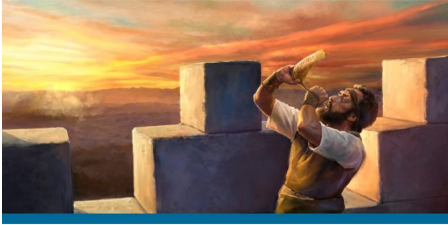


Watch How You Turn



Ezekiel 33:1-20

“Watch How You Turn” (Ezekiel 33:1-20)(5.7.23)

Ezekiel 33:1-20 Amplified Bible
put scripture on screen

33 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²“Son of man, speak to the sons of your people [who are exiled in Babylon] and say to them, ‘If I bring a sword on a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman, ³ and he sees the sword coming on the land, and he blows the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴ then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his [own] head. ⁵ He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood shall be on himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. 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 one of them, he is taken away because of his corruption *and* sin; but I will require his blood from the watchman’s hand.’

⁷ “Now as for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you shall hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me. ⁸ When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will certainly die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die because of his sin; but I will require his blood from your hand. ⁹ But if you on

your part warn the wicked man to turn from his [evil] way and he does not turn from his [evil] way, he will die in his sin; but you have saved your life.

10 “Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus you have said, “Truly our transgressions and our sins are on us, and we are rotting away because of them; how then can we live?”’ **11** Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back (change your way of thinking), turn back [in repentance] from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’ **12** And you, son of man, say to the sons of your people, ‘The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stagger because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness, whereas a righteous man will not be able to live because of his [previous acts of] righteousness on the day when he commits sin.’ **13** When I say to the righteous that he will most certainly live, and he trusts in his [previous acts of] righteousness [to save him] and commits injustice, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but he will die for his injustice that he committed. **14** But when I say to the wicked, ‘You will certainly die,’ and he turns from his sin and practices that which is just (fair) and right— **15** if a wicked man returns [what he took as] a pledge, pays back what he had taken by robbery, walks in the statutes which ensure life, without committing injustice, he will certainly live; he will not die. **16** None of his sins that he has committed will be

remembered against him. He has practiced that which is just (fair) and right; he will most certainly live.

¹⁷ “Yet your people [who are in exile in Babylon] say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right;’ but as for them, it is their own way that is not right. ¹⁸ When the righteous turns back from his righteousness and commits injustice, he will also die because of it. ¹⁹ But when a wicked man turns back from his wickedness and practices what is just (fair) and right, he will live because of it. ²⁰ Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ O house of Israel, I will judge you, every one [of you] in accordance with his own ways!”

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.



Title: **“Watch How You Turn”**

INTRODUCTION:

Last Monday morning, I went to a Pastor’s Prayer Breakfast at Victory Bible Church in Hammonton. After we ate and before we prayed, there

was a presentation by Tim Throckmorton. He was a pastor for 20 plus years before he went to work for The Family Research Council.

He opened his presentation with a quote from Isaiah 62:6–7 (NIV84)

⁶ 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,
⁷ and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem
and makes her the praise of the earth.

This struck a chord with me. The previous day, I had preached to you from 1 Peter 2. The true church, you and I who have been born again, are A Chosen People, a holy royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. We are to declare the praises of the Lord Jesus. Have we? Have we relentlessly called upon God and given Him no rest?

Thursday was the National Day of Prayer. Here in Galloway Township there was a gathering by the flagpole in front of the Municipal Complex. Reverend Dean Bult organized and led the gathering. The mayor and deputy mayor were there and the Town Council's Proclamation was read commemorating the call to prayer.

When local faith leaders were invited to speak, I went first. I read Isaiah 62:6-7. I shared how I had filled the role of watchman during my career in the US Coast Guard and showed the back of my orange coat that says, "USCG." Then I went on to say that as a preacher I am called, in the likeness of Ezekiel, to be a watchman of the faith and truth. Then I prayed. Several others also came forward to pray. There were only about 50 people there, if that many.

BODY:

The Lord makes it clear to Ezekiel that a watchman has serious responsibilities. On a national level, there are those given the authority and they have an obligation to warn the people of impending danger. If the watchman fails to recognize and to warn, to sound the alarm, he will be responsible for anyone who dies. On the other hand, when the watchman blows the trumpet, every person must decide whether to heed the warning. Their blood shall be upon themselves.

The LORD makes Ezekiel a watchman for the house of Israel. Last week, the Apostle Peter spoke about Christians being living stones being built into a spiritual house. Our preachers should be watchman, guarding the flock, guarding the nation, and guarding the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:28 (NIV84)

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

John Wesley on
the Mission
of Methodists

'To reform the nation, and
in particular the Church,
to spread scriptural
holiness over the land.'



You have heard me mention John Wesley many times over the years. He and his brother Charles are considered the founders of the Methodist movement. They were Anglican ministers in the Church of England. They were acutely

aware that they lived in troubling times.

Here is Wesley's understanding of the Methodist mission: 'To reform the nation, and in particular the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'

The Founding Fathers of the United States of America understood the place of religion in sustaining our nation. John Adams, observed, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." He wasn't the only Founding Father to hold this view. Indeed, James Madison wrote that our Constitution requires "sufficient virtue among men for self-government," otherwise, "nothing less than the chains of despotism can restrain them from destroying and devouring one another."



Yesterday, King Charles was coronated as King of the United Kingdom. It was a highly religious service. They even celebrated Holy Communion. They used much of the same scripture and liturgy that we will use here in a few minutes.

Although it has been reported that King Charles has a sincere faith, for most people, the coronation is a strange mix of government, religion; and it is simply ritual and tradition. Here is an excerpt from a May 2nd article in Christianity Today:

"Last year, a *Washington Post* journalist [interviewed](#) Ian Bradley, a professor of cultural and spiritual history here in the United Kingdom, about the accession of King

Charles III to the throne. The reporter remarked, "For a country which is so secular and where so few go to church, you sure mention God a lot."

It's a fair comment. As monarch, King Charles is not only the head of state for the UK but also the Defender of the Faith (a title given to King Henry VIII by the pope in 1521 before the king's famous break with the Roman Catholic Church) and Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

When he is crowned this week in Westminster Abbey, he will be anointed with holy oil by the Archbishop of Canterbury while the choir sings "Zadok the Priest," an anthem used in every coronation since 973 that draws on the anointing of Solomon by the priest Zadok in 1 Kings.

"It is the coronation more than any other event that underlines the sacred nature of the United Kingdom monarchy," writes Bradley in his book *God Save the King: The Sacred Nature of Monarchy*. "At their coronations kings and queens are not simply crowned and enthroned but consecrated, set apart and anointed, dedicated to God and invested with sacerdotal garb and symbolic regalia. Here, if anywhere, we find the divinity which hedges the throne."

All of this will take place in a country in which, as [a recent census revealed](#), fewer than half the population describe themselves as Christian. The Church of England's own statistics suggest that just 1.5 percent of the population attend a weekly service, while a 2018

British Social Attitudes survey found that 43 percent of us “never or practically never” attend a religious service.”

My friends, the Christian faith in America may be healthier than it is in England, but we are in a rapid decline. We see it on a national scale. We have even seen the struggles here on our own doorsteps.

Earthly kings have authority and with that authority they have responsibilities too. When you read through the Bible, especially books like Ezekiel, you see that God uses kings and other nations to fulfill His purposes. In today’s scripture, make note that the LORD says, “If I bring a sword on a land.”



The Wicked
and the
Righteous

Also, Ezekiel is preaching to those people who are exiled in Babylon. They are in exile because they failed to repent and turn back to God, forsaking idolatry and all their sordid sins. God had sent prophets to warn them. They ignored God and His

prophets. So, the Lord brought King Nebuchadnezzar’s army against them to be conquered and decimated. Yes, God is sovereign and His will always wins out in the end.

A few years ago, I had to take a preaching class as required by the Local Pastor Course of Study. The class was taught by a woman who was the senior pastor at a large United Methodist Church in Eastern PA. She was an

effective communicator and recognized as a good preacher.

One of the scriptures on which we practiced our preaching skills was Ezekiel 37, known as the Valley of Dry Bones. After she preached that scripture, we discussed her message and delivery. I was distressed because I felt she failed to mention a central issue of the scripture, the cause of the valley of dry bones: sin and disobedience. She responded that people already know about sin. They need to be comforted by the promise of God's restoration.

Really? We don't need to warn people against wickedness? Remember that Ezekiel is preaching to the Jewish exiles who had been carried off to Babylon and other places, after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. One hundred and twenty five years earlier, the Assyrians had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In both cases, it was the LORD God who had brought the "sword" against His Chosen People. Why? Because they continued to sin against God and their neighbor. They continued to live in idolatry, putting other things before God.

As a watchman appointed over this flock, I tell you that there may have never been a time when this country needed to hear more about the dangers of sin. The state of the nation and the state of the Church are at a critical juncture. The Barna Research Institute did a survey in 2004 that showed that only 27% of United Methodist Pastor's held a Biblical Worldview. Today, it is almost

universally recognized that the US is no longer considered a Christian Nation.



During last Monday's presentation made to pastors, Tim Throckmorton shared some very disturbing findings from more recent Barna Research.

6 in 100 people believe that the Bible is the inerrant, holy inspired

word of god.

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Absolute moral truth exists

- It is based upon the Bible.

Six core beliefs

- The Bible is accurate
- Jesus was sinless
- Satan is real
- God is all powerful and all knowing
- Salvation is by grace alone
- Every Christian needs to evangelize

What is a biblical worldview? This slide shows the very basics, but I would add several more core beliefs.

Tim very kindly provided me two slides, which came from a presentation created by George Barna himself.

Barna Research 2019

Significant Sources of Influence in America Culture

Top Tier	Middle Tier	Bottom Tier
Movies	Schools	Non-nuclear family
TV	Print media	Promotional events
Music	Video games	Protest events
Books	Peers	Live theater
Internet/social media	Large corporations	Advertising literature
Public policy/laws	Affinity groups	Local churches
Family/Parents	...and others	...and others

Barna
Research
2021

Significant Sources Of Influence Vary By Age Group

Children	Teens	Adults
Movies	Movies	Movies
TV	TV	TV
Music	Music	Music
Internet/social media	Internet/social media	Internet/social media
Public policy/laws	Public policy/laws	Public policy/laws
Family	Family	Family
Peers	Peers	Books
School	Celebrities/Athletes	Affinity Groups

- George Barna – “Church ranks 17th”



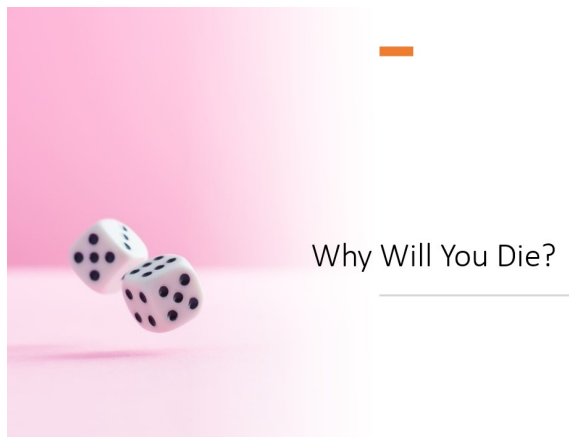
Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV84)

¹¹ 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?'

TURN TURN TURN REPENT REPENT REPENT

Acts 3:19 (NIV84) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

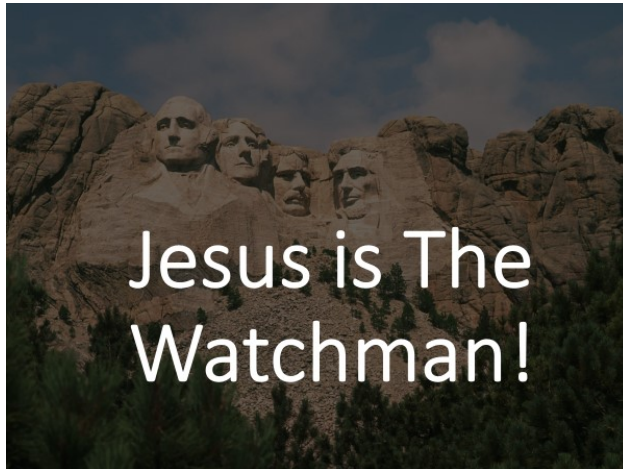


Almighty God is pleading with them. Let the wicked confess, make amends, and live in accordance with my commands. And you will live. This is eternal life versus eternal condemnation.

There is also a VERY STERN warning to the righteous. You must continue to walk in the ways of God. Be wary that you do not stumble into wickedness and the way of death. Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV84)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.



CONCLUSION:

Jesus' favorite name for himself was son of man, which the LORD used for Ezekiel.

Jesus speaks about hell nine times in the Gospel of Matthew. Warning of the

danger of hell is an act of love. Jesus warns that He is the ONLY way to the Father. Jesus warns in Matthew 24:13 (NIV84) "but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

God's desire and demand for a chosen people set apart for His kingdom is hard for us to fathom. The love of God, the call to righteousness, and the warnings of eternal punishment confound us. But it is clearly stated by the Lord Jesus: John 3:16–18 (NIV84)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Amen and amen. Let us pray.