

Ezekiel 2:8-3:4

Our daily Mass lectionary has brought us to the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel. Our first reading will draw from this important Old Testament book for the next couple of weeks.

Ezekiel's ministry was during the 6th-century B.C., a most challenging time for Israel. The 6th century B.C. saw the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) and the destruction of Solomon's temple. Ezekiel was an Israelite priest who's named meant "God strengthens."

Whereas the prophet Jeremiah tended to be quite sensitive and emotional, Ezekiel was much more stoic. Ezekiel is known for his visions (e.g., valley of the dry bones) and his street theater or ritual actions (e.g., lying on his side for hundreds of days or shaving his head). Scholars believe that he was deported to Babylon around 597 B.C. during the first wave of captivity before Jerusalem's destruction.

Today, we hear that the Lord God commanded Ezekiel to be obedient. Then comes the ritual action. He is to eat a little scroll covered with writing on the front and back. Naturally, we would like to understand the meaning of such an action. The writing on the front and back symbolized that there is no room to add to what God has written.

Ezekiel's eating of the scroll symbolizes that God's message is not something external to the prophet but rather must be internalized – something that transforms Ezekiel from the inside out.

We are also told that the scroll tasted "*as sweet as honey in my mouth.*" Even though God's message contained judgment and doom, Ezekiel experienced it as a gift, something sweet, as he received it directly from God.

We also learn that Ezekiel is to eat until he is full. In other words, Ezekiel's full stomach symbolized that he is spiritually equipped and authorized to speak on God's behalf to a stubborn and rebellious nation.

Ezekiel's little diet of eating the scroll is a great reminder that those who receive God's truth in their lives – *consuming* God's word, experience profound peace in a troubled world or in a difficult situation. Additionally, the sweetness of delivering a difficult message reminds us that it is better to be with God and suffer for His truth than to live a comfortable life without God.

Finally, Ezekiel's total assimilation (a full belly) is a great reminder, too, that Sacred Scripture is essential soul-food. Casual eating will never bring deep and lasting contentment. Eat always and eat well, and God will always provide for you!

~St. Clare, pray for us!