

# Ezekiel 2: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Ezekiel chapter 2 Ezekiel chapter 2 Ezekiel chapter 1

Ezekiel saw the heavens opened and four living creatures with the divine throne chariot a glorious humaniform manifestation of God's presence upon it After seeing the vision of the throne chariot Ezekiel had fallen on his face and heard a voice and in chapter 2 the account continues as we hear what the voice had to say Ezekiel is addressed as son of man an expression that as Walter Eichroth observes is used on numerous occasions throughout the book of Ezekiel almost 100 times yet not that often outside of it within the Old Testament Daniel chapter 8 verse 17 is one of those few other instances in a vision very similar to this one Psalm 8 verse 4 is another Eichroth argues that he is addressed this way as a reminder of his weak creatureliness and the Lord's condescension Marsha Greenberg and Leslie Allen suggest that it also serves to distinguish him from the other divine beings in the scene the four living creatures and any others that might be there

Allen writes Ezekiel is a human being and no god out of his league in the transcendent scene as his physical reflex has demonstrated even as the voice underlines the difference it hints that this human being may have a role in the divine plan the vocative human one persistently prefaces the divine messages in this passage of commission and in fact throughout the book of oracles it serves to characterize Ezekiel as the prophet of divine transcendence marked by humble awareness of who God is and by a concern that his fellow exiles should share his awareness Ezekiel is instructed to stand on his feet at which the spirit enters into him and sets him on his feet in chapter 1 the spirit animated the wheels presumably the same spirit is animating Ezekiel here although he has been overwhelmed by the majesty of the glory of God he needs to be alert and in possession of his wits as he is being summoned to intelligent action and attention the Hebrew prophet unlike many of the pagan prophets was not defined by being in constant ecstasies and losing his wits but exhibited rationality and sobriety

Daniel Bloch sees in the imagery and the language surrounding the commission the implicit context of a royal court entering the royal presence the servant prostrates himself he is then told to rise and given a charge in language typically found in a court when a ruler would appoint and send a messenger to some third party as a prophet Ezekiel is like Isaiah a participant in the divine council he is commissioned and sent to bear its words to his people he can also speak on behalf of his people in the council his role is framed by the covenant bond that exists between the Lord and his people and the terms of the covenant that the people have broken he is commissioned in the context of devastating and sustained apostasy apostasy so severe that the people were uprooted from the land and cast into exile however the remarkable thing is that even though they are now exiled on the far side of the river Euphrates having been returned to the land of the Chaldeans from which Abraham their forefather was first called the Lord has not utterly cast them off here in this foreign land even while they are still in revolt against him he is commissioning another prophet to address them even after they had rejected all of his earlier overtures the people to whom

Ezekiel is sent are identified as the people of Israel the northern kingdom of Israel was swallowed up by the Assyrians well over a century earlier the light of the southern kingdom of Judah is currently guttering and will soon be extinguished their king Jehoiakim is currently in exile in Babylon and they have a puppet king on the throne in his place however the people continue to exist as a people even though they are scattered and separated from the land in a precarious existence in danger of being assimilated to other peoples in the lands of their exile the Israelites who had been taken by the Assyrians and the Egyptian exiles of Jeremiah's day had both largely vanished in such a way the exiles in Babylon face a similar threat there is a yawning abyss of possible extinction as the distinct people opening up beneath them is there still a way back from such a terrible fate to make matters worse the people are obdurate and stubbornly resistant to the word of the Lord the Lord characterizes them as a rebellious house as Block notes stubborn both without literally stiff of face and within hard of heart and mind as the prophet of the Lord

[ 6 : 02 ] Ezekiel will face strong resistance from his people yet he needs to be faithful to his mission in the teeth of their opposition like other prophets figures such as Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah the Lord strengthens emboldens and steels him for his task a similar preparation of Jeremiah can be seen in Jeremiah chapter 1 verses 17 to 19 but you dress yourself for work arise and say to them everything that I command you do not be dismayed by them lest I dismay you before them and I behold I make you this day a fortified city an iron pillar and bronze walls against the whole land against the kings of Judah its officials its priests and the people of the land they will fight against you but they shall not prevail against you for I am with you declares the Lord to deliver you Ezekiel is charged not to fear the people's opposition he has the Lord on his side he is like someone surrounded by thorny and stinging plants these may refer to the opposition that he will face or perhaps to the oppression of life in exile however

Block advances the interpretation that these things are the wall of protection that the Lord is establishing around his servant Ezekiel if Ezekiel faithfully performs his commission his ministry will be so evidently a divinely proven one that the people will have no choice but to acknowledge his legitimacy as a prophet the Lord will not let his words fall to the ground Ezekiel needs however to distinguish himself from the people surrounding him like resistant toddlers stubbornly rejecting the food that their parents are feeding them they refuse to accept the word of the Lord Ezekiel however must receive the word of the Lord ingesting it and taking it within the prophet seems to have a far closer relationship with the word of the Lord than we see in relationship to the law or wisdom in the case of the priest or the king or sage the prophet ingests and embodies his message and its power the word of the Lord becomes the prophet's word here Ezekiel is handed a scroll most likely a rolled up papyrus document it's a complete message written on both sides with judgments that will give rise to lamentation mourning and woe we see something similar in Revelation chapter 10 verses 8 to 11 where John is also given a book to eat then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again saying go take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land so I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll and he said to me take and eat it it will make your stomach bitter but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey and I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it it was sweet as honey in my mouth but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter and I was told you must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings it is likely that Luke is also subtly working with the background of Ezekiel in Luke chapter 4 where Jesus is handed the scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth and the gracious words of the text of Isaiah proceed from out of his mouth

A question to consider looking at the prophetic commissioning of Moses in Exodus chapter 3 and 4 Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 1 and Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6 what similarities and differences do you notice between them and the account of Ezekiel's call and commission in the opening chapters of his book?