



New David

MESSENGER, SUFFERER, WATCHMAN, AND SIGN

Ezekiel 3

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

The Lord called Ezekiel to serve and communicate to His people in different ways and promised to put words, sweet as honey, in Ezekiel's mouth. Then he would deliver a message the people did not want to hear. Ezekiel would be a watchman over the house of Israel, delivering messages of warning, regardless of the cost to himself. Through all of this, *Ezekiel followed obediently what he heard from the Lord.*

Obedience means you do what you've been told to do. *Nevertheless how can you walk out obedience to the Lord if you don't take the time to listen and hear His instructions for you?* It's like a child not taking time to listen to a parent's directions. You must posture yourself in a place of availability to hear from the Lord. As you walk with the Lord, you will go, do, and say what the Spirit leads you to do for His kingdom. Keep in mind, you are responsible to the Lord for *your obedience* (not the obedience or response of others). Listen to the Lord. Then obediently open your mouth as the Lord gives you words to speak. Remember, the Lord has plans for you as you walk in His Spirit.

"Then the hand of the LORD was on me there, and He said to me, 'Get up, go out to the plain, and I will speak with you there.' So I got up and went out to the plain. The LORD's glory was present there, like the glory I had seen by the Chebar Canal, and I fell facedown."

— Ezekiel 3:22–23

FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Ezekiel 3:10–11* — "Next He said to me: 'Son of man, listen carefully to all My words that I speak to you and take them to heart. Go to your people, the exiles, and speak to them. Tell them, "This is what the Lord God says," whether they listen or refuse to listen.'"
- *Ezekiel 3:27* — "But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you will say to them, 'This is what the Lord God says.' Let the one who listens, listen, and let the one who refuses, refuse—for they are a rebellious house."
- *Galatians 5:25* — "Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit."



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Teaching Notes

INTRO

Ezekiel was profound and deep. In this chapter, Ezekiel was told to “eat this.” Ezekiel was with the exiles who were weeping when he saw a vision. Ezekiel had a vision with flashing lights, cherubim, four living creatures, four faces, wings, wheels, and they all move as the Spirit of God directs them. There was also a throne with a man with fire around his waist. This was an incredible vision of the presence of God. “The divine appearance to Ezekiel was in 1:1–28 and the divine assignment to Ezekiel was in chapter 2:1–3:27.”¹ Ezekiel got the assignment of going to the rebellious Israelites.

Ezekiel was already there during the second exile. The first exile was during the time of Daniel. The second exile was during the time of Ezekiel. The third exile will be in 586 BC. Ezekiel would be in Jerusalem during 586 when the fall took place. God was telling Ezekiel He was giving him a message that the Israelites would not like and that they would not receive. If Ezekiel does not release the word, then it is on him. If he releases the word and they do not do anything with it then it is on them. If God releases the word and they receive it, everybody wins. But in this scenario no one wanted to receive it.

TEACHING

Ezekiel 3:1-9: Ezekiel was told to eat this scroll and speak to the house of Israel. Ezekiel was still in his vision when he ate the scroll that was fed to him by God. The taste was as honey. MacArthur explains, “Even though the message was judgment on Israel, the scroll was sweet because it was God’s Word (Psalm: 19:10; 119:103) and because it vindicated God in holiness, righteousness, glory, and faithfulness, in which Jeremiah also delighted (Jeremiah 15:16).”² The word might be harsh, but there was sweetness in the word because it was from the Lord. There may be bitterness in it because of the judgment, but it was still sweet.

In verses 4–27 there was a declaring of the Word of the Lord. God needed Ezekiel to be a messenger. Israel was the audience, and the message was the Word of God. Wiersbe states, “Ezekiel was the messenger, the people of Israel were the audience, and the Word of God was the message to be delivered.”³ Most of the people who heard Ezekiel would have been from Judah and the southern kingdom.

According to Wiersbe, “The prophet wasn’t allowed to send a substitute messenger, nor was he permitted to alter the message or go to a different audience.”⁴ Ezekiel was the herald. He was not to worry about how the message was received; he was just to go. The people would be able to understand what he was saying, even though God said they would not listen. What Ezekiel went through was similar to what Christ went through.

God would strengthen Ezekiel. Wiersbe explains, “God assured His prophet that He would give him all he needed to withstand their opposition and disobedience. In Ezekiel 3:8, there is a play on words involving Ezekiel’s name which means ‘God is strong’ or ‘God strengthens.’ It also means ‘God hardens.’ If the people harden their hearts and faces, God will harden His servant and keep him faithful to his mission.”⁵ God would enable His prophet to live up to his name.

Ezekiel 3:10–15: There was a transition in verses 10–15 in which Ezekiel became an example as a sufferer as well as a messenger. He was elevated into a heavenly vision. In chapter 1, Ezekiel had the vision; in chapter 2, God was presenting the vision to him; in chapter 3 he was lifted up into this vision. Ezekiel said he was in an angry spirit when he was lifted up. The bitterness and the uncertainty of being lifted up resulted in an emotional response. Ezekiel was confused and angry, but God put him in front of the people at Tel-Abib where the Jewish captives were. In a stunned state Ezekiel sat there for seven days.

At this point Ezekiel was a prophet among the people experiencing what they were going through. He was going to present a word to the people that they would not understand. There was a similarity to what Christ experienced. Christ knew what temptation was, He knew what poverty was, He knew what frustration was, what weariness was, what rejection was. Ezekiel

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 896.

² MacArthur, p. 897.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, 2002), p. 169.

⁴ Wiersbe, p. 168.

⁵ Wiersbe, p. 168.



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knew what disappointment was, what sorrow was, what ridicule was. And he knew what loneliness was. He went through what we have gone through.

Ezekiel 3:16–17: Wiersbe points out that Ezekiel was “the messenger, the sufferer, and the watchman.”⁶ He had been in the presence of God, and now he was back with the people. The people would not hear him or receive him. “This role was spiritually analogous to the role of a watchman on a city wall, vigilant to spot the approach of an enemy and warn the residents to muster a defense. The prophet gave timely warnings of approaching judgment. The work of a watchman is vividly set forth in 2 Samuel 18:24–27 and 2 Kings 9:17–20.”⁷

Ezekiel 3:18–21: In verse 18, he released a word to the wicked person. If a wicked person was warned and does not change then he would die, but the prophet would have saved his own life. If a righteous person turns from his righteousness and does not change his ways he would die. But in verse 21 it says that if you warn a righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he listened to the warning and the prophet would save his life. Wiersbe explains, “The four scenarios include: first, the people dying because the watchman was unfaithful and didn’t warn them; second, the watchman being faithful to warn the wicked but they refuse to listen; third, the righteous dying because they turned from their covenant obedience and the watchman did not warn them; and finally, that of the righteous heeding the watchman’s warning and not being judged.”⁸ If Ezekiel did not deliver the word, it would be on his head.

Ezekiel 3:22–27: Ezekiel also served as a sign. Wiersbe says, “Ezekiel not only spoke God’s Word to the people, but he also lived before them in such a way that they saw God’s message portrayed before their very eyes.”⁹ At the plain he experienced the presence of God again. The Holy Spirit would come and go in these verses. A significant amount of Ezekiel’s ministry was done in his house, which was mentioned in verse 24. MacArthur explains, “They will put ropes on you. These ropes were not literal, but spiritual. On one hand, they could be inner ropes of depressing influence which the rebellious Jews exerted on his spirit. Their perversity, like ropes, would repress his freedom in preaching.”¹⁰ It was like he was in bondage and muted.

CLOSING

Ezekiel was to only tell the people what God would say through him. Anyone who had ears should listen. He was to speak out only when God opened his mouth. “There are two options, live like obedient servants or live like rebellious people who do not want to hear the truth.”¹¹ This is the message to the church. It was an interesting call and ministry for Ezekiel.

⁶ Wiersbe, p. 169.

⁷ MacArthur, p. 697.

⁸ Wiersbe, p. 169.

⁹ Wiersbe, p. 169.

¹⁰ MacArthur, p. 698.

¹¹ Wiersbe, p. 169.



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Reading Guide Questions

1. Why would God tell Ezekiel to eat the scroll? What did this symbolize? (Ezekiel 3:3-4; Revelation 10:9-11)
2. What was the reason God told Ezekiel that Israel would not listen to him? Did the Israelites' affliction draw them closer to God or further from Him? How did God prepare him for this work? (Ezekiel 3:8-9)
3. What was Ezekiel's reaction toward what God had told him (Ezekiel 3:14-15)? How did Ezekiel identify with the people in their grief? (Leviticus 8:33; Job 2:13; Psalm 137:1)
4. What was the purpose of God assigning Ezekiel to be a watchman? Who was he a watchman for (2 Samuel 18:24-27; 2 Kings 9:17-20)? How are you also called to this role in a New Testament sense? (Matthew 28:18-20)
5. When were the only times that Ezekiel would speak to the people (Ezekiel 3:22-27)? Who do you see yourself relating more to, the rebellious house or the obedient servant Ezekiel?
6. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in Ezekiel 3 through the reading or the teaching?

