

Ezekiel Chapter 33

This chapter is a transition between God's judgments against Jerusalem and the nations (chapters 1-32), and Israel's bright future when she is restored to her land (chapters 34-48), which is the rest of the book.

It provided God's instructions for national repentance, and is thus the preface to the prophecies of comfort and salvation which follow (in chapters 34-39).

Ezekiel 33:1 "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,"

This begins a new prophecy here. In the last chapter, Ezekiel brought his message to the heathen world. Now in this chapter, he is back speaking to his own people.

Chapters 33-39 could be described simply as "the rebirth of Israel."

Verses 2-20: This was given to prepare the exile's minds to look on the awful calamity in Jerusalem as a just act by God. He had faithfully warned, but they did not pay heed. Ezekiel had been forbidden to speak to his people (from chapter 24:26-27), until Jerusalem was captured. Meanwhile, he had spoken to the foreign nations (in chapters 25-32).

Ezekiel 33:2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

We can quickly see that "children of thy people" is speaking of the children of Israel. This is speaking of a man being chosen out of the people to go, and sit on the wall, and watch, and to warn the people of the coming danger. He is to be the watchman.

Such men as Jeremiah and Ezekiel were spiritual watchmen warning that God would bring a sword on His people so that they had opportunity to prepare and be safe. This analogy came from the custom of putting guards on the city wall watching for the approach of danger, then trumpeting the warning.

This message is as much for the ministers of our day, as it is for the people of Israel. The pastor of a church must also, be a watchman. He must look out to the world, and warn his people of all danger. The minister is responsible for warning the people of spiritual things. Unfortunately, some ministers preach nothing but love and good times.

Ezekiel 33:3 "If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;"

This is speaking of blowing the trumpet to warn of danger. The trumpet was blown to assemble the people, and for war.

Ezekiel 33:4 "Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head."

There should be a sound of alarm going forth in our country today. God will not always overlook the sin. The homosexuality, lesbianism, adultery, drugs, cursing, perversion, lying, stealing, cheating, palm reading, horoscope reading, worship of Satan, and abortions, are all things that God will not overlook. Punishment will come; it is just a matter of when.

There are many other things that should be included in the list above. Our society has gone mad. God is a holy God, and He expects His people to be holy as well.

Where are the ministers who are crying out about the sins of our land? We need some good old fashioned watchmen, who will proclaim the sin, and cause the people to repent. If we do not have national revival, our land is lost. Notice, if the watchman blows the trumpet and they do not hear, their sins are upon their own heads.

Once the watchman did his duty, the responsibility passed to each person where each person is accountable for his own response to God's warnings, whether to die in judgment or to live as one who heeded and repented. Ezekiel had been a very faithful and obedient "watchman".

Ezekiel 33:5 "He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul."

John the Baptist went through the land crying out, repent. We need some more like him today. When you blow the trumpet, not everyone will take warning, but some will. Those that hear the warning, and repent, shall save their soul. Those who do not, will be responsible for themselves. The job of the watchman is to blow the trumpet.

Ezekiel 33:6 "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take [any] person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

Remember, "watchman" is speaking of the ministers of the Word of God. It is a very dangerous thing not to warn your people. God holds the watchman responsible. If you see the danger, and do not warn your people, you are responsible for their sins. God counts you guilty of their sins.

Ezekiel 33:7 "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

This leaves no doubt, that this watchman is not a watchman for fleshly war, but is the watchman of men's souls. Ezekiel held such a position to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 33:8-9 "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked [man], thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." "Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

The minister must be observant of the sins in the people he guides. He must not just see the sin, but bring it to their attention, so they can repent. Notice the man, instead of men, here. This is speaking of individual sins in a person's life.

The minister is not responsible to see that the person repents. He is responsible to tell them of their sins. It is their decision, whether to repent of that sin, or not. The punishment, if the minister tells them, is their own, not the ministers.

(In verses 7-9), God is talking with Ezekiel as He began this by calling Ezekiel "son of man" which is what God has been calling him. He is warning Ezekiel that if He does not tell the wicked, he will bear their sins. If he does tell them, he will live and those who do not heed his warning will die.

So, the question I would have for you is: Does this apply to all Christians who know the truth and fail to warn unbelievers? Are we our brother's keepers? And the answer to that is YES!

Ezekiel 33:10 "Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins [be] upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?"

The penalty for unrepented sin is death. The unrepentant have a worse fate than death that awaits them, and that is hell. To die in sin, leaves no hope at all. They had listened to the false prophets, and thought good times were coming. They were not even aware they had sinned.

The Israelites reasoned that if they were liable to death in judgment that was inevitable, they were in a hopeless condition and had no future. God replied that He had no pleasure in seeing the wicked go into death for their sin, but desired them to repent and live.

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say unto them, [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The divine answer to the human question is "Repent and be saved"! Here a blending of compassion with the demands of God's holiness. Repentance and forgiveness were offered to all.

To "repent" means to turn completely away from the old sinful life you had been in, and live a brand new life in forgiveness. For Christians, we say "we are born again, not of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God. We no longer live, but Christ liveth in us" (see Gal. 2:20). We walk in newness of life. We are no more slaves to sin. God is always there ready to receive those who repent and turn to Him. God is not willing that even one would be lost.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Ezekiel 33:12 "Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his [righteousness] in the day that he sinneth."

One of the basic principles of God's dealing with His people is presented here: Judgment is according to personal faith and conduct. The discussion is not about eternal salvation and eternal death, but physical death in judgment for sin which, for believers, could not result in eternal death.

Ezekiel 33:13-15 "When I shall say to the righteous, [that] he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it." "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;" "[If] the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die."

Remember, Ezekiel is the watchman, and he must tell him when he is sinning. Notice that (in verse 14), God is telling Ezekiel to tell the wicked causing him to repent, and walk in newness of life.

The righteous behavior (in verse 15), could only characterize a true believer, who was faithful from the heart. There is no distinction made as to the matter of who is a true believer in God. There is only a discussion of the issue of behavior as a factor in physical death. For those who were apostate idolaters, physical death would lead to eternal death.

For believers who were lovers of the true God, their sin would lead only to physical punishment. "Righteous" and "wicked" are terms describing behavior, not one's position before God. It is not the "righteousness of God" imputed as illustrated in the case of Abraham but rather one's deeds that are in view.

Now, we see the reward for repenting and walking in that newness of life. It is everlasting life. One of the ways to show sincerity in repentance is to make restitution, wherever it is possible.

Ezekiel 33:16 "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

God does not judge past sin, as much as He judges the present condition of your heart. God has forgotten the sins that are repented of. We must live our faith everyday. Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship with Christ Jesus. We are to walk daily in that relationship.

Ezekiel 33:17 "Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal."

They blamed God for their calamities when actually they were being judged for their sins.

Ezekiel 33:18 "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby."

The following Scriptures say about the same thing.

Hebrews 6:4-6 "For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [him] to an open shame."

Ezekiel 33:19 "But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby."

God is quick to forgive. That is why He sent His Son to save us.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Ezekiel 33:20 "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways."

God loves them, and has given them every chance to repent. He will not force Himself upon them. It is still their choice. If they do not accept the salvation He is offering them, they will be judged for every sin they ever committed.

Ezekiel 33:21 "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, [that] one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten."

The capture of Jerusalem took place in the fourth month of the eleventh year. This messenger came 18 months later with this news.

The fugitive or fugitives who escaped from Jerusalem reached Ezekiel with the report (on Jan 8, 585 B.C.).

Ezekiel (24:1-2 and 33:21), show a 36 month span from the outset of the siege (on Jan 15, 588 B.C., to the report in 33:21).

Ezekiel 33:22 "Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb."

God had exercised control over the mouth of Ezekiel as to who or what he may say.

During this time, Ezekiel was not to speak from his own thoughts. The only Words that were to come from his mouth were the Words of the LORD. The things that Ezekiel saw and heard during this time would, probably, have brought comments of his own, if he had been able to speak.

God wanted just His Words to come from Ezekiel's mouth.

Verses 23-29: There is no date attached to the prophecies, but the first message after the fall of Jerusalem was a rebuke of Israel's carnal confidence. This prophecy was against the remnant of Judah who remained in the Land of Promise after the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel warns the survivors that more judgment will come on them if they do not obey God. By some strange reasoning, they thought that if God had given the Land to Abraham when he was alone, it would be more securely theirs because they were many in number, a claim based on quantity rather than quality. But judgment will come if they turn and reject God again.

Ezekiel 33:23 "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,"

Even though Ezekiel can now speak his own thoughts, he is to still speak for the Lord, as well.

Ezekiel 33:24 "Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we [are] many; the land is given us for inheritance."

These rebellious children of Israel, who had escaped captivity and remained in the land, against the wishes of God, now claim the land for themselves. They are descended from Abraham, but so are those in exile.

Ezekiel 33:25 "Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?"

God will bring their sins to their attention through the mouth of Ezekiel. Just the fact that they were in the land, was a sin in God's sight. He told them to go into captivity. They had not left the land, or their evil ways. They still had all the sins present in their lives that the ones in captivity had been chastised for. They have no right to the land. They have sided in with idols and false gods against God.

Ezekiel 33:26 "Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbor's wife: and shall ye possess the land?"

God had told them to surrender. They disobeyed and fought. They were involved in all sorts of sex deviations. Some of the false worship they were involved in, had to do with promiscuous sex.

Ezekiel 33:27 "Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; [As] I live, surely they that [are] in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that [is] in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that [be] in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence."

They were rebellious against God, and He would allow them no protection from Him. They would die from marauders, and from pestilence. Even ravenous animals will hunt them down, and kill them. They would not be able to hide from the judgment of God.

Ezekiel 33:28 "For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through."

The fact that they stayed behind in Israel, will not save them. You cannot hide from the judgment of God. He punishes them, where they are. They had one more sin to add to their sins. They had disobeyed God when He told them to surrender.

Ezekiel 33:29 "Then shall they know that I [am] the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed."

The judgments are so great that come upon them, they can no longer say, it is for the sins of their fathers. They will know it is for their own sins, and they will know this punishment came from God.

Ezekiel 33:30 "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD."

Here was a message to exiles, which had no intention of obeying the prophet's messages. They liked to listen, but not apply the prophet's words.

They finally knew by bitter experience that he had spoken the truth of God. The people appreciated the eloquence of Ezekiel, but not the reality of his message.

Ezekiel 33:31 "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee [as] my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, [but] their heart goeth after their covetousness."

They listen to Ezekiel, but they do not do what the message tells them to do. They were warned, and did not receive the warning. They did not want to give up their sins.

Ezekiel 33:32 "And, lo, thou [art] unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

They are hearing with their ears and not with their hearts. They enjoy listening to Ezekiel, but they are not receiving the message in the Words. They are not convinced enough to quit their sins.

Ezekiel 33:33 "And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."

The proof of a true prophet is when his prophecy comes true.

Ezekiel Chapter 33 Questions

1. What is different about this prophecy from the last one?
2. Who are the "children of thy people"?
3. What does this watchman do?
4. Who is someone, in our society today, that is a watchman?
5. What should the watchman do, if he sees danger coming?
6. Why does the author believe there should be a sound of alarm going forth in our country today?
7. What does God expect of His people?
8. If the watchman blows the trumpet, and they do not hear, their sins are upon _____ heads.
9. He that taketh warning shall deliver his _____.
10. What was the message of John the Baptist?
11. What is the job of the watchman?
12. "Watchman" is speaking of whom?
13. Who does God hold responsible?

14. Why should the minister tell someone of his sin?
15. The penalty for unrepented sin is _____.
16. What is a fate worse than death?
17. What were the false prophets telling them?
18. What does "repent" mean, really?
19. Christians say you are born again, not of the _____, but of the _____.
20. God is willing to save you, are you willing to be saved?
21. What is verse 12 saying?
22. What is the reward for repenting and living right?
23. What ridiculous thing were the people saying in verse 17?
24. What happens, if they do not receive the forgiveness He offers them?
25. When did this news of the fall of Jerusalem come to Ezekiel?
26. What does the author believe about Ezekiel's dumbness?
27. What are the rebellious children in Israel trying to do?
28. What were some of their sins mentioned in verse 25?
29. What will happen to them?
30. The people want to hear what _____ has to say.
31. Do they do what he tells them?