

10925U

GLENLOCK BIBLE SCHOOL - 2002

EZEKIEL - THE MAN OF SIGN

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study 3: The Commission of the Dumb Priest

Reading: Ezekiel 2 and 3

Thank you brother Allan, and good morning my beloved brethren and sisters.

Well, we had a thrilling time together, b&s, watching that vision come roaring out of the north parts; you know, Ezekiel must have been absolutely thrilled with that, as I believe we all were, when we see the Israel of God coming together, not breaking up into an Indian file formation, but now wingtip to wingtip, sisters kissing, brethren and sisters in unity, mercy and truth have met together and kissed each other, says Psalm 85, and all those that understand the truth, are now embracing and wingtip to wingtip we form a perfect square, we have our bridegroom in the middle, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Eye flashing in the middle like lightning, and Ezekiel watches, b&s, fascinated as he sees this square keep that glory in the middle, though it darted hither and thither, as lightning darts. You know, it must have been a marvellous thing, seeing the wheels rolling along eye after eye after eye, being spread over the world, b&s, the eyes of Yahweh running to and fro everywhere. The enormous impact of that, what happened? he fell flat on his face. The last verse says, 'I fell on my face and I heard the voice of one that spake', and the voice he heard, b&s, as we will see later on, came from the top of that vision, because over and above that vision as we saw, which represented the Israel of God, he saw that it was all under the control of one of Adam's race, who is Himself, the glory of Yahweh. Ah, he must have been absolutely awe-struck, he fell flat on his face, as he saw that One controlling that vision.

Well, b&s, **great privileges bring great responsibilities!** Now comes the hard part because now he's going to learn what he's got to do. You know, it's exactly the same isn't it? when the Lord Jesus Christ got to nearing the last weeks of His life, God took Him up to the north, I believe, to mountain Hermon, up to Caesarea Philippi, right at the base of Hermon and gave him that extraordinary experience of the transfiguration. Straight after that, Luke says 'that Jesus knowing the time had come for Him to be received up, steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem'. It was clear and obvious, b&s, that the transfiguration was given because of the enormous responsibility which our Lord now had. He had just finished as Matthew records, showing His disciples what things He must suffer in Jerusalem'. Not **telling** them, b&s, not telling them but **showing** them, and so He would have painted a word picture; He said, they're going to

take Me, the chief priests; they're going to take Me to prison, I'm going to be beaten, they're going to drag Me off, I'm going to be crucified and slain. He showed them in a word picture! Now some people say to me, 'oh, brother John, you've got a good imagination, you paint good word pictures'; I wouldn't make His boot lace, can you imagine the word picture that He would paint? and the word picture that He painted, b&s, would not only startle His disciples, but it would cast a pall of gloom over our own Lord, as He stood there painting a picture of His own death, and then God took Him into the transfiguration and gave Him an **experience** not a vision, **an experience of immortality!** Striding down from that mountain, Luke records, 'When the time came that **He should be received up**, the Lord went to the crucifixion with joy and happiness, b&s, knowing that He was on His way to His Father! Now that's what Ezekiel was given before he was going to face similar experiences; the people may not have literally crucified Him, but morally they would try and discredit him in every possible way, and he was going to meet, b&s, enormous opposition, and the vision has prepared him for that.

Now he's flat on his face, and the voice comes to him in chapter 2, 'Son of man, stand up'. Now what I intend to do this morning, with God's help, b&s, is get to probably verse 21 of chapter 3 if we can do that, because we've got a bit of a problem with this study in the middle, it's a bit much, but we'll do our best with it. At any rate, the first thing he's told, 'Son of man', (now this is the first time that God addresses him as son of man), why? because now he's going to get his commission that he's going to have to **represent** the children of Israel. You're their representative! I'm going to take you as their representative, son of man. I'm going to deal with you as I'm going to deal with that nation! That's what God is telling him just exactly the same as God brought His Son into the world, b&s, and dealt with His Son as He would deal with us. Even on that cross, even in death and agony, that's where we belong, that's where we belong and His was there because that's where we belong. He went through those experiences to bear the iniquity of those He came to save, b&s, to **truly represent them as the Son of man**. Now he says, 'you stand upon your feet', and when he stood upon his feet in verse 2, 'the Spirit of God entered into him', as the Spirit of God kept entering into Ezekiel, it's repeated in chapter 3 verse 24, and it goes on being repeated. Time and time again, God's hand is set forth to strengthen him; **Ezekiel**, 'whom God will strengthen' (3168); in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, the Spirit of God came upon Him at the river Jordan, at the baptism of John and the record says this, 'that John saw the Spirit in the form of a dove descending and **remaining** with Him'. Remaining with Him, Ezekiel like other prophets needed God's hand again and again, and again; **7 times** in this record it's recorded that God put His hand on Ezekiel. That was not necessary with the Lord, the Spirit of God came upon Him, b&s, and remained there because of the Lord's attitude in retaining that Spirit that God had sent; His attitude was in accord with it, and there was no need for God to constantly stretch forth His hand to His Son. They walked together to that cross, but Ezekiel needs to be strengthened, and God set him up on his feet. God gave him confidence, He made him stand up.

You know, b&s, in the Word of God when men represent God and they come to speak God's Word like Elijah did, he said to Ahab, 'I am he **who stands** in the presence of

God', he stood before Yahweh, I stand before Yahweh. The priests and the Levites who were appointed under the Law to minister, they were made to **stand before Yahweh**; you know, you've got to have confidence to represent Yahweh, confidence not in self but in God, Ezekiel had no confidence in self, but having been strengthened, b&s, he stood up and now he's in a position where he can listen and understand with confidence, the things that God's got to tell him. 'I'm going to tell you something, Ezekiel, stand up and listen to Me'. So now he's upright, the Spirit of God has strengthened him, now here's what you've got to do.

Now we're not going to come to the climax this morning, we'll come to that tonight, but I'm going to show you that when he got that commission, and then God prepared him for it, he would be absolutely astonished, as he was! he was literally astonished at what happened, what he had to do, and how he was to do it. So here comes his commission, now he says in verse 3, 'Son of man, you stand up, because I want to send you to the children of Israel

to a rebellious nation'. You'll all know, if you've a bible like mine, a little number alongside the word 'nation' (1471), because, you see, the translators are trying to tell us in the margin, that the Hebrew word means 'nations' (ah, you might say, they're just trying to say it's plural), no, they're not! they're trying to tell you, b&s, that that's the word that God has reserved for **Gentiles, for heathen nations**. That's the word 'gowy' that's the word for the Gentiles. So God is going to tell Ezekiel, 'Ezekiel, I want you to go to this Gentile nation', that's how God regarded them, b&s, but this is how they regarded themselves.

Come over to chapter 33 of Ezekiel, this is how they saw themselves. This is their attitude of where they stood; verse 24 and we read there, 'Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the Land: but we are **man**; the land is given us for inheritance'. Now you imagine the arrogance of that! they said, well, Abraham is one man and God promised him the nation, why, they said, we're all his children; if he had one chance, we have thousands, we **are really in the position of Abraham**. Over and over again, God said to Ezekiel, you go to those Gentiles! That was God's attitude, b&s, does that ring a bell? 'We be Abraham's seed they said to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He said, 'are you?' 'If you were Abraham's children you'd do what Abraham did, because God only recognizes His children, characteristically! He's not concerned with natural birth; they were no more Abraham's children than were the Gentiles. They were the children of the devil, says Jesus, you're the children of the diabolos, you're ruled by your father, the lusts in your body. The lusts of your body is your paternity! That's not what Abraham did!

So the situation before Ezekiel and before the Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, was identical; and God said to him, 'look you're going to go, He said, in verse 4, to an impudent children and stiff hearted', they're going to be extremely determined, Ezekiel, and you're going to have to say to them, 'thus saith Adonai Yahweh'. Now that's a title which we know, is very common in Ezekiel, I'll tell you how common it is! It appears **217** times. That's incredible, why would we have that title so repetitive in the book of Ezekiel?

Because, b&s, you see, this book is about **God's determination**; 'Oh, thou vain wicked prince of Israel, who's day is come when iniquity shall have an end; this shall not be the same. Take off the crown, remove the diadem, I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until, **until He come whose right it is**'. This book, b&s, is about God's determination to put His King and other kings with Him, on that throne in place of Zedekiah, whose name means 'the righteousness of Yahweh'. And in that day, He says, 'His name shall be called Yahweh our righteousness', Zedekiah, well He says, 'Zedekiah, well you're not going to have this in the last Zedekiah! You, He said, you get off that throne; take off your crown, it'll never be the same, I'm going to overturn you, overturn you, **until** Adonai Yahweh comes (He who will be rulers) and this book is the determination of Yahweh to do that! It's about that, b&s, and you might be interested to know this, and you might have a look at it yourself, but in the song of Mary, when she exalted God after the great promise that she would be the mother of our Lord, Ezekiel features very prominently in that song; as she saw the mighty pulled out of their seats and her coming Son would be the King of Israel, the son of David, and Yahweh's **determination** would come to an end! Repeatedly in this book, He who will be rulers (not your rulers but different rulers) and this is what Ezekiel keeps being told, b&s.

Now He said to Ezekiel in verse 5, 'Look, Ezekiel, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house and 13 times that phrase is used, b&s, and it's not like it is in the AV, it's actually the other way around, **it's the house of rebellion**) You see Israel would normally be called, 'Israel My nation', and they'd be called 'the house of Israel'. But now they're called the Gentiles and they're called the house of rebellion; now this is the way God sees them. Now God says to Ezekiel, 'Ezekiel, don't worry about results; what you've got to worry about Ezekiel, is your own faithfulness. You've got to concentrate on your faithfulness in doing what I ask you to do. Don't worry about results, because Ezekiel, whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, which ever way it goes, Ezekiel, the result is going to be a **positive one**, because even if they loose their lives, you'll go down to the pit knowing that you've been a **prophet**'. You see, b&s, God's Word doesn't fail whether people fail or not!

Now if you'd like to keep your hand in Ezekiel, and come to 2 Corinthians 2, you have a look at what the apostle says here; strange words in a way and yet exactly the same principle here. Paul didn't always find success, did he? but look at this! he says in verse 14, 'Now thanks be unto God who **always causes us to triumph**'. We're always on top, he says, He always causes us to triumph and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved **and, and in them that perish**. To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life', and Paul says, 'who can cope with that? who could understand it?' But he did, he understood it, he said, 'look, the people turn their backs on me, to triumph', why? because he's warned them, they know what he stands for! and the day will come even in the negative, b&s, if God deems them to have sufficient knowledge for judgment, the day will come when even in their condemnation, it will be a glory to God, because you heard and you know why you're being condemned; there will be no question in their minds why it was; because He's a

sweet savour even to those that loose their life. Why? because He's been faithful to His commission, but He could never have been a sweet savour in them that perish, b&s, if you've never told them! Then, Paul would have been in trouble, but he can stand there and say, 'we triumph in every circumstance, even among them that are lost'. Whether they will hear you, Ezekiel, or whether they will forbear, they will know that a prophet has been among them; because God is going to spell out to him, b&s, 'Ezekiel, you're problem is you!' He's going to be very personal because you've got to be the one to tell them this. It's going to be a very onus responsibility, b&s, to carry forth this message and whether they hear or whether they forbear, it will be fine, Ezekiel, as long as you are faithful to My cause, and God's going to spell it to him very clearly.

Then He says in verse 6, 'I don't want you to be afraid of them, son of man, don't let them frighten you, though briers and thorns be with you'. He's going to be with briers and thorns and He says, 'you will **sit on scorpions**' (that's what the Hebrew means); the word 'dwell' means 'to sit' (3427), you will actually sit on a nest of scorpions. Don't worry about it! **Briers and thorns**, b&s, now let's turn to Hebrews 6, to see what happens to this when you read this about briers and thorns, they're a symbol of a curse, aren't they? but there's something else about them here, the apostle says, about briers and thorns, reading from verse 4, 'he says, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (now look at all the benefits they got). They know the truth, some of them have actually experienced some of them, the gifts of the Spirit and in verse 5, they have actually tasted the Word of God; they've tasted it and they've seen the powers of the age to come, have these people. Paul says, 'If they fall away again to renew unto repentance, they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame' (there's no way they can come back under those circumstances, this is God's judgment, not ours; there's no way, and He'll deem whether this is right or not, but there are people in that category, b&s, **who will not come back**). **FOR**, says verse 7, and here comes the symbol of it, 'the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs is meat for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. **BUT** that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned'. You see, those thorns and briers, b&s, grew up in a ground where the **rain came oft upon it**; they were people who were often hearing what God said, because My doctrine shall drop as the rain. Isaiah says, 'His word will not return unto Him void, but would come down like the rain of heaven', but here it is plunging on the ground and out of that ground it's producing fruits which are meat for man to use, and strengthens his mortal body and he grows thereby, because the rain coming upon that ground is producing good fruits and at the same time in the same ground there are thorns and briers receiving the same rain. But it makes no impact upon them morally, but it should. So son of man, whether they hear you or whether they don't hear you, if they listen or they don't listen, they'll **know that a prophet has been among them**. The rain was to come upon them, b&s, and yet it was not going to produce the right sort of fruits.

Do you know the only other reference to thorns and briers, the only other occurrence of

the Hebrew expression is in Ezekiel 28 when God speaks of the time when He will take away the iniquity of Jacob, and in verse 24, (this is the only other occurrence of the expression), 'And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grievous thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they **shall know** that I am the Lord Yahweh'. He'll take them away, and you notice, b&s, in both of those references, one from Ezekiel 2 and one from Ezekiel 28, Ezekiel has to live among those thorns. Now you know what it's like when you go through a patch of ground which is thick with thorns; you have to pull your sleeves down and button up your cuffs, and you know, work your way through very carefully and this is Ezekiel, moving through his people, and at the same time when he comes to rest, he sits down on a nest of scorpions. That's the ground he's got to work on; the RSV says 'you'll sit upon scorpions'; you know, Jesus and His disciples were after that crowd, and He says, 'I'm going to give you power to tread on scorpions'. It's very dangerous, b&s, isn't it?

The son of man, He told him, in Ezekiel 2 and verse 7, under those conditions you've got to be resolute, you must be absolutely resolute; 'thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious'. Look at the warnings he's getting, b&s, how many of us would continue under those circumstances? Isn't it easy to back off? Isn't it easy to use all sorts of excuses and say, 'I've done what I can, it's no good going on! they'll never understand me, it's hopeless, I'll keep out of it, it's none of my business!' How easy is it to do that? Son of man, I'm telling you, you go on telling them!' He was in exactly the same situation as Jeremiah, Jeremiah 20, with exactly the same message. These two prophets laboured together, one in Jerusalem and over in Jeremiah 20, b&s, here's the prophet's own dilemma! Poor old Jeremiah he's got precisely this problem, he feels terrible about it and doesn't want to go on with it and he says in verse 7 of Jeremiah 20, 'Oh Yahweh, you deceived me and I was deceived: but Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed', in other words, he says to God, 'I don't understand all this, I really can't understand why I should be repeating this message and it's getting me into trouble. But he says, you're stronger than me and you've prevailed above me; I'm in derision daily, every day people deride me, they run me down to the lowest. They call me all sorts of names, I'm mocked for since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of Yahweh was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not do it any more; I will not make mention of Him nor speak anymore in His name. But he says, 'His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones', and that's exactly what's going to happen to Ezekiel because God's going to get him to **eat it!** it's going to be locked up in his bones, and Jeremiah, b&s, found it even harder **not to speak**, so when he made up his mind not to do it anymore, when he couldn't stand it any longer, he made a resolute determination that he wouldn't do it, but he found, b&s, the power of his affinity with Almighty God's feeling was so great, that it was harder to suppress it than it was to speak! You know, it's incredible, isn't it? that such could be the topsy-turvy emotions of a man that's called upon by God to deliver a very, very onerous and difficult message, yet in the end, the message itself was greater than those feelings. He said, 'I'm weary with my forbearing, he says, but I couldn't stop; it was in my bones like a fire!' That's what's going to happen to Ezekiel, so God is going to tell him to get on with the job, see!

Then He says to him, b&s, in verse 8, 'That thou son of man, hear what I say unto you', now here's a very personal message, b&s, you see, Ezekiel has to be strengthened for this; you know, sometimes we look at the prophets as if they were above needing this! We think, 'ah, it's the people that are weak, these are mighty men'; well, they were mighty men but they were men nonetheless, and God has to say to him, '**Look! I want to talk to you**' and not long after this, God's going to take him into the wilderness and tell him the same thing; so Ezekiel's got to be strengthened for this, b&s, '**now don't you be rebellious like that rebellious house**'. Now God would never have said that, b&s, if there had been the distinct possibility that that could happen. Now we know why Ezekiel got that vision, because now he's coming up to this commission (and we're only going to hear half of it this morning) I tell you, he's going to have to be told very straight; 'look, Ezekiel, you could be a problem, don't you go and be like them!' 'Open your mouth and you eat what I give you'. 'When I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me'; a hand, I believe it was the hand of the cherubim (under the wing a hand came out) it had a scroll in it.

Now I want you to keep your hand there and come to Revelation 10, b&s, because you see here is the identical experience that happened to John, and this explains it all; Revelation is more explanatory really than Ezekiel is. This is what happened to John on the isle of Patmos, verse 10 of Revelation 10 says, 'I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and a rainbow upon his head' (that's what Ezekiel saw) 'His face was as it were the sun and his feet as pillars of fire (that's what Ezekiel saw) 'and He had in his **hand**, (so here's the hand of the rainbowed angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King above the cherubim) and He's got in His hand a little book, a little biblion (975), a little bible, and in that bible was inscribed the last seven thunders.

Now there's a great drama here, b&s, a great drama because in verse 4, John reads this book, and you'll notice when he was given it; it was open, open so John was given to understand the book. You know, there are plenty of people who put their eyes on the bible, and it's **never open**. There are hundreds of people during the ages; in the Lord Jesus Christ's time, the scribes and Pharisees unrolled the scrolls, had the books opened, and **they were never open**, because you see, b&s, there's more behind understanding the bible than human eyes and human minds. We don't believe in the Holy Spirit gifts, but we believe that this book is written by the Holy Spirit. It's understood by people with spiritual minds; academic minds can have a burning desire to understand the bible, and can open it and it can never, ever, ever be opened, but that book was open when that hand came out and handed it to John.

He saw the 7 thunders in there and he wants to write it down and the angel says '**stop**, don't do that!' Verse 4, I went to write, he said, the voice said **don't, no, no, no!** close it up, seal it up', and then he's got to eat it. He's told to close it up and he's to eat it and so in verse 9, '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 be in thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. So I took the little bible out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it

was in my mouth, sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter'. Now what was in that little book? the seven last thunders. Now we know about the vials, seals and trumpets, we've got all the world's history set out like that! brother Thomas in Eureka, brother Perce in Apocalypse Epitomized, it's all there for us to read. You can read it quite clearly that here's the history of the world. We don't think about the 7 thunders, where are you going to find them? where are they? they're inside John! So what's that telling you? Well, it's telling us, b&s, no John, no 7 thunders! If we don't see him again that can never happen, it's inside of him! So God says, 'you John, have got to prophesy again!' Of course, he has, because the history of the world's in him. Think about that! So John has to be there, because it's him! Oh, we know, of course, that it depends on the Lord, we all know that! the Lord means everything, but see, John is part of it, isn't he? so we know nothing about it until he comes back because it's inside of him. Do you see what God is doing? He's making it very personal to us, b&s, this is what He does with us, it's not that we've got the gospel in the Herald of the coming age, or Read the bible effectively, or anything else we produce for the stranger, b&s, the Word of God's in here. The apostle says, 'how beautiful are the **feet**, the feet of them that **bring** the gospel of peace', he's not talking about the mail, he's talking about people! and here's Ezekiel going to get one of the most difficult commissions in the world and he's got to **eat it**. There's no way now that it can be performed unless he's there to do it, because he's going to become part of it. It's a very personal thing! and that's what happened here.

So Ezekiel goes and he gets this roll from the hand, which I believe, stretches out from the cherubim. In chapter 2 of Ezekiel verse 10 it says what happened. What did the angel do? 'He spread it before me', he didn't leave the scroll rolled up, b&s, he opened it and spread it out; do you know what the word 'spread' (6566) means? it's that word used in Nehemiah when it says, 'they read in the Word of God **distinctly**, and the word in the Hebrew means

'to break in little small bits', and that's exactly what they did in Nehemiah 8:8 (now we won't turn Nehemiah up, but let me explain what happened). Nehemiah had on the platform with him about 14 Levites and Ezra's the speaker. So Nehemiah arranged these Levites to be alongside this aged speaker, this aged man who was the absolute word made flesh, in a sense in those days, Ezra the scribe. So dear old Ezra, up there at a great old age, was expounding the Word, and he did it in little bits. He would speak about some aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles which they were keeping, and then the Levites would go down among the crowd and speak to the crowd and say, 'did you hear what he said? yes! 'did you understand it? well, not really!' and they'd explain it to the people; then they'd come back again and Ezra would go on with his next little bit, and they'd go down among the crowd and do the same routine again, until the people understood and that went on all day. So you see, b&s, what was happening was that, Ezra was breaking the bible into little bits; that's what we try and do at Glenlock, isn't it? But when the hand came down with the scroll, the man with the scroll broke it down into little pieces for Ezekiel, so he'd understand perfectly what was in that scroll, because that's going to disappear inside of him. When it gets inside of him, he's going to be indelibly inscribed in his memory. That's the word that's used there, b&s.

He looked on it, he didn't see 7 thunders, what he saw, b&s, was **lamentation, mourning and woe** and he noted that it was written on both sides, so the clear message is coming to Ezekiel, that he's going to have to eat this thing and it isn't going to be pleasant. Now Jeremiah 15 verse 16, when they found the scroll in that temple, Hilkiah the priest found it and Shaphan the faithful man in Israel, found that scroll in the temple in the days of Josiah they took it to the king and he read it and he was absolutely horrified! because he read in Deuteronomy, b&s, all those things that Israel weren't doing. He read about the woes and the curses that were in Deuteronomy 28, 'which were full of lamentation, mourning and woe', and Jeremiah said, 'Thy words were found and I did eat them'; Jeremiah's prophecy and his lamentations are full of woe, lamentation, calamity, but **they were found and Jeremiah ate them** and that was a difficult meal, b&s, a very, very difficult meal. So this is what is presented to Ezekiel! he sees it written on both sides, because you see, those lamentations, mournings and woe were going to go to the ecclesia and outside the ecclesia, and Ezekiel's prophecy is made up of mournings, lamentations and woes to **Israel and to all the nations**. It's on both sides, so he's going to cop it from every direction, he's going to condemn **the world**, that's what he's going to have to do.

Now he's going to eat this thing, so we move on to chapter 3 and it says, 'Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go and speak unto the house of Israel'. **Eat this roll**, He says, and it's got a feeling, in verse 3, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll', now what is God trying to tell him? If you eat something, of course, it goes into the belly, of course it goes to the bowels, where else would it go? But what God is trying to tell him, 'Ezekiel, you've **got to really absorb this!** I don't want you to chew it and stick it under your tongue, or keep it in your cheeks somewhere, Ezekiel, I want you to swallow it. I want it to go down into your stomach, and I want you to digest it into your system and Ezekiel, it's not going to be very tasty!' Here's the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, 'shall I not drink the cup which My Father hath given Me?' What was in that cup? what was in that cup, b&s? I'll tell you, talk about pain! have you ever read what happened when they crucified a person? I'm not going to go into the details, how would you like, any of you, with any semblance of decency, to hang up in public naked? that's in the cup! shall I not drink it?

Ezekiel's got to drink it and he already knows what's in it! and yet strangely it's sweet. He said, 'it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness'. Now while it was in the mouth it was sweet, and it is. You see, you take Proverbs 24, b&s, it is sweet because it doesn't matter what we understand about God, even the negative aspects of God's purpose, it's wonderful to know it, and his initial reaction is like this, verses 13 and 14, 'My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: **So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul:** when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off'. So you see, b&s, it doesn't matter what we learn about God's Word, we may at sometimes, face up to the fact in ecclesial life, in our own ecclesia perhaps, that there are things very difficult there; we've been through experiences in the past in my ecclesia, you would have been

through them in yours, where there's been occasion that you've had to part company with brethren and sisters. It's absolutely dreadful! and you'd never, ever, want to go through it again, but you know something, it was absolutely marvellous to know that God was right and the Word of God prevailed whether we'd believe it or didn't believe it.

So there's a sweetness, b&s, knowing that things are right even if they are bitter, there's a sweetness in that! and that was Ezekiel's initial reaction, and that was John's reaction, Revelation 10 verse 10, 'it was in his mouth sweet', but when he got it down in his stomach, I'll tell you, the bitterness was tremendous. Exactly the same happened to Ezekiel, look at verse 14 of chapter 3 of Ezekiel, 'So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in the bitterness, in the heat of my spirit' (he went in hot anger), b&s, because you see, it was wonderful to him to know that here's God's purpose; so if God condemns the wicked it's because God is righteousness, He's the essence of righteousness. If God is going to come in judgment, He's going to, at the same time, set up a kingdom for the righteous people; if some people must die, some must live. It's **good to know** that God's in control, but when you absorb it down here that He's talking about your people and the people that you've mingled with, and the brethren and sisters that you've known, then in your stomach, b&s, it not only produces bitterness but the heat of anger, because why should people act like that when they know God's will? and you see what's happening, he's absorbing the character of Almighty God, he's learning to love righteousness and to hate iniquity. He's learning, b&s, not only to understand when God's angry and when God loves, he's learning to be angry with God and to love with God. That's what he's doing! he's now taking upon himself, the attitude of the Father and loving it and sharing it; not just knowing it, it's sweet to him; and it makes him **angry** because he can see why God is angry with others.

So in that 7th verse of chapter 3 of Ezekiel, he's again told very straight, that he's got to be resolute about this, very resolute. In verse 4 he's told again, 'Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel and speak My words unto them'; you be resolute about that! for He says to Ezekiel, 'I'm not going to send you to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel. I'm not going to send you to many people of a strange speech and of a hard language; you're not going to go, Ezekiel, where you need an interpreter; **strange speech and hard language** as Rotherham has it, 'deep of lip and heavy of tongue', the RSV has 'foreign speech and hard language', b&s, he didn't need an interpreter, he's going to a people that speak Hebrew, and they won't understand him. They won't understand him! we go overseas to the Philippines and other places, we speak to our brethren and sisters with an interpreter, and they understand perfectly what we're saying. Here the people have his own language and they won't understand him!

Now God says to him in verse 6, 'Surely Ezekiel, if I had sent you to them, a people of a foreign language and a hard tongue, they'd listen'. Do you know, they did! Jesus said unto them, 'Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida, for the things that I've done here in My home town where I live, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented ages ago'. Incredible, isn't it? The queen of the south came from

Ethiopia and her breath was taken away by the glory of Solomon, and that made no impact upon the people that lived there! The men of Nineveh spoke Assyrian and after 40 days repented in sackcloth and ashes; and I've been with you for nigh 3 years and it hasn't made an ounce of an impact upon you'. See, b&s, it's not a question of understanding languages, it's a question of opening the book and the book actually being open, isn't it? That's what God is telling Ezekiel, astonishing isn't it?

In verse 8 He says, 'I've made your face strong against their faces and thy forehead strong against their foreheads'. The word 'strong', b&s, is 'bold' (2389); you know, you remember Stephen when he was disputing with the Jews in Acts 6 before they stoned him to death, who was he disputing with? he wasn't disputing with the Jews in Jerusalem, he was disputing with those of Cilicia where Paul came from, and to the other parts of the empire where the Hellenistic Jews lived. Now what was the difference between the Hellenistic Jews that lived outside the Land, (that's why they called them Hellenistic because they were affected by Greek culture) what was the difference between them and those that lived in Jerusalem? If you read any history book about it, it'll tell you that the Jews who lived in Jerusalem were absorbed in traditions and ceremonies; whereas the Hellenistic Jews because they realized they were somewhat distant from the Land, they gave themselves to the study of the Word, they were the brilliant students of the bible, the **brilliant** students of the bible! and they couldn't resist the spirit and the wisdom by which Stephen spoke. Not only the wisdom, b&s, they couldn't resist his spirit and the way he said it. Why? because his face was **bold**. What makes a man's face bold? Ecclesiastes 8, here's what does it! They saw his face shine as the face of an angel, this I believe, is what they saw, verse 1, 'Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? **a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed**'. You know, b&s, when you know the bible and you understand what God says and does, and **share** those feelings with God, both in the sweetness of understanding Him and share His anger in the things that He is angry about, there's no need to go on and rave and rant and call people names, and quote all sorts of things out of context, no need for that whatever! Because your face will be confident, because who is a confident man? those who understand the interpretation of things. Ezekiel was just given a meal of understanding, b&s, and he didn't have to resort to any sort or ploys of politics or anything to get his argument over.

His forehead and their foreheads were going to be **hardened**. Now in the bible the **forehead** (4696) is used as a symbol of **determination**, for example, in Jeremiah there's a reference to immoral women, harlots, who strut around even with their profession, unashamed of it, couldn't care less, just could not care what you thought of it! and Jeremiah said they had a whore's forehead (Jeremiah 3, verse 3). Just absolutely indifferent to their morality! 'Blow you, so I'm a harlot, so what? so their forehead was like an adamant stone; and on the other side of the scale there was a high priest in Israel who had on his forehead 'holiness to Yahweh' in pure gold, and he was equally unashamed of that! Forehead was against forehead here, b&s, and their forehead was like an adamant stone, says Ezekiel. Jeremiah used that term when he

said that Israel's sins were going to be written with the point of a diamond (same word -8068, the point of an **adamant** - a **diamond**), into the horns of the altar (Jeremiah 17, verse 1). The horns of the altar coming out of the 4 corners upon which they hung the sacrifices before they were burnt upon the altar, the **horn** is a symbol of power and the power, b&s, was the power of the **forgiveness of sins**; there's no greater power in the world than that! because we cannot be overcome while we've got the power of forgiveness. Nothing can overcome us because God will forgive us our failings and in the end will give us immortality, there's no greater power than that! Well, Yahweh says, 'I will write their sins with a diamond in that horn', it will never come out of that horn, they will never be forgiven. So this was the question, so their heads were like that, and Ezekiel's head was like that.

Then God gives Ezekiel a personal warning in verse 10 of chapter 3, 'Moreover He said unto me', notice that brethren and sisters, He keeps talking to Ezekiel. You know, He keeps indicting the people but He also keeps coming back to Ezekiel; He keeps saying, 'now Ezekiel, you keep listening to Me, 'Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, all My words that I shall speak unto thee receive in your heart and hear with your ears'. Now if you were writing the bible you wouldn't write it like that. If you are a careful reader of the bible, b&s, you would have read something very unusual there, it says this, 'all My words that I speak unto thee, receive in your **heart** and hear with your **ears**'. Now I would have thought that what you should have said was, to hear with your ears and receive in your heart, wouldn't you? wouldn't that be the natural progression of ideas? how can I receive in my heart if I don't first hear with my ears? He says, 'Son of man, you listen to Me, I want you to **hear with your heart and then hear with your ears.**' What's He mean? well, you see, b&s, there's a difference between hearing and listening; you see, when you're talking to somebody and they're talking to you, when they're actually speaking you should be listening to them but hearing them, but 9 times out of 10, we're hearing but not listening. Because what we're thinking is, when he's finished and I hope it's pretty quick, I'm going to tell him this, we're not listening one bit to what he's saying. There's a great art in listening and it's got to be done in the heart before the ears take over. So when Yahweh opened His mouth, Ezekiel had to stand there and divest himself of all thought of what he might think or what he might want to retain, and say nothing, and stand there, b&s, and get ready in his heart to hear what was going to be said to him and listen to it. There's a tremendous difference between hearing and listening, believe me, there is! you try it in a normal conversation, just put that to the test. When you're in a group of brethren and sisters and talking about something you have a vital interest in, and some other person is talking, you ask yourself the question when you stand there, are you really listening to what that person is saying? or are you like me, you're waiting to put your 6 cents in, when he stops. 9 times out of 10 that's what I'm doing! so you know when you're talking to me, you're probably talking to a brick wall. There's a tremendous difference - 'son of man, receive in your **heart** and keep your **ears** open to what I'm telling you'.

That's what he got told, b&s, and the first thing he has to listen to, b&s, 'Go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people'. Did he hear it? Imagine Ezekiel

standing there when God says, 'now son of man are you ready? have you got your heart ready? Yes, I've got my heart ready. Okay, you listen, go and tell **your** people! Wow, did you hear that? So they're not My people, they're yours'. Do you know another man that got told that and heard it very clearly because he was listening? When God in the case of Moses, when He changed the angel around and took away Michael the archangel who was leading the children of Israel through the desert and He replaced him with a lesser angel, who didn't have Michael's authority and told Moses, 'I will not go with you; take this **thy people**'. Moses **heard that** because he was listening and he pleaded with God and kept saying to God, 'I and **your people**', kept telling God and appealing to Him to take them back, calling them **your people**, because he heard God say, go and tell **thy people**, he got that straight away! and that's what God is trying to tell him that Ezekiel has to be aware, b&s, of what the relationships are!

So he's going to do this, so Ezekiel's got to go back to them of the captivity. So what happens, verse 12, 'The Spirit took me up' (and you'll see what happens here, you see, he's going to get in the chariot, so the Spirit lifts him ready to catch him, because here comes the chariot). You know, this is the wonderful thing about Ezekiel, b&s, from here on, God binds him in His purpose; he's got the bible inside of him, he's got all that he's got to say here inside of him, it's not a question of opening books anymore, he knows what the book means, and he's got to tell them, because **he is the bible!** He's got it in here and he's not going to come walking around here, or riding a camel or turning up on a donkey, he's going to come in that chariot, because he's the cherubim, he's the chariot of Israel and the father thereof; and the horsemen go by, 'my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof', that's his chariot! So the Spirit lifts him up and he hears behind him a tremendous earthquake, it says here 'a great rushing' in verse 12. 'I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing' but really the words are **an earthquake**, b&s, because he says the glory of Yahweh from His place, now b&s, that really is saying that the glory of Yahweh has come from His place, 'arose from His place', says Rotherham. So he's standing there and he's got this message, 'are you listening to Me, son of man? you go to your people, and whether they'll hear you or whether they'll not, doesn't matter! what really matters is you'. Swish! and he's taken up into mid air and the noise behind him, the earth is shaking and here it comes, his chariot is coming behind him, b&s.

You know, that's exactly what happened in the first century! Here's the disciples all gathered together with **one accord, wingtip to wingtip**, and Luke keeps telling us that they touched their wings and kissed each other, **with one accord** they were, waiting in that room. What's the first thing that happened? they heard a **rushing wind** and the Spirit came upon them, and in chapter 4 when they got Peter released from prison and the angel let him out, and Rhoda went and told them but they wouldn't believe her, but they went to the door and there he was, Peter's released, and they praised God and they sang the first hymn ever recorded in the bible, in Acts 4, and the result? there was **an earthquake!** The place wherein they were was **shaken**, b&s, because the Spirit was catching them up, invisible to the eyes of humans but the chariot of the cherubim was there to carry those apostles in triumph through the world. The eyes of Yahweh rolled

through the Roman empire, wheel after wheel, and here it was happening here! Ezekiel heard this tremendous rushing as the glory of Yahweh arose out of His place, says the translation from Rotherham, the great rushing of the wind.

So he goes in the heat of the Spirit in verse 14, sharing God's anger against his people, 'and the hand of Yahweh was **strong** upon me', it had to be, didn't it? it had to be, so what happens, it all seems so strange! You know, you try to get the whole picture of this, and see the drama of it all, and you see the tremendous exhortation of Ezekiel's personal integrity about this, and the preparation of it. Then you see him lifted up in the chariot, where does it land him? it lands him down on the ground, sitting there and staying there and meditating for 7 days, and not a word is spoken. So we read in verse 15, 'Then came I to them of the captivity of Tel-abib (8512), that's where the modern name of Tel-abib comes from. The word 'tel' of course means 'a mount and place' (8510) and the word 'abib' is the first month of the year, the name of the first month of the year and it means 'greenness' (24), because it's springtime, not that's it's necessarily springtime here, but that's what the name means here; it means it's springtime and it's green and it's the time of the Passover, b&s, and 'he came to those that dwelt by the river of Chebar'- 'a long time' (3529) that means. Now notice what it says, 'I sat **where they sat**', in other words, the first thing he does is to become, **son of man**. That's what God kept telling him, every time He addressed him, He gave him that title, so he knows that his first job is to **identify with his people**; I sat where they sat. So he becomes one of them, just as the Lord Jesus came and He sat where we sit, He came as one of us. It says that he sat there **astonished**, now the word really means 'stunned' (8074), absolutely stunned. You know, there was a precedent that he set here that was carried on later on; remember the time when Ezra came back, having been to the Land and he came back again and he found all the people were intermarried with the heathen. He came to the gate of the temple, he did exactly what Ezekiel did, he sat down **stunned**. It's exactly the same term-Ezra 9 verse 3, and he just sat there with his head bowed stunned; the people crept up quietly, all sat down with him, and none said a word, and they just sat there in absolute silence. It rained, pouring rain, and no one's moving in the rain, looking up there's just this old man with his head bowed and tears running down his cheeks, until someone from the crowd said, 'Isha, we know what we've got to do, you tell us and we'll do it!' He jumped up and told them! You see, he effected a reformation without a word! he never said a word, he just induced that spirit, b&s, from the crowd by his **demeanour**, and that's what Ezekiel is trying to do, he sat where they sat, and didn't say anything for 7 days. This is exactly what Job's friends did, they came and sat with him for 7 days, because of the great mourning they had, it's the way they did it in those days, it was a way of impressing upon them these things and this is how they did it, b&s, and there he sat with his people.

Now verse 16 says this, 'And it came to pass at the end of 7 days, that the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying', what did the word of Yahweh have to say? You would think now that he's got to this position, here's all the captives, now you'd think that He's going to tell him in Ezekiel's mouth what this crowd's going to do. NO! it's still addressed to Ezekiel. So the word of Yahweh comes to him and says I've got a warning for you;

look here, verse 17, 'I've made you a watchman unto the house of Israel, Ezekiel, I've made you a watchman! Therefore, hear the word at My mouth and give warning from me'. Now He's talking to Ezekiel and he's been through all of this, here's the crowd he's got to talk to, but it's still **him** that God's talking to! You know, there's a great warning in this, b&s, a tremendous warning. Never mind about running around and telling everybody what's wrong with somebody else; don't go around and say what other people in the ecclesia shouldn't be doing, and by inference telling me or somebody else how wonderful we really are, because we're not like that! **Don't do that!** you think to yourself, 'it's up to me to do something about that', never mind about them, **I've got the responsibility**, and my responsibility is not discharged by telling everybody else what's wrong with everybody else; my responsibility is to get up and tell the people concerned, what's wrong! That's **my responsibility** and that's what God keeps telling him, and though he's sitting there, and there's the crowd, he's been there for 7 days, he's already been sternly exhorted, and God's still saying, 'Son of man, I've made you a watchman! Look at the earnestness of this, you give them warning from Me'.

The warning was, b&s, I want you to tell the people **that I regard them as individuals**, that's what He's telling him, I regard them as individuals. Now you think to yourself, 'well, how else would God regard them? Well, you see, b&s, very often (and this happened in Ezekiel's day very much so, and it happened in the Lord's day). What happens is this, people feel sometimes that they are inevitably caught up in the guilt of the people about them, so that they sort of feel part of a corporate group. That we're all in this together sort of thing, and there's no way out of it; God says, 'it's not true!' 'The soul that sinneth it shall die', the fathers may eat sour grapes but it's **not true** that it's necessary that the children's teeth be set on edge. It's no good coming to God and saying, 'yes, but I was born into a family that had family problems; my mother left my father, and my father left my mother, and I was one of those children who was deprived of parents and I had this disability, and I feel useless! B&S, the LORD said, 'the soul that sinneth it shall die', now that's what he got firstly, that we can't come along with all sorts of excuses, it won't work! nor is it true, that because we are the children of Christadelphians, brought up in the truth, that there is some sort of guarantee that we'll be in the kingdom. Like they were saying, 'Abraham was one, his seed is with dozens of us; we must therefore have a multiplicity of opportunities, more than him'. It won't work! it will not work, and that's what Ezekiel's told. 'Ezekiel, I treat people on an individual basis, I treat you, Ezekiel on an individual basis; I have made you a watchman, I want you to answer to Me for what you do, Ezekiel, and I want you to tell the people that this man will be saved and that man won't; the wicked will die and the righteous will live, and if the wicked changes, I'll change with him; if the righteous change, I'll change with him. **I will deal with people individually, Ezekiel. Get that into their heads!**

You say it's so simple, is it? it's not as simple as that. It's funny how people are affected by their environments, you've got to get people to stand on their feet, and God said to Ezekiel, verse 18, if you don't tell them, the end of the verse says, 'I will require their blood at your hand; I'm going to require the blood at your hand', and that's a grim warning, b&s. Do you know something, Jesus is called in Revelation, **the faithful**

witness, Paul told Timothy that he was to be a faithful witness and give a good confession as Jesus did before Pilate; so the Lord did perfectly all that His Father had ever told Him; He had made His Son a watchman and He performed that duty, b&s, to a 100 percent perfection, and **still God required His blood! or our blood at His hand!** Think of that! not because of anything He did! Ezekiel would escape with his life, if he warned people about their sins, and **still the Son of God who did that perfectly**, did not escape with His life, because **Jesus was the real representative of man**. In that nature that He took to the tree, b&s, it was part of his watchman warning was to tell us, that what happened to Him up there, is due to all sinners who obeyed that nature. That nature is there to tell us, that that's where we should be! and He had to go there as part of His watchman work, and if He didn't do that, b&s, He Himself would not have been brought from the dead. That's how God held His Son responsible, for what He was to do, so He had a far greater responsibility than Ezekiel did, even when he performed the duty of a watchman, because his watchman didn't stop with telling the people, He was obedient unto death, oh, no, the death of the cross, that's where it finished. Ezekiel wasn't asked to do that! he was just asked to warn people against their own death, so isn't it marvellous that a faithful witness right to the end, that's what he was, and Ezekiel has to be very careful, b&s.

Then finally this morning, I want to tell you in verse 20 what God says here! He said to Ezekiel, 'You see, Ezekiel, what's going to happen is this, 'that when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity and **I lay a stumbling block before him**, he shall die'. **I lay a stumbling block before him**, God does! What does He mean? Well, another translation puts it, 'when I put a temptation before him'. Now God doesn't tempt any man in the sense, b&s, that He switches on their lusts, **He does not do that!** God is unrelated to that and doesn't cause man to do that! **but He will and does, b&s, brings us all into a situation where we will be tempted**. He did it to His own Son, He did to Abraham, He will bring us into a situation, where we will be tempted. He won't make us lust after it, that 's our responsibility, but He'll bring you into a situation where you'll be tried, and God says, 'I will try that righteous man', and he may stumble. Well, I've done that!

1Peter 2, b&s, look what He did, and how did God put a stumbling block before the children of Israel here? Well, this is how He did it! 1 Peter 2 verse 6, 'Wherefore it is also contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious **but unto them that be disobedient**, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same has become the Head of the corner **and** a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense, even to them that stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. The Stone of stumbling which God put before the children of Israel in those days, was **His Son!** He sent His Son into the world to save the world, He didn't send His Son into the world so that they'd fall over Him, b&s, but the fact is, that **they did** and He knew they would! So there were people who looked upon the Lord from 2 different aspects: some people saw Him as a Stone, a foundation, where you can build your life and absolutely be perfectly safe and sure

that your house will stand; you'd be confident that underneath you, you had every support in the world. Then other people went out into the dark and fell over Him, and broke their neck over Him because they couldn't see where they were going. When God said, 'I'll put a Stone of stumbling before them', you know, who in the days of Ezekiel, the stone of stumbling was? it was himself, and that's what's going to happen. Ezekiel is going to come out and say that's right and that's wrong. There were people that were wicked who saw that they were wicked, and they said, 'that's right, we've been wrong, and will accept that; and there were people who said they were righteous, and they said, 'we don't believe that! and they rejected him and they fell over the top of Him! It was God who did that! It's a grim warning, b&s, isn't it?

So that sets the tone, doesn't it? for the coming **dumb priest**, having told us now of his commission, tonight God willing, we hope to come back, and show you the conditions under which God put him, to fulfil it, and you'll sit 7 days **astonished!**