



# EXPLORE THE BIBLE.®

## Personal Study Guide

Winter 2021-22 | CSB



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ed way, he shall die in his in  
hast delivered thy soul.

WARN THE RIGHTEOUS  
20 Again, When a righteous man turn from his righteousness, iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because I have given him warning, he shall not be remembered; I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that he doth not sin, he shall live: because he is warned; also I have delivered thy soul.

22 And the hand of the LORD was upon me; and he said unto me, Stand upon the plain, and behold.

23 Then I arose, and went upon the plain: and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory of the LORD which I saw upon the river of Chebar: and I heard a voice, saying,

24 Give a timely warning of danger, lookouts or watchmen posted on high places such as gatehouses (2 Sam. 18:24) or (2 Kings 9:17). God gave His comments for the people's good (Deut. 33: 6:25; 10:12-13). If they were and his hearers would surely die (Gen. 2:17; 2 Sam. 4:11-12; Acts 18:6).

3:20 To lay a stumbling block before a person was to expose him to danger (Jer. 6:21).

3:21 On warn the righteous man, see a similar warning in 1 Cor. 10:12. Those who responded faithfully to the watchman's proc-

sat among his fellow seven-year speechless day of hardened resist the intervals between these lapses into mut

U N D E R S T A N D

E X P L O R E

A P P L Y

# Ezekiel; Daniel



# HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

We all long for security. That's why we install alarm systems in our homes and set aside money in mutual funds and retirement plans. Since none of us can predict the future, we're drawn to anything that promises a little peace of mind, a hedge against our fears of the unknown.

Ezekiel's audience could relate. They were exiles, strangers living in a strange land. They had turned their backs on God and were suffering the consequences. And while they longed to go home someday, they struggled to believe that would ever happen.

Meanwhile, Daniel gave his readers even more to think about. His narratives reminded them that faithfulness comes with a price. That was a sizable challenge in itself. But his visions of the future described the rise of fierce kingdoms and only added turmoil to their already turbulent lives. Physical captivity in the present. Political chaos in the future. Little room for hope.

Yet both prophets proclaimed a God who remained in control of every situation in every generation. What's more, they reminded people of His faithful love. Yes, He was punishing His people for their sins, but He also promised the hope of something infinitely better if they would trust His plan.

All of this points to our need of Jesus and the life He offers. He's waiting to give you peace, just as He promised His children in Babylon centuries ago.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

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After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

# Judah in Exile



"Jewish Exiles in Babylonia" is adapted from the *Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 159. Used by permission.

## **EZEKIEL; DANIEL**

The Books of Ezekiel and Daniel, both exilic prophets ministering to God’s people living in Babylonian captivity, emphasize the sovereignty of God and the hope He provides for those who are faithful to Him. The prophecies of Ezekiel underscore the dangers of rejecting God; but they also remind us that He is always at work, bringing life and redemption to His people in their most difficult times. His counterpart, Daniel, recorded narratives that highlight the power of faithfulness, along with a series of apocalyptic dreams that reveal God’s sovereign control over nations and events—past, present, and future. From familiar stories that have been cherished for generations to strange visions of the end times, each book offers its own unique perspective on how God works among His people and how He steadfastly reigns as Lord of all.

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\*Evangelistic Emphasis

# MEET THE WRITER

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# FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

The city in which I attended college had two competing, major daily newspapers. On Saturdays, I would spend part of my day in the library reading the most current edition of each paper. They reported on the same stories but from very different perspectives. Comparing related stories in each paper gave me a deeper understanding of the events and how different people might perceive or interpret the facts within a story.

When we read Ezekiel and Daniel, we find two men who were both living through Babylonian exile but experiencing it in very different ways. Ezekiel was serving on the outside, living among the ordinary exiles. Daniel was integrated into the Babylonian ruling class. While one warned his people about the coming discipline, the other stood strong in the face of a lion's den. Each lived faithfully for God, and each saw a future that included the restoration of God's people. Through both prophets, we understand the multifaceted sovereignty of God in an uncertain time.

As we study Ezekiel and Daniel, we can be encouraged knowing that God is in control at all times and in all things. We also can be encouraged knowing that God is working to refine and bring His people together. That was good news then, and it is good news now.

In His service,

**G. Dwayne McCrary**

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# WORD WISE

**Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).**

**Abednego** [uh BED-nih goh]—Babylonian name of Azariah (Dan. 1:7), the Hebrew youth who was taken to Babylon during the exile, served with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, and delivered from the fiery furnace

**Azariah** [az uh RIGH uh]—friend of Daniel who was conscripted to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court and given the name Abednego (Dan. 1:7)

**Belshazzar** [bel SHAZ uhr]—Babylonian king who ruled Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (Dan. 5)

**Belteshazzar** [bel tih SHAZ uhr]—name given to Daniel by the Babylonians (Dan. 1:7)

**Cyrus** [SIGH ruhs]—Persian king who allowed the Jews to return from exile in 538 BC

**Hananiah** [HAN uh NIGH uh]—friend of Daniel who was conscripted to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court and given the name Shadrach (Dan. 1:7)

**Meshach** [MEE shak]—Babylonian name of Mishael (Dan. 1:7), the Hebrew youth who was taken to Babylon during the exile, served with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, and was delivered from the fiery furnace

**Mishael** [MIGH shih uhl]—friend of Daniel who was conscripted to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s court and given the name Meshach (Dan. 1:7)

**Nebuchadnezzar** [NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr]—king of Babylon from 605/02–562 BC

**Oholah** [oh HOH luh]—woman’s name Ezekiel used to portray Samaria (Ezek. 23:1-10), she and her sister Oholibah are shown to be prostitutes

**Oholibah** [oh HAHL uh buh]—woman’s name used by Ezekiel to portray Jerusalem (Ezek. 23:4,11-49); she and her sister Oholah were shown to be prostitutes

**Shadrach** [SHAD rak]—Babylonian name of Hananiah (Dan. 1:7); the Hebrew youth who was taken to Babylon during the exile, served with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, and was delivered from the fiery furnace

**Tel-abib** [TEL-uh BEEB]—Babylonian city that was home to Ezekiel and other exiles (Ezek. 3:15)

**Tyre** [TIGHR]—ancient Phoenician city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, known for its wealth and trade



# BIBLE READING PLAN

## DECEMBER

- 1. Ezekiel 1:1-21
- 2. Ezekiel 1:22-2:10
- 3. Ezekiel 3:1-15
- 4. Ezekiel 3:16-27
- 5. Ezekiel 4:1-17
- 6. Ezekiel 5:1-17
- 7. Ezekiel 6:1-14
- 8. Ezekiel 7:1-13
- 9. Ezekiel 7:14-27
- 10. Ezekiel 8:1-18
- 11. Ezekiel 9:1-11
- 12. Ezekiel 10:1-22
- 13. Ezekiel 11:1-13
- 14. Ezekiel 11:14-25
- 15. Ezekiel 12:1-16
- 16. Ezekiel 12:17-28
- 17. Ezekiel 13:1-12
- 18. Ezekiel 13:13-23
- 19. Ezekiel 14:1-23
- 20. Ezekiel 15:1-16:14
- 21. Ezekiel 16:15-34
- 22. Ezekiel 16:35-47
- 23. Ezekiel 16:48-63
- 24. Ezekiel 17:1-24
- 25. Ezekiel 18:1-17
- 26. Ezekiel 18:18-32
- 27. Ezekiel 19:1-14
- 28. Ezekiel 20:1-20
- 29. Ezekiel 20:21-31
- 30. Ezekiel 20:32-49
- 31. Ezekiel 21:1-17

## JANUARY

- 1. Ezekiel 21:18-32
- 2. Ezekiel 22:1-31
- 3. Ezekiel 23:1-27
- 4. Ezekiel 23:28-49
- 5. Ezekiel 24:1-14
- 6. Ezekiel 24:15-27
- 7. Ezekiel 25:1-17
- 8. Ezekiel 26:1-21
- 9. Ezekiel 27:1-36
- 10. Ezekiel 28:1-26
- 11. Ezekiel 29:1-21
- 12. Ezekiel 30:1-26
- 13. Ezekiel 31:1-18
- 14. Ezekiel 32:1-16
- 15. Ezekiel 32:17-32
- 16. Ezekiel 33:1-22
- 17. Ezekiel 33:23-33
- 18. Ezekiel 34:1-19
- 19. Ezekiel 34:20-31
- 20. Ezekiel 35:1-15
- 21. Ezekiel 36:1-15
- 22. Ezekiel 36:16-38
- 23. Ezekiel 37:1-28
- 24. Ezekiel 38:1-23
- 25. Ezekiel 39:1-29
- 26. Ezekiel 40:1-27
- 27. Ezekiel 40:28-49
- 28. Ezekiel 41:1-26
- 29. Ezekiel 42:1-20
- 30. Ezekiel 43:1-27
- 31. Ezekiel 44:1-14

## FEBRUARY

- 1. Ezekiel 44:15-31
- 2. Ezekiel 45:1-25
- 3. Ezekiel 46:1-15
- 4. Ezekiel 46:16-24
- 5. Ezekiel 47:1-23
- 6. Ezekiel 48:1-35
- 7. Daniel 1:1-21
- 8. Daniel 2:1-23
- 9. Daniel 2:24-49
- 10. Daniel 3:1-18
- 11. Daniel 3:19-30
- 12. Daniel 4:1-18
- 13. Daniel 4:19-37
- 14. Daniel 5:1-12
- 15. Daniel 5:13-21
- 16. Daniel 5:22-31
- 17. Daniel 6:1-15
- 18. Daniel 6:16-28
- 19. Daniel 7:1-14
- 20. Daniel 7:15-28
- 21. Daniel 8:1-27
- 22. Daniel 9:1-14
- 23. Daniel 9:15-27
- 24. Daniel 10:1-21
- 25. Daniel 11:1-19
- 26. Daniel 11:20-35
- 27. Daniel 11:36-45
- 28. Daniel 12:1-13

# INTRODUCTION

Both Ezekiel and Daniel lived as exiles in Babylon. Daniel arrived in 605 BC as part of King Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation of Jewish citizens; Ezekiel arrived in 597 BC as part of the second deportation.

Ezekiel primarily addressed the exiles who lived in the region of Babylon. Meanwhile, many of their relatives still lived in Judah. They also would come to Babylon after Jerusalem's fall and the temple's destruction in 586 BC. The Book of Ezekiel divides into three sections that focus on three primary themes.

- ***God's judgment on His people (Ezek. 1–24)***. Ezekiel highlighted God's displeasure with His people. Those in exile persisted in their sin, as did those who remained in Judah.
- ***God's judgment on the nations (Ezek. 25–32)***. Ezekiel announced that God would bring His judgment on the nations who opposed Him. They did not know Him yet, but on the day He humbled them, they would know He was the Lord.
- ***God's restoration of His people (Ezek. 33–48)***. Ezekiel proclaimed God's plan to bring His people back to the land of Israel. His plan for His people also included a glorious kingdom and a heavenly home.

Daniel wrote to encourage believers of his own generation and of future generations. Chapters 1–6 contains stories of God's work through Daniel and his friends in Babylon's royal court. God demonstrated His sovereignty over history by guiding and protecting His people, and mighty rulers bowed to Him. Daniel 7–12 recounts four visions Daniel had that describe powerful opposition to God and His people. Nevertheless, the Lord of history would establish His kingdom and save His people forever. The major themes of Daniel include:

- ***God's sovereignty***. God is actively involved in human history. He intervenes on a personal level, as He did in Daniel 1–6. Daniel 7–12 highlighted how He also rules nations and kingdoms, whether they recognize Him or not, and guides history according to His purpose.
- ***The persecution of God's people***. God's people will face persecution for their faith. Chapters 1–6 describe the challenges Daniel and his friends faced as they sought to maintain their allegiance to God. Daniel 7–12 highlights the persecution God's people would face on the national level as pagan rulers sought to destroy them.
- ***The salvation of God's people***. Chapters 1–6 record God's protection of Daniel and His three friends. Chapters 7–12 announce God's deliverance of His people as a group. Daniel's visions revealed how God would establish an everlasting kingdom and save His people.

# OUTLINES

## EZEKIEL

- I.** Israel, a Rebellious House, Will Fall (1:1–24:27)
- II.** Pagan Foreign Nations Will Be Destroyed (25:1–32:32)
- III.** Disciplined Israel Will Be Restored (33:1–48:35)

## DANIEL

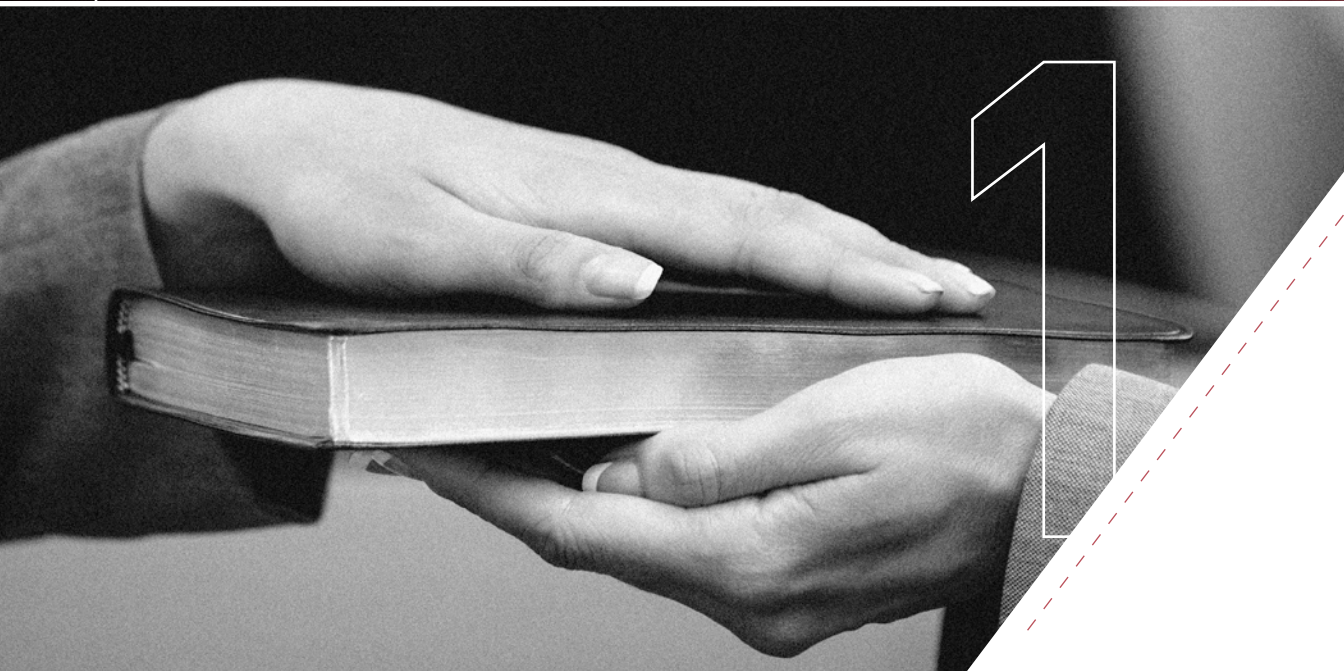
- I.** The Godly Remnant in the Times of the Gentiles (1:1-21)
- II.** God’s Sovereignty over the Times of the Gentiles (2:1–7:28)
- III.** God’s People in the Times of the Gentiles (8:1–12:13)



## ON THE COVER

Ruins of the city walls of ancient Babylon, dating to the time of Nebuchadnezzar II. Still visible are some of the lions, bulls, dragons, and other images that decorated the walls. (See Session 10.)

Illustrator Photo / Murray Severance [74/4/9].



# *Commissioned*

God calls people to consistently proclaim His truth.

## **EZEKIEL 3:8-21**

Our legal system places a premium on the truth. When witnesses come forward to testify in court, they are asked: “Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” Only after witnesses reply in the affirmative do they take a seat in the witness stand. Perjury—lying while under oath—is a serious offense.

**What are some possible consequences of people not telling the truth all the time? What makes consistently speaking the truth so important?**

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# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **EZEKIEL 1:1-7:27**

In 597 BC, during the second siege of Judah (the first siege was around 605 BC), the Babylonians took exiles from Judah. Ezekiel was among those seized and sent to Babylon. His prophetic call did not come until four years after his exile, when he was thirty years old (Ezek. 1:1). Ezekiel's ministry lasted from 593-571 BC, and he would spend his entire ministry in Babylon.

The prophet Ezekiel came from a priestly family (1:3). The objective of his message was to share with the exiles that God was holy; His name and glory were to be protected at all cost. Judah, however, had polluted the temple and defiled the land. God used Ezekiel to reveal His purpose and plans for the people of Israel.

Ezekiel's messages specifically held Judah responsible for its sins, both as a nation and as individuals. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had not learned from the ways of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As a consequence, Judah and its capital would experience judgment.

Apparently, there was a great hope among the exiles that Jerusalem would be spared from destruction. (See Jer. 17:27; 22:5; 26:4-6.) But during those initial years, the Lord provided Ezekiel with visions that let him know God had left the city and that destruction was inevitable. Ezekiel informed the exiles to stop hoping Jerusalem would be spared. In 586 BC, Jerusalem fell. God loved His people but allowed them to go through this experience to reveal His displeasure over their idolatry and rebellion.

God's message through Ezekiel was not proclaimed without hope. Even though His people were dispersed, the Lord would not forsake them. He used Ezekiel to let the people of Israel know He was not finished with them.

**As you read Ezekiel 3:8-21, highlight each time God said He had made something. Why was it important for Ezekiel to realize God's work throughout his life?**

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## PREPARED (EZEK. 3:8-11)

<sup>8</sup> “Look, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. <sup>9</sup> I have made your forehead like a diamond, harder than flint. Don’t be afraid of them or discouraged by the look on their faces, though they are a rebellious house.” <sup>10</sup> Next he said to me, “Son of man, listen carefully to all my words that I speak to you and take them to heart. <sup>11</sup> Go to your people, the exiles, and speak to them. Tell them, ‘This is what the Lord GOD says,’ whether they listen or refuse to listen.”

### VERSES 8-9

Having revealed to Ezekiel that his messages would be ignored, the Lord promised to make His prophet as unyielding and hardened as the Israelites. God challenged Ezekiel not to be afraid of the people who rejected the message but to continue speaking His message. Verse 8 begins by using the word **look**. God wanted Ezekiel to take notice of the exiles around him; they were unconcerned about the things of the Lord.

Ezekiel must have realized his task was not an easy assignment. Other prophets before him had come to tell God’s people how displeased the Lord was with their actions. But the people chose not to listen to God’s prophets. The Lord offered Ezekiel a word of encouragement. God informed him He was going to make Ezekiel as stubborn (for His purpose) as the children of Israel were. The word translated **hard** is used three times in verses 8-9. The repetition of the word intensifies the idea of God’s promise. He was going to equip Ezekiel emotionally and physically for his challenging job. The Lord was to make Ezekiel hard in the sense of being strong so that he could fulfill God’s purposes for him.

The Lord told His prophet He would provide him with a resolve **like a diamond, harder than flint**. Judah’s hardheadedness was as hard as flint. Ezekiel would outlast them. Interestingly, the meaning of Ezekiel’s name is “God strengthens” or “God hardens.”

The Lord prepared Ezekiel for his role; he did not need to be discouraged by the people’s rejection of him and his message. God supplies what is necessary to carry out the work He calls us to do.

## How might God use a person's past experiences, characteristics, and physical traits as a tool for serving Him?

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### VERSES 10-11

The Lord referred to Ezekiel as *son of man*. This term is used throughout the Book of Ezekiel. It can be found approximately ninety times, and another phrase often is associated with it: “the word of the LORD came to me.” (See Ezek 1:3; 3:16; 6:1; 7:1.)

The Lord told Ezekiel to speak His message to *your people, the exiles*. God was referring to the exiles in Babylon. The Lord had a definite group of people He intended to hear His message. It is feasible to imagine that some of *your people* Ezekiel was to address included close kin.

God instructed Ezekiel to *listen carefully* to His words. Further, he was to *take them to heart* so that he would be able to obey and instruct the people. Ezekiel was to proclaim exactly what the Lord had told him to say; he was not to change any words.

It can be extremely challenging to proclaim God's word, especially to people you know. God provides those whom He calls with the words and strength needed to deliver His message. A helpful model is Moses. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When Moses claimed that he was not able to do it, God assured him of his calling (Ex. 6:30–7:7).

### What challenges might keep a person from sharing God's message? How does God provide tools to overcome each challenge?

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### OVERWHELMED (EZEK. 3:12-15)

<sup>12</sup> **The Spirit then lifted me up, and I heard a loud rumbling sound behind me—bless the glory of the LORD in his place!—<sup>13</sup> with the sound of the living creatures' wings brushing against each other and the sound of the wheels beside them, a loud rumbling sound.**

**14 The Spirit lifted me up and took me away. I left in bitterness and in an angry spirit, and the LORD's hand was on me powerfully.**

**15 I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were living by the Chebar Canal, and I sat there among them stunned for seven days.**

### VERSES 12-15

The incident the Lord allowed Ezekiel to experience was overpowering. Ezekiel explained: ***I heard a loud rumbling sound behind me.*** In other places, the word translated *rumbling* is used to describe an earthquake (1 Kings 19:11) or the sound of armies (Isa. 9:5). The ***sound of the living creatures' wings*** and the ***sound of the wheels*** blended to create a rumbling. The references to *wings* and *wheels* remind us of chapter 1, where Ezekiel described his initial vision of living creatures that flew about accompanied by mysterious wheels (1:4-21).

***The Spirit*** of God came to Ezekiel. The presence of God's Spirit is a noticeable theme in the Book of Ezekiel. In this context, Ezekiel knew he was in God's presence. He could hear the praise of the angels glorifying God. The Spirit then ***lifted*** him up and returned him to the exiles. Overwhelmed by the weight of his assignment and embittered by the people's rebelliousness, he ***left in bitterness and in an angry spirit.***

We can understand why Ezekiel was feeling these emotions. He found himself in a foreign land where the people had absolutely no regard for the Lord. In fact, Babylonians were known as a "bitter, impetuous nation that marches across the earth's open spaces to seize territories not its own" (Hab. 1:6). Habakkuk, a contemporary of Ezekiel, struggled that the Lord used the Babylonians to execute justice on His people.

Ezekiel's issues were even more personal. He knew the words he proclaimed to his people would not be heard. They would not listen because they did not care. The prophet's feelings concerning his calling can be understood. Therefore, the hand of the Lord had to be substantial upon him to prepare him.

Ezekiel was carried back to Babylon and placed in the Babylonian city of ***Tel-abib*** where Ezekiel sat ***stunned for seven days.*** He was stunned to the point of being overwhelmed and dumbfounded with what the Lord allowed him to witness. As a result, he just ***sat there.***



Ezekiel was not the only prophet who struggled with his call. Jonah, Elijah, and Jeremiah, all labored with their callings, but God compelled them to go and tell. The weight of carrying God’s message can be overwhelming, but it is a task that must be carried out.

**What elements of sharing God’s message cause the greatest angst or anxiety? Explain.**

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**KEY DOCTRINE:** *Evangelism and Missions*

The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. (See Matt. 24:14.)

**ASSIGNED** (EZEK. 3:16-21)

<sup>16</sup> Now at the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me:

<sup>17</sup> “Son of man, I have made you a watchman over the house of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, give them a warning from me. <sup>18</sup> If I say to the wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ but you do not warn him—you don’t speak out to warn him about his wicked way in order to save his life—that wicked person will die for his iniquity. Yet I will hold you responsible for his blood.

<sup>19</sup> But if you warn a wicked person and he does not turn from his wickedness or his wicked way, he will die for his iniquity, but you will have rescued yourself. <sup>20</sup> Now if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and acts unjustly, and I put a stumbling block in front of him, he will die. If you did not warn him, he will die because of his sin, and the righteous acts he did will not be remembered. Yet I will hold you responsible for his blood. <sup>21</sup> But if you warn the righteous person that he should not sin, and he does not sin, he will indeed live because he listened to your warning, and you will have rescued yourself.”

## VERSES 16-17

**At the end of seven days**, God addressed Ezekiel again. The length of seven days could have significance. In Genesis 50:10, Joseph mourned the death of his father for seven days. In addition, seven days was the length of time for a priest to consecrate himself (Lev. 8:1-33). After the seven days, the Lord came to Ezekiel, addressing him as **son of man**.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

The phrase “the word of the LORD came to me” occurs in forty-one verses in the Book of Ezekiel, the first occurrence in 3:16. The phrase is used elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Jeremiah (9 times) and Zechariah (2 times).

The Lord appointed Ezekiel **a watchman** for the exiles. A watchman had the responsibility to stand on the wall of the city as a lookout and warn of an approaching enemy army. If he saw any danger, he was to alert the people by blowing a horn. (See 2 Sam. 18:24-27; 2 Kings 9:17-20.) If a watchman failed in his duties, then he was held responsible.

Ezekiel’s responsibility was to act as a watchman—to deliver God’s **warning** by alerting the exiles of the threat on the horizon. He was to listen closely to the words of the Lord so he could tell the people of the coming judgment.

### How might believers serve as watchmen in today’s world?

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## VERSES 18-21

The first thing Ezekiel was to do was to **warn the wicked person** that if wickedness continued, that person would **die for his iniquity**. If Ezekiel failed to warn the wicked person of the coming judgment, the person’s blood was on Ezekiel’s hands—**I will hold you responsible for his blood**. But if Ezekiel issued the warning, and the person did not heed the warning, then Ezekiel would have **rescued** himself.

The second thing Ezekiel was to do was to admonish the **righteous person**. A righteous person followed the covenant and was obedient to God. If the righteous person turned from the righteous ways of the Lord and acted **unjustly**, the Lord would **put a stumbling block in front of him**, causing that person to **die**. To put a stumbling block in front of a person was to expose that person to danger. (See Jer. 6:21.)

The statement, **the righteous acts he did will not be remembered**, signifies that a person's acts of righteousness cannot outweigh an unbelieving heart. The prophet Isaiah affirmed that all our righteous deeds together are like filthy rags before God (Isa. 64:6). Believers of all ages are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Again, Ezekiel was to some degree **responsible for his blood**.

Verse 21 described the best possible outcome: Ezekiel would **warn the righteous person that he should not sin, and he does not sin**. Perhaps a righteous person was considering straying into sin but heeded Ezekiel's words and turned back to God. The Lord affirmed **he will indeed live because he listened to your warning**. Again, God affirmed of Ezekiel: **and you will have rescued yourself**.

There is a warning here for all followers of the Lord. We have been called to proclaim God's Word. We are responsible for what we say and how we live before God and others.

**How serious do believers take their roles as watchmen today?  
Explain your response.**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.*

Read Ezekiel 3:17-21 slowly and reflectively. Read it aloud various times, placing emphasis on different words repeated in the passage (you, righteous, wicked, etc.). What emotions did you feel after reading the passage with different emphases?

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# APPLY THE TEXT

- God provides what believers need to deliver His message.
- The weight of carrying God’s message of judgment against sin can be overwhelming but must be carried.
- God expects believers to share the gospel with all they encounter.

**List ways God provides you the tools needed to represent Him and deliver His message today. How are you sharpening and developing those tools?**

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**Discuss as a group the weight a person may feel when sharing the gospel. How can group members help one another carry that weight?**

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**Identify the name of one person in your life who needs to hear the gospel. Ask God daily for the opportunity to share with that person.**

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## PRAYER NEEDS

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