

The Burden of the Watchman

Continuing Session Pt. 2

Impacting our Culture

A. Dictionary definitions: Watching is more than casual perception.

1. We use the word casually: *watching* television, *watching* the sun go down.
2. Primary definitions denote more than casual observation.
 - a. Watch is defined as "to keep vigil as a devotional exercise." Another definition is "to be awake during the night."
 - b. There are many who find themselves awake in the early hours of the morning (2:00 – 3:00 a.m. and utilize the time to seek God in prayer – this is sometimes referred to as the "night watch".
 - b. Historical definition of "watch": "A group of men who are assigned to patrol the streets of a town at night, announce the hours, and act as police."
 - c. Watchman: "A person who keeps watch: GUARD."

3. NOTE: Watching in its primary sense implies responsible involvement.

B. Biblical watchmen: A secular vocation with spiritual implications

1. Watchmen in biblical times were caretakers and guardians.
 - a. Some were assigned to protect crops from predators and thieves.
 - b. Some were assigned to protect cities from military invasion.
2. Watchmen were to be proactive in their role as guardians.
 - a. They were vigilant. There were "watches" around the clock
 - b. They were vocal: They warned of danger with shouts or trumpets.
3. The words for "watchman" have implications for spiritual watchfulness.

- a. (tsaphah): "To lean forward, i.e. to peer into the distance" (perception)
- b. (shamar): "to hedge about" (as with thorns) (defense) c. (Natsar): "Conceal" (as in besieging a city) (advance)

II. The Ministry of the Watchman in the Old Testament

A. Adam was assigned to guard or "keep" the Garden of Eden.
"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." (Genesis 2:15)

- 1. The word translated keep is (shamar) – It means to watch, to hedge in, to guard (as from an enemy or threat, to keep, to have charge of, to be on one's guard, to take heed.
- 2. Because he didn't, the Cherubim were to "keep" (shamar) him out.
- 3. Lesson: **First mention** of watching relates to spiritual vigilance.

B. Ezekiel was called to be a watchmen over Israel.

- 1. He was anointed to be a *seer* before He was called to be a watchman.
 - a. He sees the windstorm, the cherubim, the expanse, the Lord upon His throne, and the scroll he is commanded to eat. (1:4-3:3)
 - b. He is called to be a spiritual *watchman* who warns people of the dangers of sin and unrepentant hearts. "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so, hear the word I speak and give them warning from me." (Ezekiel 3:16)
- 2. He was anointed to see the big picture before embarking on His task.
 - a. He received revelation of God's omniscience. This is pictured in the Cherubim with four faces and full of eyes. (1:17-18;10:12)
 - b. He received revelation of the people's idolatry: idol of jealousy, worship of creeping things and animals; worship of the sun. (ch. 8)
 - c. He received revelation of the people's spiritual blindness & oppression.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS:

"He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'" (Ezekiel 8:12)

SPIRITUAL OPPRESSION:

"Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?"'" (Ezekiel 33:10)

3. He was called to the multifaceted ministry of the watchman.

a. Seeing what God sees and feeling what God feels.

"The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me." (3:14)

"Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." (9:3-4)

b. Speaking to turn from sin and inspire hope.

"Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'" (33:11)

"I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them They will be my people, and I will be their God." (11: 16b, 17b, 19a, 20b)

4. God still uses the watchman to expose sin and call people to repentance.

C. Isaiah was a seer who foresaw the ministry of spiritual watchmen/intercessors.

1. Isaiah was enabled to foresee future events of Israel's history:

- a. The exile of the Jews to Babylon
- b. The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple
- c. The edict of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to their homeland

- d. The future reconstruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

2. Isaiah heard God speak of the calling/positioning of watchmen/intercessors:

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth." (62:6-7)

3. These watchmen/intercessors were seers and participants in the vision:

- a. They saw beyond the exile, the fall of Jerusalem, and the edict to return.
- b. They saw the rebuilding of the city with large walls to fortify it.
- c. They saw themselves on the wall interceding from vision to reality.

4. This depiction imparts three important lessons about watchmen/intercessors:

- a. They see the vision of God's purposes.
- b. They own the vision and position themselves in it.
- c. They battle through prayer to the fulfillment of that vision.

5. God uses watchman today to place themselves in the vision and pray through to the answer.