EZEKIEL 3

The Watchman: Eat the Word, Then Warn

> *“Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.”*
> EZEKIEL 3:17

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. The call that began in chapter 1 continues, still about 593 BC among the exiles in Babylon.

2. This chapter completes Ezekiel’s commission and gives the book one of its key pictures: the watchman on the wall.

Eat This Scroll

A scroll of woe that tasted sweet as honey

EZEKIEL 3:3

He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik takes the eating as part of the vision, yet a real experience; the point is that God's message had to get all the way inside Ezekiel before it came out.

WHAT IT MEANS

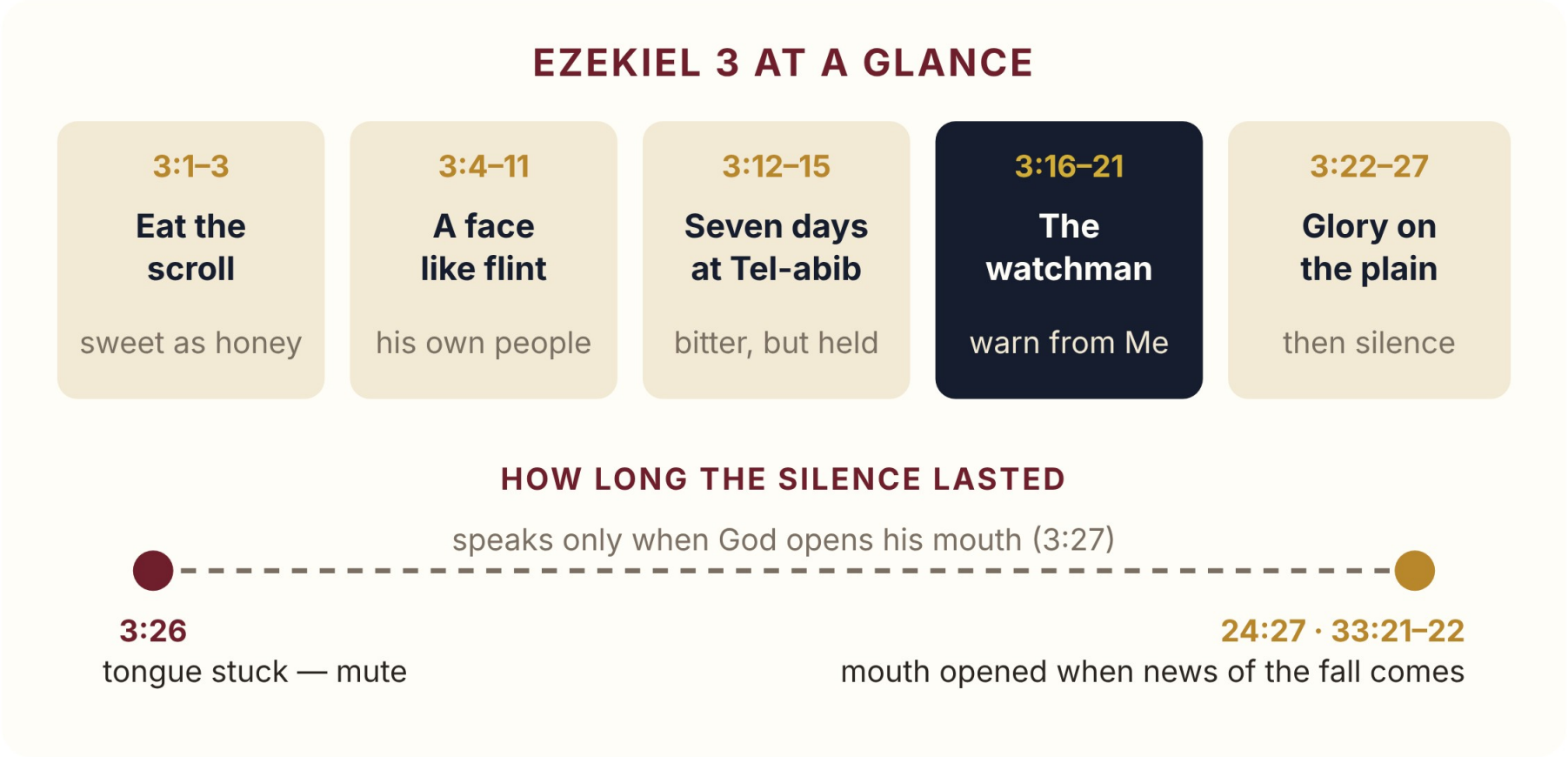
God's man has to eat the Word before he can speak it. Ezekiel did not hold the scroll at arm's length and read it to others; "I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll" (v. 2).

Sweet (מָתוֹק)

MATHOQ · "SWEET, PLEASANT"

Mathoq means sweet or pleasant, and it sits beside debash (H1706), honey: "it was sweet as honey in my mouth" (v. 3). The verb all through these verses is akal (H398) — to eat, consume, devour.

Ezekiel 3 at a Glance



From the sweet scroll to the silent house — and the silence would last until news of Jerusalem's fall (3:1–27; 33:21–22).

A Face Harder Than Flint

Sent to his own people — who will not listen

EZEKIEL 3:7

yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik notes that a foreign nation might have listened, as Nineveh did for Jonah. Israel would not, because their quarrel was with God, not with the messenger: “they are not willing to listen to Me” (v. 7).

WHAT IT MEANS

Ezekiel was not sent to strangers with a strange language (vv. 5–6). He was sent to his own people — and they would not listen, “since they are not willing to listen to Me” (v. 7).

Emery (שָׁמִיר)
SHAMIR · “ADAMANT, DIAMOND”

Shamir is a very hard stone — adamant, even diamond — and here it is compared with tsor (H6864), flint: “Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead” (v. 9).

Bitter, but Held

Lifted by the Spirit, stunned for seven days at Tel-abib

EZEKIEL 3:12

Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place."

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik notes that the praise of verse 12 is heard over the roar of the wings and wheels from chapter 1.

WHAT IT MEANS

A great voice cries, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place" (v. 12), and the Spirit carries Ezekiel off. He goes angry and bitter, "and the hand of the LORD was strong on me" (v. 14).

Embittered (מַר)
MAR · "BITTER, BITTERNESS"

Mar means bitter. Ezekiel went "embittered in the rage of my spirit" (v. 14), and rage is chemah (H2534) — heat, anger, wrath.

Appointed a Watchman

Warn the wicked, warn the righteous — or their blood is on you

EZEKIEL 3:17

"Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik stresses that a watchman's work is faithful proclamation of God's word, not fault-finding — the warning comes "from Me" (v. 17).

WHAT IT MEANS

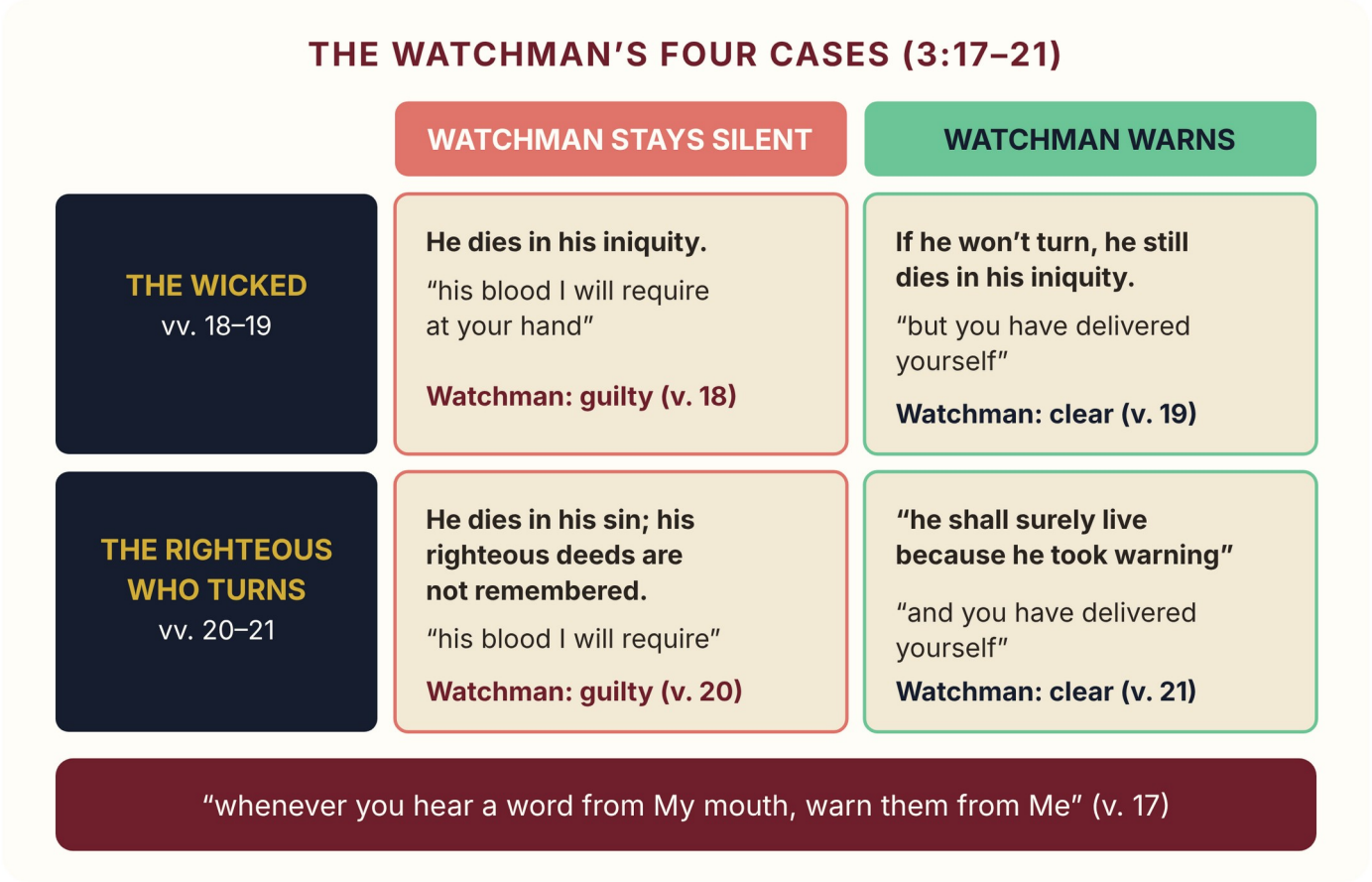
God makes Ezekiel a watchman (v. 17), and every believer who loves someone in danger has a piece of that job. When a man is drifting toward the old crowd, the old bottle or the old lie, love does not stay quiet.

Watchman (צָפָה)

TSAPHAH · "TO LOOK OUT, KEEP WATCH"

Tsaphah means to look out or keep watch; the watchman stood on the city wall and sounded the alarm when he saw an enemy coming (2 Sam 18:24–27).

The Watchman's Four Cases



God gives Ezekiel four cases: the wicked and the righteous, each warned or not — and the watchman answers for his silence (3:17–21).

Glory on the Plain, Then Silence

On his face again — then shut in, bound and mute until God speaks

EZEKIEL 3:23

So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face.

DAVID GUZIK

On the plain the same glory appears, and down Ezekiel goes again (v. 23). Guzik passes on Wright, who cites a wise man: 'we should take ten looks at Christ to one at ourselves.'

WHAT IT MEANS

The hand of the LORD is on Ezekiel again, and on the plain "the glory of the LORD was standing there" (v. 23) — the same glory as by the Chebar. Again he falls on his face; again the Spirit stands him up (v. 24).

Mute (אָלַם)

ALAM · "TO BE BOUND, SPEECHLESS"

Alam means to be bound, to be dumb or speechless — the tongue tied. God says, "I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute" (v. 26).

What to carry from this chapter

1

Eat before you speak.

God fed Ezekiel the scroll before sending him; the Word had to get all the way inside first (3:1–3).

2

Woe that tastes sweet.

Spurgeon, in Guzik: if God's Word is not sweet to me, have I an appetite (3:3)?

3

Their quarrel was with God.

Israel would not listen to Ezekiel "since they are not willing to listen to Me" (3:7).

4

Harder than flint.

Shamir, emery or adamant, was the hardest stone known — God made His prophet's forehead like it (3:9).

More to carry

5

Bitter, but held.

Ezekiel went in the heat of his spirit, yet “the hand of the LORD was strong on me” (3:14).

6

Sit before you speak.

Seven silent days among the exiles matched a priest’s consecration and changed his attitude (3:15).

7

Silence is not neutral.

Morgan, in Guzik: if the wicked die for lack of the word, the prophet is guilty of his blood (3:18).

8

Mute until God speaks.

Alam means bound, speechless; Ezekiel’s mouth opened only when God opened it (3:26–27).

Talk it through

1. God fed Ezekiel the scroll and it tasted sweet. What is the difference between reading the Bible and eating it?

2. God made Ezekiel's face as hard as theirs. Where do you need God-given firmness — and how is it different from stubbornness?

3. Ezekiel sat seven days among the exiles before speaking. Who do you need to sit with before you speak to them?

4. Who in your life is drifting toward danger right now? What keeps you from warning him?

5. "He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse." How does this free the watchman — and sober the hearer?

CLOSING

“Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place.” His Word is sweet, His hand is strong, and He makes weak men hard as flint. Eat the Word, sit with the hurting, and be a faithful watchman — never silent when love must speak, never speaking what God hasn’t said.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.