

EZEKIEL'S COMMISSION

BIBLE TEXT : Ezekiel 1:1-28; 2:1-10; 3:1-27

LESSON 407 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 3:18).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Ezekiel 1:1-28

1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

5 Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7 And their feet *were* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11 Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; *and* they turned not when

Bible References:

I Ezekiel's Commission

1. We are given the time and place of divine manifestation to the prophet, Ezekiel 1:1-3;

Daniel 8:1-2

¹ In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, *even unto* me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

² And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan in the palace, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Matthew 3:16

¹⁶ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Acts 7:56

⁵⁶ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

2. Ezekiel is given a vision of the four living creatures and the wheels, Ezekiel 1:4-18;

Revelation 4:6-8

⁶ And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

⁷ And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying eagle.

⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

3. The living creatures were moved by the Spirit that was in them and the noise of their wings was like the noise of the Almighty, Ezekiel 1:19-25;

Ezekiel 10:17

¹⁷ When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them.

4. Ezekiel saw a throne and the likeness of the glory of the Lord around it, Ezekiel 1:26-28;

Isaiah 6:1

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

Daniel 7:9

⁹ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire.

II Sent to a Rebellious Nation

1. Ezekiel was sent to the children of the captivity, whether they would hear or not, Ezekiel 2:1-5;

1 Samuel 8:7

⁷ And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice

they went.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: *and* they turned not when they went.

18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither *was* their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.

21 When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.

22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.

of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Isaiah 48:4

4 Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;

Jeremiah 5:3

3 O LORD, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Acts 13:46

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

2. He was not to be afraid of their words or looks, Ezekiel 2:6-8;

Isaiah 41:10

10 Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isaiah 51:12

12 I, *even* I, *am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass;

Jeremiah 1:17

17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

3. He was given a roll, written within and without with lamentation and woe, Ezekiel 2:9, 10.

III Eating and Declaring God's Word

1. Ezekiel ate the roll and was made a watchman to the house of Israel, Ezekiel 3:1-17;

Psalms 119:103

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

Jeremiah 15:16

16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Revelation 10:9

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

2. He was warned of the importance of being a faithful watchman, Ezekiel 3:18-21; 33:6;

John 8:21

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

John 8:24

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

3. He was given another vision of the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel 3:22-27;

Ezekiel 24:27

27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Ezekiel 33:22

26 And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Ezekiel 2:1-10

1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day.

4 For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious.

8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

9 And when I looked, behold, an hand *was* sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book *was* therein;

10 And he spread it before me; and it

22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

Luke 1:20-22

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

Notes:

Ezekiel is Called the "Shepherd of the Exiles"

Ezekiel was carried to Babylon in the second stage of the captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was among the first of the captives to be taken to Babylon, eight years previous to Ezekiel's captivity. Ezekiel was contemporary with Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah had prophesied for 34 years before Ezekiel was called to the prophetic ministry. Ezekiel was the son of a priest and possibly had executed some priestly offices himself before being taken captive to Babylon.

He had been in Babylon five years when the Lord appeared to him one day by the river Chebar and gave him a vision of the divine glory of the Lord. He continued to prophesy for at least 22 years. Much of his prophecy was symbolical but his language was very plain and simple.

Having been around the Temple in Jerusalem, he possibly had heard much of Jeremiah's prophecy. It may have influenced his young life. Ezekiel had been prophesying in Babylon for six years before the fall of Jerusalem.

During this time Jeremiah was battling with his own people in Jerusalem trying to persuade them not to resist the Chaldean army. To his own countrymen this sounded like treason. To the ungodly, the voice of the Lord speaking through His messengers is distasteful and many times stirs up rebellion.

Ezekiel's Commission

Ezekiel was favoured with this extraordinary vision of divine glory when he received his commission to bear God's message to the rebellious house of Israel. He states that the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God, emblems and symbols of divine majesty, showing forth the glory of the Lord.

When these living creatures moved, the sound of their wings was like the voice of the Almighty. In the firmament that was over them was the likeness of a throne, and on that throne, the likeness of a man. Could this represent the One who was to come and lay one hand on sinful man and the other upon a merciful God and bring them together in reconciliation? The appearance of fire was round about the One who sat on the throne. Fire denotes judgement. But above it all was the appearance of a bow that is seen in the cloud in the day of rain. This bow of promise was hung out like a flag from this throne of glory as a covenant of peace. Except for final judgement, there is never a judgement foretold but that it is followed by a promise of peace and hope to those who will heed the warning and seek the face of God. In wrath God remembers mercy. God's ultimate purpose is to save men's lives and not to destroy them.

Eating the Roll

was written within and without: and *there* was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel 3:1-27

1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.
2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.
3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.
4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.
5 For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, *but* to the house of Israel;
6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.
7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted.
8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.
9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.
10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.
11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.
12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place.
13 *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.
14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.
15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of

A roll was handed to Ezekiel, written within and without, full of lamentations and woe. Ezekiel was told to eat the roll. The Lord wanted him to fully saturate himself with the message he was to bear.

In order to fully preach God's Word, a minister must know and understand the message he is to preach. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

This roll, or message, told of God's judgement for sin. It is not easy to proclaim the judgements of God. It sometimes brings severe persecution to the messenger. That is why many ministers are preaching only the "love" of God. It is an easy way and tickles the ears of people. It does not disturb them from their spiritual slumber. But God is a God of judgement as well as a God of love and mercy.

Ungrateful

There never was a people so highly favoured as Israel and yet never a people so ungrateful. At one time the glory of the Lord shone out through the Kingdom of Israel to all the nations of the world. No nation was ever more blessed of the Lord than Israel during the reign of Solomon, but sin and disobedience brought it from its pinnacle of glory to the depths of slavery. What a fall! "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). There is no soul so abject and pitiful as one who has once known God and backslid.

A Rebellious People

Ezekiel was possessed with those sterling qualities that make a man a giant for the Lord. He was sent to a rebellious people. The Lord told him not to be afraid of their voices or dismayed at their looks. Whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, he was to proclaim the Word of the Lord. Paul exhorted Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2). Even though they will not hear, they cannot plead their ignorance in the day of judgement.

A Watchman

Ezekiel was made a watchman to the house of Israel. The duty of a watchman is to warn the people of an impending danger. Israel had wandered far from the fold. The Prophet Jeremiah said, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of diamond" (Jeremiah 17:1). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Israel was now reaping what they had been sowing for years. They were captives in a strange land. The walls of their beautiful city, Jerusalem, were broken down. Their costly Temple was laid waste. Their sins had separated them from their God. Not only their past sins but their present sins were keeping God's face hid from them. They were still a stiff-necked and rebellious people. They had forgotten God.

Responsibility

The responsibility of warning Israel was laid upon Ezekiel. The responsibility of warning sinners today is laid upon God's watchmen. Where are the fiery preachers who once sounded the warning that hell-fire and brimstone awaited the ungodly? "Eternal security" is the cry that today's hirelings are sending forth. Hear this from the lips of the Almighty: "When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but

Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

22 And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

26 And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they *are* a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious house.

his blood will I require at thine hand."

From the pulpit, from the press, from the air, in almost every quarter of the globe, one hears that smooth-sounding phrase, "eternal security." One can be eternally secure if he walks obedient to God's commandments, but if he turns from the faith, he is no longer a child of God and has no right to eternal life. At whose hands will the blood of those who have been deceived be required? They have been led to believe that if they were once saved they can never be lost, when God's Word plainly declares that only the "pure in heart" shall see God. God still has some faithful "Ezekiels" who still warn the wicked of their evil ways and declare that in the day a righteous man sins he shall surely die.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was Ezekiel when the Lord gave him his commission?
2. What was the proverb the Children of Israel were using?
3. Describe the vision Ezekiel saw.
4. Why was Ezekiel told to eat the roll?
5. What is the duty of a watchman?
6. What does the Lord say about a righteous man in the day that he sins?
7. What does the Lord say about a sinner in the day that he turns from his sin?