

***A Perfect Partnership***  
Ezekiel's Call  
***Impossible Hope Series – Part 2***  
Ezekiel 2:1-3:11  
January 20-21, 2024

*“His calling is simple: to declare the messages of Yahweh, irrespective of audience response, and to trust God for his security.” Daniel Block, NICOT*

**Introduction**

- **The Glorious opportunity to partner with God** – Can you imagine that the God of all creation, the Almighty, wants to do things with you and through you? It's true!
  - **We are here for a reason** – God could do things alone, but He doesn't want to. He wants to use you. You have a purpose.
  - **No one said the call was easy, just that it was meaningful** – what type of life do we want? Easy or meaningful?
  - **The reasons why we resist our calling** – it could be fear, it could be laziness, it could be ignorance of opportunity, it could be a lot of things. The point is that we were built to do things with God not apart from Him. As long as we are apart we will struggle with a hole in our selves.

**There is no Greater PURPOSE than PARTNERING with God**

- **We were born to partner with God.** We were born to live into our purpose and meaning. Any sort of valuable living has to begin with God and continue with Him. We cannot just be Scripture-Soaked and not Spirit-led.
- **Recap – what happened last week...**
  - **A Trip to Heaven** - Ezekiel was seemingly randomly<sup>1</sup> pulled up into heaven to see visions of God's chariot throne & massive and powerful heavenly beings called Cherubim.
  - **Highlight the meaning of it all** – Ezekiel was about to be called by God into a very serious and difficult assignment. It was going to test everything that he had. His absolute loyalty was necessary to get across an accurate message from God. There could be no deviation from the message or illustrations. To begin the process, God brought him into heaven to see that there were bigger things going on than just Ezekiel's existence. He was stunned by the size and scope of God's presence and the creatures that attended Him. Ezekiel would never ever again have to question either the existence of God nor His calling after seeing all of that.
  - **Ezekiel fell down overwhelmed or in honor.** He's face down when we start this portion of the story.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Suddenly, on the fifth day of the fourth month of his thirtieth year, at the time he would normally have been commissioned for temple ministry, God breaks into this exile's life and calls him to an alternative, and perhaps even higher, service. The specific date of his call is fixed at the fifth day of the fourth month. Assuming a spring New Year, the call came to him on the fifth day of Tammuz, which for the year 593 B.C. translates as July 31” Daniel Block, NICOT Commentary

## Lesson

### • On a Mission From God

#### • Ezekiel's First Recorded Call to Prophecy

- Eze 2:1–5 - *“And he said to me, ‘Son of man [human being], stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.’<sup>2</sup> And as he spoke to me, the Spirit<sup>2</sup> entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.<sup>3</sup> And he said to me, ‘Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel,<sup>3</sup> to nations of rebels [revolted against the king],<sup>4</sup> who have rebelled<sup>5</sup> against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.<sup>4</sup> The descendants also are impudent<sup>6</sup> [insubordinate, on the outside] and stubborn<sup>7</sup> [on the inside]: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord [authority/master] GOD [Yahweh].’<sup>5</sup> And whether they hear or refuse to hear<sup>8</sup> (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.”*

- **He said to me...I will speak with you** – God speaks to mankind, to Ezekiel. What Ezekiel has seen, prior to God speaking has left him stunned.
- **Son of Man** – this is a poetic way of saying, ‘human being.’ It’s gentler. Oddly enough, it’s Jesus’ favorite way of describing Himself.
- **Stand up** – At the opening of this portion Ezekiel is either passed out or laying prostrate (face down, arms out in honor) before God. God is about to have a conversation with him and it’s time to stand up since homage was already paid.
- **The Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet** – this indicates two key things: 1.) Ezekiel lacked the ability to stand up on his own in the presence of God; 2.) The Holy Spirit enables us to stand and be with God. Both of those realities are powerful.
- **Other people who were overwhelmed by God’s presence** – Ezekiel is not the only one. Many people have been overwhelmed by God’s presence even to the point of passing out, going into a trance, not eating or drinking, etc. It happened to Daniel 3x’s. Here’s a quick guide to examples:<sup>9</sup>
  - **Daniel collapses at seeing angel Gabriel** – Da 8:18
  - **Daniel sees two more heavenly beings angel (2x’s)** – Da 10:7–11, 15-19
  - **Peter knocked into a trance** – Ac 10:9–11
  - **Paul’s trance** – Ac 22:17–18

---

<sup>2</sup> “In the meantime Ezekiel is infused with an energizing *rûaḥ* that picks him up and sets him on his feet. And what kind of *rûaḥ* is this? A sudden gust of wind? Or the Spirit of Yahweh, the Holy Spirit? The text notes that the raising of the prophet occurs simultaneously with the sound of the voice, which suggests that this *rûaḥ* may be the source of the word’s dynamic and energizing power. This can be none other than the Spirit of God, and the *rûaḥ* that energizes Ezekiel must be the same *rûaḥ* that had animated the wheels in 1:12, 20–21, and that will control his movements throughout his ministry.” NICOT, Daniel Block

<sup>3</sup> (*bēnê yiśrā’ēl*, lit. “the sons of Israel”)

<sup>4</sup> “The first, *mārad*, which occurs twice in v. 3 (*rebels, who have rebelled*), denotes primarily “to rise up in revolt against an overlord, to refuse allegiance to one’s sovereign.” NICOT

<sup>5</sup> “The second term, *have been in revolt (pāša’)*, means essentially “to commit a crime, to transgress a law or principle.” NICOT

<sup>6</sup> (*qēšē pānîm*, lit. “stiff, hard of face”)

<sup>7</sup> “If “stiff of face” describes the exterior manifestation of stubbornness, the second term, *obstinate (ḥizqê lēb*, lit. “hard of heart/mind”), describes interior hardness.” NICOT

<sup>8</sup> “The manner in which Israel expresses their defiance is intimated in the twofold aside, *whether they listen or not* (vv. 5, 7). On first sight, this comment seems to suggest that some will heed the messages which Ezekiel is to deliver. But Yahweh’s picture of Israel’s hardened condition is too realistic, and he quickly deflates that expectation. They are an insubordinate family, refusing to listen to him when he speaks.” NICOT

<sup>9</sup> See my document titled: “Study in the Issue of Slain in the Spirit” for more information.

- **John passes out seeing glorified Jesus** – Re 1:17–18
- **2x's in the Temple when priests are knocked down** - 2 Ch 5:13–14; 2 Ch 7:1–2
- **Why people fall down in God's presence** – a quick discussion on 'falling out in the Spirit' (a.k.a. 'slain in the Spirit'). There is a phenomenon in which people pass out or fall over in highly spiritual environments. It's very common in some churches and very rare in others. It is my opinion that this phenomenon can be impacted by 4 significant elements: Body, soul, spirit, & warfare. Here's what I mean... There are many different reasons why someone would fall down in a church service or spiritual environment. Some of those reasons are healthy and some are not. The Bible is clear that sometimes people fell down before God purposefully in honor and sometimes they were knocked down by glory or emotional weight. We experience those same situations today. It's a combination of the human condition along with supernatural impact.
  - **1.) Spiritual knockouts** – probably the most common experience of this sort in the Bible is when God's awesome presence overwhelms an individual and they are rendered inoperative, and they fall down as if asleep (pass out). This is directly God overwhelming people by His presence. This is entirely involuntary and a reaction.
  - **2.) Soul impact or emotional swooning** – this is when someone is emotionally overwhelmed by the presence of God and begin to get weak. They have the option either to lean into that and go down, or to resist that and remain standing. When trust and peace is present, many choose to go down so they can soak/bask in the presence of God. It's a partnership with the Lord (some is Him = initiation; and some is us = reception)
  - **3.) Body or fleshly response** – there are healthy body responses and unhealthy responses. It usually hinges on two key factors: A.) spiritual or church culture; B.) self-centered needs.
    - **Cultural expectation impact** - In many denominational and church cultures it is not only accepted that someone CAN go out in the Spirit, but that they SHOULD. This creates a predisposition to the emotional element (similar to how pre-suggestion encourages hypnotism). On one hand it can be healthy and joyful that there is a safe environment to do so, and they can spend time emotionally resting in God, but on the other hand it can create undue or unhealthy pressure to fake responses just to be seen as one of the tribe.
    - **Self-focus factors** - In any human situation there is always going to be an aspect of self-focus and sometimes our dysfunctional needs for attention cause us to manipulate through a display. It can be as simple as desperately wanting others to tend to us, so we are extra emotional, or extra needy. Although that is unhealthy and dysfunctional reasoning, care should be taken to find out motivation

and help toward healthier options should be sought (if someone needs attention, the need may be real, but the process/vehicle may be inappropriate).

- **4.) Spiritual Warfare** – Satan and his team are opportunists. They take advantage of situations. They tend to provide counterfeit experiences to muddy the waters of legitimate God-work. For example, demonic forces may encourage fleshly responses like seeking attention, getting out of control, causing disruption, etc. The point is to distract from the real. Good people can be enticed as well as ungodly people. Hyper-responses should be looked at closely, especially if they are taking the attention off of the Lord, but they should not be assumed to be demonic in origin until more evidence is found. God does weird things and extreme things too. Oddity is not a reliable indicator of negative spiritual warfare.
- **Common Combinations** – in a large hyper-spiritual environment it is likely that portions of all 4 elements are at play. It is rarely a one-size-fits-all, everyone-is-legit-or-not at the same time. It's a mixed bag. Our job is not to shut it down but discern the truth and guide it toward Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- **We don't partner with God well in our own strength** – notice the passage says the Holy Spirit entered into Ezekiel and only then could he stand up to the task. We desperately need the power of God to do God-Stuff.
- **I send you to the Israelites** – the mission is clarified instantly. God to the Jewish people. Ezekiel was a Jew and a priest, so this was a normal thing to hear and expected. An immediate question Ezekiel may have is whether or not he is going to talk to the deported Jews around him in Babylon or if he's being sent back home to talk with the Jews still remaining in the homeland of Israel (Ezekiel was taken in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 deportations and even in the end the poorest of the poor were still left there kind of scattered about).
- **A nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me. Their descendants are also impudent** (showing scorn and disrespect) **and stubborn** – this was the new part of the message that would have caught Ezekiel off guard. It's not he couldn't understand it or even agree with it, it's that when God says something it's fact. You can't argue with His view/opinion of it. It is whatever He says it is. He just labeled Israel (and perhaps the other surrounding nations that He judges) as disrespectful, stubborn and rebellious, period. That is unacceptable to God and should be unacceptable. Rebellion against deity is high treason. We get more details on what they were doing that was actively rebellious and scornful/disrespectful but for now the heart intent is the focus.
- **Why Israel/Judah was in so much trouble** – we will dig into the specifics in later messages but initial reason (and what we address here) is that they stopped partnering with God and failed to live their purpose of existence. They became not just useless for the Kingdom of God but in opposition to. Have we become that?

- **Oracle of God: I send you to them and you will say to them, ‘thus says the Lord GOD.’** – this is big time. This is the highest level of prophecy that anyone can utilize. It’s the direct, judgment words of God, that proclaim reality. It must not be edited, changed, refused, or altered in any way. Every bit of it is accurate and true.
  - **My concerns with modern-day, ‘thus says the Lord’**– I have such a high view and value for ‘thus says the LORD’, that I don’t want any modern-day person using it except in the most strict environments. The reason is that it connotes infallibility and stops all ability to filter, consider, or disregard it. It lets too much humanity, messed up conduits, garbage into it. We are called, in the New Testament ear to ‘weigh what is said,’ not accept it as fact. Therefore I prefer the use of, ‘I sense/feel that the Lord may be saying...’ It still gives the glory and direction to God, but it allows a freedom of filter.
- **The Call: whether they hear or refuse to hear they will know that a prophet has been among them (they won’t)** – although it kind of sounds like some will give a favorable ear to Ezekiel’s message, the tone and style of how it’s written with the aside by God (they are a rebellious house) and comparing it to later discussions, it’s clear that God has not belief that they will indeed listen. This is more of a flat out statement of, ‘they won’t listen to you, but our presence is what they need to remember’. What’s the point in sending a prophet to a people that won’t listen to a prophet? It’s a statement more than a hopeful opportunity. Ezekiel WILL say what’s happening. He will warn them. They will technically have a chance, but they won’t take it. Therefore Ezekiel is a harbinger of God’s judgment coming and no one can say God didn’t warn them.
  - **Discussing the matter of results<sup>10</sup>** – our job is to be faithful and obedient. The ultimate outcomes are in God’s hands. We don’t save anyone, He does. Whether they listen or change or not, we are still responsible to demonstrate well and share well.
- **A Scary Calling**
  - **God Assures Ezekiel not to be Afraid**
    - *Eze 2:6–7 - “And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions.<sup>11</sup> Be not afraid of*

---

<sup>10</sup> “whoever would serve as the messenger of God must recognize that the calling is not to success but to faithfulness. Every aspect of vocational service remains under the sovereign control of God, especially the results. Accordingly, apparent effectiveness is no proof of calling, nor even a sure criterion by which to measure faithfulness. The messenger embarks on his or her mission as an emissary of the divine King. That privilege alone should provide sufficient motivation for unconditional service.” NICOT

<sup>11</sup> “The rarity of the expressions used renders the interpretation of this comment somewhat uncertain... In this context *sorābîm* are reasonably understood as some form of “stinging nettles.” But what is to be made of the “ugly mixture of metaphors” created by the introduction of *scorpions*? ‘*aqrabbîm* have traditionally been understood as a Palestinian variety of arthropods, possessing two strong pincers and an upturned tail with a stinger on the end. However, the problem of the mixed metaphor and a long history of forced interpretations is resolved if ‘*aqrabbîm* is interpreted as another designation for a thorny plant, so called either because of its scorpionlike appearance or its stinging quality. But what is the point of Yahweh’s prediction that Ezekiel will be among thorns and thistles? The question may be answered from two sides. On the one hand, perhaps reflecting Babylonian influence, the thorns, briars, and scorpion plants should not be interpreted as threats to the prophet but as symbols of his protection. On the other, this statement occurs in the account at the very point where other call narratives noted promises of divine presence for the commissioned agent. Accordingly the thorns and thistles represent God’s promise of a wall of protection for the prophet.” NICOT

*their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>7</sup> And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house."*

- **And you, son of man** – Uh Oh. God turns the conversation back to Ezekiel personally. That has to be scary. But thankfully it's a reassuring word.
- **Be not afraid of them, their words or their threatening looks** – Ezekiel is going to be rejected and threatened. That's the bad news. The good news is that God is on His side and God sent him. Therefore, all of their nastiness and violence is against God more than it's against Ezekiel. God is going to get his point across therefore Ezekiel will be relatively safe in the process. He needs to ignore what they are saying and keep doing his job.
- **Weird phrase: Good or Bad? (briars, thorns & scorpions)** – what do we make of this sentence? Even the scholars say that it's messy and confusing in the original language. It's so odd, that no one knows if it's referring to a good thing or bad thing. It could mean: A.) EVEN THOUGH you are surrounded by dangerous things; or, B.) SINCE you are protected by a wall of defense. In the first instance it would be talking about various dangers the Jewish leaders threaten with. In the second instance, it's a description of impenetrable hedges (briars, nettles, thorns, and bushes as sharp as scorpions) that provide protection. That defense would be the fact that Ezekiel is in Babylon where the Jewish leaders wouldn't have the ability to harm him since they aren't in charge. He's more protected here than anywhere else.
- **You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear...** - this again is a repeated statement of God about how much Israel won't listen to what Ezekiel prophesies, but it doesn't matter. The results are not on him. He is supposed to do his part. He is supposed to present the message clearly and unadulterated and leave the rest to God.
  - **The pain of being ignored** – Some of the heaviness of our challenges in life is that we can't see any purpose in it. When we can see purpose it gives us strength to walk through it. When we operate or ministry on God's behalf and we are ignored or rejected, it helps to remember that there is a reason for it. There are other factors at play. It's not immediately because they don't like us or that they don't see us as valuable. It's much more about God than us.
- **Honey Bunches of Scripture**
  - **God Gives His Word to Ezekiel to Eat**
    - *Eze 2:8–3:3 - "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." <sup>9</sup> And when I looked, behold, a hand<sup>12</sup> was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book<sup>13</sup> was in it.*

---

<sup>12</sup> "a scroll, presented to him by a hand stretched out. In the light of the command in v. 8, the hand obviously belongs to Yahweh." NICOT

<sup>13</sup> "But the special nature of the scroll is highlighted in several ways. First, it is identified as a *rolled-up scroll* (*mēgillat sēper*). Even though *mēgillat*, from *gill*, "to roll," means "scroll," the common translation "written scroll" (e.g., NRSV, NJPS) is unlikely, since *sēper* does not mean "written." Rather, it denotes the object on which a text is written, without reference to its contents,<sup>63</sup> and may be used of documents of many

*<sup>10</sup> And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back,<sup>14</sup> and there were written on it words<sup>15</sup> of lamentation<sup>16</sup> and mourning<sup>17</sup> [moaning] and woe.<sup>18</sup> **3** And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find<sup>19</sup> [see] here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” <sup>2</sup> So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.”*

- **But you son of man, hear what I say to you** – Over and over God calls Israel rebellious. Along the way He reminds Ezekiel not to be like that. Here He commands Ezekiel to pay close attention.
- **Don’t be rebellious like they are** – if Ezekiel acts like the rest of Israel he will be swept up in the judgment with them. He must be soft in the hands of God, a tool for the building of the Kingdom of God. Resistance will ruin everything. This is a severe warning.
- **Open your mouth and eat what I give you** – at this exact moment, Ezekiel doesn’t know what he’s supposed to eat. Just the command and seriousness of it, has to make him uneasy. What will God offer to him?
- **Behold** – that is the key word that says, ‘wow, this is a big deal, pay attention.’
- **A hand was stretched out to me** – notice that Ezekiel would never say, ‘God put out His hand’. First of all God doesn’t have hands. Secondly, nothing is clear enough in overwhelming heavenly visions to make a solid statement like that. He knows that A HAND offered it to him, but clueless as to whose, although he’s going to naturally assume it’s the one commanding him, which is Yahweh.
- **A scroll of a book was in the hand** – Hmmm, not food, clearly. What is this about? It seems to be a page from a book that was rolled up like a scroll. Nobody eats scrolls, so what is God hinting at? (he must have thought).
- **He spread it before me** – we are now assuming that God is doing the spreading of the scroll, which simply means rolling it out flat so that it could be looked at.
- **There was writing on it front and back; words of lamentation, mourning, and woe** – we know two things immediately: 1.) it’s a lot in there; 2.) it’s not good.
- **He said, ‘eat whatever you see here...eat this scroll, then go speak to the house of Israel** – hmmm...eat a scroll. Wait, what? Clearly God isn’t going to let him go do his job until he eats it so there is no debate here. He is about to eat a scroll because it has something to do with the task he is being sent out to do.

---

kinds. This scroll was probably made from papyrus rather than skin, since the former was the more common scroll material in biblical times. More importantly, however, whereas the practice of writing on both sides, front and back, was customary on papyrus scrolls in Ezekiel’s day, the technique of preparing skins so they could receive writing on both sides was developed much later, after the beginning of the Christian era.”

NICOT

<sup>14</sup> “Second, the scroll *was full of writing, front and back*, implying not only a well-defined but also a complete message. Ezekiel may not modify it with his own comments, nor does God allow himself any room for adjustments.” NICOT

<sup>15</sup> “describe the effects of the judgments he will pronounce upon his people.” NICOT

<sup>16</sup> “*qînâ*, “lament, dirge,” whose form derives from the dirges wailed at funerals,...” NICOT

<sup>17</sup> “*hegeh*, literally, “rumbling, growling,” is a paralinguistic onomatopoeic expression, expressive of the moaning and groaning associated with grief.” NICOT

<sup>18</sup> “Perhaps this too is an onomatopoeic expression, echoing a cry of pain.” NICOT

<sup>19</sup> “*māšā*” does not mean “find” in the sense of discover, but “encounter.” Cf. Greenberg in *Congress Volume*, p. 138; BDB, p. 593a.” NICOT

- **I opened my mouth and He gave me the scroll to eat** – Notice the instant obedience. This is awesome and how our hearts should be. Imagine what God could do if we were instantly obedient even in the uncomfortable or weird that we KNEW was God? Wow. He’s ready to gobble down, however that’s going to work. But as it’s being handed over for consumption God has greater explanation.
- **Son of man, fill your belly/stomach with this scroll** – this seems to suggest two things at least: 1.) Ezekiel must eat it ALL. It’s not a nibble situation. 2.) the purpose is filling. It’s a consuming message.
- **I ate it and it tasted as sweet as honey** – this is fascinating. Obviously the metaphor here is that God’s words are sweet and good. Clearly scrolls don’t taste like honey normally. This is all about the quality and content of God’s messages. Even though they are bad news, anything that comes from God is good, right, and true. That makes it sweet.
  - **The value of receiving oracles from God - God tells Ezekiel stuff** - The phrase, “*And he said to me...*” (*wayyō’mer ‘elay* in Hebrew) is used 41x’s in Ezekiel.<sup>20</sup> GOD is telling Ezekiel stuff! Imagine that you and God talked about secret things. That happens. There are so many Christians today that have personal conversations with God. It may not be as dramatic as knowing the future, but it is still personal and powerful. The closer we get to God the more He is able to reveal if He wants to.
- **Doomed From the Start**
  - **God Explains that Israel Will Not Listen**
    - *Eze 3:4-15 - “And he said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. <sup>5</sup> For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel— <sup>6</sup> not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. <sup>7</sup> But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. <sup>8</sup> Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Like emery<sup>21</sup> harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.” <sup>10</sup> Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. <sup>11</sup> And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear. <sup>12</sup> Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake:<sup>22</sup> “Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!” <sup>13</sup> It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one*

<sup>20</sup> “And he said to me.” *wayyō’mer* occurs 41 times in Ezekiel... Only 3 times is the person addressed someone other than Ezekiel (9:4, 7; 10:2). Usually the expression occurs in contexts in which Yahweh and the prophet are relating personally, or Yahweh is providing the prophet with an interpretation of some aspect of a vision that he is observing.” NICOT Commentary, Daniel Block.

<sup>21</sup> “*emery* (*šāmîr*), a form of corundum, the hardest substance known at the time,...” NICOT

<sup>22</sup> “Whereas 1:24 had compared the sound of the creatures’ flapping wings to the rumble of rushing waters, the voice of Shadday, and the tumult of an army camp, here the metaphor is changed to *a great earthquake*.” NICOT

another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake.<sup>23</sup> <sup>14</sup> The Spirit lifted me up<sup>24</sup> and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit,<sup>25</sup> the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. <sup>15</sup> And I came to<sup>26</sup> the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.<sup>27</sup>”

- **He said, ‘son of man, go to Israel and speak my words to them. They are not a foreign people with a language barrier, but the Jews –** This seems like very unnecessary description until we see what comes right after it. Slowed down for study like this makes it sound extra, but in a moment to moment conversation it provides context. Ezekiel doesn’t have the Jonah call (foreigners), he is called to his own people.
- **If I sent you to foreigners, they would listen to you –** God uses irony here to say, ‘oddly enough, IF I were to give you a call to go to foreigners with my news they would be far more receptive to you. Your own people, the Jews, are specifically resistant and rebellious not just in general but they’ve hardened their heart toward ME. Foreign missions would be easier in this regard.
- **The house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me –** This whole ministry was not Ezekiel’s idea, but God’s. They are His plans, His words. Therefore Ezekiel needs to remember that any response is a response toward God and not to him directly. This takes away some of the personal rejection to the ministry assignment.
  - **When we are rejected in ministry -** Too often we are rejected in sharing the Word/Gospel and feel a personal attack when in fact, it’s God and His word that they are rejecting.

<sup>23</sup> “Turning around, he observes the glory of Yahweh lifting up off the ground.” NICOT

<sup>24</sup> “whoever would serve as God’s messenger must be empowered by the Spirit of God. Ezekiel was “the prophet of the Spirit.” Animated and energized by the infusion of God’s Holy Spirit, he serves as a model to all who would stand in the Lord’s presence and all who would enter his service.” NICOT

<sup>25</sup> “Ezekiel is *deeply disturbed*. The use of *hēmā* in the rest of the book and the requirements of the present context determine the meaning of *hāmāt rūhī*, literally “angry in my spirit.” That the book of Ezekiel contains 31 of the 85 occurrences of *hēmā* in the OT reflects the general tone of his ministry, especially the early part. Elsewhere in Ezekiel the word always means “rage, wrath” (often parallel with *’ap*), and except for 23:25, it always has reference to divine anger. In this case, however, the emotion is applied to the prophet’s *rūah*, which is best understood in context as an alternative to *lēb*, “mind, heart,” the seat of mental and emotional activity. The LXX translation of *hāmāt rūhī*, *ὀργῆ τοῦ πνεύματός μου*, “in the passion of my spirit,” replaces the psychological emotion of rage with a spiritual impulse. In the present context, however, it makes sense to interpret the phrase in its normal meaning: Ezekiel is infuriated by the divine imposition on his life and the implications of Yahweh’s commission for him. Accordingly, the phrase *mar bahāmāt rūhī*, “embittered in the fury of my spirit,” which describes the prophet’s emotional state, expresses explicitly what we have seen to be implicit in the narrative to this point. The prophet does indeed share some of the hardened disposition of his compatriots. This interpretation is reinforced by the following statement. Rather than offering the prophet consolation, or promising his presence, Yahweh continued to pressure the prophet with his strong hand.” NICOT

<sup>26</sup> “But the transportation of Ezekiel back to the Chebar canal raises a problem. According to 1:1–3, the divine vision and call had come to him while he was at the canal. The need for the return is understandable if “by the Chebar canal” in the superscription is interpreted as a general designation for the area where the exiles resided. They need not have lived on the bank of the canal, nor does the account require that Ezekiel’s vision and commission occurred while he was beside the canal. The precise location of his call is not given. Presumably he was alone at the time, probably somewhere outside the village. By contrast, the location of his ministry is specifically identified: *Tel Abib*, the village where this exilic community lived. The residents will encounter a messenger of God from their very own midst.” NICOT

<sup>27</sup> “This word may have been chosen intentionally because of the range of nuances it conjures up: silence, desolation, despair, distress, shock. The encounter with God, the digestion of the scroll, the charge to go and preach to an unresponsive audience, the hardening of his forehead, the sound of the throne-chariot, and the pressure of the hand of Yahweh upon him have left Ezekiel in a wretched state—socially ostracized, physically exhausted, and emotionally disturbed. Thus he sat among his fellow exiles for an entire week, resisting the call of God, but feeling the relentless pressure of God’s hand.” NICOT

- **The house of Israel has a hard forehead and stubborn heart** – they are completely resistant.
- **Therefore I have made your face as hard as theirs and your forehead as hard as theirs (like emery harder than flint)** – They are stubborn, tenacious, and resistant, so I'm going to stir up a heart within you to be just as ferocious as they are. They will reject, but you won't give up. They will rebel and you will chase after them. You will be just as demanding as they are.
- **Don't fear their threatening looks, they are on my bad side right now** – God's point to Ezekiel is that he is on God's team while they are not, so what can they do to him? God gives constant reminders not to be afraid to do this assignment, because it was really difficult.
- **Receive in your heart and hear with your ears ALL my words, God says** – don't reject any of it. The word of God must first be absorbed by the believer, the teacher, the ambassador, BEFORE it can be shared with others. Otherwise, we have inconsistency and hypocrisy. Every good preacher must engage with, wrestle through, experience, and internalize their sermon before they present it to the congregation. It must begin with us before we take it to THEM.
- **Go to the exiles, your people, and give them My message no matter how they respond** – this is a clear indicator of who Ezekiel's audience is supposed to be. It is the Jews with him in Babylon, the deported exiles. He is not being called back to the homeland to minister. He will minister right here.
- **Then the Spirit lifted me up** – this is the Holy Spirit. We don't know how He lifted Ezekiel up but maybe it just felt like he was rising up or levitating. The term spirit is also wind and breath. That means this could be the Holy Spirit lifting him up via a whirlwind (through the breath of God) which would be similar to the description of how Enoch was taken physically by God.
- **I heard behind me the voice/sound of a great earthquake** – the Hebrew word can either be sound or voice. Since it refers to an action (the wings moving of the cherubim) AND is right before someone says something, it's difficult to tell which one it is. I would guess that it's the movement of the wings.
- **'Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!'** – this is a praise call out. Usually that is done by the Seraphim who, so far, have not been present or recognized. Perhaps it was a simultaneous call FROM the cherubim as they launched out and propelled the chariot throne of God (they carry it), and the sound of the movement getting ready to escort God. The content is beautiful. It says, 'may the glory of Yahweh be beautiful and magnified where He moves.' It's simply a statement that no matter what God does or where He goes, may His glory resound out in power and effect.
- **It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them (the great earthquake sound)** – these are the cherubim (four wings; four faces; hooves, hands; massive; powerful; combined with wheels by which they complete the chariot locomotion

engine). They are so powerful that even the movement of their wings sounds like an earthquake.

- **Terrifying or Important? (hearing God)** – Are experiences with God supposed to be terrifying or important? Both, wouldn't you say. Unfortunately due to the first, we tend to avoid it and miss the last. The result is a tame and tranquil faith that accomplishes little and leaves us faithless.
  - **The Spirit lifted me up and took me away** – again we see the Holy Spirit catches him up in the whirlwind and transports him. It's the same movement, only described twice.
  - **I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit** – this is emotional language. Ezekiel is very angry at the situation and likely at God. What God is forcing him to do (there was no debate allowed) was intense. Ezekiel knew that it was a terrible call. He was bitter. Interestingly, you would assume that the bitterness would be chased out by fear and honor/respect after seeing the throne room of God. What's fascinating to me is that God leaves room in His beings hearts to still feel their own feelings and not overwhelm them. He could have stunned Lucifer into obedience, but He didn't. He left room for them to decide how they want to interact with Him. Clearly that's intentional.
  - **The hand of the LORD being strong upon me** – this seems to suggest that there was no room for anything else. He was caught up and driven by God. He was going to go where God said and do what God did, regardless of what he wanted.
  - **I came to the exile at Tel-abib by the Chebar canal** – wasn't he there during the vision? Or did God really teleport him somewhere and he was now back? Or was he just outside the city when it happened and now he's back inside the city and near his other guys? It's not very clear.
  - **I sat there overwhelmed among them 7 days** – this means a lot of things. It means that Ezekiel likely didn't eat or do anything but was in a stunned state for a week. It means that he was both overwhelmed by the visions, angry at the calling/assignment, scared at the possibilities, and just trying to keep sane after all of that. God put him through the ringer on that one. You don't just move on from there quickly.
- **The Watchman**
    - **God Appoints Ezekiel as the Watchman for Israel**
      - *Eze 3:16–21 – “And at the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>17</sup> “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. <sup>18</sup> If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>19</sup> But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. <sup>20</sup> Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him,*

*he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand.<sup>28 21</sup> But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.”*

- **Chapter 33 picks up the Watchman metaphor**
  - **Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. - What’s a watchman<sup>29</sup>** – a watchman in the ancient world was a lookout usually stationed in a tower on the wall of a city. They would keep an eye out for any danger. If they saw danger they were to blow their horn and warn everyone. It’s that simple.
  - **Watchman for WHO? - Warn Israel of every word that I say to them** – that’s Ezekiel’s duty. It’s a communication/proclamation assignment.
  - **Watching against WHAT danger(s)?<sup>30</sup>** – oddly enough, in this case it seems to be God. He’s one of the key dangers. He’s the one coming to wreak havoc. However, the context also suggests that the danger is sin and disobedience (rebellion). When Ezekiel sees it, he’s supposed to call it out so that the people have a chance to repent.
  - **How it works practically** – God lays it out rather clearly. He says there are two kinds of people Ezekiel must warn: 1.) Good guys (righteous), 2.) bad guys (wicked). God is going to have warnings for both of them. Ezekiel’s job is to say exactly what God wants them to hear. IF Ezekiel warns them not to do something bad but they do it, they will die guilty since they knew better, and Ezekiel is off the hook. IF, however, Ezekiel doesn’t warn them and they do something bad and God kills them in the process, God is going to hold their death partially on Ezekiel for his own disobedience.
  - **My frustration with modern self-designated Watchmen** – Unfortunately some odd Christians or religious people today fancy themselves prophets and self-appoint as ‘watchmen’. Their view is that they believe that God has told them to warn people and they take solace in that others will reject them. Unfortunately a lot of them are way off from the Lord and their messages are nothing but self-

<sup>28</sup> “An idiomatic rendering of *wēdāmō miyyādēkā ’ābaqqēš*, lit. “but his blood from your hand I will seek.” NICOT

<sup>29</sup> “*watchman*. The noun *šōpēh* derives from a common root meaning “to look out, to spy, to keep watch.” The role of the watchman in ancient Near Eastern defensive strategy is best illustrated by the parable provided in full in 33:1–6. Persons chosen for sentry duty were generally stationed on lookout towers strategically placed on the walls of the city, the roofs of gatehouses (2 Sam. 18:24), or towers outside the city (2 K. 9:17). The watchman’s charge involved paying careful attention to the enemy’s movements. In the face of an imminent attack, he would blow his horn (*šōpār*), summoning the soldiers to arms, and civilians to take cover (Ezek. 33:3–6). This formal call to sentry duty is appropriate for Ezekiel, not only because the tradition of referring to prophets as “seers” (*rō’īm*) who “looked out” for the nations had a long history in Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 9:9), but especially because his ministry prior to 586 B.C. would consist largely in sounding the alarm for his own people, under attack by the Babylonians (cf. 7:1–27). In the end the warning would go unheeded and Jerusalem would fall. But Ezekiel was not the first to define the prophetic office in terms of a sentry. The 8th-century prophet Hosea makes the identification in 9:8, and alludes to it in 5:8 and 8:1, where he calls for the blowing of the horn. Isa. 56:10 refers to blind sentries, visionaries who are asleep, presumably false or negligent prophets. But Ezekiel’s description bears the closest resemblance to Jer. 6:17: “I have set up sentries (*šōpīm*) for you; pay heed to the sound of the horn (*šōpār*)! But they said, ‘We will not pay heed.’” Ezekiel’s contemporary self-consciously sounded the alarm repeatedly for his people (Jer. 4:5, 19, 21; 6:1; 51:27).” NICOT

<sup>30</sup> “Ezekiel is appointed by a third party, Yahweh. Furthermore, Yahweh, who poses as the enemy, also dictates the nature and timing (*whenever*) of the alarms. Many in Israel would have found this notion shocking. The God of Israel is the danger against whose arrival the people are to be warned! He is coming as judge to pass the death sentence on his people.” NICOT

created gibberish even though they don't think so. When they call themselves watchmen it gives them a pride in standing alone and condemning or warning others as if they are beyond all of it. It seems to be a quick label for self-important people.

- **Hair Pulling and Heavenly Visions**

- **God transports Ezekiel in Heavenly Visions to the Temple**

- Eze 8:1–4<sup>31</sup> – *“In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there. <sup>2</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal. <sup>3</sup> He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. <sup>4</sup> And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the valley.”*

- **Concluding visions of the Temple, New Heaven, River of Life – Ezekiel 40-48**

- Eze 43:1–5 – *“Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. <sup>2</sup> And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. <sup>3</sup> And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. <sup>4</sup> As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, <sup>5</sup> the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”*
- **Going places and seeing things no one else gets to see** – Just like I mentioned in the first message of this series, Ezekiel got to see stuff that no one else gets to see. It was mind-blowing. How exciting is that? That's part of the excitement of following the Holy Spirit closely and getting into the front line of what He's doing. The miracles tend to follow desperation and desperation tends to be found in areas of risk. Comfort or overly-Safety-mindedness keeps us from the thrill of walking with God.

---

<sup>31</sup> “The place of 3:16–21 in its present literary context has been questioned for many reasons. First, in terms of genre, the word-event formula in v. 16b identifies this as a formal oracle from Yahweh, quite different from the style of the divine speeches in the preceding verses. In fact, if vv. 16b–21 were removed, the narrative would flow smoothly from v. 16a to v. 22. Second, the linkage with the preceding material is awkward. V. 16 begins naturally enough with a time notice, but it is followed immediately by another introductory formula. Furthermore, the harsh *wayēhî*... *wayēhî* sequence occurs nowhere else in Ezekiel. Third, and most obviously, the previous narrative prose gives way to a quasi-legal style (see below). Fourth, this charge, which some consider a second commission, appears redundant after the foregoing. Fifth, the passage is duplicated in expanded form in 33:1–9. In fact, the two watchman texts function as “bookends” around the prophet’s judgment oracles. In the light of these considerations, it is not surprising that most scholars treat this paragraph as a secondary insertion, designed perhaps to enhance the image of the prophet. By blending material from 33:1–9 and ch. 18, and affixing it to the end of the call narrative, the editor has highlighted Ezekiel’s accountability to Yahweh. However, one should not discount too quickly the originality of the present arrangement... Fourth, the appropriateness of this subunit in the present context is obvious the moment one recognizes that the entire call narrative is driven by a divine determination to conscript a man resistant to the call to prophetic office. Far from enhancing the image of Ezekiel, the stern tone of this speech and its brutally direct warning not to shirk professional duties confirm the reality of vv. 14–15: Ezekiel is a stubborn man, who sits there for seven days, until Yahweh’s patience has run out.” NICOT

## **Conclusion**

- **Living on the front lines of God's Kingdom advancement** – creates a fascinating faith walk – inspiration from things I get to see as a pastor and the encouragements I get to hear.