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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

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**“EAT AND SPEAK”**

**Ezekiel 3:1-15**

***Ezekiel 3:1 "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel."***

***Ezekiel 3:2 "So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll."***

***Ezekiel 3:3 "And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat [it]; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."***

Ezekiel was commanded to eat this roll (or scroll). This depicted the fact that he was first to receive the Word of God. He who would communicate God’s Word must first assimilate it.

***Revelation 10:9-10***

***9 And 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 make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.***

***10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.***

The fact that it was “written within and without” (on both sides) is a picture of the extensive content of what God intended to communicate through him. Even though the scroll had writing on the front and back with words of lamentation, mourning, and woe, Ezekiel was told to eat it and then deliver its message to the house of Israel. In other words, Ezekiel was to “digest” the Word of God to read it and make it a part of himself. Despite its words of severe judgment, the prophet found the scroll to be as sweet as honey in his mouth. This indicates that even though a specific message from God can be hard to hear, nevertheless it is still sweet to the believer who appropriates it because it is the Word of God. This is not physical food for his body. This is food for the mind and the spirit of man. This is the Word of God that Ezekiel is to eat. For a person to be able to bring the Word of God to the people, he must first consume that Word for himself. The Word of God is a gift to man from God. God provides the Word. Ezekiel must fill himself to overflowing with that Word, and then when he opens his mouth, he will speak the Word accurately. Notice, one more time, Ezekiel must consume the roll, and then go speak the Word to the house of Israel. This is just explaining that Ezekiel is obedient to God. He opens his mouth and God fills his mouth with the Word. To just hear the Word is not enough. This is explaining the importance of the Word being down deep inside of us. Jesus explained it by saying, they have ears to hear, and they do not hear. They heard the Word that was spoken but did not receive it within themselves. It had not become part of them. The 24th chapter of Proverbs speaks of wisdom from God as being sweet as honey in the mouth. Wisdom is like the Word of God; they are both gifts from God. The Word of God is spoken of as food in the following verse.

***Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."***

***Proverbs 24:13-14***

***13 My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:***

***14 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.***

***Ezekiel 3:4 "And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them."***

***Ezekiel 3:5 "For thou [art] not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, [but] to the house of Israel;"***

***Ezekiel 3:6 "Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee."***

***Ezekiel 3:7 "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel [are] impudent and hardhearted."***

Notice, in this, whose Words are to be spoken. The Word he speaks must be God's Word. Just as God put His Words in Jeremiah's mouth, He puts His Words into the innermost being of Ezekiel. When Ezekiel opens his mouth, God's Words will pour out. Speak with my words unto them sets forth the second aspect of Ezekiel’s calling. Not only was he to receive God’s Word, but he was also to deliver it faithfully to Israel. Ezekiel will not need an interpreter. He is Hebrew, the same as they are. They will be able to understand what Ezekiel brings to them from God if they will accept it. We see from the following Scripture, that a prophet is more acceptable to strangers, than by his own.

***Matthew 13:57 "And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."***

Once Ezekiel was fortified with the content of his prophecy, God reinforced Israel’s rebellious nature to Ezekiel by saying that if he were sent to a foreign people whose language he didn’t understand, they would believe him and repent! But not Israel (or in Ezekiel’s case specifically, the surviving kingdom of Judah); they didn’t want to hear from Ezekiel because they didn’t want to hear from God. We know this is true. The very reason they are in captivity, is because they had turned against the teachings of the law that God had given them. They had worshipped false gods, which is breaking the very first commandment. They will not listen, because they are proud, arrogant people. They have hardened their hearts to the teachings of God. Ezekiel was warned at the outset of his ministry that the people would not listen to him.

***Ezekiel 3:8 "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads."***

***Ezekiel 3:9 "As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they [be] a rebellious house."***

"Their foreheads" symbolizes their minds. Their minds are so closed off, they will not accept the things Ezekiel brings them from God. They are like goats that butt heads, neither one wanting to yield. "Adamant", in the verse above, is speaking of a stone. God has girded Ezekiel's mind, so that it is harder than a stone. God keeps reminding Ezekiel that He is his protection. Ezekiel must not let their threats, or angry looks, stop him from bringing the message that God sent to them. Fear is the opposite of faith. Ezekiel must place his faith in God. The people to whom Ezek-iel was being sent were hardheaded and hardhearted, so God told Ezekiel that he was going to make him just as tough so he could speak to them without being discouraged.

***Ezekiel 3:10 "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears."***

The fact that God calls Ezekiel, "son of man", is reminding Ezekiel that he is a man, and not God. Ezekiel's strength comes from God. This is the same as eating the Words of God. The Words of God must be received into the innermost being of Ezekiel. This is the same message in the following Scripture.

***Mark 13:11 'But when they shall lead [you], and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."***

The Words God wants him to speak will come in his ear and in his mouth.

***Ezekiel 3:11 "And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."***

Just as Noah was to tell the people before the flood, Ezekiel was to go to the people here. They did not listen to Noah in his time, and they will not listen to Ezekiel in his time. He is to tell them anyhow. Maybe, someone will listen and repent.

***Ezekiel 3:12 "Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, [saying], Blessed [be] the glory of the LORD from his place."***

***Ezekiel 3:13 "[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 a great rushing."***

Now it was time for Ezekiel to be returned to the place where his ministry would begin, and it was quite a ride. He had started out among the exiles by the Chebar Canal, and the Spirit lifted him up to take him back there. But suddenly he heard a loud rumbling sound and found himself being transported on God’s chariot-throne by the four cherubim and the wheels. This is the same rushing wind that was heard on day of Pentecost. The Spirit in the Word of God is what he hears. The wings, you remember, lift heavenward.

***Ezekiel 3:14 "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."***

***Ezekiel 3:15 "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."***

The bitterness that he felt was the bitterness of knowing the rejection of his people. He is like many ministers, who feel they can do no good, but go anyhow. Remember, the hand of God upon him, is bringing power to him to minister. His pain came from the fact that his own people would not accept the message he brought. The hand of the LORD was strong upon me pictures the divine enablement given to Ezekiel to sustain him during his difficult ministry. It is time now for Ezekiel to go and do the things God has told him to do. The Words of God are deep within him. He is ready. Sometimes it takes a little nudge from God to get going. The Spirit of God lifts him up and gets him going. This voice behind him could have been like the angels who constantly worship and adore God. Ezekiel's only reluctance is the fact that he might be rejected by his countryman. He is helped along by the Spirit which has lifted him. Because the sin of Judah’s people angered him as much as it angered the Lord. The prophet was so overwhelmed by all that had happened and the gravity of his message, in fact, that he sat there among the exiles stunned for seven days. This is a reminder that true spirituality is manifested when we feel the way God feels about unrighteousness. Tel-abib was located in Babylonia and is not to be confused with the modern city of Tel Aviv in Israel. We see that God sent Ezekiel back to his home to minister to the people. Just as the priests were to wait 7 days before they went into the temple to minister, Ezekiel waited 7 days before bringing the message of God. You may read about this in Leviticus chapter 8. Ezekiel's astonishment was at the people for their lifestyle which was so far away from God. He was, also, astonished that God would have him bring this message to these rebellious people. Seven, in the Bible, symbolizes spiritual completeness. This, perhaps, is why he sat for 7 days waiting. There are several other times of waiting 7 days, such as the time Job's friends waited, and also the time when Noah was in the ark waiting for the rain to come.

***Genesis 7:4 "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth."***

**QUESTIONS**

1. What did God instruct Ezekiel to eat in verse 1?
2. For a person to bring the Word of God, he must first do what?
3. What did God call Ezekiel in verse 3?
4. Whose Words are to be spoken by Ezekiel?
5. What will happen, when Ezekiel opens his mouth?
6. Why will Ezekiel not need an interpreter?
7. Why will they not hear what Ezekiel says?
8. What does the forehead symbolize?
9. They are like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that butt heads?
10. What does adamant mean?
11. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the opposite of faith.
12. Why is God calling Ezekiel "son of man"?
13. Is Ezekiel to speak to them, even if he knows they will not listen?
14. What is verse 12 telling Ezekiel?
15. What lifts Ezekiel up?
16. Ezekiel's only reluctance is because of what?
17. What is the rushing, in verse 13, like?
18. Ezekiel went in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
19. What brings him the power to minister?
20. What city was he taken to?