

Chapter 2

Date: **Late June/Early July 593 BC**
Some scholars place the date more specifically as
Saturday, June 25th, 593 BC
(the 5th of Tammuz 3,168)

Historical Setting: Ezekiel, who is a young captive from Jerusalem, is being held in exile in Babylonia. He is living in what appears to be a small community of captives in the near proximity of Babylonia's capital city, "Babylon". In chapter one, Ezekiel was near the river Chebar when the heavens were opened unto him and he began to see a glorious vision. This chapter is a continuation of that vision. The setting and time are the same as chapter one.

Preview: The Lord speaks to Ezekiel, and calls him as a prophet of God. He is called to cry repentance unto his own, who the Lord refers to as rebellious and stiff-necked.



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

After an incredible introduction in chapter one, Ezekiel's divine visitor addresses Ezekiel as the '*Son of man*'. Such a title is rather confusing since it is typically used to refer to Jesus Christ. Bruce R. McConkie explained, "*Christ is the Son of Man, meaning that his Father (the Eternal God!) is a Holy Man. 'In the language of Adam, Man of Holiness' is the name of God.....Thus Christ is the Son of Man of Holiness or more briefly put, the Son of Man*" (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 742*). If such a title were reserved for the Son of God, why would Ezekiel's divine visitor choose to use it in reference to Ezekiel? The answer lies in the capitalization of the word man. When referring to the Savior of mankind the word "man" is capitalized, since it refers to His Father, God. In Ezekiel's case, the word is not capitalized and refers to earthly man. Ezekiel was indeed the son of earthly men. The term "son of man" is recorded 119 times in the Old Testament, and is typically used "*to emphasize the relative weakness of man as compared to Deity*" (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 742*). The term is often confusing to the bible scholar since it acquires new meaning when used in the New Testament. Each incident in which the term "son of man" is used in the Old Testament it is used under the same pretense as in the case of Ezekiel.

In this verse, we learn that the young prophet, Ezekiel, was to be addressed by a heavenly messenger. Based on the information obtained in chapter one, it is probably safe to say that Ezekiel was going to be addressed by the Lord God, Jehovah.

It is interesting that the Lord required Ezekiel to stand prior to addressing Ezekiel. Standing is a sign of respect, and obviously deserving for the appearance of the Savior. In line with such respect, ancient symbolic definitions for standing are linked to the symbolic definition for the feet. Feet typically symbolize freedom of movement. They also symbolize humility and a willingness to serve. Such symbolism is fitting for a servant of the Lord, humble and willing to serve.

Verse 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.”**

“*The spirit*” which Ezekiel is referring to is the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost. It is significant that the spirit entered into Ezekiel prior to the Lord speaking unto him since the Holy Ghost testifies of truth. The Lord taught Joseph Smith that “...*my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound*” (*Doctrine & Covenants 88:68*). Joseph learned this great truth firsthand and wrote, “*By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God*” (*Doctrine & Covenants 76:12*). It is due to the fact that the spirit entered into Ezekiel, that he could understand and not deny the things, which he saw and heard. He knew they were true because the spirit had told him so. Truly, the “...*revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels*” (*Doctrine & Covenants 20:35*) are the truths of Heaven.

The Holy Ghost also protects mortal men from withering in the presence of the Lord. The revelations given in the latter days teach that “*no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God*” (*Doctrine & Covenants 67:11*). The Holy Ghost is a crucial element for conversing with God. Mortal man is not only incapable of understanding the truths of God without the spirit but “*Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory*” (*Doctrine & Covenants 76:116-118*).

It is important to understand that the Holy Ghost is the “*key*” to revelation. It is the key to understanding and knowing God. It is the

only way for us to gain testimonies of the truth. It is by and through the Holy Ghost that Ezekiel could receive and understand the revelations given in this great book. This is also the same pattern that God has followed with all of His prophets. Nephi wrote, "...by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh" (1st Nephi 22:2).

As we read the remainder of Ezekiel's great book, we will find that if it were not for the great strengthening powers of the Holy Ghost Ezekiel could not have been able to do the things he did. We read of many other places in the scriptures where the Lord strengthens His elect with the Holy Spirit. As Nephi's brothers sought to take away his life, Nephi wrote "... they durst not do this lest they should wither before me, so powerful was the Spirit of God; and thus it had wrought upon them" (1st Nephi 17:52). As Pharaoh tried to maintain his hold on the children of Israel and Moses was commanded to set the Lord's people free, the Spirit of the Lord provided Moses with the power to part the great Red Sea and create a path to freedom. The same Holy Ghost that entered into Ezekiel "... is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground" (Doctrine and Covenants 8:3).

What is the significance of the spirit standing Ezekiel on his feet? As we better understand the gospel of Christ, we will understand that as we do the best we can, being willing and humble before the Lord, the spirit of God will assist us and make up for our inadequacies. The spirit strengthened Ezekiel, and stood him on his feet so he could receive the word of the Lord. Symbolically, the spirit of the Lord standing Ezekiel on his feet implies that the Lord would support and strengthen him on the mission the Lord was soon to assign him.

Verse 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."**

This verse represents Ezekiel's "*call to serve*", as the Lord tells Ezekiel "*I send thee*". This is important since we know that no man can be a true prophet of God unless he is called of God. The scriptures teach us, "... no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4).

Before analyzing the rest of this verse, let's pause to define two of the terms in this verse for the purpose of clarification. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the terms "*transgress*" and "*rebel (-led)*" as follows.

Transgress v. **1.** To go beyond or over (a limit or boundary), exceed or overstep **2.** To act in violation of (the law for example).

Rebel (-led) v. 1. To refuse allegiance to and oppose by force an established government or ruling authority. 2. To resist or defy an authority or a generally accepted convention. 3. To feel or express strong unwillingness or repugnance.

Since the beginning of time, the God of Israel has guided and directed His children by giving them commandments, laws, and guidelines by which they should live their lives. The children of God during Ezekiel's time period had significantly transgressed these laws. They had rebelled against God's laws and failed to follow His counsel. The following includes just some of the ways which the children of Israel were transgressing the Lord's laws.

1. The temple of the Lord had been defiled. The sacred temple of the Lord, built by Solomon, was being used for annual worship of the pagan God, "*Tammuz*". They also worshiped the Babylonian sun god "*Shamash*" in the Sanctuary, and many other gods on the hillside, and in the city. In addition to this, they allowed foreigners and strangers into the temple of God which was restricted to worthy Hebrews only. In a future revelation given to Ezekiel, the Lord voices His displeasure with Israel in defiling the temple and says, "*In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel*" (Ezekiel 44:7-31).
2. The Hebrews also rejected the prophets, disbelieved their messages, and attempted to kill them. The Book of Mormon, which started in Jerusalem just prior to Ezekiel's first vision states, "*Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they (Nephi's older brothers) were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father*" (1st Nephi 2:13).

3. The citizens of Jerusalem, the Hebrews, had taken to lying, stealing, and murdering.

In the Book of Mormon, we read of Lehi and his family who were fleeing Jerusalem under the direction of the Lord. As the family journeyed away from the wicked city, the Lord instructed them to go back to Jerusalem and retrieve the record of their people so that they might have the written scriptures. One of the Hebrew leaders in Jerusalem held this record. His name was Laban. The Book of Mormon records that Lehi's four sons, Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, and Sam made the journey to retrieve the record. As they arrived at the city they cast lots to see who should venture inside. Since their father was a prophet, and the citizens of Jerusalem had sought his life for preaching the word of God, they too were fearful of their lives. *"The lot fell upon Laman; and Laman went in unto the house of Laban, and he talked with him as he sat in his house"* (1st Nephi 3:11).

As Laman made his request *"Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee"* (1st Nephi 3:13). The Hebrew leader obviously had little respect for human life. Apparently, murder was of little concern to him. Luckily, Laman escaped unharmed. This story is an isolated example of the wicked attitudes the Israelites had adopted. Of the Israelites the Lord said, *"Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them"* (Ezekiel 7:11). In another verse He goes on to say, *"Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence"* (Ezekiel 7:23).

4. Another sin that the children of Israel had adopted was the love of money and/or material wealth. After Laman failed at getting their records from Laban, the four brothers returned to their Jerusalem home they had left to obtain their family riches in an attempt to buy their family records from Laban. The Book of Mormon records, *"And it came to pass that we went down to the land of our inheritance, and we did gather together our gold, and our silver, and our precious things. And after we had gathered these things together, we went up again unto the house of Laban"* (1st Nephi 3:22-23). The offer

was made to Laban. Lehi's family must have been quite wealthy, since Laban who was a wealthy man himself seemed to be in awe over the riches he saw. Nephi records, "*And it came to pass that when Laban saw our property, and that it was exceedingly great, he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property*" (1st Nephi 3:24-25). This is just another example of the love of money and material wealth that was present in Ezekiel's Jerusalem. Though the people loved money, the Lord had already marked an end to their lust. He said, "*The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life*" (Ezekiel 7:12-13).

5. The children of Israel had also neglected to adhere to the moral code given them of God. They were not faithful to spouses or honorable in the use of sacred procreative powers; neither were they faithful to their God. Symbolically, they committed fornication against the covenants they made with God. Adultery and fornication were commonplace in both uses of the word. Later in life, Ezekiel received another revelation regarding Israel. Here the Lord speaks to Israel and says, "*Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger*" (Ezekiel 16:26). The Lord goes on to say, "*Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith*" (Ezekiel 16:29).

Though we do not know the extent of the infidelity present in Ezekiel's Israel, the references we have in the scriptures would indicate that it was a significant problem. The Israelites were obviously engaged in affairs and sexual relations outside of marriage to the point that the Lord voiced His displeasure to the prophet Ezekiel. He said, "*But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest*

them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary” (Ezekiel 16:32-34).

6. Pride was another major violation committed by the Israelites against their God. The Israelites had become puffed up in their own abilities and status as a nation. They began to rely on the arm of flesh rather than the arm of God. Humility had left their souls. The Lord said of the children of Israel, *“Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded” (Ezekiel 7:10).*
7. The leaders of the Lord’s church in ancient Jerusalem had neglected their call. Ezekiel later received some very strong communication from the Lord on this matter. He wrote, *“And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity” (Ezekiel 44:10-12).* The children of Israel were obviously accountable for their actions, but the fact that the Lord’s chosen leaders had strayed was even more appalling to the Lord. It all goes back to the simple gospel principle, *“for of him unto whom much is given much is required” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3).* More is expected from the Lord’s chosen leaders.

The children of Israel were wicked. Not only had they rebelled against the laws of God but their fathers had as well. Experience had taught the Israelites that their God would visit *“the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:7).* It was obvious, based on history, that the God of Israel did not tolerate sin. The covenant made between the Israelites and their God brought great judgement upon them when they transgressed, but at the same time it

brought great mercy upon them because of the faithfulness of their forefathers in keeping the covenant. The Bible teaches, “*the LORD thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them*” (Deuteronomy 4:31). Unfortunately, the Israelites of Ezekiel’s era had seriously transgressed the laws. So great had they sinned that the prophets wrote, “*And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done*” (1st Kings 14:22). It appears that Israel was caught in a vicious circle. Their fathers had strayed from the counsels of God, and to make matters worse they had set the example for their sons and daughters. In turn, the sons and daughters of Israel were repeating the cycle.

The mentioning of the father’s sins brings up another interesting point. Fathers hold a great responsibility for the example they set for their children. Speaking of the children’s sins the Lord says, “*But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?*” (Moses 7:37). This doctrine is often difficult to digest, but the reality is that the role of the father is not only crucial to the future conduct of their children, but fathers will be held accountable before the Lord for the way in which they rear their children.

Verse 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.**”

The chosen children of God had lost all guilt and shame. Not only had they committed sins, but they felt no remorse. In fact, the Lord calls them “*impudent*” and “*stiffhearted*”. The American Heritage Dictionary defines these terms as follows.

Impudent adj. 1. Characterized by offensive boldness; insolent or impertinent. Synonymous with shameless 2. Obsolete, immodest

Stiff-necked or Stiff-hearted adj. 1. Stubborn and arrogant or aloof.

Such was the sad state of Israel during the era surrounding Ezekiel’s life. They were a stubborn, arrogant people without shame or guilt. They boldly defied God’s laws without concern for the consequences eternally tied to such acts.

One of the most fortunate things about having a loving Father in Heaven is that He is merciful. The Lord taught the Latter-Day Saints that the sinners will always be warned, and have opportunity to repent. Those who refuse this offer will be cut off. It is written, *“And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people; For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant”* (Doctrine & Covenants 1:14-15). This same pattern was being followed in the case of Ezekiel’s Israel. Ezekiel was being called to cry repentance to the Israelites.

Ezekiel’s call is to all the children of Israel, not just to the exiles. He was to call all of God’s people unto repentance. Unfortunately, the children of Israel were quite different than Ezekiel. One of the best example in the scriptures of the contrast between the attitudes of the children of Israel of the 590’s BC and the very elite few that were righteous is that of Nephi and his two older brothers. The main difference between Nephi, Laman, and Lemuel can be illustrated in the following two scriptures.

“And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them (1st Nephi 2:12).”

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers (1st Nephi 2:16).”

Those who were familiar with the prompting of the spirit, and knew the voice of God, heard the cry for repentance. Those who had hardened their hearts heard the prophet’s words as rambling nonsense. Consequently, they failed to hear the voice of warning. This simple, yet important, difference allowed Nephi to seek the Lord and search out the knowledge and testimony that he needed to follow a righteous path. Laman and Lemuel on the other hand weren’t familiar with the Lord’s voice and didn’t turn to Him in the time of their confusion. Consequently, they left themselves in darkness. We run the same risk if we refuse to hear the Lord and turn unto Him.

Verse 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.”

Whether we listen to the counsel of the Lord or choose to ignore the Lord, we shall all be warned. Even if the warning was brushed off in our minds, the spirit will not allow us to deny that the Lord has warned us. In the case of the Israelites, they received many warnings. Our just and merciful Father in Heaven gives us all ample opportunity to repent. In the case of Ezekiel’s Israel, He sent many prophets. Besides Ezekiel, He sent Jeremiah, Lehi, Daniel, and many others.

Knowing the number of prophets that the Lord had sent Israel, and the reception that they received, Ezekiel was probably worried about his task at hand. The Lord was up front with Ezekiel and tried to explain what he was going to be up against. In a later revelation He told Ezekiel, “*Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house*” (Ezekiel 12:2).

Verse 6: “And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers 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.”

Similar to the comfort given to Jeremiah at the start of his call, Ezekiel was told not to fear the people to whom he was to cry repentance. Jeremiah was told, “*Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD*” (Jeremiah 1:8).



Ezekiel’s wording in this verse uses some distinct symbolism. The connection between the Hebrews response to his words and briers, thorns, and scorpions is made. Briers symbolize defiance and vindictiveness. Thorns often symbolize trials, sin, discomfort, and wickedness. In association with flowers, they symbolize the contrast between pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, etc. Finally, scorpions symbolize destructive forces, disaster, darkness, evil, torment, treachery, venom, and death. Scorpions are associated with the Babylonian deities, Ishtar and Nina.

Such symbolism appropriately conveys the reception that would meet Ezekiel’s words. The Israelites would despise his words, wishing him ill



fate on account of his teachings, and yet the Lord reiterates, “*be not afraid*”.

This verse is a great example of the Lord’s commitment to giving His children free agency. That is, freedom to choose one’s path in life, but not freedom to choose the consequences. The Lord made sure that the choice was clear by sending a voice of warning. Later the Lord told Ezekiel, “*And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them*” (Ezekiel 33:33). The young man Ezekiel was to be a prime example of the modern day scripture which reads, “*The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh*” (Doctrine & Covenants 1:19).

Ezekiel was similar in many ways to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Both were sent on very difficult missions here upon the earth. Both were met with tremendous opposition. After being persecuted, tarred and feathered, beaten, driven, mocked, and imprisoned, the Prophet Joseph Smith approached the Lord with a question that many have asked of God in times of despair. The prophet recorded his plea, “*O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries? Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, ...stretch forth thy hand; let thine eye pierce... Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs. Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever*” (Doctrine & Covenants 121:1-6).

In reply to the young prophet, the Lord says, “*My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands. Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job. And they who do charge thee with transgression, their hope shall be blasted, and their prospects shall melt away as the hoar frost melteth before the burning rays of the rising sun; And also that God hath set his hand and seal to change the times and seasons, and to blind their minds, that they may not understand his marvelous workings; that he may prove them also and take them in their own craftiness; Also because their hearts are corrupted, and the things which they are willing to bring upon others, and love to have others suffer, may come upon themselves to the very uttermost; That they may be disappointed also, and their hopes may be cut off; And not many years hence, that they and their posterity shall be*

swept from under heaven, saith God, that not one of them is left to stand by the wall. Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them. But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. And those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death--Wo unto them; because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house. Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them. They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation. It had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks, and they drowned in the depth of the sea. Wo unto all those that discomfort my people, and drive, and murder, and testify against them, saith the Lord of Hosts; a generation of vipers shall not escape the damnation of hell. Behold, mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgment in the season thereof, for them all; For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his works shall be. God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ...The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever" (Doctrine & Covenants 121:7-46).

At the close of this verse, the Lord refers to Israel as a rebellious house. What did the Lord mean by a house? Symbolically, the word house represents a world center, an enclosing symbol, or protection. The fact that the Lord refers to Israel as a rebellious house represents that they were rebellious as an entire entity. The whole populous was rebellious, not just a sect or a portion, but the entire nation.

Ezekiel was not to be surprised by the children of Israel's negative response or as it is said figuratively, "**dismayed by their looks**". The Lord knew His children well. He knew the rejection that awaited Ezekiel.

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

This verse is almost a repeat of verse five, indicating that it was important for Ezekiel to know and understand this. It was important that Ezekiel knew that his mission was to a group of people who probably would not listen. He conveys this message using the word forbear. The American Heritage Dictionary defines this term as follows.

Forbear v. 1. To refrain from; resist. Synonymous with refrain 2. To desist from; cease. 3. To avoid or shun.

Basically the Lord was living by His plan of teaching His children correct principles and letting them govern themselves. The Lord was telling Ezekiel that the children of Israel were not going to listen but they were going to be given the witness and then given the choice.

Verse 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.”**

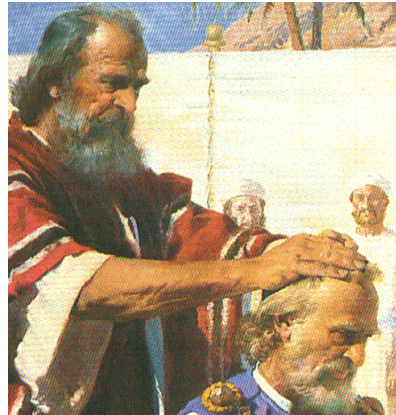
Ezekiel is counseled not to follow the ways of the children of Israel but to follow the Lord. He is to do what the Lord says. This is often easier said than done. Ezekiel was surrounded by corruption. He was living in Babylon and amongst a fallen Israelite people. Often for us looking in at a situation we might respond, *“Of course he should follow the Lord”*. But, how many of us under similar circumstances would have found it very difficult to follow the Lord? The Lord knew the temptation, and circumstances under which Ezekiel would be exposed. His counsel to Ezekiel must have rung deep, ***“Be not thou rebellious like unto that rebellious house”***.

Following the Lord’s counsel to Ezekiel to stay on the straight and narrow path, the Lord gives Ezekiel a symbolic command. The two seem almost interconnected by the structure of the sentence. Ezekiel was told by the Lord to open his mouth and eat what the Lord gives him. Obviously the Lord was not inviting the prophet to dinner. The command was figurative in nature. The act of eating is a symbol which conveys the thought of imparting the quality of that which is consumed to the consumer. Simply put, you become what you eat. Similarly, the mouth symbolizes, devouring and eating. It is often associated with the same symbolic meaning as eating. It is also used to represent the power of spoken word, or command. In other cultures it represents the entrance into the spirit world. The Lord was going to support and feed Ezekiel spiritually. He was extending him a call and asking Ezekiel to not only accept the call but to make it part of him.

Oh, that we could follow that counsel - to accept the gifts given to us of God and incorporate them into our life, our personality, and our very being.

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

A hand was sent unto Ezekiel. The hand symbolizes mortal action and strength. The offered hand, or the stretched forth hand, symbolizes friendship, offering, and giving. The hand of God symbolizes divine protection, guidance, and divine power. In this instance, the hand might represent the hand of God setting Ezekiel apart for this calling. The symbol of the hand of God being sent to someone symbolizes the transference of power, or setting apart. This quite possibly could be Ezekiel's setting apart by the Lord as a prophet.



Aaron was set apart at the hand of Moses


We know that all prophets were called by the laying on of hands by one having authority. In Ezekiel's case, he was probably far from any mortal man that could accomplish this task. Fittingly, he was probably set apart directly from on High. If this hand did not represent his setting apart, it definitely represented the symbolic gesture of being given or offered something.

Upon looking at what the Lord's hand symbolically held, Ezekiel sees “*a roll of a book*”.



The Hebrew word that was translated into the word “*roll*” might better be translated as a “*scroll*” or “*book*”. Rolls were usually records (Ezra 6:2), and often contained prophesy (Jeremiah 36:2). Similar to this passage in Ezekiel's record, John the apostle said (Revelation 10:9) that an angel of the Lord stood before him, and as he approached the angel he saw that many great things were being unfolded out of a book that the angel held.

After approaching the angel, John asked for the book. The angel replied, “*Take it...*”. The book symbolized John's mission. Similarly, the book offered to Ezekiel represented a mission. It represented the will and counsel of God. In line with this symbolic interpretation, books also symbolize learning, the spirit of wisdom, revelation, and the direction of God.

Another book was spoken of in the Book of Revelation. John wrote, “*And I saw in the right hand of him  that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed*”

with seven seals” (Revelation 5:1). This passage puzzled the Prophet Joseph Smith and prompted him to ask the Lord for the meaning of the book. Fortunately for us, we have the Lord’s response to Joseph in modern day scriptures. The Doctrine and Covenants says that Joseph asked, “*What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?*” The Lord answered, “*We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence*” (Doctrine and Covenants 77:6). This book represented all of the mysteries and knowledge of God.

The book that was presented to Ezekiel, should the symbolism be in line with the other passages in the scriptures, would represent Ezekiel’s call to serve the Lord. It might represent the counsel given to Ezekiel for his mission similar to words of counsel given to us from the Lord as we are set apart for a calling by one having authority.

Verse 10: “**And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.**”

The Lord spreads the roll out before Ezekiel, symbolizing that the Lord explained the mission in its entirety. The mission was obviously large in scope. The passage states that the book was written “*within and without*”, though the Hebrew translation is probably better translated as written on front and back. This indicates that there was writing on the front and back of the pages, symbolizing the large and all encompassing scope of Ezekiel’s call.

Ezekiel then records that the call, or the writing in the book, contained lamentations, mourning, and woe. For clarification, the following definitions are offered from the American Heritage Dictionary;

Lament v. 1. To express grief for or about; mourn
2. To regret deeply; deplore

Mourn n. 1. The actions or expressions of one who has suffered a bereavement 2. Conventional outward signs of grief for the dead, such as a black armband or black cloths. 3. The period during which a death is mourned.

Woe n. 1. Deep distress or misery as from grief; wretchedness. Synonymous with regret 2. Misfortune; Calamity.

Such information would not have been foreign to an Israelite. They had lived most of their lives under trials. The Hebrews were

accustomed to mourning. Their past was plagued with trials and tribulations. Given their heritage, the Hebrews had a specific method for mourning as outlined by their culture. Someone in mourning would often dress in sackcloth or black and sad clothing. Some would even rend their cloths. One could also identify a person in mourning because they would sprinkle ash dust or earth on themselves. Other traditions associated with mourning among the Hebrews were removal of ornaments, neglect of one's self, shaving of the head, plucking out the hair of the head and beard, and finally public moaning and sobbing. Little did Ezekiel know how in touch he would become with lamentation, mourning and woe.

How was Ezekiel's mission associated with so much grief? This question is probably best answered through reading the rest of this commentary; however, we can summarize by saying that the Jews suffered being burned alive in Babylonian furnaces, pestilence, slavery, being turned into eunuchs, famine, destruction, death, etc. Ezekiel's mission and life was surrounded by grief, yet he wasn't to mourn. His was a call to warn.

Using remarkably similar symbolism, John the Apostle, several hundred years after Ezekiel, was asked to open the book that he was given from Heaven. John did as he was requested. He took the open book, representing his mission and ordination, and he ate it, symbolizing his accepting the call. John found that the book was bitter to his belly, symbolizing sadness, misery, and sorrow. One can see the parallels between the two prophets.

All calls from the Lord will bring eternal happiness; however that does not mean that all calls are easy or can be accomplished without heartache. This world is often a wicked and cruel world, which fights against the will of God. Our best consolation is the simple knowledge that we are sent of Him and, like Ezekiel, He will strengthen us to the task at hand.



**Chapter
Summary:**

This chapter, if titles were given to chapters in the Bible, could have been titled, "*Ezekiel's call to serve*". It starts with the Lord appearing to the young Levite priest named Ezekiel, who had fallen to the ground in either amazement or fright after being shown the heavens. The spirit enters into Ezekiel and he is told to arise. The Lord then calls Ezekiel to be a prophet to his own wicked, stubborn people. He is given the great mission to bear the message of repentance to a fallen people. The Lord counsels and warns Ezekiel that the mission will not be easy and most will reject him. He also reminds Ezekiel that the strengthening powers of the Lord would guide and protect him.

