

SET AS A WATCHMAN

– EZEKIEL 3. – *OCTOBER 1.* –

"Hear the Word at My mouth and give them warning from Me."

– Ezek. 3:17.

EZEKIEL RANKS amongst the great Prophets. Most realistic were his visions and powerfully described. A portion of his prophecy was written before the final serious troubles upon the kingdom of Judah, which resulted in the overthrow of Zedekiah's kingdom. The remainder of the book was written after the complete overthrow of the kingdom. The entire prophecy was given in Babylon, Ezekiel himself residing there and ministering as a Prophet chiefly to the captives, arousing their hearts to an appreciation of their situation and to a hope of return in God's appointed time to their own land.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that Ezekiel's mission was entirely or even chiefly to the Jews of his time. Rather we are to understand, through St. Peter's statement, that he, with other Prophets of old, spoke and wrote things which they themselves and the people who heard them did not understand – things which God did not wish to have understood until after the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – things which would be "meat in due season" for the spiritual Israelites throughout this age.

For instance, when Ezekiel tells the people, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," he was delivering a truth applicable to the Gospel Church during this Age, and a truth which will be applicable to the whole world during the Messianic reign, but which was not truth nor applicable to the Jews at the time of the utterance. Why? Because the whole world at that time was lying in the Wicked One; as St. Paul explains, they were all under sentence of death through Adam's disobedience. They could not be put on trial for life, individually, until first they should be redeemed from the Adamic condemnation.

The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin from the Jews, nor redeem them; the redemption could come only in the Divinely appointed way – through the death of the Savior; and the Savior had not yet come, had not yet brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. And as for Israel's Law Covenant, it was merely typical of the New Covenant of the future, and we have the Apostle's word for it that the Law could not make anything perfect.

No amount of turning from sin could give anybody eternal life. None could so turn from sin as to be perfect, hence the necessity for the Savior. When Ezekiel refers to the proverb that "the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge," he was stating the general fact that all human sin and weakness descend by heredity from parent to child, and that the matter of recovery is therefore a hopeless one except as a Redeemer, separate and distinct from the sinner race, would be provided. And this provision for release from the weakness inherited from Father Adam has been provided by Jehovah through His Only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer.

"TIMES OF RESTITUTION"

In the 16th chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy the declaration is clearly set forth that in the Divine Plan a great restitution is sure to come which will affect not only Israel and the living nations of the time, but also the dead of all nations. From the 40th verse onward the Prophet describes the certainty of God's promise to recover Israel, to bring them back into His favor, and that on a better basis than ever in the past. At the same time the Lord declares, through the Prophet, that the Samaritans will be restored and blessed, and that the Sodomites will be restored and blessed. The latter nation had been entirely destroyed by fire from heaven, as the Redeemer declared. It follows that their restoration must be from the tomb, from death, *hades, sheol*.

The prophecy goes on to declare that the Lord will not do this because of any worthiness of the Israelites or others, but for His own Name's sake – of His own good pleasure. In other words, this is the

purpose which God purposed in Himself from before the foundation of the world. This is the purpose which He declared to Enoch, saying that in due time Messiah would "come with myriads of holy ones" to establish justice and righteousness in the earth, to bless the people. This is the same message which God declared to Abraham saying, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This was the hope which Israel had so long entertained and which the Lord declares will not go unfulfilled.

This description is found in verses 40 to 60, the conclusion being that when Israel thus experiences the goodness of God in their restitution they will be ashamed and never open their mouths again by way of boasting or complaint. This will be after God's favor shall have been **[R4881 : page 362]** restored to them, and He shall be pacified toward them in respect to all of their idolatrous doings of the past. The pacification of Divine Justice is found in the redemption accomplished by our Lord and Savior.

Ezekiel is one of the Prophets referred to by St. Peter as prophesying respecting coming "Times of Restitution" – blessings of Messiah's Kingdom to be inaugurated at the close of this Age, as soon as the Church shall have been elected to be the Royal Priesthood and shall be glorified with the great Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator, their Head and Lord. St. Peter declares that these coming "times of restitution" are mentioned by all the Holy Prophets since the world began, and Ezekiel's reference to them marks him as one of the Holy Prophets. – Acts 3:19-23.

Viewing our study from this standpoint we perceive that Ezekiel stood for, or represented the Son of Man, the great Teacher, the Redeemer; he also represented the members of the Bride of Christ whom the glorious Head may, from time to time, use as His mouthpieces.

Ezekiel was carried miraculously forward to some of the captives residing by the river Chebar. After a time he received a message for

them, declaring that God had appointed him a watchman to give warning from Him. This warning has been going forth ever since the Gospel was preached. It tells the wicked, that is, the wilfully wicked, the intentionally wicked, that the end of their way is death, but that by turning from wickedness they may live. This message of this Gospel Age is not to the whole world, but, as the Scriptures declare, "To him that hath an ear to hear." St. Paul uses this message saying, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ Our Lord." – Rom. 6:23.

NOT TORMENT BUT DEATH

It is worthy of note here that neither the Prophet nor those whom he typified were ever commissioned to say to mankind that the sinner would be eternally roasted, nor suffer eternally in any condition. The extreme penalty for sin presented to us in God's Word is, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." In other words, God declares that He will not give eternal life to the wicked, but only to those who will turn from sin to righteousness. Thus we read, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" And again, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life (everlasting), but the wrath of God abideth on him" – the wrath or sentence of death everlasting.

In any event, the Prophet and those whom he represents, including all of God's consecrated people of today, are duty-bound to make clear this feature of the Divine Program, namely, that all wilful sin will bring death; that all wilful sinners, as St. Paul declares, shall be punished with everlasting destruction – not with everlasting torment. (2 Thes. 1:9.) Every member of the Body of Christ is a watchman on the walls of Zion, even though today Zion be in Babylon, as were those typically addressed by the Prophet.

=====