

PROPHETIC CALLING

Lesson 1

Ezekiel 1–3

RECAP

What is the first thought that comes to mind when you hear the words prophet and prophecy?

PROPHETIC CALLING

In this lesson, we are introduced to Ezekiel, a man who was trained to be a priest but had been exiled to Babylon in 597 BC. On Ezekiel's thirtieth birthday God gave him a vision along with a calling to be His prophet¹ to the people of Israel.

READING PLAN

We encourage you to read the entire section of Scripture using the reading plan below.

Day 1: Ezekiel 1

Day 2: Ezekiel 2

Day 3: Ezekiel 3

¹ We know that the prophecies and words of Ezekiel came from God. **2 Peter 1:20–21** says, *“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.”*

QUESTIONS

Day 1: Ezekiel 1

1. “The prophets were ... God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if his law is kept, blessing will result, but if not, punishment will ensue ... The prophet does not act or speak independently of God.”² What do you learn about Ezekiel and his situation from **Ezekiel 1:1–3**?³

- a. In the Old Testament, prophets typically addressed current issues among God’s people including, but not limited to, idolatry, selfish leaders, and social injustice.⁴ They spoke words of judgment but also words of hope for the repentant. In addition, they occasionally pointed to future events.⁵ In the New Testament, prophets proclaimed messages of encouragement and edification, as well as future events.⁶ How would you describe a prophet today?⁷

² Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth*. Zondervan, 2014. 184

³ “The name Ezekiel means ‘El (God) is strong’ (**Ezekiel 3:14**), or ‘El (God) strengthens’ (**Ezekiel 30:25; 34:16**) or ‘May El (God) strengthen.’ This prophet lived during one of the most difficult times of Judah’s history—namely, the Babylonian Exile—and this may indicate the reason for his name. He was one of 10,000 captives from Jerusalem taken during Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign of 597 BC (**2 Kings 24:10–17**), and most likely he prophesied in Babylon to the exiles in the settlement of Tel-abib on the river Kebar (**Ezekiel 3:15**.” Gardner, Paul. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who’s Who in the Bible*. Zondervan, 2001. Bible Gateway Plus

⁴ **1 Kings 18:25; Ezekiel 8; 34; Amos 5:7–13**

⁵ **Micah 6; Ezekiel 7:8–20; Joel 2:12–14; Isaiah 53; Daniel 7**

⁶ **Acts 15:32; 1 Corinthians 14:3; Acts 21:10–11**

⁷ Prophecy is still an active gift in the Church today. (**1 Corinthians 14:3**)

b. Do you know of anyone who is a prophet? If so, who?
How do they demonstrate the gift of prophecy?

2. Make a list of the things Ezekiel saw in his vision from
Ezekiel 1:4–5?

3. How would you describe the four beings based on what you
learn from **1:6–14, 23–25?**⁸

⁸ The creatures described here are cherubim. They are not given this name in Ezekiel until **Ezekiel 10:1**. In this book they are described as hybrid creatures, a collage of different animals. However, every time they appear throughout Scripture they look a little bit different (**Exodus 25:20; 1 Kings 6:27; 8:6–7; Ezekiel 1:6; 10:14; 41:18**). Cherubim are majestic, and often they are the ones that stand guard at the boundary between Heaven and Earth. The first time cherubim are seen in the story of the Bible, they are standing outside of the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:24**). The Garden of Eden was God's temple residence. Once Adam and Eve sinned, He placed these spiritual bodyguards at the entrance so that the rebel humans couldn't get back in and ruin everything. But the biblical story is about how God wants us back in His presence. This is why He chose the people of Israel and gave them the gift of a symbolic miniature Eden called the tabernacle, and then later the Jerusalem temple. In both of these spaces, cherubim were painted and engraved all over, including covering the Ark of the Covenant. These representations served as a reminder to the priests that they were working in God's presence (**Exodus 25:17–22; 26:1, 31; 1 Kings 6:23–28, 29**). They are symbolic representations of all the creatures of the earth because they all belong to God. "Angels and Cherubim." *BibleProject*, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/angels-cherubim/>.

4. Next, Ezekiel saw wheels beside each being. What did the wheels do and what did they look like? (1:15–21)

What do you think it means when it says, “*the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels*”? (1:20 and see footnote)⁹

5. How did Ezekiel describe the glory of the Lord?¹⁰
(1:26–28)¹¹

⁹ “When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved, activated by the Spirit. The Spirit gave direction to the wheels through direct knowledge and access to the will of God. **Verse 21** is a recap of **verses 19–20** and forms a conclusion to the section, emphasizing the unity and coordination between the cherubim, the wheels, the Spirit, and the throne-chariot.” Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *The New American Commentary: Ezekiel*. Vol. 17, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. 69
“The wheels symbolize the omnipresence of God, while the eyes on their rims suggest the omniscience of God, seeing and knowing everything. Ezekiel was beholding a representation of the providence of God as He worked in His world.” Wiersbe, Warren W., and Ken Baugh. *Be Reverent: Bowing before Our Awesome God: Ezekiel*. David C Cook, 2010. 18

¹⁰ “**Verses 25–28** make clear that this living vehicle with wheels represented the throne of the glory of God. Other prophets also speak of God sitting on a throne (see **1 Kings 22:19**; **Daniel 7:9**; **1 Chronicles 28:18**; **Isaiah 6:1–9**). The idea of a mobile throne was not unique to Ezekiel and the Old Testament but appears elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern literature.” Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *The New American Commentary: Ezekiel*. Vol. 17, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

¹¹ “The Hebrew word for ‘glory’ is *kavod*/כבוד, and it means ‘heavy’ or ‘significant.’ The biblical authors use this word to describe the physical manifestations of God’s importance when he personally appears. The images in the vision are similar to when God appeared on Mount Sinai in **Exodus 19** and **24**, as well as when his presence came over the Ark of the Covenant in **Exodus 25**. And that’s actually the most shocking thing about Ezekiel’s vision. God’s glorious presence is supposed to be dwelling in the Jerusalem temple. What is God’s glory doing in Babylon? This question, which would have been obvious to any ancient Israelite, is what the first section of the book of Ezekiel sets out to answer.” Mackie, Timothy P. *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*. The Bible Project, 2017. 52

How did Ezekiel respond to God's glory? (1:28)¹²

Day 2: Ezekiel 2

6. What did the Spirit do to Ezekiel? (2:1–2)

- a. In the Old Testament the Spirit of God came on people for a specific period of time. The first time this happened in the Bible was when the Spirit of God came on Joseph so that he was able to understand dreams.¹³ Throughout the rest of the Old Testament the Spirit was often seen coming on people.¹⁴

In the New Testament, Jesus explained that once He was taken up to heaven Holy Spirit would come and would live permanently in believers, making them new creations.¹⁵ How would you describe Holy Spirit and what it looks like to be filled with Him?¹⁶

¹² "This is the posture that one would assume before a ruling monarch in ancient times." Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*. Baker Books, 2020. 580

¹³ **Genesis 41:38**

¹⁴ **Numbers 27:18; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:19; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13–14**

¹⁵ **John 14:15–21; 16:5–15; Galatians 5:22–34; 2 Corinthians 3:16–18**

¹⁶ For more information on Holy Spirit see **Acts 2** and **John 14–17**

- b. **1 Corinthians 3:16** says, *“Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?”*

Because we now have the Spirit of God living inside us as believers, we are all mobile temples. How have you experienced Holy Spirit in your life? How does being a mobile temple impact your life?

7. Summarize the message God gave to Ezekiel from **Ezekiel 2:3–8**.

8. Why do you think the scroll that God gave Ezekiel, which was covered in messages of doom and sorrow, tasted as sweet as honey to Ezekiel?¹⁷ (**2:9–3:3**)

¹⁷ Other Scriptures that reference eating the Word: **Jeremiah 15:16; Revelation 10:8–10; Psalm 19:10**

- a. How does **Psalm 119:103–104** shed more light on this topic?

¹⁰³ *How sweet your words taste to me;
they are sweeter than honey.*

¹⁰⁴ *Your commandments give me understanding;
no wonder I hate every false way of life.*

- b. What does it mean to “eat” the Word of God today?¹⁸

Day 3: Ezekiel 3

9. How did God encourage Ezekiel even though the message was hard and the people wouldn't listen? (**Ezekiel 3:4–14**)

- a. Have you ever known someone with a hard heart? What was it like when you tried to share God's truth and love with them?

¹⁸ **Psalm 119:11**

- b. God longs for people to know Him, even those whose hearts are hard. Take a moment to pray for the people in your life who may have a hard heart toward God.

10. In **Ezekiel 3:17** we learn that God called Ezekiel to be a watchman. “A watchman’s job was to stand on the city wall and warn the people of approaching danger. Ezekiel’s role was to be a spiritual watchman, warning the people of the judgment to come.”¹⁹ Do you have someone in your life that you consider a watchman (male or female), who serves as a spiritual protector? What character qualities enable them to fulfill this role?

- a. “God’s description of Ezekiel as a watchman on the walls of the city captures the personal nature of his ministry. A watchman’s job was dangerous. If he failed at his post, he and the entire city might be destroyed. His own safety depended on the quality of his work.”²⁰ Ezekiel was given a hard mission and God laid responsibility on Ezekiel to carry His message (**3:18**). Why do you think God laid that responsibility on him?

¹⁹ *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016. 1311

²⁰ *Ibid.* 1313

b. What responsibilities has God given us as His followers?

11. As a prophet, Ezekiel was called by God to serve as His spokesperson to those in exile. Have you ever felt like God was calling you to do something, whether big or small? If so, what was that experience like?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Ezekiel received an incredible vision from God. God often communicated with His people using images, symbols, visions, or pictures.²¹ And, God still speaks to us using imagery. Sometimes it's a specific image that comes to mind in prayer; sometimes it's a dream; sometimes it's a piece of art or another creative expression. This list can be expansive; God is so creative in the ways He communicates with us and desires for us to know Him.

Has God ever spoken to you using imagery? If so, in what way?

What symbols or pictures in the Bible have been impactful to you over the years?

Whether or not you have experienced this form of communication in the past, consider using the prayer below to invite God to speak to you using imagery:

God, will you open up my eyes to see what You have for me to see.

Allow me the ability to hear from You in this way.

Pause, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Ask God what He wants to show you.

(You may not see anything, but keep asking. It may seem very small or insignificant, but pay attention, write it down and continue to seek God for what He is saying to you.)

²¹ **Genesis 15:1; 41:25–27; Daniel 10:7; Joel 2:28; Matthew 2:19; Acts 10:10–13; 18:9**

ON MISSION

As you think about those in your spheres of influence, what does it look like for you to be a watchman or spiritual protector for them?

TAKEAWAY SUMMARY

When you think about prophetic calling, what is one key takeaway from this lesson?

Write a brief summary of your takeaway on page 106.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

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