

# EZEKIEL

## Chapter 2

### *Ezekiel's Call*

**And he said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” 2 And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ 5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 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. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7 And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house. 8 “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.” 9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.**

**Ch 2–3** Sometimes these chapters are artificially separated from ch 1, but they are a unit. (TLSB)

**2:1-5** The Babylonians attacked and sacked Jerusalem several times before the final destruction of the city in 587 BC. In one of these earlier attacks, probably around 597 BC, Ezekiel was among the thousands of inhabitants taken as prisoner to be resettled in the land of Babylon. God appeared to him there and gave him a prophetic mission that extended for more than twenty years, to both the exiles in Babylon and to those who remained in Judah. God’s message through Ezekiel emphasized a call to repentance and faithfulness in the period before 587, a reminder of God’s continuing grace and the hope it brings for the future in the period after 587. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**2:1** *He*. God Himself, but under His revealed form as the “glory.” (TLSB)

*Son of man*. A term used 93 times in Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet’s humanity as he was addressed by the transcendent God. Da 7:13 and 8:17 are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the OT. Jesus’ frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the eschatological figure spoken of in Da 7:13 (see, e.g., Mk 8:31 and note). (CSB)

God never addresses Ezekiel by name, but by “son of man” 93 times throughout Ezk. The expression accents the prophet’s weakness as a creature in contrast to the Creator’s omnipotence displayed in the vision. (TLSB)

Perhaps this form of address was meant to teach Ezekiel something important. Although the Lord was granting him special visions, although the Lord was giving him the privilege of transmitting God’s truth to His people, and although the Lord had picked him to fill the role of prophet-in-exile, Ezekiel was still a son of man. He was just a human being, a sinful son of Adam. It was

not as priest or as pious man or as Israelite that Ezekiel was called to be the Lord's spokesman, but as a frail mortal who brought nothing but weakness to the task. (PBC)

People in leadership positions, including leadership positions among God's people, are in circumstances perfect for fostering pride. Pride not only is a direct violation of God's command to love, but gets in the way when people attempt to carry out service for God. It builds barriers and makes God-pleasing interpersonal relationship extremely difficult. (PBC)

*stand* - To raise up and take a firm stance which might suggest that you are going to stay at least until what is to take place has been accomplished. Ezekiel had been knocked to the ground by the glory of God (Ezekiel 1:28) This type of action also happens in the following verses: (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

Joshua 5:13-15 "Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

1 Kings 8:11 "And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple."

Daniel 10:9-12 "then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them."

Matthew 17:1-8 "After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus."

Acts 9:3-6 "As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

**2:2** *the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet.* The Spirit of God, who empowered the chariot wheels (1:12, 19; 10:16–17) and the creatures (1:20), now entered Ezekiel—symbolizing the Lord's empowering of the prophet's entire ministry. (CSB)

The Spirit works through the Word, and so enters Ezekiel's spirit and raises him, as it were, from the dead. Cf Rm 8:11. (TLSB)

Ezekiel, like us, cannot do anything without the help of the Spirit. The explanation to the Third Article says it well, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith..." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

Since Ezekiel was a sinful son of man, he couldn't on his own stand in the presence of God, nor could he properly receive orders from the Lord. But the Lord made up for Ezekiel's spiritual insufficiencies. The Spirit stood him on his feet and made him ready to listen to the Lord. God is always the one who is responsible for making sinful humans into people who can stand in His presence. He makes them into people who have the courage to receive orders from Him and to carry out those orders. (PBC)

It might be our tendency to stay lying face down with Ezekiel, overcome with awe, when we are led to experience the mercy and majesty of the Lord. But the Lord doesn't let His people just lie around and bask in His glory. He has work for us to do. He lets us view the rainbow of His grace, orders us to stand up and listen to Him, and then empowers us to do so. (PBC)

**2:3** *send you*. An official assignment. The word "apostle" is derived from the Gk equivalent. (TLSB)

It means to appoint someone to a task that involves movement on the part of the person being sent. Examples of others being sent follow:

Genesis 12:1 "The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

Exodus 3:10 "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Judges 6:14 "The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

Isaiah 6:8 "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Acts 26:16 "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you."

*the people of Israel*. Lit, "sons of Israel," emphasizing the theme of hereditary guilt (or original sin). The phrase is relatively rare in Ezk. (TLSB)

*Israel*. Ambiguous in the OT. Originally it is the covenant name of God's chosen people. The religious significance was preempted for political purposes when the 10 northern tribes broke away and used it as the name of their country (1Ki 12). Ezekiel uses "Israel" for (1) the conquered Northern Kingdom, (2) the exiles with him in Babylon, and (3) those still in the land of Israel. Ezekiel's audience here was those exiled with him, but it often sounds as though he is also writing to those still in Jerusalem. There was communication between the two communities, and their religious ideas were essentially the same. (TLSB)

*nation of rebels*. A keynote of Ezekiel's preaching: The entire nation throughout its history had been rebellious against God. (CSB)

Parallel to "people of Israel." In later Hbr, "nations" assumed the meaning of "Gentiles" (i.e., heathen unbelievers). The implication here seems to be that the rebellious Israelites were like another heathen nation before God. (TLSB)

This was a reference to a heathen, Gentile people. This would have really shaken the Israelites up to be called this.

Ezekiel was to take his message to people descended from Israel. Because of God's choice of their nation to produce the Savior these people had a special national relationship with God. Most of them, nevertheless, had rebelled against the Lord. They had insisted on following other gods. They had insisted on disobeying God's will. This is why they were in exile. But even their years in exile had not led most of them to repent of their rebellious ways. In spite of their lack of inclination to repent and in spite of what appeared to be a lost cause, God still sent His prophet to these people. (PBC)

Here we have an excellent view of the patient, long-suffering Lord. He suffered the rejection of His people for a long time, but it didn't hinder Him from trying to bring them to repentance. Reminders of the Lord's patient endurance help keep us from becoming frustrated when we don't seem to be successful in reaching others with the Lord's call to repentance. (PBC)

**2:4** Ezekiel's primary mission was to his present generation. They were born rebels, but they could not evade personal responsibility by blaming their ancestors. (TLSB)

*impudent* – Literally translates "hard of face(s)" or colloquially, "hard-headed." They refuse to let in that which is good for them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

*stubborn* – Means "strong of heart." Here, however, the strength is not positive. Rather, it equates to the pejorative "strong willed." They demand to do, and then indeed do that which they desire, not what God wills. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

*Lord God* – Lord Yahweh is a common Hebrew construct. The Jews refused to use the name of God, substituting Adonai. Thus we are left with Adonia Adonai (Lord Lord). The difficulty is minor, except that it contributes to a Reformed misunderstanding of God, following the Calvinist model of viewing Him according to His sovereignty. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

God sends Ezekiel to preach His Word, not Ezekiel's own judgments. This expression is used far more frequently in Ezk than in the rest of the OT, so much so that it almost becomes Ezekiel's signature. (TLSB)

**2:5** *hear*. In the sense of "listen" or "obey." (TLSB)

*rebellious house*. Instead of "house of Israel. (TLSB)

*they will know that a prophet has been among them*. Variant of Ezekiel's recognition formula, "Then you will know that I am the LORD." They may have to learn the hard way, but learn they will! A prophet (or pastor) who preaches only what his audience wants to hear is rebellious and unfaithful. A prophet or pastor is not called to be successful by earthly standards, but to be faithful. (TLSB)

Ezekiel was to disregard the people's willingness or unwillingness to receive his message. He was not to stop transmitting the Lord's message even if they refused to listen to it. Thus even the rejecters would have to admit that a prophet, a transmitter of the Lord's message, had been at work among them, especially after Jerusalem fell as the prophet had said it would. Transmitters of the Lord's message always must make clear what they are saying is what the Sovereign Lord says. We need to be ready to point to God's written Word so people are aware we are not just giving them our opinions. (PBC)

**2:6** *briers and thorns ... scorpions*. Vivid images of those who would make life difficult for the prophet. (CSB)

The opposition is pictured as inflicting pain that will hurt but not prove fatal. (TLSB)

**2:7** *rebellious house*. Lit, "rebellion," as though this were their very essence. (TLSB)

**2:8** Transitional verse. (TLSB)

*Be not rebellious*. Lit, "Be not rebellion." Underscores the intensity of the opposition that Ezekiel faces. (TLSB)

*eat what I give you*. Unexpected command to the prophet; faithfulness to the Word does not include the option to pick and choose. (TLSB)

**2:9** *a hand was stretched out*. God's outstretched hand will appear again in 8:3; a cherub's hand appears in 10:7. Those instances speak of the hand as an instrument, not as an overpowering force. (TLSB)

*a scroll of a book*. Or, "a rolled-up scroll." Books as we know them (codices) did not appear until about the time of Christ, but scrolls were commonly used. (TLSB)

**2:10** *He spread it*. God unrolled the scroll. (TLSB)

*front and back*. Normally, ancient scrolls were written on one side only. The implication here is that the scroll was thoroughly saturated with words of divine judgment. See Zec 5:3 and Rev 5:1 for the same figure. (CSB)

Common on scrolls. This detail also tells us the scroll was made of papyrus (only in NT times did they develop the technique of preparing skins so that they could be written on both sides). (TLSB)

*lament and mourning and woe.* Although Ezekiel was later commanded to preach hope, his initial commission (until the fall of Jerusalem) was to declare God's displeasure and the certainty of his judgment on Jerusalem and all of Judah. (CSB)

Hbr syntax indicates that this was a title written on the outside of the scrolls, essentially as is done with books today. It accurately summarizes the contents of the scroll, representing the bulk of the first part of Ezekiel's preaching (chs 4–24), until his constant prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem comes true. (TLSB)