

**Message #4****Ezekiel 2:1-10**

In our previous context, we saw Ezekiel fall down flat on his face because he saw the glory of the Sovereign God who was controlling all things pertaining to Israel on earth. God used His arsenal of living beings to do whatever His Spirit directed them to do.

We may recall that Ezekiel was a priest (1:3). But just when he was nearing the age to minister, he was taken captive, so it looked like his ministry was over before it started. He could not serve God in the Temple, because Israel was out of the land and where they were in Babylon did not even have a Temple.

But God was not done with Ezekiel. He had another plan. He had another ministry for him. **God would change the ministry of this priest into a ministry of becoming a prophet.** Now a prophet had two responsibilities: 1) To forth tell God's truth; 2) To foretell God's future. Ezekiel would do both. What we see here is this:

**GOD, BY HIS SPIRIT, CALLED EZEKIEL TO BE A PROPHET TO HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL AND GAVE HIM THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ACCURATELY COMMUNICATE HIS WORD REGARDLESS OF THE SUBJECT AND REGARDLESS OF THEIR RESPONSE.**

Do not miss this. **Ezekiel is a prophet to God's people Israel (2:3; 3:4). He was not sent to be a prophet to foreign people who spoke foreign languages (3:5-6).**

This is so important to see. God's people need to hear God's Word. This is what God's people need. **God's people need to be taught God's Word regardless of how they respond.** When we go through the Scriptures, including the books known as the "Pastorals" (I & II Timothy and Titus), there are many more admonitions given to teach the Word of God to the people of God than there are to reach the lost. Somehow this point is lost by many who think their primary church job is to set up an environment that will lure in the lost. The primary job is proclaim the Word to the people of God.

That is the assignment given to Ezekiel. He was to take God's Word to the people of God. They needed to hear it, learn it and apply it; but even if they didn't want it, that was his job. There are three simple parts to this chapter.

**PART #1** – Ezekiel is called by God and enabled by God's Spirit to become a prophet. **2:1-2**

Just imagine what this moment must have been like for Ezekiel. He has been prostrated on the ground "by the awesome vision of the Majesty" and now he is invited to stand up so this majestic God could speak to him.

According to **verse 2**, it is the Spirit of God that entered him and stood him up and enabled him to hear.

Now there is a clear difference between how the Holy Spirit worked in the O.T. than in the N.T.. One of the most significant differences is pointed out by the Apostle John. **The Holy Spirit in the O.T. dispensation was with people temporarily and in the N.T. dispensation He is in people forever (John 14:16-17).**

Now the first thing to observe from **verse 1** is that God is the One doing all of the talking and what God says to Ezekiel is “stand on your feet that I may speak with you.” The invitation is from God.

Now God addresses Ezekiel as “Son of man.” This title is found nearly 100 times in Ezekiel. This is a key title of Daniel that refers to the Ancient of Days who will one day rule all the peoples of the world (Dan. 8:17) and this title was also used of Jesus Christ pertaining to Himself. So this is a very special title.

A. C. Gaebelain said that 86 times when Jesus Christ uses the title pertaining to Himself, He does so in various contexts. He uses it as a title pertaining to Him being rejected. He uses it in a context of His suffering, His exaltation, His glory and His second coming (*Ezekiel*, p. 24).

**We believe that the reason why Ezekiel is given this title is because he is a type of Christ. His message, his rejection and his treatment will prove to be just that. He is a human but He is also on a Divine mission. But even though he is on this Divine assignment, he is still just a man.**

Now as God spoke to Ezekiel and told him to stand, we will observe from **verse 2** that God’s Spirit was the One who enabled him to stand. **He stood reverently in the presence of God because of the enablement of the Holy Spirit.** This is an extremely important point. It is God’s Spirit that enables a man to carry out God’s ministry. We have lost sight of this point.

One religious leader said if the Holy Spirit were to withdraw from most ministries, He would not even be missed because most ministries are 90 percent based on programs and organization, not God’s Spirit.

A ministry that really accomplishes something is a ministry that is in tune with the Spirit of God and that does not mean it will be what men would say is successful. In fact, a true Spirit-led ministry may appear to not be too successful. Ezekiel certainly would not get the results he would want, but every bit of his ministry was Spirit-led and empowered.

Now carefully notice at the end of **verse 2** that it is the Spirit of God that enabled Ezekiel to hear the Word of God. True understanding of God’s Word must come by the Holy Spirit. It is God’s Spirit that enables one to grasp truth at a depth level. Paul said the same thing to the Corinthians (I Cor. 2:14-3:3).

**PART #2** – Ezekiel is specifically commissioned by God to proclaim God’s Word. **2:3-5**

Ezekiel was singled out by God to proclaim His Word to an audience that for the most part would like him or his message. He would not have to come up with his own messages because God would tell him exactly what he was to say.

I used to teach homiletics and I have quite a library of homiletics books and one of the points that is emphasized in most of them is know your audience. Know who your audience is and tailor your message to fit your audience. Now there is some wisdom to this, but the truth is the job of a preacher is to preach God’s Word regardless of who the audience is or how they receive the message. Ezekiel was not going to get a real good audience response.

There are five facts given to Ezekiel by God concerning his audience.

**Fact #1** - He is to proclaim God’s Word to Israel. **2:3a**

What that specifically means is that he is to proclaim God’s Word to God’s people. He is not to proclaim God’s Word to the lost nations of the world. God’s own people needed to hear God’s Word and Ezekiel’s job was to take it to them.

**Fact #2** - He is to proclaim God’s Word to a rebellious people. **2:3b**

The picture of God’s people is not flattering. They were not obedient people; they were rebellious people. In fact, this word “rebellion” or “rebellious” is found seven times in this chapter (**2:3, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8**) and the fact that they are a rebellious house is found eleven more times in Ezekiel (3:9, 26, 27; 12:2, 2, 3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3; 44:6). These people, who were God’s people, were rebels against God and His Word. They opposed God’s Word in their own lives. They totally resisted the Word of God.

Now the word “rebellious” is an interesting word. It comes from a root word that means to be bitter. This word is one that means to be bitter against the Word of God and to totally resist and oppose it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 507-508).

In fact, this was the very reason they were being dominated by a foreign nation. They were so rebellious that God uses a Hebrew word for “people” which is “goyim” which normally refers to Gentile nations. God’s own people were so rebellious and so worldly that they looked like, talked like and acted like the pagan nations.

**Fact #3** - He is to proclaim God’s Word to people who have transgressed against God. **2:3c**

Ezekiel was to take God’s Word to God’s people who were known for wandering off the path of righteousness and doing that which was sinful.

**Fact #4** - He is to proclaim God's Word to stubborn people. **2:4a**

The word "stubborn" is one that refers to something that is very hard or hardened (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 746-747). This is God's assessment of His own people. They are not sensitive to Him and His Word. They were not teachable. They were not pliable. They were stubborn.

**Fact #5** - He is to proclaim God's Word to obstinate people. **2:4b**

The word "obstinate" refers to something that is very strong and firm and established. It holds tight to something very strongly (*Ibid.*, pp.269-270).

Combined, these two words stubborn and obstinate indicate that these are very hardened people in their sin and rebellion. These are God's people who have established a character of hard-heartedness to the Word of God and the will of God.

Now **verse 5** says that Ezekiel's job was to communicate God's Word to God's people who were hard-hearted rebels and he was to preach God's Word whether they listened or not.

God tells him right up front that he is going to a rebellious people and his job is to proclaim God's Word. God says they probably won't listen, but they will know that a true prophet of God has been among them.

**PART #3** – Ezekiel is told by God the attitude that he is to have in his ministry. **2:6-9**

God tells Ezekiel the kind of attitude he is to have in his ministry. By calling Ezekiel "son of man," He is saying you are a human on a Divine mission.

**Attitude #1** - He is not to fear them. **2:6a**

Those who are in tune with the Holy Spirit need not fear fleshly rebels. Even though they may threaten them, God's ministers are not to fear them. Sometimes we get intimidated by others who reject truth. Our job is not to fear them, but to tell them the truth.

**Attitude #2** - He is not to fear their words. **2:6b**

God's own people would be nothing but thistles and thorns to Ezekiel. His ministry would be like sitting with scorpions. They would not be friendly to him or what he had to say. But he was to stick to his assignment even though they were a "rebellious house." The entire household, the nation Israel, was in total resistance against God and His Word.

**Attitude #3** - He is not to fear their presence. **2:6c**

When your assignment is to minister to people who don't like you or your message, it can be very intimidating. God did not want Ezekiel afraid of them or their faces.

**Attitude #4** - He is to speak God's Word. **2:7**

This is what a minister's job is—you preach and speak God's Word. We are not to preach my convictions or opinions or philosophies or imaginations; the job of a minister is to speak forth God's Word in a way that is accurate.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the most liberal ministers in the history of the United States, who died in 1969, attacked the Bible, the Virgin birth and expository preaching. He actually said what Andy Stanley similarly said recently that expository preaching is the poorest type of preaching "because it leaves so little scope for the imagination." The job of the minister and the job of Ezekiel is not to put together some oratorical imaginative lecture; it was and is to accurately proclaim God's Word. He is to do this regardless of the response of the people.

**Attitude #5** - He is to listen to God's Word. **2:8a**

Regardless of the audience, Ezekiel's job is to understand and communicate accurately the Word of God. What this shows us is that we could be surrounded by people who don't love God's Word and we can still love it. We can live in a world in which most don't want to hear God's Word and we do.

**Attitude #6** - He is to feed on God's Word. **2:8b-10**

There are five facts to observe about God's Word:

**(Fact #1)** - God's Word comes from the hand of God. **2:9a**

**(Fact #2)** - God's Word has been extended to God's people. **2:9b**

The Word of God is a tremendous gift of God to His people.

**(Fact #3)** - God's Word is a scroll. **2:9c**

We cannot help but think of the scroll described by Zechariah (Zech. 5:1-4) which shows the judgment of God is coming upon the whole world out of heaven. We also are reminded of the seven sealed scroll in Revelation (5:1, 4, 5) which is clearly connected to the wrath of God being poured out in the world in the Tribulation. Specifically as it relates to Israel, we are reminded of Revelation 10:9-10 when John is told to eat the scroll, which is exactly what Ezekiel is told to do (Ezek. 3:1).

So based on this context, we think the primary meaning of this scroll is that it is the scroll that contains the Tribulation judgments that are found in the Word of God targeting Israel and the nations. The reason why God will permit Israel to go through that judgment is because of her rebellion.

**(Fact #4)** - God's Word is written. **2:10a**

God has written His Word. People need to know this. The written Scriptures are not just another book; it is the book of God. The fact that it is written on front and back indicates that it is written in a systematic way and is to be expounded systematically.

**(Fact #5)** - God's Word contains written judgments. **2:10b**

Now remember these are messages Ezekiel was to give to God's own people, Israel. In the written Scriptures are lamentations, mourning and woe.

This clearly connects us to Biblical prophecy and the woe judgments that will take place in the Tribulation.