

Power Hour Lesson Summary for July 23, 2017

“Ezekiel”

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 3:1-11

Background Scripture: Ezekiel 1-3

Devotional Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24

Ezekiel 3:1-11 (NIV)

¹ And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.” ² So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

³ Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

⁴ He then said to me: “Son of man, go now to the people of Israel and speak my words to them. ⁵ You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and strange language, but to the people of Israel—⁶ not to many peoples of obscure speech and strange language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. ⁷ But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate. ⁸ But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. ⁹ I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people.”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. ¹¹ Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says,’ whether they listen or fail to listen.”

TODAY’S LESSON AIMS

Learning Fact: To describe the context of Ezekiel’s call and commission.

Biblical Principle: To emphasize that those called by God must experience the Word for themselves before they can share it with others.

Daily Application: To stand firm and not alter God’s Word as we proclaim it with grace and compassion.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: 592 B.C.

Place: Babylon, near Chebar (or Kebar) River

The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah. Both were living at the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was likely some years older than Ezekiel since (1) Jeremiah saw himself as “a child” when he received his call from the Lord (Jeremiah 1:6) in 626 B.C and (2) Ezekiel was 30 years old in “the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity” (Ezekiel 1:1, 2), which was the year 592 B.C. Thus Ezekiel would have been born in 622 B.C. Perhaps there was some personal contact between Ezekiel and Jeremiah prior to Ezekiel’s captivity. But the Scriptures are silent on that.

Ezekiel is introduced as “the priest” (Ezekiel 1:3). And that is what he would have been had it not been for the tragic turn of events in the southern kingdom of Judah. The first stage in these events came in 605 B.C., when Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:1, 2; Daniel 1:1-6). Ezekiel’s relocation to Babylon was a part of the second stage of exile; he was among the 10,000 of the elite citizenry taken in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:12-14).

Daniel and other Jews were taken to serve “in the king’s palace” (Daniel 1:4), while Ezekiel found himself in a completely different setting: “among the captives by the river of Chebar” (Ezekiel 1:1). Even so, “the hand of the Lord was on him” (1:3). It was there that the Lord proceeded to call the priest to a task he undoubtedly did not anticipate.

The call began with an intense display of what Ezekiel describes as “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord,” which caused Ezekiel to fall facedown (Ezekiel 1:28). Then followed this command: “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you” (2:1). As with other call accounts in this unit, Ezekiel’s included both sounds and sights. The sound was the voice of the Lord. The sight was, first, the awe-inspiring glory of the Lord, then an outstretched hand that held “a roll of a book,” or a scroll (2:9).

What Do You Think?

- What can we expect to experience when we taste God’s Word? What is signified if we don’t experience such things?
- What are some ways for Christians to prepare themselves for negative reactions that may come when sin is confronted within a church?
- What forms should stubbornness on our part take and not take in spreading the gospel? Why?
- How do we know whether or not to move on when the gospel is stubbornly resisted?

POINTS TO PONDER

1. As God’s messengers, we must receive the Word within ourselves – we must taste and see for ourselves that the Lord is good! (Psalm 34:8; Ezekiel 3:1-3).
2. In sharing the gospel, you must first be willing to *go*. You must also have an audience and a message from God (Ezekiel 3:4-5).
3. God’s Word should be proclaimed to all people, even if the Word is found unappetizing (vs. 6-7).
4. Do not compromise the gospel for acceptance! (vs. 8-9)
5. Receive God’s Word in your heart so that you can share it with others (vs. 10-11).

CONCLUSION

Balancing Act

God called Ezekiel to walk a prophetic tightrope. On one hand, he was given a message that was filled with mourning and woe. On the other hand, he noted that the message was nourishing and sweet. God’s harshest rebukes are given for the eternal good of the hearer.

Christians today are faced with a similar balancing act. Some complain that Christianity is a religion of *no* and that we are defined only by what we are against. On the other hand, some look at positive, affirming messages and then grumble that the church does not take sin seriously anymore! How do we preach the sweetness of the gospel without compromising what the Bible says about the seriousness of sin?

The prophecies of Ezekiel contain some of the bleakest words in Scripture regarding the fate of those who resist the truth of God’s Word. But the same prophecies contain great words of hope and conclude with the promise, “The Lord is there” (Ezekiel 48:35). May we seek to offer that same balanced message today.

**PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, harden us against whatever opposition we may encounter; but keep our hearts soft with your compassion for a lost world. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

A message of judgment without grace is no gospel at all.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "**Amos**" and describes the resistance to the prophet's message and how he responded. Study Amos 7.