

The Watchman

Have you ever considered yourself to be a "Watchman," one who watches for something to occur or someone to appear? Before His arrest, Jesus told the disciples that while He prayed, they were to "watch and pray." Two of the four gospels record His words, which are really His command (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). As Jesus taught of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, He said, "Watch therefore, and pray always..." (Luke 21:36). These are only two of the times Jesus or His apostles tell us to watch for something and be prepared to take action.

There are requirements for a watchman that are not itemized in the New Testament narrative. The preparation of Ezekiel as a watchman for the house of Israel can serve as a commentary of that preparation, the duties, and the rewards. Unlike prophets, who were selected, sent, and the word of God given as they spoke, watchmen had to be prepared to watch, endure the wait, and respond when the time came. Ezekiel chapters 3 and 33 describe the prophet's preparation and responsibilities as the watchman.

In preparation, Ezekiel was commanded to absorb God's words and make them an active part of his being. "'Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, 'Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.' So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness" (Ezekiel 3:1-3). A similar command was given to John as he received Christ's revelation (Revelation 10:8-10). The servant, be they prophet or watchman, had to be filled with the knowledge that God wanted them to share. Moreover, they had to be aware of what to watch for so they could sound a warning if people strayed from God's word.

As the scroll was eaten, it was sweet to the taste but later became sour to digest. That is like the word of God, which people love to read and hear but find it difficult to live up to. "As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. And when this comes to pass--surely it will come--then they will know that a prophet has been among them" (Ezekiel 33:30-33)

Today, people find joy and comfort in recalling the story of Jesus' birth, the baptism by John in Jordan, and the Spirit's descent upon God's son. They feel sorrow as they read of the trials, beatings, and crucifixion of the innocent Savior of the world. But most close the Bible and return to their self-centered lives in the world.

Jesus used the same analogy in John 6:50-59. Notice, especially John 6:54-57, "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." Peter understood that the word of God was in Jesus. In John 6:68, Peter said to Jesus, "You have the words of eternal life."

We then, as God's children, absorb the scriptures so that we may recognize what is contrary to them and as dangers approach, help our brethren avoid them. We are the watchmen of today, to watch out for each other, teaching and admonishing each other and wait for the return of our Lord and Christ, (Colossians 1:28; 3:16).