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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Ezekiel 3.

(2014)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Ezekiel 3.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

Topics.

- The LORD sends Ezekiel to the people of Israel.
- Ezekiel is sent to those in captivity to Babylon.
- Ezekiel is caught up in the Spirit.
- The word of the LORD that came to Ezekiel.
- Ezekiel's call and Ministry.
- Ezekiel sees the glory of the LORD.
- The Spirit of the LORD enters Ezekiel.

Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the "likeness" of the LORD". Ezekiel was keenly aware of God's presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chpt. 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

NOTE: Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

History of Ezekiel: Ezekiel with the men of Judah who had influence was taken to Babylon ten years before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem. Ezekiel had been in captivity for five years when the LORD called him to be a prophet (Ezekiel 1:2) then five years later Jerusalem was destroyed. This chapter is in the 5th year of Ezekiel's captivity, five years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The LORD sends Ezekiel to the people of Israel.

Ezekiel 3:1-3 ----- ¹And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." ²So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. ³And 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.

The LORD gave me this scroll to eat: means Ezekiel read, absorbed and took to heart the words on the scroll in contrast to the rebellious people of Israel who rejected the words of the LORD (Ezekiel 3:10).

The words were sweet as honey: because they were the prophetic words of God, but this does not mean they were words filled with instant blessing. We know this because in (Ezekiel 2:10) we are told that the words on the scroll were words of sadness, grief, mourning and sorrow. This is because they were words calling those at Jerusalem to turn from their rebellion and warning them of God's judgment to come if they do not repent. Ezekiel's message does contain an enormous future blessing for the nation of Israel, but not for the people he is speaking to since they did not heed the warning of the LORD to turn from their wicked ways.

Ezekiel is sent to Israel.

Ezekiel 3:4-7 ----- ⁴And he said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. ⁵For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel— ⁶not 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. ⁷But 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.

How amazing is this: the LORD tells Ezekiel if he went and called the secular nations to turn from their wicked ways and warned them of God's judgment they would respond, but God's own people will not. The entire nation of Israel (except of course for a handful of faithful men and women) are committing gross sins and are in rebellion to God.

Ezekiel is sent to those in captivity to Babylon.

Ezekiel 3:8-11 ----- ⁸Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ⁹Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." ¹⁰Moreover, 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. ¹¹And *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."

I have made your face and forehead like emery and as hard as flint: means being determined for a fixed purpose, not yielding despite a wave of criticism and enormous obstacles.

NOTICE: the LORD tells Ezekiel to speak to them regardless of their response whether they listen to him or not, showing that he is only responsible to share the LORDS word and not for their response to it. This is an important principal for all who share their testimony and witness the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not our responsibility to save them, our calling and mission in life is not to manipulate people to a decision, but simply to share the message of the cross and the Gospel when we are able and leave the response totally up to them. God does not manipulate or force anyone into His kingdom nor should we.

Ezekiel is caught up in the Spirit.

Ezekiel 3:12-16 ----- ¹²Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake: "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!" ¹³It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake. ¹⁴The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. ¹⁵And I came to 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. ¹⁶And at the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me:

The great earthquake: it was the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them that made the sound of the great earthquake.

The living creatures: refers to four nations, firstly Babylon and later Edom, Tyre and Egypt (though they are not limited to these nations only).

The wings: refer to God's will carrying the four nations against Jerusalem to bring about His judgment on its inhabitants.

Touched one another: refers to the mighty and massive army coming against Jerusalem to destroy it.

Wheels: refer to the warriors, chariots and weapons of war. For greater detail of the living creatures, the wings and the wheels see chapter One.

Lifted me up by the Spirit: it appears that Ezekiel was lifted up by the power of God and transported to the exiles at Tel-abib by the Chebar canal in Babylon (the glory that was taken) and while in the Spirit he hears an enormously powerful voice, saying "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place" meaning blessed are those who have been taken from Jerusalem (the city of God) to Babylon. This is because the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar are about to destroy the city of Jerusalem and plunder the temple. Ezekiel sat with the exiles seven days and at the end of this seven day period the LORD'S word came to him.

The word of the LORD that came to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 3:17 ----- 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.

The LORD always gives His people warning and a time to change their ways, before the actions of His judgment come.

Ezekiel's Call and Ministry.

Ezekiel 3:18-21 ----- ¹⁸If 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. ¹⁹But 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. ²⁰Again, 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. ²¹But 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."

The LORD tells Ezekiel if he does not warn the wicked people of Israel or the godly people of Israel that have turned to wickedness that they will die because God's judgment is about to come upon them and they die then he will be held guilty for their death, but if he does warn them and they do not change their wicked ways and die then he will not be held guilty of their death. It is important to keep in mind that God has not called Ezekiel to proclaim this message to the secular world, but to God's own people.

Ezekiel sees the Glory of the LORD (by the Chebar canal).

Ezekiel 3:22-23 ----- ²²And the hand of the LORD was upon me there (by the Chebar Canal) (v15). And he said to me, "Arise, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you." ²³So I arose and went out into the valley, and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the Chebar canal, and I fell on my face.

The glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory I saw by the Chebar canal may simply mean it was absolutely awe inspiring, crystal clear and overwhelming. For a full understanding of the glory of the LORD, by the Chebar canal, see: Ezekiel chapter one.

The Spirit of the LORD enters Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 3:24-27 ----- ²⁴But the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself within your house. ²⁵And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the

people. ²⁶And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.

Throughout the book of Ezekiel the LORD often uses dramatic actions in Ezekiel's life as signs that shock and jolt the mind. God does this to highlight the condition of the people or to highlight a coming event. Remember in these ancient days God did not have Google and the internet so He used dramatic events that would shock the human mind in such a manner that everyone would be talking about it and in this way the message would spread very quickly through word of mouth.

There is no doubt Ezekiel being tied up with ropes, shutting himself in his home and being made mute would certainly start all the townsfolk talking about him and his strange actions. So you can imagine how powerful his message would have been when the LORD did open his mouth and he did begin to speak and how quickly it would have spread amongst all the people of Israel.

God uses these types of dramatic actions that stun and shock the mind for the following three reasons: -

1. To get the attention of Israel.
2. To depict the condition of the entire nation of Israel.
3. To picture future events that are about to come upon Israel.

Ezekiel's life is used to get the attention of Israel he is to be tied up, locked in his house and not be able to speak until the LORD opens his mouth. Ezekiel was from a priestly home and no doubt would have been well known throughout the land; all those who knew him would have been wondering why this prophet of God had people tie him up in his home and questioning why he could not speak? Because of this the strange events of Ezekiel's life would quickly spread throughout the land, preparing the people to listen to the words he does speak when the LORD'S word comes to him.

A great principal for Christians today: the words the LORD spoke to Ezekiel, is a good principal for all those who share their testimony and the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to keep in mind. The LORD said: "Those who will hear, let them hear; and those who refuse to hear, let them refuse" (v27). God is basically saying to Ezekiel, if they listen to what he says great, but if they reject him and his words, don't worry, don't quarrel, don't argue with them, simply let them be, it is their choice, his only responsibility is to warn them that if they continue doing what they are doing they will bring God's judgment upon them, how they respond is not in his control or his responsibility.

The LORD is telling Ezekiel that he is not to impose or force God's ways onto those he witness to or manipulate them into making a decision. Nowhere in the entire Bible does God force, impose or manipulate men or women into His Kingdom. He never violates our free choice, but instead invites men and women into his global and eternal Kingdom in the same way a Bride and Groom invite people to their wedding. It would be proper and right to say that God is inviting all the people of the world to the most amazing wedding banquet this world has ever seen.

End.