



## Sermon Series Weekly Devotionals

Week of January 7

### EZEKIEL 1.

**1. READ.** While reading, think: *Do I know what is God like?*

**2. REVIEW.** Ezekiel drops what he is doing, arrested by a sudden blast of north wind. He looks up and sees an enormous cloud, lit up with a blinding light, fire bolts darting back and forth. The cloud nears, and strange creatures emerge. Four fantastic beasts, with human bodies, but with four faces and four wings apiece. The faces to the front are human, but the ones on the right, left, and rear are those of a lion, ox, and eagle—rulers of the wild animals, domestic animals, and birds. Ezekiel has seen cherubim before—human-faced, lion-bodied, ox-footed, eagle-winged.—but never four different heads on one body. Weird!

At the bottom were the most amazing wheels he'd ever seen, that flashed the cloud back and forth like lightning. And then he saw it. On top of it all, a crystal platform on which sat a brilliant blue throne, and on the throne, a fire-swathed man, but more than a man. It must be none other than...God!

**3. MEDITATE.** Imagine you are the spectator Ezekiel. What are feeling? thinking? How does Ezekiel react? Is that the appropriate reaction? What does this event tell you about what God is like? Mysterious? Glorious? Holy? Sovereign? And yet, interested in humanity? Present with us?

**4. PRAY.** Be a modern Ezekiel. Tell God what you're feeling and thinking about Him.

## **EZEKIEL 2.**

**1. READ.** While reading, ask: *If this happened to me, what would I be feeling?*

**2. REVIEW.** Ezekiel is face down on the ground. He has responded appropriately to seeing the God-king, by paying homage. But little does he realize that his days as a spectator are over. God is about to turn his private world upside down. As the One on the throne begins to speak, Ezekiel finds himself bodily picked up and placed erect. Clearly the king is about to give him orders, and he is to listen and obey. To his surprise, God (Yahweh) commissions him to carry His words to his fellow-countrymen. God is fed up with Israel. Yes, they are His people, but they are insubordinate (“hard of face”) and insensitive (“hard of heart,” v. 4). They are His family, yet they are like defiant teenagers (“rebellious household,” v. 5).

Ezekiel gets his orders: “Human, go to them. I’ll tell you what to say. And don’t be afraid. Now, open your mouth and eat this.” Ezekiel opens his mouth. God’s hand appears in the air holding a papyrus scroll covered with words. Ezekiel just catches sight of the words “moan” and “wail” before the thing is shoved in his mouth.

**3. MEDITATE.** Imagine you are Ezekiel. Having seen the unbelievable, now you’re hearing the inconceivable. You’re a sponge, that’s all. Picked up. Commanded. Given no choice. What does this tell us about what God is looking for in His messengers? Might He expect any servant of His to have had an encounter with Him? to be in awe of Him? to listen to Him? to be willing to do whatever He asks? to be faithful rather than successful?

**4. PRAY.** Be a modern Ezekiel. Tell God what you feel and think about serving Him.

## **EZEKIEL 3:1-15**

**1. READ.** While reading, ask: *When is the last time I felt “bitter, angry, and stunned”?*

**2. REVIEW.** Perhaps Ezekiel revolted at the idea of eating a papyrus scroll, because God commands him to do it twice—first in general, vague terms (1-2), then in detail (“your stomach gorge, your intestines fill with this scroll” 3). Ezekiel obeys, and to his surprise, it tastes like chicken! (just kidding; honey, actually) This is a big deal. The divine word Ezekiel has eaten will fuel him for more than five years as he delivers its message of judgment to a hardened audience. And now God repeats Ezekiel’s orders (compare 2:3-7). Ezekiel is to repeat God’s words verbatim to a people who won’t respond. God comforts him: “They won’t listen to you, because they won’t listen to Me.” God promises to equip him for the job, using a play on his name (Ezekiel, “God hardens”): “They’re hardened, but I’ll make you just as hard.”

Suddenly, like Dorothy whisked off to Oz, Ezekiel is picked up by the wind (Spirit) of God and deposited among the exiles by the Kebar canal. He sits there for seven days, and suddenly we are given a window into his feelings: He is bitter. angry. and stunned. He is in shock, and infuriated that he has lost all control of his life.

**3. MEDITATE.** Imagine you are Ezekiel. Can you remember a time in your life when you were in shock, angry, and bitter? Do you think it could have been part of God’s plan?

**4. PRAY.** Be a modern Ezekiel. Feel the pain of having your life turned upside-down. Talk to God about it, and what He wants from you.

## **EZEKIEL 3:16-21**

**1. READ 3:16-ch. 4.** While reading 3:16-21, ask, *What is the Lord saying to me?*

**2. REVIEW.** Ezekiel is in a wretched state—he feels upset, angry, and trapped, with no way out. God has said, “From this point on, your life isn’t yours, it’s mine. No more free time to hang out with friends or do what you want. You’re my mouthpiece, 24-7.” Ezekiel is stunned. God gives him exactly a week to get over it, then puts the hammer down: “I’m making you Israel’s sentry, watching for an attack. From me! Your job is to warn them when I’ve had my fill and judgment is about to fall. If you warn them, and they don’t repent, you’re off the hook. But if you don’t warn them—if you’re so scared of them that you keep your mouth shut—then I’ll hold you responsible, and when I come for them I’ll come for you too.”

Notice the four cases in v. 18-21. The first two cases are about unbelievers; but the second two are about believers who have backslidden. They are genuine believers who once were faithful, but have “fallen away.” Now they are in danger of God’s judgment and even death (physical, not eternal). See also *Ezekiel 33:1-9*.

**3. MEDITATE.** Which one of these “words from God” touches you at a heart level:

- a) “There are so many people who are headed for Judgment, and need to be warned.”
- b) “There are some Christians who have fallen away from me, and need to turn back.”
- (3) “I am looking for sentries who will warn people in spiritual danger. Will you do it?”

**4. PRAY.** Tell God the names of people you care about, people who have turned away from God, people who need to be warned.