

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 7-Chapter Two (Ezekiel 2:1-3:11)

Executive Summary

The following document synthesizes the divine commission of the prophet Ezekiel as outlined in the scriptural records of Chapters 2:1 through 3:11. Following an overwhelming vision of God's glory, Ezekiel is transitioned into a direct, one-sided dialogue with the Creator. This commission is characterized by the physical strengthening of the prophet by the Holy Spirit (*rûah*), a clear identification of his audience as the "rebellious house" of Israel, and a symbolic mandate involving the consumption of a scroll.

1. The Call to Service and the Role of the Spirit

After being "scared to death" by the initial display of divine glory, Ezekiel is commanded to stand. However, the text indicates that Ezekiel's physical strength was entirely lost. The transition from a state of being overwhelmed to a state of readiness is achieved through the intervention of the Spirit.

Linguistic Context: Rûah (רוּחַ): The Hebrew word *rûah* occurs 378 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, with its most frequent use appearing in the Book of Ezekiel (52 times).

- **Meanings:** "Spirit," "wind," or "breath."
- **Theological Significance:** In this context, it refers to the Holy Spirit, the third Member of the triune Godhead.
- **Function:** The Spirit enters Ezekiel to provide the strength necessary to stand and the focus required to receive God's words.

Characterization of the House of Israel: God explicitly defines the nature of the people to whom Ezekiel is being sent. Though they are in exile, they remain "stubborn" and "obstinate," maintaining the same rebellious attitudes that led to their captivity.

Key Behavioral Descriptions: The source context provides a deep linguistic analysis of the terms used to describe the Israelites' disposition:

Term	Hebrew Word	Occurrence in Ezekiel	Definition/Context
Stubborn	<i>qāšē</i> (קָשֶׁה)	2 times	"Hard," "rough," or "cruel"; describes the nation's predisposition.
Obstinate	<i>ḥāzāq</i> (חָזָק)	10 times	"Strong," "mighty," or "firm"; highlights their unyielding attitude.
Rebellious	<i>māraḏ</i> (מָרַד)	4 times	Used when a group is against a king or God.
Rebellious	<i>m^ori</i> (מָרִי)	16 times	Underscores collective, willful disobedience to the Law of Moses.

Hostility and Fear: Ezekiel is warned that his audience will be hostile, compared to "thistles," "thorns," and "scorpions." God commands Ezekiel not to fear their words or be dismayed by their presence, as their rebellion is a reflection of their house's character, not a failure of the prophet.

The Prophetic Mandate: The Scroll and the Message: God provides Ezekiel with a physical representation of his message: a scroll extended by a hand. This scroll is unique in that it is written on both the front and the back.

2. The Content of the Scroll

The scroll contains three specific types of negative pronouncements:

1. **Lamentations (*qînâ*):** Funeral dirges, chants, or wails for the dead.
2. **Mourning (*heḡē*):** Guttural responses or heavy, intense contemplation.
3. **Woe (*hî*):** Intense wailing and howling resulting from extreme loss or tragedy.

The Consumption of the Word: Ezekiel is commanded to "eat what you find." Upon eating the scroll, Ezekiel records that it was "sweet as honey in my mouth."

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 7-Chapter Two (Ezekiel 2:1-3:11)

The Paradox of Sweetness: Despite the contents of mourning and woe, the scroll is sweet because it is the Word of the Lord. As noted in Psalm 19:7-10, God's law and judgments are more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey. The message is sweet because it is intended for the welfare and discipline of Israel, providing the proper perspective for a rebellious people.

3. Fortification of the Prophet

God acknowledges that Ezekiel is being sent to a familiar people who speak his language, rather than a foreign nation with "unintelligible speech" (*āmēq*) or "difficult language" (*kābēd*). Despite this linguistic familiarity, the house of Israel will refuse to listen to Ezekiel because they have already refused to listen to God.

- **Emery (*sāmīr*):** God makes Ezekiel's forehead like "emery harder than flint."
- **Purpose:** Since the Israelites are "hard-headed" against the Word, God makes Ezekiel's resolve even harder, ensuring he cannot be intimidated or broken by their stubbornness.

4. Comparative Actions of Divine Commission

The commission of Ezekiel follows a pattern established with other major prophets, underscoring the authenticity of his calling.

Action	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
Divine Vision	Isaiah 6:1-4	Jeremiah 1:4	Ezekiel Chapter 1
Affirmation Act	Touching lips with a coal	Hand touches the mouth	Handing a scroll to consume
Command/Go	Isaiah 6:8-9	Jeremiah 1:6-8	Ezekiel 2:1-8
Specific Message	Isaiah 6:8-10	Jeremiah 1:14-16	Ezekiel Chapters 4-48

5. Conclusion: Authenticity and Authority

The meticulous detail Ezekiel provides regarding his vision and subsequent commission serves to underscore the credibility of his message. The repeated use of the phrase "**Thus says the Lord GOD**" (*ko amar adonoy YHVW*)—which appears 122 times in the Book of Ezekiel alone—serves as a constant reminder that the prophet is not speaking of his own volition. The commission was designed to empower a "son of man" to deliver a divine message to a "hard-minded" nation, ensuring that whether they listen or not, they will know a prophet has been among them.