

Ezekiel 3:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

Analysis

God declares He will open Ezekiel's mouth at specific times to deliver messages, while at other times the prophet will be silent. The phrase 'He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear' (shomea yishma vehechadel yechdal, שְׁמוֹעַ יִשְׁמָע וְהֶעֱחָדֵל יִעָחַד) acknowledges human freedom in responding to divine revelation. God's word divides hearers into two categories: those who receive it and those who refuse. This same principle appears in Jesus' parabolic teaching: 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear' (Matthew 11:15, 13:9, Mark 4:9). The designation 'they are a rebellious house' (beyit-meri, בֵּית־מֶרִי) repeats throughout Ezekiel (2:5-8, 3:9, 12:2-3), explaining why many will refuse the message. Yet God persists in sending His word even to rebellious hearers, demonstrating both His justice (they cannot claim ignorance) and His mercy (He continues offering opportunity for repentance).

Historical Context

Ezekiel's selective speech (periods of divinely imposed muteness, 3:26) distinguished him from false prophets who spoke constantly without divine authorization. True prophets spoke only when God gave specific messages, while false prophets manufactured oracles on demand. This pattern tested Ezekiel's obedience—would he remain silent when people wanted words, and speak when

they didn't? The exiles, accustomed to prophets who told them what they wanted to hear, found Ezekiel's intermittent ministry frustrating. Yet this very pattern authenticated his messages as genuinely divine rather than humanly contrived. God controlled both the timing and content of prophetic utterance.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you discern when to speak God's truth and when to remain silent, waiting for His timing?
2. How should the reality that some will refuse God's word affect your evangelism and witness?

Interlinear Text

וְכַדְבַּר י'	אִתְּךָ	אֶפְתָּח	אֶת	פִּי יְךָ	אֲמַר
But when I speak	with	thee I will open	H853	thy mouth	and thou shalt say
H1696	H854	H6605		H6310	H559
כֹּה אֶלֶיָּהּ ׀	אֲמַר	אֲדַבֵּר י'	יְהוָה	שִׁמְעַ	
H413	H3541		H3068	H8085	
	and thou shalt say	the Lord		He that heareth	
	H559	H136			
שִׁמְעַ	וְהִסָּד לִי	יִחַדֵּל	כִּי	בֵּית	
He that heareth	and he that forbeareth	let him forbear	H3588	house	
H8085	H2310	H2308		H1004	
מֵרִי	הִמָּה:				
for they are a rebellious					
H4805	H1992				

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 24:27 (References Lord): In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel 3:11 (References God): 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.

Ezekiel 29:21 (References Lord): In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

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