

# A Priest's Prophetic Calling in Exile

Ezekiel 2:8-3:21

## Introduction

Five years before the opening scene of this book:

597 BC

Jerusalem

Ezekiel, in his mid-20s, being groomed for the priesthood. Son of Buzi (prominent enough to be named, most likely a priest himself)

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his armies overthrow Judah and force Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, to surrender to him and be taken prisoner and carried back to Babylon along 10,000 captives (2 Kings 24)

Pick back up in the Book of Ezekiel, which starts 5 years into their time of exile in the vicinity of Babylon — near the manmade Chebar (KEE-bar) canal, which connected to the Euphrates River (today this would be in the country of Iraq).

God reveals himself to Ezekiel on the plains of Babylon in a vision.

Ezekiel's "Great Commission"

God's repetition of commands to Ezekiel from chapter 2 through 3:21:

8x Eat/Feed/Hear

5x Go/send you

6x Speak/say to them

So Ezekiel's Commission is ...

1. Eat (Feed on God's Word)
2. Go (to my people)
3. Speak (my Words to them, as a watchman)

Parallels with our Great Commission:

1. Go (Matt 28:19-20)
2. *Speak* (implied from make disciples and teach)
3. *Eat* (implied from teach ALL I have commanded)

## I. Eat / feed / hear

- Ezek 2:8 God says to Ezekiel "hear what I say to you" and "open your mouth and eat what I give you"
- Ezek 3:1 "Eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll"
- Ezek 3:3 "Feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it"
- To be internalized. **v.10** "Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you **receive in your heart**, and hear with your ears."

- JFB: “The idea is to possess himself fully of the message and digest it in the mind; not literal eating, but such an appropriation of its unsavory contents that they should become, as it were, part of himself, so as to impart them the more vividly to his hearers.”
- Echoed throughout the Scriptures: Job 22:22; Psa. 119:11; Luke 8:15; 1Th. 2:13
- As bitter as the bad news was in Babylon, the Word was sweet. **v.3** “... Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.”
- Testimonies throughout Scripture: Psa. 19:10; Psa. 63:5-6; Psa. 119:103; Psa. 34:8; Jer. 15:16 “
- **For self-reflection:** We are fairly consistent at feeding ourselves, physically speaking. But how are we doing feeding ourselves spiritually?
- God knows our tendency to rebel far better than we do. Ezekiel was a sinner, too, so God paired his command to eat with a negative command in **2:8**: “Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give to you.”

## II. Go

- Ezekiel went, a changed man, changed on the inside with new motivations driving him to go. **v.14** “I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit”
- This was righteous anger, a combination of love for God and hatred of sin, sobered by the task he was called to do and the spiritual state of those he would need to confront.
- Keil & Delitzsch: “Ezekiel feels himself deeply roused, even to the bitterness of anger, partly by the (obstinacy) of Israel, partly by the commission to announce to this (obstinate) people, without any prospect of success, the word of the Lord. To so heavy a task he feels himself unequal, therefore his natural man rebels against the Spirit of God, which, seizing him with a strong and powerful grasp, tears him away to the place of his work; and he would seek to withdraw himself from the divine call, as Moses and Jonah once did. The hand of the Lord, however, was strong upon him ...”
- God’s Word changes us from the inside, progressively (2Cor 3:18)
- The Scriptures are full of testimonies to this new attitude of hating evil and loving holiness: Proverbs 8:13; Psalms 97:10; 101:3; 119:104; Amos 5:15; 1Peter 1:13,15; Romans 7:15, 24; 12:9.
- Driven by passion Psalm 39:3
- Ezekiel’s sober-mindedness, empathy and compassion **v.15** “... I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.”
- Seven days was the period of consecration of a priest (Leviticus 8).
- John B. Taylor: It was “an example of the prophet’s being caught up into the righteous anger of God against his people so that he enters into the burden of the ‘lamentation and mourning and woe’ which constituted the message of God to Israel.”
- Similar to Job 2:13 when Job’s friends “sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.”

### III. Speak / don't be afraid

- What was Ezekiel to speak? “my words” God told him, 3x ch. 2, 3x more ch. 3.
- He was to speak as a watchman. **v.17** “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.”
- Message: foretelling and justifying God’s intention to punish the holy city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants with destruction and death.
- Keil & Delitzsch: “As a prophet for Israel, Ezekiel is like one standing upon a watchtower (Hab. 2:1), to watch over the condition of the people, and warn them of the dangers that threaten them (Jer. 6:17; Isa. 56:10). As such, he is responsible for the souls entrusted to his charge. From the mouth of Jehovah, i.e., according to God’s word, he is to admonish the wicked to turn from their evil ways, that they die not in their sins.”
- Jesus’ exhortations to watchfulness: Matt. 26:41; Luke 21:34
- Exhorted to watchfulness over brothers and sisters who make up the church:
  - Responsibility of shepherds: Acts 20:28; 1Tim. 4:16; Heb. 13:17
  - Responsibility of all: Gal 6:1; Rom 15:14; 1Thess 5:14
- Two groups of people to be warned:
  - The wicked. **vv.18-19**.
  - The righteous. **vv.20-21**.
- Command to speak came paired with a negative command: not to be afraid. 5x, twice in ch. 3 and 3x before that in ch. 2 God told Ezekiel not to be afraid or intimidated by the people he would confront. If fear reigned on the inside, Ezekiel would be tempted to shrink back and hold back the truth.
- Like Ezekiel, we are to be faithful watchmen like Paul showed us in Acts 20:26 “I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

**Conclusion:** OUR prophetic calling in exile.

Ezekiel had direct revelation from God on a need-to-know basis. We have “the prophetic Word more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place” (2Peter 1:19)

We “are a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a **holy** nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellencies** of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1Peter 2:9)