

Message #6**Ezekiel 3:15-27**

We are in desperate need today of true watchmen who will actually look out for the welfare of the people and tell them the truth. Frankly, in both the political and religious realm, they are lacking. Let me illustrate the point.

We have political leaders and religious leaders who are telling the American people that Islam is a great religion. They are telling people that the Muslim religion is a good religion. Islam is a devilish and demonic religion that makes mockery of the true God of the Bible and makes mockery of Jesus Christ. It has changed the name of God from Jehovah to Allah. It has changed the day of worship. It has changed the place of worship from Jerusalem to Mecca. It has changed the book of worship, the Bible to the Quran. Its key prophet Muhammad was a child-molesting rapist. It is a religion that promotes violence to infidels in multiple passages of the Quran. It is a religion that promotes even the death of those who do not worship Allah. Instead of people telling us the truth, they say it is a good religion.

Where are our watchmen? Where are our leaders who are supposed to protect us? Most of them are saying this is a great religion. It is an evil religion. This is a religion leading people to hell.

Now the truth is we don't expect secular politicians to be our true watchmen. It would be nice if some politician had enough theological wits about them to spot that and say that, but they don't. However, we should expect men who know God's Word to be watchmen. That is their job. Paul said we are to "expose" things that are dark (Eph. 5:11). That is what a watchman does. That was what Ezekiel was to do. Ezekiel was to be on the lookout for religious things and religious people who were not presenting truth and his job was to warn the people.

GOD APPOINTS EZEKIEL TO BECOME A WATCHMAN WHO IS RESPONSIBLE TO LITERALLY UNDERSTAND AND FAITHFULLY COMMUNICATE THE WORD OF GOD TO ALL THE PEOPLE AND LITERALLY APPLY GOD'S WORD WITH HIS OWN LIFE.

This passage is intimidating. It says to the man of God that your job is to carefully and accurately communicate God's Word to individuals. This is true of the wicked and the righteous. It also says that God's people have a responsibility to carefully and accurately understand the Scriptures and apply them or else they can lose their own rewards. This is one intimidating text.

OBSERVATION #1 – God's Spirit took Ezekiel to a specific place to minister to the exiles.
3:15

God directed Ezekiel to the precise place he wanted him to be. Ezekiel's first ministry opportunity that God assigned him to was Tel-abib near the Chebar River. This was the place where he had been brought and the place that was his home (1:1). He was living here when he first received his vision.

This was the main place of residency for exiled Jews in Babylon. Actually it was not a bad place to live. The problem is the people sensed no urgency to be right with God.

Now Ezekiel was completely overwhelmed with what he had seen and apparently he just sat there thinking about things for seven days. The Spirit of God led Ezekiel to go back to his home area and just sit there for seven days.

Now he certainly would have been thinking about what he had just seen and heard from God. As he sat there he could not help but look over his own people and think that God had just told him they will not listen to you. They don't care what you have to say.

There is a debate among scholars whether or not Ezekiel sat there for seven days and said nothing or whether he said something. The text does not say; **what we do know is that him setting there did have a negative effect on people.** His presence was stifling them. Sometimes silence speaks volumes. Sometimes just one's presence says it all.

Notice the effect that Ezekiel had on the people; he caused "consternation among them." That word "consternation" means that these people were astonished and stunned. The word carries with it the idea that the people were awestruck and appalled. They were horrified (*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, pp.1030-1031)

The people sensed something was not right. Just Ezekiel's presence and manner were different. The truth is Ezekiel was right with God and they weren't. There will always be problems because of that.

OBSERVATION #2 – God spoke to Ezekiel at the end of seven days. **3:16-21**

At the end of seven days, which probably means when Ezekiel had completed or finished this part of the assignment for seven is the number of completion, God again came to Ezekiel. The phrase "the word of the LORD came to me" is used nearly 50 times in the book of Ezekiel. This phrase is used in Ezekiel more than any other prophet. For example it is used of Jeremiah nine times and Zechariah two times, but of Ezekiel almost 50 times. It shows the importance of the Word of God to Ezekiel's ministry.

God's Word came to Ezekiel and gave him three key revelatory messages:

Message #1 - Ezekiel has been appointed by God to be the watchman to Israel. **3:17a**

He begins by identifying Ezekiel as "son of man" which again means he is a human with a divine assignment. Not only was Ezekiel identified as a "son of man," but now he is told by God that he is being appointed as a "watchman."

Ezekiel had not been looking for this job or applying for this job. He wanted to be a priest, but God changed his course to become a prophet and now He was making him the "Watchman" for all of Israel.

A watchman had a responsibility to function as a lookout. It was his job to watch out for enemies or dangerous things and then warn the people. As Moshe Greenberg said, his job was “to give timely warning of approaching danger” (*Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 84). A watchman was typically perched on some high place where he could see afar.

Ezekiel would have a watchman-type of ministry. **What Ezekiel’s job would be was to accurately understand the truth of God and be on the lookout for anything or any doctrine or any person who was a dangerous threat to the truth of God. It was his job to spot it and warn against it. Ezekiel’s primary job was to take the Word of God to the people.**

Message #2 - Ezekiel is to proclaim God’s Word to the wicked. **3:17b-19**

When Ezekiel would hear from God, he must warn the people. It did not matter who the people were. When you hear, you must warn. Giving solemn warnings is the job of one who has been called and gifted by God to communicate His Word.

Apparently the Apostle Paul believed it was the job of a New Testament Grace Age minister to do the same thing because he said to the Ephesian elders that he was innocent of the blood of all men because he “did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose and council of God” (Acts 20:26-27).

The word “wicked” (*rasha*) is one that refers to abnormal, perverse, wicked evil (*Ibid.*, p. 957). This does not just refer to sin, but to abominable, perverse sin that causes God to make a judicial decision to hold people guilty and to kill people.

Ezekiel was to proclaim God’s Word to the wicked when the message was “you will surely die” (3:17). **Notice the pronouns used for the wicked in verse 18, “him” “his” and “he.” This was not just a warning given to the nation, but to individuals.**

Ezekiel’s job was to warn wicked people that God was about to destroy them. He was to go to wicked people and give them a “repent or die message.” God was literally about to kill them so that they would die. What we are talking about here is an untimely death that God sends against a person as a judgment against their wickedness. We know that God is a patient and gracious God, but He does have a limit and when certain wicked things reach some level, He will kill people.

Apparently God would give specific revelatory information to Ezekiel that someone was about to die by judgment of God and Ezekiel’s job was to take that message to him. Often times, God would name the specific sin and the reason for the judgment. Ezekiel’s job was to look people in the eyes and tell them the truth.

In fact, if he refused to warn the wicked man of the truth, then he would be highly accountable to God. Not only would the wicked man die in his sin, but his blood would be required from Ezekiel (3:18).

In other words, God would judge Ezekiel and hold him accountable for not proclaiming His Word accurately to those wicked.

Now in II Samuel 4:11-12 what this meant was the death penalty. It could very well mean that “requiring blood from your hand” was the same as saying to Ezekiel that if you don’t tell people My truth when I tell you to, then I will execute you.

One of the main jobs of preacher and teacher of the Bible is to carefully and accurately warn people of future pending judgment that will destroy them.

Now God says in **verse 19** that if Ezekiel does his job and warns wicked people and they do not turn from their wickedness to God, then God will cause them to “die in their iniquity” but Ezekiel will be delivered from any judgment because he did his job.

One other point, it is not our job to destroy the evil wicked sinner. We are to warn them that God will do that. No Christian should ever seek to destroy one who is wicked, but should warn one who is wicked that God will destroy them. That was Ezekiel’s job.

Message #3 - Ezekiel is to proclaim God’s Word to the righteous. **3:20-21**

It isn’t only the wicked who need to be warned, but also the righteous.

Now Ezekiel had another job as a watchman and that was to spot one who is righteous and has wandered off the path of righteousness and wandered into sin. **Ezekiel’s job was to warn the righteous sinner that he/she needed to do turn from his sin and do what was right.**

God would apparently place obstacles (miksol) or stumbling blocks or calamities in the way of His people before He executes them. During this time, it was Ezekiel’s job to warn them.

Now the warning is serious. If a righteous person started to drift off into a wicked area and Ezekiel did not warn him or her, then the person would die and none of his or her righteous deeds would be remembered and the blood God would require from Ezekiel’s hand. Again, Ezekiel himself could die.

This text makes it clear that a believer through backsliding can lose all potential and possible rewards. Every believer ought to seriously think about this. Every believer ought to be willing to warn himself. If we become lax and loose in our spiritual life, we can end up losing all rewards. Part of Ezekiel’s responsibility was to warn God’s people of this.

If on the other hand Ezekiel warned the righteous man that he was moving in a very dangerous direction and the righteous person listened to him and did not cross the line into dangerous sin, not only would the righteous man live, but Ezekiel would be honored.

There is tremendous grace in this text. Even people who wander off the path into evil and wicked areas can turn back to the Lord and experience His grace. But apparently there is a time limit to it.

OBSERVATION #3 – God spoke to Ezekiel and told him to move. **3:22-27**

Now we learn from **verse 22** that again “the hand of the LORD” was on Ezekiel. God was directing Ezekiel and He specifically told him to go out to the plain where God would speak with him again. The word “plain” is a geographic term that refers to a valley surrounded by hills.

According to **verse 23**, Ezekiel got up and went out to the plain and when he did, the following six actions occurred:

Action #1 - The glory of the LORD was standing there in the plain. **3:23**

Now apparently there was a human figure standing in the valley that displayed the glory of God. That glory was the same glory he had seen previously seen at the Temple, but now it was near him in the plain. Once again he fell face down on the ground. It is possible to have the presence of God and the glory of God actually exist in a foreign place other than the temple in Jerusalem.

Action #2 - The Spirit of God entered Ezekiel and made him stand. **3:24a**

No man is fit to do a work for God unless he is controlled by the Spirit of God. No man can even stand before God unless God’s Spirit does the work.

Action #3 - God told Ezekiel to shut himself up in his house. **3:24b**

This would isolate Ezekiel and keep him from a hostile environment and it would also sequester him from public responses and responsibilities. The people would not be able to hear God’s Word because Ezekiel was not publicly proclaiming it.

Action #4 - God told Ezekiel he would be bound in his house. **3:25**

Now most commentators think that what this means is that this was a symbolic act that showed his ministry was confined to Israel. However, we agree with Moshe Greenberg, who says you cannot exclude the literal interpretation here (*Ibid.*, p. 102) In fact, we do know that Ezekiel did literally confine himself to ministry in his own house (i.e. 8:1).

In other words, Ezekiel was not free to communicate God’s truth to God’s people. God’s people were bound as slaves; God’s people were bound in sin and the one man who could proclaim freeing truth was bound from doing it.

Action #5 - God told Ezekiel that He would prevent him from speaking. **3:26**

God's people were so rebellious that God would prevent them from being able to hear a rare, true prophet of God. God apparently kept Ezekiel silent from a major public ministry for many years until the fall of Jerusalem (Ezek. 33:21-22). This was a judgment of God.

The Word of God is designed to reprove and rebuke. If God does not send a man who teaches the whole Word of God that does that, it is His judgment. Most people do not have a clue how privileged they are if they are able to actually hear the Word of God accurately communicated. Most don't care. But God can actually prevent people from hearing His Word.

God said to Ezekiel I am so fed up with my people that even though you are the watchman for Israel, I will literally at times prevent you from speaking truth to them. My people are so rebellious they do not deserve My Word and I will not let you proclaim My Word.

Sometimes God in His sovereignty will not allow His faithful men to be around anymore to communicate His Word anymore and when that happens, it is a judgment of God.

Action #6 - God told Ezekiel that He will enable him to speak at certain times. **3:27**

God says I will literally open your mouth at times and you will say exactly what I want you to say. If people hear, they will hear. If they refuse, they will refuse. But Ezekiel would be recognized as "the mouthpiece of God." God would spread his reputation as a man who would communicate the truth.

That was Ezekiel's job regardless of the response of the people. His job was to communicate truth, even to those who don't want to hear it.

I believe there are certain times when God's Spirit convicts His people and then there are times when God says I won't convict them anymore. One of the most dangerous situations to be in is when God says, "I am through convicting you."

We are in some respects watchmen. We need to communicate the truth. We need to warn people that all religion is not good. We need to tell people that there is only One resurrected Savior and if they do not believe in Jesus Christ, they will burn in hell.