

# The Book of Ezekiel

## Lesson 8-Chapter Three (Ezekiel 3:12-27)

### Executive Summary

The transition of Ezekiel from a visionary observer to a commissioned prophet is marked by intense sensory experiences, emotional turmoil, and a gravity-laden mandate. The provided text details Ezekiel's movement from the initial vision to his residence among the exiles at Tel-abib, where he is appointed as a "watchman" for the house of Israel. This role is not voluntary but an obligatory stewardship—a "voluntold" mission—where the prophet's own life is contingent upon his faithfulness in delivering divine warnings. Central to this period is the "Hand of the LORD," signifying God's direct intervention, and a unique period of divinely imposed muteness intended to underscore the authenticity of the message when Ezekiel finally speaks to a "rebellious house."

### The Sensory and Emotional Experience of the Divine

Following his initial vision, Ezekiel describes a transition facilitated by the Holy Spirit. This experience is characterized by overwhelming auditory and physical sensations designed to underscore the authenticity and credibility of the message.

- **Auditory Details:** Ezekiel reports a "great rumbling sound" resembling a loud quaking or an earthquake. He specifically notes the sound of the wings of living beings (cherubim) touching one another and the sound of wheels.
- **The Spirit's Intervention:** The Spirit (Hebrew: *'rūah*)—specifically referring to Ezekiel's own "inner immaterial man" in this context—lifts him and carries him away.
- **Psychological State:** Ezekiel departs in a state of "embittered rage."
  - **Embittered (*mar*):** A term used to describe deep bitterness.
  - **Rage (*'hēmā*):** This word, meaning "fury" or "wrath," appears more frequently in Ezekiel (33 times) than in any other book of the Hebrew Scriptures.

### The Significance of "The Hand of the LORD"

The phrase "The Hand of the LORD" (*yād y'hōvā*) is a pivotal motif in Ezekiel, appearing seven times in the book. Its primary function is to highlight the direct, personal activity of the God of Israel in the prophet's ministry.

### Contextual Uses of "The Hand of the LORD"

Category	Significance	Biblical Example
Judgment of God	Physical punishment and divine wrath.	Exodus 9:1–3 (pestilence on livestock); Judges 2:14–15 (against Israel).
Works of God	Divine deliverance and power over nature.	Joshua 4:23–24 (drying up the Jordan River).
Prophetic Activity	Recognition and empowerment of God's workers.	1 Kings 18:45–46 (Elijah outrunning Ahab); Luke 1:65–66 (John the Baptist).
Messianic Kingdom	Future activity pertaining to God's kingdom.	Isaiah 41:19–20 (transformation of the desert).

### The Watchman's Mandate: Divine Accountability

After seven days of "consternation" (shock and dismay) among the exiles at Tel-abib, God formally appoints Ezekiel as a "watchman." This role carries a heavy burden of personal responsibility, where Ezekiel's safety is tied to his obedience in communication.

### Responsibility Matrix

God outlines a specific system of accountability regarding the delivery of His message:

Scenario	Outcome for Subject	Outcome for Prophet
Wicked Not Warned	Dies in iniquity.	Prophet is held responsible; blood is on his hand.
Wicked Warned	Dies in iniquity (if they don't turn).	Prophet has delivered himself; blood is not on his head.
Righteous Not Warned	Dies in sin; righteous deeds forgotten.	Prophet is held responsible; blood is on his hand.
Righteous Warned	Lives (if they do not sin).	Prophet has delivered himself.

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**The Principle of Compulsion:** The prophetic office was not a volunteer position. The documents suggest Ezekiel was "compelled" to complete his ministry. This is paralleled in the New Testament with Paul's ministry in 2 Corinthians 9, where he describes himself as being "under compulsion" and a steward "against my will."

### Restricted Speech and the Rebellious House

In a final directive, God instructs Ezekiel to shut himself in his house. The text outlines a period where Ezekiel's ability to communicate is strictly controlled by the Divine.

- **Physical and Divine Binding:** Ezekiel is warned that he will be bound with ropes by the people. Furthermore, God states, "I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute."
- **The Purpose of Muteness:** By making Ezekiel mute, God prevents him from being a man who rebukes a "rebellious house" until the specific moment God chooses to open his mouth.
- **Authentication:** When Ezekiel eventually speaks, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD," the previous period of silence serves as proof that the message is not his own, but is coming directly from the LORD.
- **Individual Responsibility:** The call remains general: those who choose to hear may hear, and those who refuse may refuse. This underscores the nature of the exiles as a "rebellious house" (a theme first established in Chapter 2), where the prophet's duty is to speak regardless of the audience's response.

### Conclusion

The commissioning of Ezekiel is a process of divine empowerment designed to stir "shock and awe" among the exiles. His role as a watchman is an obligatory stewardship, characterized by the "Hand of the LORD" guiding his movements and the LORD personally directing his speech. This ensures that the message delivered to the rebellious nation is undeniably divine in origin.