

Ezekiel's Final Summons to Watchman Duty

Ezekiel 33:1–9

Veritas Adult Community

February 13, 2021

The Word of YHWH

^{33:1} Now the following message of YHWH came to me:

² Human, speak to your compatriots and say to them: “Suppose I bring a sword against a country, and the country’s citizens pick one man from among them and appoint him to be their watchman. ³ Suppose he sees the sword advancing against the country and warns the people by blowing the horn. ⁴ If anybody heard the sound of the horn but ignored the warning, and the sword came and took him away, then his blood would be upon his own head, ⁵ He heard the sound of the horn, but he ignored the warning, thus his blood is upon himself. Now suppose he had heeded the warning; then he would have saved his life.

⁶ As for the watchman, if he sees the sword advancing, and the people are not warned because he fails to blow the horn, and the sword arrives and takes one person away from them, that person was taken away on account of his own guilt, but I will hold the watchman responsible for his death.

⁷ Now you, human, are the one I have appointed as watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a message from my mouth, then you are to warn them about me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, “O wicked person, you shall surely die!” and you do not issue a warning to the wicked person to abandon his course, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but I will hold you accountable for his death. ⁹ But if you have warned the wicked person to turn from his course, but he has refused to do so, he, on account of his iniquity, shall die, but you will have saved your life.

Exposition**Introduction: The End of an Era**

²¹ Now in the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a certain survivor from Jerusalem came to me and announced, “The city has fallen!” ²² Now the hand of YHWH had come upon me the previous evening, before the survivor had arrived, and he had opened my mouth in the morning prior to his coming to me. Thus my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless.

Date of present oracle: between January 5, 587 (beginning of siege of Jerusalem)
and July 14, 586 (Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians)

Outline of Ezekiel 33

- A. The Final Summons to Ezekiel to Watchman Duty (vv. 1–20)
- B. The Final Word Concerning Jerusalem (vv. 21–22)
- C. The Final Disputation with the People in Judah (vv. 23–29)
- D. The Final Vindication of Ezekiel as YHWH’s Watchman to the Exiles (vv. 30–33)

A. The Final Summons to Ezekiel to Watchman Duty (vv. 1–20)

- 1. The Nature of the Summons (vv. 1–6)
 - a. The Framework (vv. 1–2b, 6d)
 - “Suppose I bring a sword against a country. . . (v. 2b)
 - “I will hold the watchman responsible for his death” (v. 6d)
 - b. The Metaphor of the Watchman (vv. 2b–5b)

Scenario 1 (vv. 2b–5)

- (1) News reaches a country of an enemy invasion.
- (2) A man is appointed as look-out to observe carefully the movements of the enemy.

- (3) The enemy is sighted.
- (4) The citizens are alerted by the sound of the watchman’s horn.
- (5) The people ignore the warning.
- (6) They are slain.
- (7) They are held accountable for their own deaths.

Scenario 1: An Alternative Ending (v. 5b)

- (5) The people respond to the warning.
- (6) They are delivered.

Scenario 2 (v. 6)

- (3) The enemy is sighted, and continues this way.
- (4) The sentry fails to sound the alarm.
- (5) A single person is captured.
- (6) Tthe person is held responsible for his own guilt.
- (7) The watchman is held accountable for the man’s death.



b. The Instrument of Warning: The Shophar (ibex or ram’s horn)

2. The Charge to Ezekiel (vv. 7–9)

A SYNOPSIS OF EZEKIEL 3:17–19 AND EZEKIEL 33:7–9

Ezekiel 3:17–19	Ezekiel 33:7–9
Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a message from my mouth, then you are to warn them [to get away] from me.	<i>As for you,</i> son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a message from my mouth, then you are to warn them [to get away] from me.
If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die!” and you do not warn him, and you do not speak up to warn the wicked person [to turn] from his wicked way, that he may live, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.	If I say to the wicked, “O wicked person, you shall surely die!” and you do not speak up to warn the wicked person [to turn] from his way, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.
But you, if you have warned the wicked person and he has not turned from his wickedness and from his wicked way he, on account of his iniquity, he shall die, but you, you will have saved your life.	But you, if you have warned the wicked person to turn from his way, and he has not turned from his way he, on account of his iniquity, he shall die, but you, you will have saved your life.

The Plot

- a. YHWH seizes the authority from the citizens and commissions the sentry himself.
- b. Ezekiel is the sentry commissioned.
- c. The house of Israel (exile community) is the target.

C. Lessons from Ezekiel’s Final Summons to Watchman Duty (33:1–9)

- 1. Whoever would serve as a messenger of God must recognize that the calling comes from God alone.
- 2. Whoever would serve as God’s messenger must first have a clear vision of the one who sends him/her.
- 3. Whoever would serve as the messenger of God must be inspired by the message of God.
- 4. Whoever would serve as God’s messenger is called to faithfulness, not to success.
- 5. Whoever discharge faithfully the commission that YHWH had laid on them will be rewarded with the sentence of life, and vindication in the eyes of the people.
- 6. Whoever are in range of the watchman’s warning are accountable to YHWH for their response.