

# I Have Made You a Watchman

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The video version of this teaching is at: <https://youtu.be/jdOpmaVblrg>

The scripture reading is Ezekiel 33:1-20

As we begin the High Holy Days with the Feast of Trumpets, it is important to remember what this day is about. Yeshua Himself gave us many warnings in the form of parables to be ready and watching for His return. One such parable is found in the gospel of Matthew chapter 25:

Matthew 25:1-5 KJV 1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Yeshua is calling the believers to be ready and watching. But what are we to be ready and watching for? Yeshua, as well as the apostles who came after Him, were all expecting His return. But when would He return? In the meantime, before His return, just as with Yeshua's disciples, we are to be watchman. We are to be prepared and ready at a moment's notice.

To better understand Yeshua's warning, as well as the words of the apostle Paul regarding this same subject, we need to have a better understanding of the life and times in which they lived and ministered. The Feast of Trumpets, or what we today call Rosh Hashanah, is the only feast day that begins on the first day of the month.

In ancient times in the land of Israel, one did not follow a fixed calendar as we do today. Also, the Biblical months then, as well as the modern-day Jewish calendar, follow the cycles of the moon. The beginning of the month is marked by the "new moon." A new moon was defined, not as the total disappearance of the moon as it passed between the earth and the sun, but as the first visible sighting of the sliver of the moon just after local sunset in Jerusalem.

The beginning of months and, therefore, the timing of the feast days was determined by this sighting. The official sighting was under the authority of the Sanhedrin. As a new moon was anticipated, watchmen were sent out by the Sanhedrin to observe the skies and report back to them should they see the new moon. If none was seen, the process was repeated the next night. But the new month did not begin until the Sanhedrin made their declaration following the confirmed sighting.

Given the fact that the new month, Tishri in this case, and therefore, the Feast of Trumpets could not begin until the new moon was sighted and confirmed, this vitally important feast day was also called Yom HaKesah, or the hidden day.

This is important when we consider the words of Yeshua recorded in Matthew chapter 24:

Matthew 24:36 NKJV 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

The Feast of Trumpets was a High Holy Day; an additional Sabbath day regardless of the day of the week on which it fell. One had to prepare for it ahead of time just as one did for the regular weekly Sabbath. All food had to be prepared and ready because no food could be cooked on the Sabbath. It is a Feast of the LORD, so

you must have your best garments ready. As Sunset marking the beginning of the Sabbath is just arriving, a special meal has been prepared; the good dishes are put out; everyone is in their best clothes. But will the new moon be sighted on this night? Will the feast begin this evening, or will they need to repeat all these preparations again tomorrow? The element of watching and waiting is an integral part of this feast day. They knew the day was coming and they were prepared, but they didn't know exactly when it would begin, either the day or the hour. They had to be ready and watching.

The beginning of this unknown day was announced by the sounding of the shofar, a kind of trumpet made from a ram's horn. The sounding of the shofar was used for many things, and one of the most important was the announcement of the new moons and the appointed Feast Days.

Leviticus 23:1-2 NKJV 1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

Verse 24 speaks of this Feast Day in particular.

Leviticus 23:24 NKJV 24 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.

This feast day was marked by a special blowing of the shofar. At the conclusion of the Temple ceremony announcing the beginning of the Feast, one hundred blasts of the shofar are sounded with the last single long blast known as the "last trumpet." This puts the words of Paul in perspective.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NKJV 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Paul is using language which indicates that he is placing the return of Yeshua and the resurrection of the dead at the "last trumpet." Paul's understanding of the prophecies concerning Yeshua's return and the end of the age was that these events are foreshadowed in the fall Feast days of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

There is far more background to this than we can explore with this short teaching. For further study, Brenda and I have prepared an in-depth study of all the Feast Days in our study books under the title "Divine Appointments with God" available from Amazon.com

With this background we now turn our attention to our study text from the prophet Ezekiel and learn what it means to be a watchman, and the role of the watchman. Ezekiel writes this prophecy while in exile in Babylon shortly after the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first Temple.

Ezekiel 33:1-5 NKJV 1 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, 3 'when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 'then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. 5 'He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

The watchman here has a similar role as the watchmen sent to observe the new moons. These watchmen which Ezekiel refers to were placed in the turrets of the city walls and were to watch for the enemies approaching. They were to sound the alarm by blowing the shofar. If anyone among the people did not heed

the warning, then whatever happened to them would be on them and no one else. But Ezekiel says the watchman also has a heavy responsibility to give an accurate and timely warning.

Ezekiel 33:6 NKJV 6 'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

It seems that in these six verses of our passage, the LORD, through Ezekiel, is using the concept of a watchman, a well-known and often necessary practice in this time, in both a literal and metaphoric sense. The destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Babylonians had taken place only a few short years before. The clue may be in the words at the end of verse six where it says, "he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand."

At verse seven, there is a switching of gears so to speak. The LORD is perhaps telling Ezekiel that he is now a watchman for the house of Israel. Ezekiel is to give a watchman's warning pointing out the iniquity that remains in the people while in exile.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 NKJV 7 "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

The sins of Israel needed to be addressed directly and on an individual basis. God had chosen Ezekiel to do it. The nation had been taken into exile, but there remained sin among the people that sin needed to be addressed. The LORD called upon Ezekiel to be the Watchman to sound the warning.

Ezekiel 33:10-11 NKJV 10 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' 11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Through Ezekiel, God is pleading with the people of Israel to turn away from their wicked ways that caused their exile in the first place while there is still time! As a nation, they have already faced judgement and would spend the next seventy years in exile in Babylon before a remnant would return to the land and eventually rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. But while in this exile they would face some very dark times and be called upon to make some troubling and serious choices as individuals. The prophet Daniel and others experienced firsthand some of the tough choices facing them in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon commissioned that a golden statue of himself be made and ordered that it be worshiped as a god. Under penalty of death three Jewish men defied the order of the king.

Daniel 3:15-18 NKJV 15 "Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery

furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

At the beginning of this period of exile in Babylon, God issues these warnings to the individual. God had said that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His desire is for all to repent and return to righteousness. God issues a stark warning about their individual iniquity and what the result of it will be.

Ezekiel 33:12-13 NKJV 12 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.' 13 "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die.

What is the LORD telling the people? He is saying that they cannot hide behind all their righteousness when there is the least bit of iniquity or transgression within them. All their righteousness cannot save them. Unrepentant transgression will veto any of their previous righteousness. But what happens to the unrighteous should they repent, or anyone repent for that matter?

Ezekiel 33:14-16 NKJV 14 "Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, 15 "if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 16 "None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

How is it fair that someone who is living in sin and iniquity their entire lives, who late in life comes to repentance and turns to God and is saved, compared to someone who loves and serves God his or her entire life, and in the end, submits to sin and is lost? Whose life was more meaningful? Whose life was more relevant to the promotion of the kingdom of God? That is just the question Ezekiel poses.

Ezekiel 33:17-20 NKJV 17 "Yet the children of your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' But it is their way which is not fair! 18 "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. 19 "But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. 20 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways."

What the LORD is saying through His servant Ezekiel is that all mankind will be judged by the choices they make. But how does this passage in Ezekiel relate to the concept of the watchman? What is the message for us some twenty-five plus centuries later?

Ezekiel was taken into exile among the first wave of Israelites relocated to Babylon. When he wrote these words, the nation as a whole had been judged. Now God turned His attention to the people and called Ezekiel to sound the warning of the trials and choices they would face as individuals while in exile.

Yeshua Himself was a watchman giving his disciples many warnings of the coming destruction of the Temple and the season of His return to judge the world. The gospel of Matthew records one such warning.

Matthew 24:37-39 NKJV 37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in

marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Just as in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins which we read at the opening of this teaching, Yeshua then goes on to warn his disciples to be watchful and vigilant.

Matthew 24:42-44 NKJV 42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

At the end of Yeshua's time on earth following His resurrection and just before His ascension, Yeshua gave His disciples a commission to teach and make disciples of others along the way.

Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

As followers of the Master Yeshua, these words apply to us today as well. As I look around us, in the times we live in today. There is turmoil from the stark political differences dividing us into angry factions. There are blatant, sometimes violent, and irrational attacks on believers both here and abroad happening almost every day. With the evil spirit that has crept into our society as well as polluted the body of believers, I am convinced more than ever that the words spoken by Ezekiel to the exiles in Babylon is just as relevant to us today as it was for them. The people are asleep! The people are not watching and preparing for Yeshua's return! We are the ones being called to be today's watchmen. We are called to stand guard on the walls and turrets of our world lifting the shofar to our lips to sound the alarm. He is coming! Wake up and be ready, for the kingdom of God is at hand!

Study Questions:

1. In a metaphorical sense, how can Ezekiel 33:1-6 be applied to the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians? What about other metaphorical applications of this passage?
2. How does the ancient practice of sighting the new moon to begin a new month as well as the Temple era celebration of the Feast of Trumpets enhance our understanding of Yeshua's teachings about his return?
3. How and to whom is the term "son of man" used in the bible? What is the significance to both Ezekiel and Yeshua being referred to as "son of man?"
4. At the beginning of this teaching, we quoted the parable of the foolish virgins with the understanding that it is a warning to be ready and prepared for Yeshua's return. What are some of the other teachings or parables of Yeshua that relate the same or similar warnings?
5. It is clear from this teaching that God called Ezekiel to be a kind of watchman for the people of Israel while they were in exile. As disciples of Yeshua, how is He calling his disciples, both then and now, to be watchman? What are the similarities of today's world to those of both Ezekiel's and Yeshua's time?
6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

