

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

September 5, 2010

“The Watchman’s Duty”

Focal Passage:

Ezekiel 33:1-20

Cross References:

Ezekiel 18; 2 Peter 2:3-9;

John 3:16-21; 1 John 1:9

Central Idea: God issues warnings to His people through “watchmen” who must be faithful to sound His alarm.

Lesson Idea: We are called as those who know the Lord to warn those who don’t know of the impending judgment for sin and the offer of life to those who repent.

Background: Ezekiel ministered to God’s people during the time of the Babylonian siege and capture of Jerusalem and the deportation into Babylon (roughly 593-573 BC). The LORD spoke to him in a series of visions and prophetic messages.

Traditionally Ezekiel is divided into three distinct sections. Chapters 1-24 proclaim the coming judgment on Jerusalem and its causes. Chapters 25-32 announce judgment on the foreign nations, while chapters 33-48 declare the blessings of future restoration and the messianic kingdom.

The pivotal point historically and chronologically is the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The messages contained in chapters 1-24 are all dated prior to the Fall of Jerusalem, preparing the exiles for the judgment that was to come on Jerusalem. Once that judgment had come, as described in chapter 24, Ezekiel turned his attention to judgment on the nations. These messages (chs. 25-33) were given during and following the siege of Jerusalem, in 586-585 BC. . . Then 33:21-39:29 was delivered on the night before the fugitive arrived in Babylon to tell the exiles that Jerusalem had fallen (Dec./Jan. 586/585 B.C.). These messages encouraged the exiles when that news came. Fourteen years later, the final section of the prophecy in chapters 40-48 was delivered. . .

Five prominent theological concepts pervade these prophetic pages: (1) the nature of God; (2) the purpose and nature of God's judgment; (3) individual responsibility; (4) the ethical, religious, and moral history of Israel and (5) the nature of Israel's restoration and the millennial worship. (Expositor's Bible Commentary, Old Testament)

Bible in a Year Readings

Aug 29-Sept 5, 2010

Aug 29 Ezekiel 18 - 20

Aug 30 Ezekiel 21 - 22

Aug 31 Ezekiel 23 - 24

Sep 1 Ezekiel 25 - 27

Sep 2 Ezekiel 28 - 30

Sep 3 Ezekiel 31 - 32

Sep 4 Ezekiel 33 - 35

Sep 5 Ezekiel 36 - 38

Highlights of the Week:

Ezek 18: Repent and Live

Ezek 20: God's Dealings with Israel

Ezek 21: The Sword of the Lord

Ezek 22: Sin of Israel

Ezek 24: Death of Ezekiel's Wife

Ezek 25-32: Judgment of the Nations

Ezek 33: The Watchman's Duty

Ezek 34: Bad Shepherds/God's Sheep

Ezek 36: A Heart of Flesh

Ezek 37: The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 33:1-9

The Call of the Watchman

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, ³ and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, ⁴ then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. ⁵ Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself. ⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.'

⁷ "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ⁸ When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. ⁹ But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

DISCUSSION:

- What was the job of a "watchman"?
- What happens if someone doesn't heed the warning?
- What happens when someone does heed the warning of the watchman?
- What happens if the watchman doesn't sound the warning?
- In vs 7 God says He has made Ezekiel a "watchman for the house of Israel." In what way is Ezekiel a watchman?
- What was the message of warning that God told Ezekiel to speak?
- What was the purpose of Ezekiel's message?
- Read 2 Peter 2:3-9. What is God's purpose in delaying the coming judgment?
- Why do you think people need to be warned about the coming Judgment Day and who needs to warn them?

Ezekiel 33:10-16

The Cause of the Watchman

¹⁰ "Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?"' ¹¹ Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

¹² "Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, 'The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.' ¹³ If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. ¹⁴ And if I say to the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right- ¹⁵ if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live.

DISCUSSION:

- God's declaration in v. 11 explains what His heart really feels towards mankind. What is His plea to us?
- Read John 3:16-21. How does Jesus' mission to the world express the truth of Ezek 33:11?
- What happens if someone who has lived a righteous life decides they want to turn to evil?
- According to vs 13 how should we respond to statements that you hear today: "I know God's Word says I shouldn't do this, but God wants me to be happy, doesn't He?" or "I know it's wrong, but God will forgive me."
- What does God promise if someone who has lived a lifetime of evil decides to repent and do right?

- How does vs 16 relate to the promise of 1 John 1:9?

NOTE: We believe that vs 12-16 do not teach about “falling from grace” or eternal damnation; rather they teach truths about the importance of repentance and perseverance to a person’s everyday life. God rewards those who turn to Him and forsake their evil ways, but He won’t excuse wickedness based on someone’s past goodness. The people of Jerusalem couldn’t believe that God would ignore their history of being God’s people and let a heathen nation like the Babylonians come in and destroy them. But He did. And everyone who would not accept the message of the prophets and obey the LORD, either died by the sword, famine, wild beasts, or plague (see Ezek 14:21). Sin always destroys and should never be embraced.

Ezekiel 33:17-20

The Just Ways of the Lord

¹⁷ "Yet your countrymen say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. ¹⁸ If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. ¹⁹ And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. ²⁰ Yet, O house of Israel, you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his own ways."

DISCUSSION:

- Why would God’s people accuse Him of being unjust?
- In what kind of times do people today accuse God of being unjust?
- How does vs 20 say that God will judge people?
- Ezekiel 33 is very similar to Ezekiel 18. Read Ezek 18:30-32. God judges us according to our individual iniquities, but He pleads for us to repent and receive a “new heart and a new spirit.” Why would people choose to reject God rather than repent from their sin?

APPLICATION:

This passage is a very clear call to repentance and warning against sin.

- Is there anything in your life that you have embraced that God calls sin? Ezekiel sounds a warning for you to repent.

Passages such as the Great Commission and 2 Corinthians 5:20 remind us that we are called to be God’s “ambassadors” (or “watchmen” like Ezekiel).

- Are there people in your life that God has been calling you to share Jesus with, but you have avoided the subject? This passage reminds us that God holds us responsible when we choose to remain silent.
- Are there fellow brothers or sisters in Christ who are backsliding and need to be confronted in love, not in a judgmental way, but in a spirit of humility and warning?

Are you willing to accept God’s call to be a “watchman?” Then realize that the Judgment Day is drawing nearer and people around you need to accept Jesus as their Savior. Don’t be silent while people around you die and go to hell. Sound the warning!

Ezekiel 33:33 *So when it comes to pass--as surely it will--then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.*