

# The Book of Ezekiel, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 14: The Watchman and the Fallen City

### Ezekiel 33:1-33

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Help the class grasp the twofold accountability of the watchman who must warn and the hearer who must heed, and to feel the weight of faithful gospel proclamation.

Hold up God's tender declaration that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, so that the certainty of judgment is heard alongside the genuine call to repentance.

Move every member from admiring the word to obeying it, exposing the danger of being a hearer who is charmed by truth but unchanged by it.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*In Ezekiel 33:1-6, what is the watchman's duty, and how does the passage distinguish between the watchman's accountability and the hearer's own responsibility when the warning is given?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

God sets the scene with a parable: when He brings the sword on a land, the people take a man and set him as their watchman.

The watchman's task is to keep his eyes on the horizon and, when he sees the sword coming, to blow the trumpet and warn the people.

The imagery comes from the ancient walled city, where the lookout on the wall held the lives of all within his vigilance.

The whole community recognizes the danger of the sword and appoints a watchman precisely so they may be warned in time.

The parable sets up the prophet's own calling: he is God's appointed watchman over the house of Israel.

#### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The watchman picture is a renewal of the commission first given in chapter 3, now marking the turning point of the book.
- The sword represents God's instrument of judgment, real and approaching, not an idle threat.

- The figure presses the truth that warning is itself an act of mercy toward those in danger.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why does the community itself appoint the watchman?
- What does the trumpet blast represent in the work of God's messenger?
- How does this parable frame Ezekiel's renewed calling?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*Where in your own life have you heard a clear warning from God's word yet treated it as someone else's concern rather than your own?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

If the trumpet sounds and a man does not heed it, his blood is on his own head, for he was warned.

The hearer who ignores the warning has no one to blame but himself when the sword takes him.

But if the watchman sees the sword and does not blow the trumpet, the people are taken away in their iniquity.

In that case God declares that He will require the people's blood at the watchman's hand.

Two distinct accountabilities are set side by side: the duty of the messenger to warn and the duty of the hearer to heed.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The passage teaches genuine human responsibility on both sides, ruling out any notion that the hearer's response is fixed beyond his control.
- The watchman's guilt for silence underscores the seriousness of withholding the gospel from the lost.
- Blood on one's own head means each person answers to God for his response to the warning he received.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does the warned hearer bear responsibility for ignoring the trumpet?
- What weight does this passage place on the messenger who stays silent?
- How do these two accountabilities apply to gospel work today?

### **Question 3**

**Student Question:**

*According to 33:7-9, God says that if the watchman fails to warn the wicked, the wicked will die in his iniquity but his blood God will require at the watchman's hand. What does this teach about the seriousness of faithful gospel proclamation?*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

God applies the parable directly: So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel.

Whenever the prophet hears a word from God's mouth, he is to give the people warning from God.

If he fails to warn the wicked and the wicked dies in his iniquity, God will require his blood at the prophet's hand.

But if he warns the wicked to turn and the wicked refuses, the wicked dies in his iniquity, and the prophet has delivered his soul.

Faithful warning, whether heeded or rejected, clears the watchman before God; silence does not.

**Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The watchman's charge is the pattern for all faithful gospel proclamation, sounding God's warning without softening it.
- Paul echoes this very accountability when he declares himself innocent of all blood because he held back nothing.
- The text does not measure faithfulness by results but by the faithful delivery of God's word.

**Discussion Prompts**

- What exactly clears the watchman before God?
- How does this charge shape our understanding of evangelism?
- Why is faithfulness, not visible success, the standard of the watchman?

**Question 4****Student Question:**

*Think of someone in your life who needs the warning of the gospel. What has kept you from sounding the trumpet, and what would faithfulness look like this week?*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

The people lament that their transgressions weigh upon them and they waste away, asking how they can live.

God answers with an oath: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

His desire is rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.

He pleads with them, Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Here the certainty of judgment and the tenderness of mercy are bound together in a single divine appeal.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- This verse refutes any view that God delights in condemning sinners or has predetermined their ruin.
- The call to turn shows that repentance is real and possible, not foreclosed by an unconditional decree.
- God's longing for sinners to live is echoed in Peter's word that He is not wishing that any should perish.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does God's oath reveal about His heart toward the wicked?
- How does this verse hold together judgment and mercy?
- What does the doubled plea, turn back, turn back, communicate?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*In 33:10–11 God declares, As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. How does this statement hold together God's certain judgment and His genuine mercy?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

God declares that the righteousness of the righteous will not deliver him in the day of his transgression.

If a righteous man trusts in his righteousness and then does injustice, none of his former righteousness will be remembered.

He will die for the iniquity he has committed, despite his past record.

Past obedience is no insurance policy against present rebellion.

The principle guards against presumption, the false security of resting on former faithfulness.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- This passage stands against the once-saved-always-saved notion, teaching that the righteous can fall away and perish.
- Righteousness is not a stored credit but a present walk that must continue.
- The warning targets spiritual presumption, a danger in every age of the church.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why will past righteousness not deliver the one who turns to sin?
- How does this passage warn against spiritual presumption?
- What does it teach about the necessity of continuing in obedience?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*When you picture God's attitude toward sinners, do you imagine Him eager to condemn or longing for them to turn and live? How does His own self-revelation here reshape that picture?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

On the other side, when God tells the wicked he will surely die, and that man turns from his sin and does justice,

if he restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without doing wrong, he will surely live.

None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him.

Genuine repentance is marked by concrete change, restoring what was taken and doing what is right.

The wicked who turns is met with full forgiveness and life, his past sins remembered no more.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- True repentance bears visible fruit, not mere regret but restitution and a changed walk.
- No past sin is too great to be forgiven when the sinner genuinely turns to God.
- This balances the previous warning, holding out real hope to the one who repents.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What concrete marks of repentance does this passage describe?

- What hope does it offer to the wicked who turns?
- How does God's treatment of the repentant display His mercy?

## Question 7

### Student Question:

*In 33:12–20 God answers the charge that His way is not just, insisting that the righteous who turns to sin will die and the wicked who turns to righteousness will live. What does this teach about personal accountability and the impossibility of resting on past righteousness or being bound by past sin?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

The people complain that the way of the Lord is not just, charging God with unfairness.

God turns the charge back: it is their own way that is not just.

He restates the principle: the righteous who turns to sin dies for it, and the wicked who turns to righteousness lives by it.

God declares He will judge each one according to his ways.

Personal accountability stands at the center: every individual answers to God for the path he walks.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The complaint that God is unjust arises from a refusal to accept personal responsibility.
- Each person is judged for his own way, in keeping with the principle that the soul that sins shall die.
- God's justice is not arbitrary but measures each life by its actual course before Him.

### Discussion Prompts

- Why do the people accuse God's way of being unjust?
- How does God answer the charge of unfairness?
- What does individual judgment teach about personal accountability?

## Question 8

### Student Question:

*Is there a past obedience you are quietly resting upon, or a past failure you assume defines you forever? How does this passage call you to turn today rather than coast or despair?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

In the twelfth year of the exile a fugitive arrives with the news: The city has fallen.

The long-pronounced judgment on Jerusalem has come to pass exactly as God said.

The evening before the fugitive came, the hand of the LORD had opened the prophet's mouth.

Ezekiel, whose speech had been restrained during the years of judgment, is now free to speak.

The fall of the city marks the hinge of the book, where warning gives way to the message of hope and restoration.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The arrival of the fugitive confirms that God's word came to pass precisely, vindicating the prophet's faithfulness.
- The opening of Ezekiel's mouth signals the new phase of his ministry after the city's fall.
- This historical moment underscores the certainty of God's spoken word, a central theme of the book.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does the fugitive's report confirm about God's word?
- Why is the opening of Ezekiel's mouth significant here?
- How does the fall of Jerusalem mark a turning point in the book?

### **Question 9**

#### **Student Question:**

*Verses 30–33 describe people who hear Ezekiel as one who sings beautiful love songs, sitting eagerly before him yet not doing what he says. Set this beside the call to be doers of the word and not hearers only who deceive themselves in James 1:22. How can we tell whether we are truly heeding God's word or merely enjoying it as entertainment, and what concrete evidence would mark the difference in our daily lives?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Those left in the ruined land of Israel claim the land as their possession, reasoning that Abraham was only one man yet inherited it.

They presume on covenant promises while clinging to their sins, eating with the blood, lifting their eyes to idols, and shedding blood.

God exposes the emptiness of their claim: should they then possess the land while living in such rebellion?

He announces that the sword, wild beasts, and pestilence will sweep the survivors away.

The land will become a desolation, and they will know that He is the LORD.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The remnant's appeal to Abraham shows how covenant privilege can be twisted into presumption while sin remains.
- God's promises are never a license to continue in iniquity, a warning against false confidence.
- Possessing the inheritance has always been bound to walking in covenant faithfulness, not mere descent.

#### **Discussion Prompts**

- How do the survivors misuse the example of Abraham?
- Why does God reject their claim to the land?
- What does this teach about presuming on God's promises while clinging to sin?

#### **Question 10**

##### **Student Question:**

*Looking back over this whole chapter, write one sentence describing how you will move this week from being a hearer who admires the word to a doer who obeys it, and name the first step you will take.*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

The people talk about Ezekiel by the walls and in their doorways, urging one another to come hear the word from the LORD.

They sit before him as His people and hear his words, but they do not do them.

With their mouths they show much love, but their heart goes after their unjust gain.

To them the prophet is like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they enjoy the sound but obey nothing.

When all this comes to pass, and surely it will, they will know that a prophet has been among them.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The passage exposes the danger of being a hearer who admires the word as entertainment while remaining a stranger to obedience.
- James later sounds the same warning, calling us to be doers of the word and not hearers only who deceive themselves.

- Delight in good preaching is no substitute for the obedience that proves the word has taken root.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How do these hearers treat the word as entertainment rather than command?
- What is the difference between admiring the word and obeying it?
- How does James 1:22 sharpen the warning of these verses for us?