

## **Ezekiel's Call**

**Summer Quarter: God's Urgent Call**

**Unit 2: Calling of the Prophets**

**Sunday School Lesson for the week of July 23, 2017**

**By Rev. Earnestine W. Campbell**

**Lesson Scripture: Ezekiel 3:1-11**

**Background Scripture: Jeremiah 1-3**

Key Verses: He said to me: Human one, listen closely, and take to heart every word I say to you. Then go to the exiles, to your people's children. Whether they listen or not, speak to them and say: The Lord God proclaims! (Ezekiel 3:10-11)

Purpose: To depend on the teachings of Scripture for help in rising above seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

### **Bible Lesson**

This week's lesson examines the fourth prophet's call in this unit. Last week's lesson was the Call and Commission of Jeremiah. We can surmise at this point, as we investigate Ezekiel, that these calls to prophesy and mission have been ecstatic and the responses humility. We will review Ezekiel's life and his call experience.

### **Historical Background**

The "Adult Bible Studies" author's historical account: *He was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon during the first deportation in 597 BCE. Many of those among the ruling classes in Judah were taken into captivity at this time, a full ten years before the final fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Ezekiel's message was similar to that of Jeremiah. He warned the people of Judah that God's judgment was coming soon. Those who paid attention to this warning and changed their ways would be spared; those who ignored the warning would suffer severe consequences. Ezekiel speaks emphatically of the individual's responsibility to obey God.*

### **Ezekiel's Call**

- Chapter 1 describes the "Lord's glory" that Ezekiel envisions. Here again we see that God appears gloriously.
- Chapter 2 begins with God speaking to the prophet. God is always clear in His

- commands. He exclaims the disobedience and disheartening state of the Israelite people, calling them a “traitorous and rebellious people” (verse 3). God also tells Ezekiel just as He had told Jeremiah “not to be afraid” of his fellow Israelites (verse 6). At the end of Chapter 2, Ezekiel tells of a strange instruction given to him: “Open your mouth and eat what I give you” (verse 8). He is then given a scroll with “songs of mourning, lamentation, and doom” (verse 10).
- Chapter 3:1-3: God tells Ezekiel to “eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel.” The lesson’s author notes, “We find the phrase ‘house of Israel’ throughout Ezekiel’s prophecy, and rarely is it used in a flattering way. It describes those who have violated God’s covenant.” This hard and dangerous mission accompanies a bitter command (mourning, lamentation, and doom) that contrarily tastes “as sweet as honey” (verse 3). God can do mysterious and miraculous works, even during times of hardships, heartaches, disappointments, and our transgressions. Psalm 34:8 states “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” God is kind and merciful to all His people. His divine goodness is transformational in our lives and crucial to our existence.

### **Comparison of Ezekiel to Jeremiah and Isaiah**

- The Book of Ezekiel’s popularity falls short of the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah:
  - Scholars believe that the reasons are that its writing is more of a gloom and doom message;
  - It is also difficult to understand because of its mystical images, as well as the strange worship experiences. These images and worship experiences were probably understandable for the audiences of that era but not are difficult for modern readers. Ezekiel’s message also expands beyond God’s concern of Judah and Israel, thus expanding beyond these borders.
  - Ezekiel is a prophet that is called in exile. The book’s opening verses state that his call is during the fifth year of the exile (593 BCE). Jeremiah was later forced to exile in Egypt where he died.
- He was both a prophet and priest like Jeremiah.
- Ezekiel’s style of message shows freedom and priestly training in his speech more so than Jeremiah’s.
- Ezekiel speaks more of the Lord’s movement in a mystical way, such as lifting him up and transporting him places, and of the spirit of the Lord moving him.
- Ezekiel preached in the last few years before the fall (593 to 586), not the length of Jeremiah’s ministry, but still prophetic and prolific.

### **Conclusion**

- The call of Ezekiel and the other prophets examined in this unit demonstrates that God calls in various ways.
- The personality and style of the prophets are different. We see that with Jeremiah, a more sensitive, personal and emotional prophet. No one person is the same, and that's acceptable to God.
- The called may have some differences in focuses in their messages based on the issues and the audience of that time. The messages all denounce disobedience to God.
- The resolution to disobedience is to repent and obey God. The consequence of continuing disobedience is the calamity, destruction, and banishment of the people and land. We must examine carefully today the message from God and our call to action.

The key verses 10-11 teach us that when we speak a message of righteousness, justice, and deliverance from oppression, we will face opposition, hardened heads, and hearts. We are still to proclaim the Word of the Lord within and outside of our borders, and to speak truth to powers and tyrannical behaviors.

### **Serenity Prayer, St. Francis of Assisi**

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

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*Footnote: Adult Bible Studies Series Fall 2017 and Reading the Old Testament, Lawrence Boadt. (Paulist Press) are used as content sources for this lesson.*