

Ezekiel

December 9, 2007

Chapters 2-3

I. Ezekiel's Call

Although some also include chapter 1, chapters 2 and 3 represent actually Ezekiel's call. In many ways, it parallels Isaiah's call in Isaiah 6. Notice these six elements in this call:

1. The initiative of Ezekiel's vocation with God.
2. His message was from God, the primary part being "This is what the Sovereign LORD says."
3. Ezekiel was not promised success.
4. Ezekiel is warned that he might be physically threatened.
5. Ezekiel's role is to obey God.
6. Ezekiel is to absorb totally the word of God.

Are you willing to serve God? Assuming that you are, how will you be accepted? Have been accepted? Are being accepted?

II. Son of Man

Ezek 2:1

2:1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."

NIV

The phrase "Son of man" is used 93 times in Ezekiel. In Hebrew, it always refers poetically to a man in that an adult "son of man" is always a man. One commentator translated it as "human" throughout his book. In all cases in Ezekiel, "Son of man" is a communication from God somehow, generally in a vision, directed at Ezekiel.

"Son of man" stresses the human nature of Ezekiel. Like many of us when the call comes we might be a little reluctant to respond. Isaiah does volunteer, but Jeremiah would have preferred not to have the role given to him by God. In any case, this shows strongly that the initiative was from God, not from Ezekiel.

III. The Setting

Ezek 1:1

1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. NIV

Although the chronology associated with the thirtieth year cannot be fully identified, most would agree that the book starts about 592/593 BC. Ezekiel prophesizes to the Jewish deportees in Babylon who are looking to return home soon. God tells Ezekiel that this will not happen.

IV. Getting Ezekiel Ready for Service

Ezek 2:2

2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

NIV

The Spirit helps him to his feet. One can see the spirit getting Ezekiel ready for service in this action. While a correct understanding of God should knock us to our knees, only God can get us ready for true service.

V. Description of Ezekiel's Service

Ezek 2:3-8

3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen — for they are a rebellious house — they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. 7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. 8 But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

NIV

The word for nation (*goyim*) is rarely used for Israel. Usually when it is used, it is used negatively and for Gentiles. Its use shows how far that the Israelites have fallen. The deportees would have reacted to this word.

While this description might seem strange to us, it is God's way. We see similarities in the calls of Isaiah and Jeremiah:

Isa 6:9-10

9 He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'

10 Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Jer 1:17-19

17 "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. 18 Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land — against the kings of

Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

NIV

What is the purpose of prophecy? If you believe that it is for us to know the future precisely, I would suggest that you are wrong.

VI. God's Sweet Word

Ezek 2:9-3:3

9 Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, 10 which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. 3:1 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3 Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

NIV

“Tasted” means that he ate of it and it became a part of him. “Sweet” means that it was pleasant to Ezekiel. He had been told by God that he would not be received when he gave the message to the people. However, as he proceeds to obey God, he feels deep satisfaction as he realizes service in fellowship with the living God. Throughout this chapter, we see how people respond differently to the same stimulus. God’s message was sweet to Ezekiel; however, when Ezekiel conveys it to the people, it is not sweet to them.

VII. Ezekiel's Main Duty—One More Time!

Ezek 3:9-11

9 I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house." 10 And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. 11 Go now to your countrymen in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says,' whether they listen or fail to listen."

NIV

In Hebrew, hardness and strength are based on the same word. Life as a prophet is not an easy one; again we see parallels with this:

Isa 50:7

7 Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

NIV

Jer 15:20

20 I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD. NIV

Why is it hard to serve the Lord?

VIII. The Final Solution: First Plan

Ezek 3:24-27

24 Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: "Go, shut yourself inside your house. 25 And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. 26 I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, though they are a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let him listen, and whoever will refuse let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

NIV

At first, Ezekiel is overcome with his own grief unable to serve the LORD (3:15). The LORD reads him the riot act so that Ezekiel will obey. To assure that he remains hardened in his task, the LORD forbids him to interact with the people. To Ezekiel, this increases the difficulty of service, but improves his ability to serve.

At the end of chapter 24, and therefore, the end of the first part of the book, Ezekiel's mouth is opened, thereby changing his commission.

IX. Some Questions for the First Three Chapters

1. What office would Ezekiel have filled if he had remained in Judah?
2. Where did Ezekiel prophesy?
3. What was Ezekiel's age at the time of his installation?
4. Was Ezekiel seeking a call from God?
5. What convinced Ezekiel that he had really received a call from God?
6. As we read through these chapters, what understanding of God is taught?
7. What is the significance of the position that Ezekiel assumes in 1:28 and that God wants him to assume in 2:1-2?
8. Why was Ezekiel willing and able to obey God's command?
9. What kind of results could Ezekiel expect from his preaching?
10. Why must Ezekiel's forehead be harder than flint?
11. What unique (in the Bible) title did Ezekiel have?
12. What is the real proof of a genuine believer?
13. Where did Ezekiel confine his ministry before the fall of Jerusalem?
14. What is the significance of the hand of the LORD?