25-27

From this time on, for the next seven years, Ezekiel is under “house arrest”, bound. He can’t go in or out, and he is mute. He can’t speak. From this time on, the only time he can speak is when God opens his mouth. Then, when he speaks it will be: “Thus says the Lord Yahweh [Lord GOD]” (Ezekiel 24:27; 33:22).

Ezekiel 33:21-22 – English Standard Version (ESV)

In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has been struck down."

Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.

EZEKIEL

Segment 4

Ezekiel 4 & 5: Jerusalem's Siege and Destruction

When God first called Ezekiel, He said, "As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them...But you shall speak my words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious" (Ezekiel 2:5, 7). God never assured Ezekiel that the people would actually listen to His words. His role was not so much to campaign and organize the community so much as it was to bear witness to the fact that God was giving them the truth whether they liked it or not. Even so, God had Ezekiel communicate His message to the people in a variety of creative and attention-grabbing ways.

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*¹

Chapters 4-24 combine a series of oral messages and symbolic acts designed to warn the people of Judah that judgment was coming and to explain the reason for this imminent discipline. In chapters 4-7 Ezekiel dramatized the coming siege of Jerusalem (ch. 4) and the subsequent dispersion of the people in exile (ch. 5).

Chapter 4: Laying Siege to Jerusalem

Object Lesson: Ezekiel laying siege to model of Jerusalem while eating rations

4:1-3

Ezekiel builds a model of Jerusalem under siege. Translations vary with most saying Ezekiel wrote or engraved on a brick and others saying he inscribed on a clay tablet. Either way, it is clear that Ezekiel made a miniature representation of Jerusalem under siege as a prophecy of what would later happen.

4:4-8

Ezekiel lies on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days.² We need not imagine that all he did was lie on his side day and night, for a few verses later

¹ Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1986), 768.

² Ralph Alexander provides one idea about what these numbers mean: "Normally the numbers would be taken literally as periods of time separated into two distinct and successive intervals of 390 and 40 years (vv. 5-6). Ezekiel's reference point for chronological determination was Jehoiachin's deportation of 597 b.c. This, therefore, would appear to be the natural starting point for measuring the time periods in these verses. The 430 years would denote the

God instructs Ezekiel on how to prepare and cook his food. Furthermore, in chapter 8, we see Ezekiel sitting in his house with the elders during the last days of laying on his right side. Perhaps we should imagine Ezekiel assuming this position in a public place several hours each day.

4:9-17

During this time of lying on his side, Ezekiel ate meager rations of bread and water to show that the Jerusalem inhabitants would run very low on food and water during the siege.

Chapter 5: Destroying Jerusalem

Object Lesson: Ezekiel shaves his head and beard and divides up the hair in thirds

5:1-4

Ezekiel used a sword to shave his hair. He burned a third, struck another third with a sword, and scattered the last third to the wind, but not before he first took some of the hair out and tied it to his robe. From the hair on his robe, he pulled out a few pieces and burned them.

5:5-17

Here we find the explanation of Ezekiel's symbolically hairy actions. His cut hair represents all of the people left in Jerusalem. One third of them will perish from pestilence and famine, another third will die by the sword, and on third find themselves scattered (presumably taken captive). Of this last group of survivors, the Babylonians will kill some (but not all) with the sword. This section also provides much insight into what God's reasons are for punishing His people so severely.

God's Reasons:

- 5:6 She has rebelled against my rules
- 5:6 More wickedness than surrounding nations
- 5:9 All of your abominations
- 5:11 Defiled sanctuary w/ "detestable things" and "abominations"

Judah's Punishments:

- 5:10 Severe hunger resulting in cannibalism (fathers eating sons and vice versa)

punishment inflicted by conquering foreign powers on the children of Israel and Judah from the deportation of Jehoiachin, their recognized king, to the inception of the Maccabean rebellion in 167 b.c. During the Maccabean period, the Jews once again exercised dominion over Judah. Though this is a possible solution, dogmatism concerning these numbers must be avoided" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, pp. 769-770).

- 5:12 A third die of pestilence and famine
- 5:12 A third die by sword
- 5:12 A third scattered to the winds (probably exile)
- 5:14 Make you a desolation
- 5:15 Become a reproach, taunt, warning, horror
- 5:16 Famine, hunger, no supply of bread
- 5:17 Send wild beasts against you

The Purpose of Ezekiel's Ministry

While Ezekiel prophesied to the exiles in Babylonia, Jeremiah carried out his ministry back home in Judah. We can easily see the importance of Jeremiah's mission—to urge the people to repent. However, what's the point of having Ezekiel speak about the situation in Jerusalem and the impending doom they faced when he was hundreds of miles away? It is not as though the people back home would ever hear a word of Ezekiel's prophecy. The answer, I believe, is that God wanted to control the narrative. He wanted His version of history recorded rather than defaulting to what people would have thought without Ezekiel's insights. Before we can see why this would be so important, we have to wrap our minds around how polytheists think, especially when it comes to getting conquered.

Judges 11:23-24

23 'Since now the LORD, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before His people Israel, are you then to possess it? 24 'Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God has driven out before us, we will possess it.

Yahweh, Israel's God, gave her a certain territory, and Chemosh, the Ammonite deity, determined their borders.

Isaiah 36:18-20

18 'Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 20 'Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

Each nation has its own particular gods who care for it, guard it, and grant victory. When the Assyrians were gobbling up kingdom after kingdom, they bragged saying the gods of the various nations could not withstand them.

Jeremiah 50:1-3

1 The word which the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, through Jeremiah the prophet: 2 "Declare and proclaim among the nations. Proclaim it and lift up a standard. Do not conceal it but say, 'Babylon has been captured, Bel has been put to shame, Marduk has been shattered; Her images have been put to shame, her idols have been shattered.' 3 "For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away!

A nation's defeat is a god's defeat. In the time of Babylon's destruction (after Ezekiel's time), people will think the gods Bel and Marduk are put to shame because the nation they protect, Babylon, will fall to a power out of the north.

In light of how ancient people thought about their national gods, let us consider for a moment the standard conclusion people would draw when they saw Babylon conquer Judah. They would think Marduk has defeated Yahweh. Marduk must be more powerful, since Yahweh could not defend His people from the mighty Babylonians. Now, this conclusion is absolutely unacceptable to God. He will not have His people thinking He was defeated just because they were.

Ezekiel make it crystal clear among the surviving exiles in captivity that the defeat of Judah happened not because the Babylonian gods are too powerful for Yahweh, but because Yahweh lifted His hand of protection and brought them in to punish His people for their unwillingness to keep His covenant and for their chronic idolatry addiction. Yahweh is plenty strong to defeat an imperial army. After all, He did precisely that when the Assyrians came knocking at Jerusalem's gates. Furthermore, He is so powerful He can use other nations to do His bidding.