

Introduction: Ezekiel was a priest (1:3). As a priest, his duties included prayer, personal holiness, inquiring of God for prophetic words, and instructing people about God's way for them to live. *** The Covenant God of Israel appointed Ezekiel to be a watchman to warn His people, specifically wicked people to turn from their ways to God's ways; and, righteous people to not turn to iniquity. *** There was an awful penalty when watchmen did not warn people so they may faithfully follow God. *** From the beginning, to the days of Moses and Joshua, to the time of the judges, and even under God-appointed kings, there is a tendency for all people to fall short of following God in full and faithful obedience, loving Him because He first loved them (1 John 4:19). *** The work of Jesus made it possible for all people to be priests and watchmen, as was Ezekiel (1 Peter 2:5-9). *** So, the words we hear The Covenant God speak to Ezekiel as an exhortation and challenge are also spoken to us this morning, if we are indeed followers of Jesus. *** As we go through our passages, we will consider the fulfillment of God's Word from the Gospels and New Testament, and what responsibilities we have as God's Church IN Jesus to be watchmen and watchwomen to our neighbors.

I. Yahweh calls Ezekiel to warn individuals, and He also warns Ezekiel. (Ezekiel 3:16-21)

A. Two warnings concerning wicked men. (Verses 16-19)

1. After seven days, the Word of Yahweh came to me. (Verse 16)

Time: Seven days before this Ezekiel saw a vision of cherubs supporting the throne of God (chapter 1). This was in the fifth year of the first exiles to Babylon, 597 BC, when he was thirty years old.

Word of Yahweh: Literally, he said the Word of Yahweh was (or **be**-came) to him.

2. 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel, and when thou have heard from My mouth thou (will) warn them from Me'. (Verse 17)

Watchman: Every city was built on high ground and had a wall around it. All day and night watchmen were on the walls watching for any danger. At the first sign of danger, they would alert the leaders of the city.

Yahweh has given Ezekiel the responsibility to be His spiritual watchman for His people.

3. 'When I say to the wicked: Thou will surely die, and thou have not warned him and not spoken to warn the wicked from his wicked way, that wicked man will die in his iniquity – and his blood I will require from thee'. (Verse 18)

Warn individuals: Yahweh tells Ezekiel in no uncertain terms he must pass on His warning to wicked people so they will not die because of their wicked desires.

Failure: Moreover, if Ezekiel fails to warn the wicked, they will die, and Ezekiel will share their fate!

God expects His people to be watchmen

4. 'And thou, if thou warned the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness and his wicked way, he in his iniquity will die – and thou, thy life (soul) have delivered'. (Verse 19)

If warn: However, if Ezekiel does pass Yahweh's warning on to wicked individuals, and they choose to disregard the warning Yahweh gives through Ezekiel, they will die for acting on their wicked desires, but Ezekiel's life (soul) will be delivered.

Application: As we will see more clearly later, we too must be faithful watchmen to our neighbors so they may turn from wickedness to righteousness IN Jesus.

B. Two warnings concerning righteous men. (Verses 20-21)

1. 'And when a righteous (man) turns from his righteousness and does iniquity, and I put a stumbling block before him, because thou have not warned him: in his sin he will die and his righteous deeds which he did will not be remembered – and his blood I will require from thee'. (Verse 20)

Warn backslider: 'On the other side of the coin' Ezekiel must warn any individuals who turn from righteous behavior to act on wrong desires because they were given an opportunity to act wickedly, because such men will die in their sins.

Failure: And, just as was the case with unwarned wicked people failing to repent, again Ezekiel will share their fate, and die as they died!

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2. 'Now, if thou have warned the righteous man not to sin; and he, the righteous man, does not sin: he will surely live because he was warned – and thou, thy life (soul) have delivered'. (Verse 24)

Righteous returns: Similarly, if Ezekiel does warn the righteous man of the danger of death he faces for not turning back to his righteous ways; and, he hears the warning and does not continue in sin, he will surely live – and Ezekiel's life (soul) will be delivered. Ezekiel will later be given a message for Israel to repent of their transgressions and acquire a new heart and spirit because Yahweh has no pleasure in anyone dying (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

Application: Again, we too must be faithful watchmen to our neighbors so they may not turn away from doing what is right by faith, but that they may maintain their righteousness IN Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

II. After Ezekiel beholds the glory of Yahweh and worships Him, he is told he will remain silent until he is commanded to speak to the rebellious people; and, under Joshua the people of Judah failed to fully occupy the land.

(Ezekiel 3:22-27; Joshua 15:20-21, 33, 48, 61, 63)

A. Ezekiel beholds the glory of Yahweh in the valley, worships Him and is told to shut himself in his house. (Ezekiel 3:22-24)

1. Then was on me there the hand of Yahweh, then He said to me: 'Thou must arise! Thou must go out into the valley! And there I will speak with thee'. (Verse 22)

Command: After seven days it is likely Ezekiel had returned to his house. Now, Yahweh commands him to get up and go to the valley to hear a message from Him.

2. Then I arose and then I went out into the valley, and behold! There the Glory of Yahweh was standing, as the glory which I had seen by the River Kebar; then, I fell on my face. (*Verse 23*)

Glory of Yahweh: Ezekiel obeys the command of Yahweh and is startled to see the same Glory of Yahweh he had seen when the cherubs were holding up His throne as they had by the tributary channel of the Euphrates River (chapter 1).

Worship: His immediate response was to fall on his face in worship of The Covenant God, Yahweh!

3. Then Spirit entered into me, then He stood me on my feet, then He spoke with me: Thou must go! Thou must be shut within thy house. (*Verse 24*)

Spirit's message: The (Holy) Spirit comes into Ezekiel and commands him to go and stay in his house.

- B. Ezekiel will be bound and made silent as the 'son of man' until Adonai Yahweh opens his mouth to the rebellious house. (*Ezekiel 3:25-27*)

1. 'And thou, 'son of man', behold! They have put on thee cords, and they have bound thee in them, and thou will not go out among them'. (*Verse 25*)

Prophet bound: Ezekiel is about to be bound up by his fellow exiles so he will not be able to go out and speak to them or warn them.

2. 'And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou have been made speechless; and, thou shall not be to them a man reproving – for they (are) a house of rebellion'. (*Verse 26*)

Yahweh: Now, in a change of mission, Ezekiel is informed that both his fellow exiles, and Yahweh Himself, will prevent him from speaking any more warnings to the house (or people) of Israel.

Rebellious house: They have passed the 'point of no return' in their rebellion against Yahweh their God!

3. 'When I speak with thee, I will open your mouth and you say to them: Thus says Adonai Yahweh – The one hearing, he will hear; and, the one rejecting (to hear) he will reject – for they (are) a house of rebellion'. (*Verse 27*)

Witness: In God's own time, He will open Ezekiel's mouth and he will speak God's words to the house of Israel. Ezekiel had to learn he is not in control of his gift: he must learn to humbly submit to God's will and ways.

Two outcomes: There is hope that some will hear and turn back to God in obedient faith; but, also many will reject God's words through His prophet because they are rebellious against their God. So, even now, at times of God's own choosing, Ezekiel (whose name means: 'my help (is) God') is still God's watchman.

God expects His people to be watchmen.

Application: As for us, we must witness to people about Jesus at every opportunity, and be aware when The Holy Spirit is giving us such opportunities (Acts 1:8).

- C. Judah's inheritance was four terrains, but they failed to fully occupy it. (*Joshua 15:20-21, 33, 48, 61, 63*)

1. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families. And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the border of Edom southward ... in the valley ... And in the mountains ... In the wilderness (*Joshua 15:20-21, 33, 48, 61*)

Four regions: Judah received the largest portion of the tribes, some 7000 square miles out of a total of about 14,000 square miles for all twelve tribes, almost half! It ranged from southeast of the Dead Sea near Edom north to the mountains immediately west of the Dead Sea to the valley south of Jerusalem to the wilderness in the southwest towards the Mediterranean Sea.

2. And the Jebusites inhabiting Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out, so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day. (*Joshua 15:63*)

Failure: Tragically, falling short of total obedience to God, the people of Judah did not fulfill God's will for them and were disciplined for this (Judges 2:1-3).

Judah falls short of God's will for them

Application: God's will for us as followers of Jesus is that we must do our part in making disciples of Jesus who will gladly and faithfully obey all He commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

Conclusion: Ezekiel was commanded to warn both the wicked and the righteous. The former were to turn away from wickedness to God, and the latter to not turn away to iniquity. Further, if Ezekiel did not warn the people, he would suffer their fate. Then he beheld God and worshipped Him. and was commanded to only speak when Adonai Yahweh opened his mouth to the rebellious people who had failed to fully obey God from the days of Joshua. Followers of Jesus are His watchmen and watchwomen.

God expects His people to be watchmen