

But Ezekiel was not the *only* one that God would hold accountable for the state of the “house of Israel.” Let’s read a few verses from chapter 34 of Ezekiel.

*“The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup>Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? <sup>3</sup>You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.... <sup>5</sup>So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.... <sup>7</sup>Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord : <sup>8</sup>As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, <sup>9</sup>therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>10</sup>This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.”* (verses 1-3; 5; and 7-10 NIV)

Yes, God was also holding the kings, priests and prophets of Israel responsible because of their position of leadership. It was their responsibility to guide the people in the right direction and instruct them in the right ways. But instead, out of selfishness they had fed their own personal interests instead of guarding the flock that had depended on them for guidance. God told Ezekiel to tell them that they would be held accountable for the sad state of the flock. As it was then, so it is now — we read earlier in Hebrews 13:17 that Shepherds of the Lord’s Church today must also “*give account*” for the souls they watch over.

In conclusion, the Scriptures we’ve looked at in this article indicate that God will hold each of us accountable for our actions as well as our *lack* of actions. We are *all* watchmen, especially during a time of war and brethren, the Church is at war against Satan. Change Agents are using New Hermeneutics to attack the Church from every side and to abolish foundational Truths found in the Word of God. Let us not have to explain to God why *we* failed to sound the trumpet and alert others of the approach of an enemy — or — why we ignored the sound of the warning trumpet.

*Special Note — If you are interested in a study that the Church is the new Israel of God in this Christian Age, the book entitled The True Israel of God by Dr. James Burton Coffman is recommended. An autographed copy of it was given to us many years ago by a very dear friend.*

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# DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

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Watchmen

It’s no secret that the Church is currently engaged in a serious battle. Change Agents are attempting to “undo” the Truth of God’s Word. They are employing New Hermeneutics (a new way of interpreting the Bible) in an attempt to change the very foundational teachings found in the Scriptures. In very practical terms, we could say that New Hermeneutics embraces the attitude of sitting in judgment over the Word of God, rather than allowing the Word to judge us. A whole range of false ideas and teachings are found under the New Hermeneutics heading. Brethren, we are at war. Satan is *actively* attempting to seduce the Bride of Christ and our war *against* his evil schemes should be at full scale.

In this article, we’re going to take a look at a most unusual prophet of the Old Testament — Ezekiel. Ezekiel was an actual witness to a great reformation that took place in the land of Israel under King Josiah. The Scriptures tell us that —

*“Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve the Lord their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the Lord God of their fathers.”* (II Chronicles 34:33 NASB)

Unfortunately however, that reformation turned into a rapid decline under the next several Kings. Under the reign of Jehoiachin, Ezekiel was one of the captives taken to Babylon. It was there that Ezekiel was called by God to be a prophet and a watchmen over the “house of Israel.” Let’s read about the very interesting details of his calling in the following verses.

*“<sup>17</sup>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. ‘...<sup>1</sup>The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup>Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, <sup>3</sup>and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, <sup>4</sup>then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. <sup>5</sup>Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself. <sup>6</sup>But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his*

sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. <sup>9</sup>But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself." (Ezekiel 3:17 and 33:1-9 NIV)

So we read here that God commissioned Ezekiel to be a watchman "for the house of Israel." The duty of the watchman to his people was to always be on the alert and warn of any approach of the enemy. When he saw danger approaching, he was to blow a warning signal with the trumpet to warn the citizens that danger was near. Notice that God told Ezekiel however, that if the watchman failed to sound the warning, his neglect of duty would not only allow the death of the citizens, but the watchman himself would be "accountable for (the) blood" of lives that were lost because of his failure to warn them that an enemy was approaching. So the watchman — by sounding the warning trumpet — moved the responsibility from himself to each individual citizen. Yet if Ezekiel knew that an individual's ways were wicked and he did "not speak out to dissuade him from his ways" the negligent prophet would be held responsible for the death of that person.

Now, let's fast forward for a moment to the New Testament. Romans 15:4 states: "...whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (NASB)

So as Christians, we're told to take heed of the numerous lessons that can be learned from the Old Testament. God's commission to Ezekiel to be a watchman "for the house of Israel" is perhaps one of those lessons that was written "for our instruction." We won't take the space here to list the Scriptural reasoning behind it (although there is ample), but during this Christian Age, the Church is God's new spiritual "house of Israel." So the spiritual house of Israel of today is made up of those who have been immersed in the watery grave of baptism to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. This means then, that if God had commissioned Ezekiel to be a watchman "for the house of Israel" today, Ezekiel would be a watchman for the church and would be held "accountable for the blood" of those whom he neglected to warn of an approaching enemy. So let's look at some New Testament Scriptures that talk about "watching" or being "watchmen" to determine if Christians are commissioned to be watchmen today for the spiritual "house of Israel" or in other words, the Church

- Luke 21:36 — Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.
- Mark 13:37 — And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

- Acts 20:31 — Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
- I Cor. 16:13 — Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.
- Col. 4:2 — Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
- I Thess. 5:6 — Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
- II Tim. 4:5 — But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.
- Heb. 13:17 — Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.
- II Peter 4:7 — But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.
- Rev. 3:3 — Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

As we read these verses (only a few of many), it becomes apparent that even in the New Testament, God instructs His people to be alert watchmen — watchmen who will be on guard against whatever fiery darts Satan tosses at them as individuals or tosses at the Church. We must conclude then, that if as Christians, we choose to be spiritual pacifists or spiritual appeasers (February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 issue of *Diligence*) instead of active watchmen, we are negligent watchmen for the Church. When we read the context (verses 28-31) of Act 20:31 listed above, we read that Paul "ceased not to warn every one" that "savage wolves" would arise even from among the "shepherds" of the Church and "distort the truth." So it's clear that a watchman is expected to maintain constant watchfulness — especially during a time of war. Also let's not forget that God told Ezekiel that he would be held accountable for those who were lost because of his negligence if he failed to sound the trumpet of warning. Will God hold us accountable for those who are lost if we fail to "sound the trumpet" when we see an enemy approaching the Church.

It might be worth noting here that the captives to whom Ezekiel was prophesying were under the delusion that in some miraculous way the power of Babylon would be broken and that they would be returned to their own land. God told Ezekiel —

"yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate." (Ezekiel 3:7 NASB)

That did not however, release Ezekiel from being held accountable if he failed to warn them. His commission was still the same. Have we ever allowed ourselves to be under the delusion that since God is in control anyway, there's no need to be overly concerned about the fiery dart's that Satan aims at the Church?