



## [Ezekiel 33:1-7](#)

(1) And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, (2) "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them, 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman; (3) If, when he sees the sword come upon the land, he blows the ram's horn and warns the people, (4) Then whoever hears the sound of the ram's horn and does not take warning, if the sword does come and take him away, his blood shall be on his own head. (5) He heard the sound of the ram's horn and did not take warning. His blood shall be on himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have delivered his life. (6) But if the watchman sees the sword coming, and does not blow the ram's horn and the people are not warned; if the sword comes and takes *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity. But I will require his blood at the watchman's hand.' (7) And you, son of man, I have set you as watchman to the house of Israel. Therefore you shall hear the Word from My mouth, and warn them from Me.

*A Faithful Version*

In His explanation of Ezekiel's role as a prophet, [God](#) informs the man that he was to be a watchman for the people. Of what use is a watchman if the enemy's advance and all the pertinent details of his attack are already known? Anciently, a watchman would stand in a high place, upon a wall or a tower, and scan the horizon for enemies. When he saw them approaching, he was responsible for shouting a warning to the unsuspecting citizens that danger was near and that they needed to prepare for the onslaught. However, he did not know exact details—only what he could discern from his vantage point.

Once war begins, the most precious commodity is precise and timely information, and it is almost never transmitted in time to those who need it most. The best scenario a leader can ask for is to know as far in advance as possible that his enemy is on the march against him, for this gives him time to make the preparations necessary to secure his people and possessions, assemble his forces, and meet the enemy on the battlefield

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of his choosing. An excellent watchman just might give him the advance warning he needs.

However, this presupposes a physical attack. A continued reading of Ezekiel 33 clarifies that the prophet was not warning about a physical enemy but a spiritual one. Ezekiel's job was to warn the wicked in Israel to turn "from his way" ([Ezekiel 33:8-11](#)). His job as watchman was spiritual in nature! He was to warn against sinful lifestyles, against iniquity and wickedness, and to implore them to repent and live righteously. A companion passage in [Ezekiel 3:16-21](#) makes this plain.

In other words, his role as prophet/watchman—just as a Christian minister's job is today—was heavily weighted toward preaching and teaching God's way of righteousness. It was essentially, like [the gospel](#) of the [Kingdom of God](#), a warning message of [repentance](#) and an exhortation to growth in [faith](#) and obedience to [holiness](#). In this regard, the prophetic hints about future events were, as they are to us, prods to motivate change before the coming, dreadful Day of the Lord.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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