

# Would Ezekiel have stood a better chance of success in our churches today?

## Study one the commission.

The King James Bible throughout these studies.

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## Ezekiel.

Feel free to use these studies as a help in Bible Study Classes, Cell Groups, Sunday Sermons, or a help to Pastors, Teachers and lay preachers to which your own study of the subject may be added.

This is an introduction to the Studies of the prophet Ezekiel who was used by God to encourage Israel to turn back to Him as they slid further and further into sin and away from God's covenant.

The history of the Children of Israel commences with God's covenant with Abraham in approximately 2000 BC.

### The Covenant

Genesis chapter: 12: 1-3

*Get thee out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house unto a land that I will show you.*

*And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing.*

*And I will bless them who bless you and curse him who curses you in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

### The Selection of a Special People

God chose the seed of Abraham and Sarah to give the world the Word of God and more important, and many years later bring the Messiah into the world. These people had very little to attract the creator of the universe to them, at least on the face of it but we know that man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. He looked on these people and set them apart so that through them He would show love, truth, righteous and Godly living to the world. First God had to sanctify them or set them apart. He told Abraham to get up, get out, and go to, none of the old ways; no influence from mother or father, no self beliefs or old thinking were to be taken by Abraham. Sanctification is a sacrificial experience, it needs a total let go, a change of direction a giving up and a "Thy will be done" on our part. When God calls us for a work for Him He wants nothing of ourselves no baggage that we think maybe necessary because "it worked in the past" God just wants us empty before Him then He can do His best work in and through us.

When God wants to use any of us He first has to sanctify us and set us apart from the world, there has to be a difference between the world's way of living and the life of a born again Christian. Sometimes in Christian circles that difference is not always apparent.

I knew a Christian many years ago when he ordered his first TV set and asked for it to be delivered. As the delivery man walked up the pathway carrying the TV, nicely boxed up with the makers name and logo on the side he also saw facing him the words "brings the world into your home". My Christian friend's conscience was pricked as he read those words and promptly asked the delivery man to take it back to the shop and cancelled the order. Today

we may think that is a funny story and my friend a bit small minded because now we Christians are used to seeing “the world” brought into our homes through the television every day, our Christian standards are not as high as they were only a few years ago. This seepage of moral standards and the decline in Godly living and separation was also the experience of Israel as they became “friendly” with those God told them with good reason, not to associate with and they became contaminated with the sins of the world.

Deuteronomy Chapter 7: verse 1.

*When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land where you go to possess it and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you.*

Verse 2.

*And when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you; you shall smite them and utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy unto them.*

Verse 3.

*Neither shall you make marriages with them; your daughters you shall not give unto his son, nor his daughter shall you take unto your son.*

Verse 4.

*For they will turn away your son from following Me that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and destroy you suddenly.*

Verse 5.

*But thus shall you deal with them; you shall destroy their altars and break down their images and cut down their groves and burn their graven images with fire.*

God knew that these heathen nations would be a great hindrance to His people. He made it so much easier for them by delivering no less than seven nations greater and mightier than Israel into their hands all they had to do was obey God and destroy them and all they had secure in the covenant He made with their father Abraham. God also knew that yielding to the pull of these nations and their pleasures would kindle His anger and displeasure. But instead of obeying the Lords command and destroying their enemies and pulling down their false god’s and burning their idols Israel showed mercy and in doing so invoked God’s displeasure.

Ezekiel was given a commission from God to warn the Children of Israel of their sin and rebellion towards their God. Israel was in a backslidden state and had turned away in disobedience to God’s laws. They had brought back wives from other Nations; they had brought back idol gods of those Nations and gave them pride of place in their homes. Their sin was constant and deepening hardness against God and rebellion against His word.

Ezekiel was inspired by the Holy Spirit, who gave him messages to preach, and mimes to perform, all given by direct revelation. Of the 40 mimes in Scripture 25 are by Ezekiel to be given to God’s people Israel with the sole purpose to bring the ungodly wayward Jews to repentance that they might avert any further judgment from God: to encourage the Godly ones to continue to be true to Him: to punish other Nations who had contributed to Israel’s downfall and to reveal a future restoration of the Nation and the eternal reign of their Messiah.

**Chapter 1.** King James Version of the Bible throughout the study.

Ezekiel was with the Jewish captives in Babylon by the river of Chebar the modern day Khabour that flows into the river Euphrates. In a vision he saw the heavens opened. This simple sentence tells us that sometimes the heavens are shut, no doubt to the sin of the world and the rebellion of man and as God cannot look upon sin well may He shut the heavens. At this time Ezekiel saw they were opened.

*Ezekiel 1;*

*V.3 the Word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest and the hand of the Lord was upon him.*

There is no doubt that those who are seeking after God and who have ears to hear whether in “captivity” or not can receive a vision or message from an open heaven no matter if you are a member of a church, a house group or a Leader or Pastor of a church. Surely Leaders and Pastors should always seek an open heaven to receive the right word of God for the congregation. The congregation too must be in obedience to the word of God so their heaven be open to their prayers. In Deuteronomy 28 v 26 the Bible speaks of the heavens being like brass:

Verse 26

*And your Heaven that is over your head shall be brass and the earth that is under you shall be iron.*

Deuteronomy chapter 28 speaks about blessings and rewards for obedience to the word of God and from verse 15 tells us the rewards for disobedience. We will pray to a heaven of brass and the earth will not give forth crops.

Unfortunately much of the body of Christ is starved of teaching that comes *expressly* from the Lord and the hand of the Lord is seldom to be seen or felt by those in many of our churches. The heavens are always open to those hungry to hear what God has to say and He wants only His word to be passed on.

There is another problem; our ears are so full of worldly junk, from screaming, shouting television or radio programs, from our own thoughts, ideas, and opinions to the soft whisper of a friend persuading you down the wrong path.

Jesus tells us that it is in the still small voice that He will speak to us and guess what, we will have to be quiet, shut our mouths and in an attitude of prayer and openness to the Spirit to be able to hear what He has to say.

Ezekiel was a Priest, a Pastor, Leader, Shepherd as well as a Prophet of God. May all our modern day “Priests” seek to get next Sunday’s message “Expressly” from the Lord and the body of Christ pray that the hand of the Lord be upon them?

A point to remember is that although we see the Priests of Ezekiel’s day were in disobedience themselves and led Israel down the wrong path into sin, 1 Peter 2 verse 9 tells us today, this side of the cross

1 Peter 2 verse 9

*We are a chosen generation a Royal Priesthood a Holy nation a peculiar people that should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

Ezekiel was correct to expose the sins of the priests of his day which affected the congregation in the Temple. But according to Peter we too are Royal Priests unto God set aside for God's purpose and have just as much responsibility to be holy, pure and clean before God as the congregations of Ezekiel. James 3 v 1 advises us not to pursue the position of teacher knowing the teacher will receive the greater condemnation. In other words mishandling the word of God will bring tremendous problems upon the teacher because God holds the teacher more responsible than the student.

Verse 4.

*And I looked and saw a whirlwind come out of the North.*

Ezekiel saw living creatures that had the likeness of a man, these were on a mission to Israel's advantage to warn the Jews of God's coming Judgment if they ignored Ezekiel's message. We are reminded that another Judgment upon the world will come from the North in the last days in the form of a mighty army headed by the Antichrist himself. In both cases there is need of repentance before God to avert His wrath.

The rest of Chapter 1 is about God in all His glory. Who can describe God, who can understand Him? Our fallen state prohibits us from doing so, however as our study is about God's Prophet and his mission to the Children of Israel I would like to start at chapter 2.

## **Ezekiel's Commission Chapter 2**

*Ezekiel 2:1*

*And He said unto me Son of man stand upon your feet...*

The Hebrew for son of man is Ben Adam or son of Adam. This term is used of Ezekiel 100 times always without the definite article. In the New Testament it is used of Christ 88 times always with the definite article.

Without it the term denotes a human natural descent of Adam, with it denotes the last Adam. The first Adam forfeited by sin and disobedience, his right of universal dominion over the earth...

*Gen 1:26*

*26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

This dominion was given by God to man who He made a little lower than Himself (Psalms 8) and crowned with glory and honor. Man was to manage the earth and look after God's creation; always subject to God. Through disobedience man sinned and gave that dominion to Satan and we have seen the result of Satan's handling of that divine dominion ever since.

...the last Adam Jesus Christ, retrieved that dominion from the hands of Satan by the shedding of His blood on the cross opening the way to eternal life for all who will believe on His name.

*Verse 2. And the Spirit entered into me when He spoke to me and set me upon my feet...*

This refers to Ezekiel being given the Holy Spirit so as to perform this special commission. It is not the same as the Baptism with the Holy Spirit that was available after the Cross of Christ

*John 14:17*

*17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

*Ezekiel 2: 3. And He said unto me, son of Man I send you to the Children of Israel, to a rebellious Nation that has rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me even to this day.*

Ezekiel is addressed as “son of man” not as a son of Abraham because Israel was now Lo-Ammi. Hosea tells us that he was commanded by God to take a wife of Whoredoms. This word actually means children of idolatry, but she was also a prostitute, so Hosea chose Gomer and they had children one of which was named by God Himself.

*(Hos:1v 9) Then God said, call his name Lo-ammi: for you are not my people.*

Gomer was a picture or type of Israel and as she left Hosea to go back to her past sinning, likewise Israel had left God for the same thing. It would seem that God had run out of patience and now Israel was Lo-ammi and God was telling Ezekiel “*They are not my people and I am not their God*”.

This happened before in Exodus Chapter 32 the children of Israel so frustrated God that he said to Moses in verse 9

*...I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them and I will make of you a great Nation.  
Moses besought the Lord his God and said LORD why does Your wrath wax hot against YOUR people which YOU have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?  
Verse 14 The Lord repented of the evil that He thought to do unto His people.*

In verse 7 of that chapter The Lord said to Moses who was in the mountain:

*Go get you down for YOUR people which YOU have brought out of Egypt...*

God was so fed up and disappointed with Israel that He wanted to pass them over to Moses and have nothing more to do with them. The history of the Children of Israel was a disappointment to God.

Now in Ezekiel this Nation was being given yet another chance under the hand of God's Prophet. What a merciful and gracious God we serve?

As you read the Bible story in Ezekiel and compare these notes, can you feel the ache in God's heart? Can you feel His frustration and sorrow, even to the point of Holy anger towards the people He loves so much?

He had done so many miracles for them after brining them out of 400 years of slavery, but they were, in God's own words a rebellious, stiff-necked, impudent nation.

Can you think of other Nations who are acting just the same way today? What about the Nation where you live? What about the City or Town or even the church you go to.

Do you recognize attitudes similar to the Children of Israel? If you are not sure, buy a newspaper tomorrow or turn on the news, you will see murders, crime, cheating, broken homes and marriages, children left at home on their own until parents get home from work, or the pub! Thoughts about Jesus, thoughts about eternity, Salvation, care for others "No I am too busy"

*Verse 4.*

*For they are impudent children and stiff-necked. I do send you unto them; and you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD GOD.*

The name LORD GOD in Hebrew is YHWH Jehovah one of the highest names of God and it occurs 214 times. Ezekiel was to speak in that all-powerful name, as if God was speaking to them in person.

Ministers who preach and teach in our churches today must, for the sake of the "stiff-necked" and sometimes "rebellious" congregations preach and teach from the Bible under the authority and in the power of the LORD GOD Jehovah. You are teaching in the place of and representing The Lord God Almighty.

Please remember that many congregations *do* know the voice of God when they hear it. What they do with what that voice says is up to them. It is their choice as it was Israel's.

My father was a strict preacher. He knew and preached the Word of God and did not embellish it. He often said, "If I have offended you please remember I have given you God's word, if you don't like it take it up with Him!"

If the modern Preachers sought God and obtained their message "expressly" from God and didn't fill in, they need not fear the "looks or the words" from any rebellious people because you have given God's word and any argument should be addressed to God. You may like to warn them that to argue with God could well back fire! We shall see in a later chapter if you tell them with a word *Expressly from the Lord* you have relinquished your responsibility.

*Verse 5*

*And they, whether they will hear or not for they are rebellious yet they will know that there has been a Prophet among them.*

How many Saints leave church after a meeting knowing they have been listening to a Prophet of God who has built them up in spirit, been encouraged in the fight to stand up for truth and righteousness in the work place, taught to be over comers. Having been challenged to walk closer to Jesus, to be more like Jesus and be strong in their faith?

Ezekiel was commanded of God to preach His word, not once did God say you can fill in the spaces with what you think or your opinion, or what you have got off the Internet.

But just imagine for a second or two when congregations get to the throne of God and He asks, for instance “why did you not encourage your workmates to know ME”? And they answer “Dear Lord I did not know you, let alone encourage others”

There is a scripture that says something about God saying to those who came late and unprepared to the Lord’s Marriage supper in

*Matthew 25 v 12,  
I know you not.*

### **Today there are millions in church, but not in Christ.**

Time and space will not allow me to dwell on the fact that there are two Spirits at war in the heavens, the Spirit of God and the spirit of darkness, good and evil if you prefer.

Verse 6

*And you son of man be not afraid of them neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with you and you dwell among scorpions be not afraid of their words nor dismayed at their looks...*

Verse 6 is what God thought about *His* “congregation,” but He loved them enough to take the time and trouble to remind them of their sin and prepare a man to go to extraordinary lengths to bring them back to Himself.

Maybe when a man is ordained into the ministry of the Lord this verse should be read over him instead of the very nice things that seem to come from nowhere. Maybe those praying over a new minister should clearly say “there will be briers and thorns and you will preach among scorpions but don’t be afraid!” Don’t you think the new Pastor might want a bit longer to think about it!

At least Ezekiel was warned about his future “church” ministry dealing with a rebellious bunch of scorpions. God didn’t mince His words or His thoughts about the people He was sending Ezekiel to.

What an awful bunch of people they were.

God was warning Ezekiel not to be afraid of their words. Wow! How untimely, ill spoken words can pierce to the very soul and cause such heartache. Some church members are masters of the art!

*Though briers and thorns be with you and you dwell among scorpions!*

My guess is that many Pastors and Leaders can identify with that verse and some may even say they are all in my church now! Remember Israel's rebellion was against God and the hurtful remarks you get from members are really addressed to God and are from the pit. They don't look at it like that. You don't look at it like that, but God does and will give you grace to overcome as he did the Prophet.

God was preparing Ezekiel for what he was going to find in his new congregation. We shall soon see to what extent and what depth that preparation took.

We shall also see, if you haven't given up on me yet, there is also a great responsibility required from the congregations.

But just before we look at how Israel responded to God's words through Ezekiel, let's look at how God prepared Ezekiel further. God was not going to let His Prophet go into the fight without proper preparation.

Verse 7.

*And you shall speak My words whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (ignore it).* Unfortunately lots of congregations forbear!

Pastors, Leaders, and Teaches must preach God's word from the Bible and stick to it.

Our congregations are gracious, but must not be taken for granted. OK some stories, some testimonies illustrate the Word God has given you. Jesus made good use of parables but God was very serious with His instruction to His Prophet and very serious about his congregation.

Verse 8

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

Be not rebellious like that rebellious house is a warning to Ezekiel to guard his own natural weaknesses.

Ezekiel had to be strong in his own faith in God, but only God knew the extent His Prophet's testing was going to be. There was no one else he could call on, talk things over with, to get a second opinion. It was going to be a lonely commission. He had to KNOW His God.

Congregations everywhere must recognize that the Leader's position is a lonely place to be. Some have asked for Prayer from my wife and me, admitting loneliness and some, believe it or not, insecurity.

The Church must pray and hold up those Holy hands and ask God to give the Leader that Word *expressly* each week. If you don't do your part and pray and intercede for your Pastor you cannot complain if you think the service is boring!



My thoughts in this study are to encourage Leaders and Pastors to study the Bible more and God wanted that as well for Ezekiel.

Verse 9,10

*And when I looked behold a hand was sent unto me, and lo a roll of a book was therein. And He spread it before me and it was written within and without with lamentations morning and woe.*

See next study.