

Ezekiel Part Four

“Ezekiel’s Preparation – Part One ”

Consecration in Exile

In chapter one, Ezekiel experienced an open heaven. He saw the Eternal. He saw Glory. He saw the enthroned One in resurrection. He saw things that words cannot describe. After such a Divine encounter, one might assume they had attained to a level of spirituality that qualified them to minister among God’s people. This is not the case with Ezekiel. The things Ezekiel beheld in his open heaven pertained to deep inward realities that could only be wrought through a process. After the vision, God did not immediately release Ezekiel into the mission field to prophesy, rather He initiated a process that would truly prepare him to be the priest, prophet and minister that God desired him to be. Interestingly, Ezekiel was 30 years old when the heavens opened. This is the age when men were consecrated for the priesthood in Israel. Ezekiel was born into a priestly line, and therefore set apart for the priesthood. Many only comprehend Ezekiel as a prophet, but Ezekiel was also a priest. This is significant because God did not just call him to preach to people, but to lay his life down for them as a priest identified with the altar and Spirit of sacrifice. Leviticus chapter eight defines a lengthy and specific process that all those being consecrated into priesthood were required to pass through. It would be impossible for Ezekiel to go through this ceremony in the middle of Babylonian exile. Yet God initiated Ezekiel’s consecration in ways that would fulfill the true purpose of the mosaic requirements according to God’s desired end. Ezekiel’s vision was only the beginning of His ordination into ministry. The priests in Leviticus were not just required to know the law, but to handle, eat, and be intimately identified with the sacrifices they would offer and the altar upon which their ministries would function. A vision may give us a certain amount of understanding, but until we eat His flesh, drink His blood and embrace oneness with the Lamb of God we are not yet prepared for the ministry. A further examination of Leviticus chapter eight will demonstrate this point to anyone who wishes to search this out. In this article we will begin to examine some of the steps God ordained to prepare and consecrate Ezekiel for His ministry. Before Ezekiel began to prophesy he had to first pass through the preparations that God required of him.

Moving Towards Conformity

At the end of chapter one, God (more as a Father than a “vision-giver”) steps on the scene and tells His son, “Stand up, I want to talk to you”. In other words, God was not fully satisfied with Ezekiel’s response of “falling on his face” after He saw the open heavens. God wanted Ezekiel to get up and keep pressing till he entered into the things he just beheld. Some may feel that all God requires of them is to believe what He shows them, and humbly bow before it. Yet God wants us to WALK in the Spirit and not just humbly acknowledge the spiritual realities in Christ. If what is true in heaven is going to manifest in the earth, then we have to get up and press into knowing Christ as our Life. In chapter two God begins to guide Ezekiel in just how to enter into the Reality of the vision, and be consecrated as a priest fit to minister to the Lord’s own.

The first step, as just mentioned, was the fact the Ezekiel needed to get off his face and stand up, ready to hear and receive what God wanted to impart into him (Ez. 2:1). It is tremendously difficult to move from a passive position of lying down in awe and wonder to standing at attention, alert and open to move with God’s instruction. This transition requires that which is beyond our resources. Ezekiel got filled with the Spirit, and that is what set him on his feet and caused him to hear what God was saying to him; *“And the Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me”* (Ez. 2:2). The Spirit not only opened the heavens for Ezekiel to see God, but filled him so that Ezekiel might stand up and enter into all that the vision declared. To truly hear what God is saying to us also requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit as declared in I Cor. 2:9-12. Only after Ezekiel was filled with the Spirit was he able to “hear Him that spake unto me”.

Eat The Word

Chapter 2 and verse 8 continues to define what Ezekiel was hearing from the mouth of God. *“Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat what I give thee.”* It is revealed in this verse that part of the rebellion found in God’s people at that time was due to them not EATING what God fed them from His holy Word. Therefore the next action God requires of Ezekiel is that he, “OPEN THY MOUTH AND EAT”. Just as it was not sufficient for Ezekiel to see an open heaven and remain passively on his face, it was not acceptable to hear the Word of God and not eat it. In verse ten of chapter two it goes on to define the words given to Ezekiel at this hour, *“And there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe”*. God’s Word

to Ezekiel is not in the form of a pleasant story, but spiritual words preparing him for the bitter application of crucifixion. The in-working of the cross was going to be applied to the people Ezekiel would minister to, and he would walk as their servant bearing in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus on their behalf. The scriptures in chapter three verse three continue on with God's specific instruction concerning how Ezekiel should eat the Word of God, *"Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee."* Eating the word of the Cross allows it to reach our deep inward parts, bringing forth in us the motives of the sacrificial Lamb and eradicating self-preservation by the power of His death. God continues to affirm His desired response to His Word in verse 10, *"All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive into thine heart"*. God initiates towards Ezekiel by opening Himself to him in the vision. Ezekiel responds by opening his heart to the word of the Cross in a way that will fill him with the Spirit of Christ towards the people. Ezekiel honored God's trust with the vision by allowing the word of the Cross to be applied in a deep and inward way. This type of application of the Word of God was necessary to prepare Ezekiel for the ministry that was before him. Without yielding to his "consecration preparation", Ezekiel would have been just another prophet speaking of things he did not understand or bear within his innermost being. His words would have carried no substance or spirit, for they would have held no demonstration of power and heart from whence they came. The prophet needed to become a priest. The man with a message from God needed to also become a vessel of the heart of God. This can only be truly fulfilled when we allow CHRIST TO BE FORMED IN US. Everything God shows us in the scriptures and all that we know we are supposed to do in ministry can only be fulfilled through God's Son as the One ministering through us. Everything is summed up in Christ, and Christ came to be our Life. When He becomes our goal, then all else is put in its proper order and carried forth acceptably.

Ushered Into Life

Because Ezekiel did proceed according to God's instruction, he was ushered into living communion in chapter 3 and verse 12, *"Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place"*. Ezekiel was brought into a place of Life and glory, not doctrine and religious duty. Verse 13 further identifies that Ezekiel was hearing things pertaining to God's Life and not just head knowledge. Notice that every mention in this verse pertaining to hearing a noise is referring to something living. *"I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of*

great rushing". His relationship with the Word of God was based on the Spirit bringing Him into the Life of God. When the Spirit reveals Christ in the Word, what we hear brings us into the fellowship of His Life.

In verse 14 of chapter 3 there is a second movement of the Spirit. In verse 12 Ezekiel was "taken up", but now the Spirit is "lifting him up", and I believe this is in reference to the Cross at work in Ezekiel's walk. *"So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me"*. As Ezekiel was being taken up into the realm of those who LIVE by God's Christ, he was also being lifted up in the nature of that Life, a Lamb who was lifted up on a tree to give His life a ransom for many (Jn 3:14). Ezekiel is conforming to the way of the Cross. Ezekiel's depths are bearing the image of the heights of heaven's vision where the Lamb of God is enthroned. Christ is being formed in Ezekiel and he is now ready to be sent to the people. Ezekiel does not approach the captives with pride and superiority because he is "God's man" and has "God's message". Rather he returns to the captives as one humbled, carrying the bitterness of the captives cross in his own bosom, feeling the weight of it in the heat of his spirit; bearing in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus on their behalf.

Ready To Be Sent

Chapter 3 and verse 15 ***"THEN*** *I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days"*. If someone really hears what God is saying and doing in Ezekiel and the people, they will be astonished because it is SO MUCH MORE than what is commonly defined as "preparation", "ministry, "Christianity". It is astonishing how much we need Christ formed in our depths, and how real the work of the Cross needs to be in us. It is astonishing that this is the preparation God wants to work into each and every one of his own. At the end of those seven days of astonishment God speaks to Ezekiel in verse 17 and says, *"Son of man, ***I have made*** thee a watchman to the house of Israel"*. God MADE Ezekiel (Jn. 8:36). God did not just show something to Ezekiel, God made him the man of God he was meant to be by forming His Son in him. Ezekiel could now be sent to the people. His ministry brought forth fruit. May we take the time to allow our Father to form His Son in us. May we let the Word of Christ Crucified go deep and change us into His image that our work may be approved by God. ***