

THE WATCHMAN

Ezekiel lived in a dark time. In the space of less than 20 years, three loads of Israelites were dragged from the promised land — away from Jerusalem, away from the temple, away from God Himself, it seemed. Even the king himself, Jehoiachin, was in exile. Ezekiel supposed to be a priest serving at the temple in Jerusalem, but there he was in Babylon far from Jerusalem, far from the temple.

The Babylonians weren't satisfied with just ravaging the land. Would they dare to touch God's temple, His dwelling place in Jerusalem? Yes, they would, and they did. There it went into pieces, into rubble, into a smoking pile of ruins.

In the midst of all of the trouble, God wanted a man to watch for and give warning to His people. Jeremiah was God's watchman in Judah. Daniel was God's watchman in the king of Babylon's palace. Ezekiel was God's watchman among the people by the river Chebar.

There they were in a foreign land, a strange country, because of their sin (Ezekiel 2:3). Can you imagine sitting on a scorpion? Not a very pleasant thought, I'm sure. But that's the language the Lord used here in describing the seriousness of His people's sin (Ezekiel 2:6). The unfaithful bride Israel had abandoned her husband. She preferred sin and death rather than obedience and life. Yet God still wanted His people to come back. Because of God's mercy He gave them a watchman — to protect them (Ezekiel 3:17). My friends beware, for those who hold God's watchmen in contempt rebel against the mercy of the Almighty.

What is his task as a watchman? Read Ezekiel 33:1-6. Imagine a small city or town which needs protection. To prevent the city from being overrun, walls are built up around the city. There are gates, but as long as there is sufficient warning, these can be closed and defended. The one way that the enemy has a chance of conquering this city is to take it by surprise. To get through those gates before

anyone realizes it and while they are undefended. To ensure that they have plenty of warning in the event of an enemy attack, a man with a very important job is posted on the city walls. There stands the watchman, high on the walls scanning the countryside searching for any sign of movement. No matter what the weather, no matter how tired he is, he must stick to his task. If there is going to be an attack, he must see it. If there is an attack, he must blow the trumpet and blow it loud and long to warn the people, to wake them up, to put everybody on the alert. That is his task — watching and warning!

What is the watchmen to do? He must WATCH, that is, he must hear God's Word. He must WARN, that is, he must announce it to God's people. A simple, yet difficult task. Ezekiel was indeed a good watchman, but the message he had to bring wasn't exactly a popular one. As a watchman, he had to announce God's word of condemnation because of their sins and God's word of blessing upon those who would do God's will.

The watchman had to deal with the false prophet who brought a message which the people wanted to hear, a message which they invented. These were the watchman of Isaiah 56:10, "His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber." Can you imagine a blind watchman! The enemy comes, and there is none who sees them! As they enter the gates, there is none who blows the trumpet! Before they realize it, they are being killed, as the voice of the blind watchman on the wall echoes, "All is well."

God says, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 3:17). The watchman is concerned with God's people. These are the people that God compared with briars and thorns and scorpions! Ezekiel must go and say: "Thus saith the Lord!" He doesn't want them to die in their sin but wants them to live (Ezekiel 33:11). God wants to give His people life. That's why He sends His watchman — to protect their life! The message the watchman must bring

is a serious one. It's a matter of life and death. Ezekiel was and we are watchmen of the covenant. The church needs to be reminded about God's word, His covenant promises and threats, His covenant demands and obligations. Also, the world needs to be told there is no hope for them outside of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

What is God's response to the watchman? He will judge the watchman for his faithfulness. Since God gives His people a watchman to protect their lives, the watchman who doesn't do his job properly is endangering the life of the people. The watchman who fails to blow the trumpet, who fails to warn the people of danger is responsible for their souls. The watchmen of the new covenant, the elders, are no less responsible (Hebrews 13:17). Preachers are also responsible (1 Corinthians 9:16). Each member also bears responsibility in this area (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 6:1-2). The only way to please God is to declare the whole council of God (Acts 20:26-27).

There will always be "scorpions" wanting their way in religion. God expects His people to be strong and watchful. Often, God's message is rejected. Many will never give ear to God's word (Nehemiah 9:30). God's word will be met with rebellion and bitterness by those whom the word cuts (Acts 7:54). Some will be almost persuaded, but they too will be lost (Acts 26:28). But those few who gladly receive the word and obey it, make it all worth while. Watchman, keep on watching.

God has appointed us the task of watching and warning — no Christian is exempt. The gospel is to be presented to all men everywhere for their obedience. How they respond to that message is their blessing or cursing. Whether or not we do God's will is our blessing or cursing.

Tom Moore *from West End Watchman*

ANNIVERSARY

Cleo and Marion Stone, 02-19 (62nd).

ILL

Sunday: Dee Adams. **Wednesday:** Anne, David and Dee Adams, Janice Carter, and Lynda Cole. Those battling cancer: Bo Marcum's sister, and Ledgia Campbell. Gary Cole's aunt is in the hospital. Leta Thrasher had surgery at Cox South on Thursday and is in Room 906. Sandra Thrasher had an emergency appendectomy on Thursday at St. John's and was released on Friday. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Janice Carter, Allen Scott, Kim Clark, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

AT HOME

Bob Adams is at the Del Mar Gardens, Room 229. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

SYMPATHY

Our sympathy is extended to Kathleen Camp in the passing of her sister-in-law, Lola Wiggins. Funeral services were held in Ft. Scott, KS on February 16.

OUT OF TOWN

Jeremy Keifer was in Sapulpa, OK last weekend and will be there this weekend as well. The James' family is in Yuma, AZ for two weeks visiting relatives.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 60; Sunday PM, 50; Wednesday PM, 46.

Make plans now to attend our

Spring Gospel Meeting
Toney Smith of Rendon, TX
April 9-13, 2006

Those To Serve

February 19, 2006

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Tullis

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... George Thomas
SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYER Michael Simmons
PRESIDE..... Jeff Nemechek
ASSIST..... John Cody Carter
ASSIST..... Allen Scott
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Carter

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Gary Cole
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Dodson
LORD'S SUPPER..... Jeff Nemechek

WEDNESDAY 22nd

SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
INVITATION Myron Nebergall

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher
Phone: (913) 764-2325
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