

## EZEKIEL 33:1-22 | THE PEOPLE: A SIGN

- Ezekiel 33:1-9 | The Sign
  - Ezekiel is asked to **speak to the children of thy people** (v.2), something he has not done since Ezekiel 24:27, when he was struck with muteness. Here he is told what to speak but he is unable to do so until the prophesied time.
  - The word from God is about a **watchman** (v. 2) selected by the people. When this watchman **seeth the sword** (v. 3) that God has sent (v. 2), he *even still* has opportunity to **warn the people** (v. 3). Even then, **whosoever heareth** (v. 4) the warning can respond, and the man who has heard the warning bears personal responsibility. If, however, the watchman **blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned** (v. 6), then the watchman is responsible.
  - Ezekiel stands as **a watchman unto the house of Israel** (v. 7). These verses (1-9) give warning chiefly to Ezekiel as the watchman.
  - Concerning application: *many* have taken this passage in seeking to motivate others for evangelism. To do so is a misuse of the passage for two reasons.
    - First, it is *not* a passage about evangelism.
    - Second, God does not require the blood of others at our hand when we do not evangelize.
    - Evangelism is of utmost importance but should be taught from a grace perspective and from passages which are germane to the subject.
- Ezekiel 33:10-20 | Application
  - Ezekiel was to share the heart of God, that he has **no pleasure in the death of the wicked** (v. 11) but desires that a wicked person would **turn from his way and live** (v. 11).
  - Two theological observations:
    - This is clearly not applicable in the age of grace. Repentance does not result in salvation.
    - This is problematic for Calvinism, which provides no opportunity for the wicked to turn. Also problematic to Calvinism is the **whosoever** of verse 4.
  - In verse 12 we see the impact of sin in the age of the law: **the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression**. That is, the man who has lived righteously can suddenly lose it all in one sin. On the other hand, when the wicked man **turneth from his wickedness** he **shall not fall** by means of his past sins. This truth (a truth for the age of Law) is further elaborated in verses 13-16, with emphasis on repayment in verse 15. Note that verse 16 ends by saying the repentant and repaying wicked man **hath done that which is lawful and right**, and thus is back in right-standing with the Law.
  - In spite of this, the **people say, The way of the Lord is not equal** (v. 17). The Lord disagrees and claims that it is the people whose **way is not equal** (v. 17). Because of this, God pledges to **judge you every one after his ways** (v. 20).
  - More theological observations:

- Catholicism is built on this same kind of theology: as long as you are living righteously *when you die* then you will live.
  - Most of Protestantism and Evangelicalism is simply confused, sometimes teaching a grace message, at other times teaching the message of this passage. Sometimes teaching 2 Corinthians 5:19, other times teaching Ezekiel 33:20b.
  - The only solution to the contrast of grace and judgment is not to mix the two, but to *divide* the two, as instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15.
- Ezekiel 33:21-22 | Fulfillment
  - Ezekiel 24:26 had prophesied that one would escape the city and come to Ezekiel to let him know that the city had fallen. Now this has been fulfilled. The traditional date assigned to this event is 587 BC.
  - Ezekiel notes in verse 22 that the **hand of the Lord** had been upon him the prior evening and **had opened my mouth**. The man came **in the morning** and Ezekiel's **mouth was opened** (the night before). It looks like the opening of the mouth took place at the time the man escaped.

## EZEKIEL 33:23-33 | THE INHABITANT OF THE WASTE

- Ezekiel 33:23-24 - The saying of the People
  - Now the land has been reduced to rubble, and the people of the rubble stand defiant, saying **the land is given us for inheritance** (v. 24).
- Ezekiel 33:25-29 | God Proclaims More Destruction
  - While the people claim rights to the land because they are the **many** (v. 24) that comes from the **one** (v. 24), a reference to the fulfilled prophecies to Abraham, God reminds them of their sins of idolatry, bloodshed, abomination, and fornication. Shall this people **possess the land?** (v. 26).
  - Rather, God promises to remove the remainder by **the sword** (v. 27) and **the beasts** (v. 27) and **the pestilence** (v. 27). In the end, the land will be **most desolate** (v. 28) and **the pomp of her strength shall cease** (v. 28) and the land **shall be desolate** (v. 28).
  - When this is done the people will **know that I am the Lord**.
- Ezekiel 33:30-33 | The People Speak, Again
  - The Lord tells Ezekiel that **thy people are still talking against thee** (v. 30). Even though they now come to **hear what is the word is that cometh forth from the Lord** (v. 30) and **sit before thee as my people** (v. 31) and **with their mouth they show much love** (v. 31) and Ezekiel is to them **as a very lovely song** sung from **one that hath a pleasant voice** (v. 32), yet this "show" of the people means nothing, **for they hear thy words, but they do them not** (v. 32). However, **when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,)** (v. 33, note the double emphasis), then the people will **know that a prophet hath been among them** (v. 33).
  - It is my interpretation that:
    - The land has been destroyed, but the phrase *they shall know that I am the Lord* (v. 29) is always a reference to the last days. Since the destruction in 587BC was clearly not *last days*, then these words have an eschatological meaning (and likely have no discernable short-term fulfillment).

- In *latter days*, however, the Jewish people would give this “lip service” to the word of the Lord, but **they do them not** (v. 32). However, when God lays the **land most desolate because of all their abominations** (v. 29) in the coming Tribulation, **then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them** (v. 33) and these words will be ultimately fulfilled.