

# THE MISSION ASSIGNED TO THE PROPHET OF GOD EZEKIEL 02:01–07

## *Introduction*

What is the most important mission or task, on earth? Is it serving as the leader of the most powerful nation? Or being responsible for the most powerful army in the world? Or overseeing the strongest economy? Or producing some of the basic necessities of life? Or discovering the cure for the diseases that plague the world? There are so many tasks that are absolutely essential for the survival of the human race that perhaps it is impossible to pinpoint the most important mission.

Surely one of the most important tasks God ever gave someone was the mission He assigned to the prophet Ezekiel. God chose this prophet to share His Word with a world of unbelievers who were dooming themselves to eternal judgment because of their wicked behaviour. This Scripture is the LORD's official commission of Ezekiel to be His prophet. Here, He assigns Ezekiel seven specific tasks. This is, *The Mission Assigned to the Prophet of God: A Sevenfold Task*, Ezekiel 2:1-3:27.

- I. He must know that he is a “son of man”: human, weak, frail (v. 2:1).
- II. He must arise and listen to God (v. 2:1).
- III. He must receive and be filled (empowered) with God's Spirit (v. 2:2).
- IV. He must go and share God's Word (vv. 2:3-5).
- V. He must not fear opposition: emphasized three times (vv. 2:6-7).
- VI. He must devour and digest God's Word (vv. 2:8-3:3)
- VII. He must proclaim God's Word (vv. 3:4-27).

### **I. *Ezekiel 02:01 He Must Know that He is a “Son of Man”: Human, Weak, Frail***

The prophet was to recognize that he was weak and frail, a “son of man.” Throughout the book of Ezekiel, the LORD never addresses the prophet by his proper name, but rather by the title “son of man.” The LORD uses the title more than 90 times. Why? Probably for two reasons.

First, “son of man” emphasizes the fact that Ezekiel was a mere human being, a member of the weak and frail human race, a species that lives for only a few short years on earth and then passes away. In life, human beings are depraved and corrupt and fall ever so short of the glory and perfection of God. All human beings stand in desperate need of God's mercy and salvation, even the prophets of God. The LORD was going to be dealing directly with Ezekiel throughout his ministry, speaking to him as though face-to-face to reveal some amazing events that lay out in the future. Because the prophet would have so

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much direct contact with the LORD, there was the danger that pride would enter his heart. Therefore he needed to keep in mind that he was a mere human being. Despite the special visions and messages God would give him, Ezekiel needed God's mercy and salvation and power as much as anyone else. Thus as he ministered, he was to depend totally upon the Spirit of God.

Second, the title "son of man" can also have a noble, distinguished and royal meaning. It can point to a person as a model, an ideal pattern among the human race. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He frequently referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" (Mat 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; Mark 2:28; Luke 19:10; etc.). By using this title, He emphasized the fact that He had come to earth as a man and was identifying with the human race. He was the promised Messiah, the Son of God who had taken on human flesh in order to save the human race from sin and death (John 1:14; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4-5; Phil 2:5-10; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). He was the God-Man, the Ideal Pattern of what a person should be while living on earth. Thus when the LORD addressed the prophet as "son of man," He was emphasizing the fact that Ezekiel was to walk as a noble, honourable man among the human race. He was to be an ideal man, a pattern for others to follow. The LORD was now calling Ezekiel to serve Him; therefore the prophet was to be a true "son of man," one who set an ideal pattern of righteousness and faithfulness to God, a dynamic example for others to follow.

**Thought 1.** We are mere men and women. Every one of us is born of a man and woman. Each of us is a son (daughter) of man. We are all human, weak and frail. We are human beings who live only for a few short years on earth and then quickly pass away. Keeping our human weakness in mind will cause us to turn to the LORD for mercy and salvation, and the result will be deliverance from sin, death and the judgment to come. We will inherit eternal life. For this reason, the LORD wants us to be very aware of our human weaknesses and frailties and subjection to death. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

**James 1:9-10** *The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.*

**James 4:14** *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

**1 Pet 1:24** *For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall."*

**1 Chr 29:15** *We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.*

**Job 7:6** *"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope."*

**Job 9:25** *“My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy.”*

**Psa 39:5** *You have made my days a mere hand-breadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath, even those who seem secure.*

**Psa 49:12** *But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish.*

**Psa 103:14** *For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

**Psa 103:15-16** *As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

**Isa 40:6-7** *A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass.*

**Isa 51:12** *I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass.*

**Isa 64:6** *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

## **II. Ezekiel 02:01 He Must Arise and Listen to God**

The prophet of God was to arise and listen to God’s Word. Remember that Ezekiel was lying prostrate before the LORD, humbled by the vision of God’s glory. The prophet had been adoring the LORD in prayer and worship long enough, and now it was time for him to get up. The people were guilty of the terrible sins of disobeying God’s holy commandments and participating in false worship. As a consequence, they were dooming themselves to eternal separation from God. Although there was a time for prayer and revelling in the presence of God, it was now time for the prophet to arise and listen to God’s Word to prepare himself to take God’s message to the world (also see note, Jos 7:6- 26).

**Thought 1.** As God called Ezekiel, so He calls us. We must also prepare ourselves to reach the unbelieving world for Christ, whether the unbeliever is in our own family or in a foreign land. As Ezekiel sought the LORD along the bank of the river Kebar, so we must get alone and seek the LORD in prayer. But after praying, we must arise and listen to God’s Word. We must prepare ourselves by staying in God’s Word and studying it diligently. Listen to what God says about studying His Holy Word:

**John 5:39** *“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”*

**Acts 17:11-12** *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

**Rom 15:4** *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

**1 Tim 4:15** *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

**2 Tim 2:15** *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

**2 Tim 3:16** *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

**Deut 17:19** *It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.*

**Josh 1:8** *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*

**Neh 8:18** *Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God.*

**Psa 1:2** *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

**Psa 4:4** *In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.*

**Psa 19:14** *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

**Psa. 63:5-6** *I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.*

**Psa 119:148** *My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.*

**Psa 143:5** *I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.*

**Isa 34:16** *Look in the scroll of the LORD and read: None of these will be missing, not one will lack her mate. For it is his mouth that has given the order, and his Spirit will gather them together.*

### **III. Ezekiel 02: 02 He Must Receive and Be Filled with God's Spirit**

The prophet of God was to receive and be filled with God's Spirit. Apparently the vision of God's glory had so overwhelmed Ezekiel that he was unable to get to his feet. Knowing his weakened condition, the LORD placed His Spirit in the prophet. The Holy Spirit strengthened him so that he could arise. Through this experience the LORD was teaching the prophet to trust the presence and power of God's Spirit. His Spirit would

always empower His dear servant in times of need. Whenever necessary, the Spirit of God would lift him up and give him a very special power to complete the task at hand (Ezk 2:2; 3:14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 25; 37:1; 43:5).

**Thought 1.** God's Spirit is what equips us to live righteously before the LORD and to serve Him faithfully as we walk through life day by day. If we truly trust the LORD and obey His Holy Word, His Spirit comforts, strengthens, teaches, convicts, guides, and empowers us. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

**John 6:63** *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."*

**John 14:16-18** *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

**John 14:26** *"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

**John 15:26** *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father — he will testify about me."*

**John 16:13** *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."*

**Acts 13:2** *While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

**Rom 8:11** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

**Rom 8:14** *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

**Rom 8:16-17** *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

**1 Cor 2:12-13** *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

**2 Cor 3:6** *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

*Gal 4:4-6* But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

*1 Pet 3:18* For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

*1 John 4:13* We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

*Isa 30:21* Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

*Eze 36:27* And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

#### **IV. Ezekiel 02:03–05 He Must Go and Share God’s Word**

The prophet of God was to share God’s Word. And he had to share it with everyone, even with those who rejected the LORD. Ezekiel’s call clearly stated this mission. Though Ezekiel was being held captive in Babylon, God called him to minister to the Israelites, in particular to the captives in exile in Babylon. Few tasks will ever be as difficult as the one assigned this prophet. It would be the most difficult task imaginable because of the people’s wicked behaviour, unbelief and refusal to repent and trust God. They were spiritually bankrupt. They neglected or rejected God and His Holy Word and ignored the importance of trusting and obeying Him. God gives three descriptions of the people’s attitude toward Him:

- => They had rebelled against Him to such an extent that the entire nation could be considered rebellious (v. 3).
- => They had transgressed against Him down through the centuries, ever since their birth as a nation (v. 3).
- => They were impudent, obstinate and hard-hearted, totally unwilling to repent and turn back to Him (v. 4).

Despite the people’s hard hearts and wicked behaviour, they still desperately needed the LORD’s salvation and deliverance. Thus it was the prophet’s duty to share God’s Word with them. No matter how difficult the task, or whether the people listened or not, Ezekiel was to give them an opportunity to hear the message of the hope of God’s wonderful salvation and restoration. Once Ezekiel faithfully carried this message to the people, they would know that a true prophet had been among them. As a result of his faithfulness, some people would accept the LORD, repent of their sins, and live righteously as a strong witness for Him. On the other hand, God’s Word would be a strong witness against all who rejected the prophet’s message.

They would have the opportunity to hear the Word, but if they rejected its message, it would bear witness against them in the judgment that was coming upon both Jews and Gentiles. God's purpose was to use Ezekiel to give the people an opportunity to hear a prophet proclaim His Holy Word. While His Word promised salvation to those who responded and turned back to Him, it would stand as a strong witness against those who continued to reject Him.

**Thought 1.** Every human being of every generation must have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ. No matter how difficult the task or how rebellious, hard-hearted or wicked the people, we are to give everyone an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ. Through Christ, God gives us the wonderful promise of salvation and forgiveness of sins. Therefore, we must proclaim the gospel of Christ to the world.

**Mat 24:14** *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony unto all nations; and then the end will come.”*

**Mat 28:19-20** *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Mark 13:10** *“And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.”*

**Mark 16:15** *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

**Luke 24:47** *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

**John 20:21** *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

**Acts 1:8** *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

**Acts 5:20** *“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”*

**2 Tim 4:2** *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.*

**Rev 14:6** *Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people.*

## **V. Ezekiel 02:06–07 He Must not Fear Opposition: Emphasized Three Times**

The prophet of God was not to fear opposition. This is emphasized three times in verse six and repeated again in verse nine. During Ezekiel's ministry, a threefold persecution would be launched against him:

- => Some people would use words against him. They would ridicule, mock and scorn him.
- => Some would prick him like thorns and briars, tearing at his flesh and attempting to harm him.
- => Others would sting him like scorpions, threatening to poison his ministry or to take his life.

No matter what opposition the prophet faced, his duty was to be faithful to the LORD. He was to proclaim God's Word regardless of the response. Whether the people listened or failed to listen, whether they responded or rebelled, the prophet was to give them an opportunity to hear God's message of salvation and the promise of restoration.

**Mat 10:26-28** *"So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

**2 Tim 1:7** *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

**Deut 31:6** *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*

**Josh 1:6** *Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.*

**2 Chr 32:7** *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him."*

**Psa 3:5-6** *I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustained me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.*

**Psa 27:1-3** *The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.*

**Psa 91:2-6** *I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

**Psa 118:6** *The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?*

**Prov 3:24** *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

**Isa 12:2** *Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.*

**Isa 41:10** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

**Isa 51:12** *I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass.*

**Jer 1:8** *“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD. ■*