

# + THE LOOKOUT

SEPTEMBER 2022

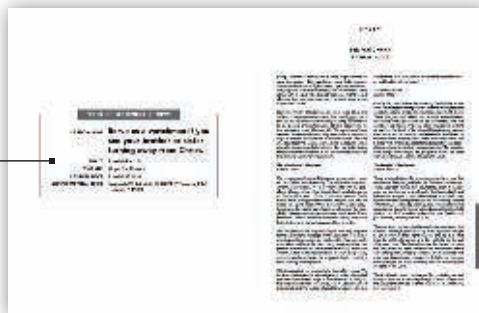
## Unit: Ezekiel (Part 2)

### Theme: Hope for Sinners

**Overview:** A Bible school class named themselves the HOPE Class. The acronym stood for “Hitched Or Patiently Engaged.” But that is not what *hope* stands for or means. *Hope* is the eager and very real anticipation of a world totally controlled by God. The major prophet Ezekiel marked out the consequences of sin (we focused on that last month), but he also marked out hope for sinners. This month students will learn of the tender care necessary to turn a sinner back to God, how having a new heart helps with that task, how people who have experienced the deadly nature of sin can breathe with new life, and how God’s nature can come afresh to once-weary sinners.

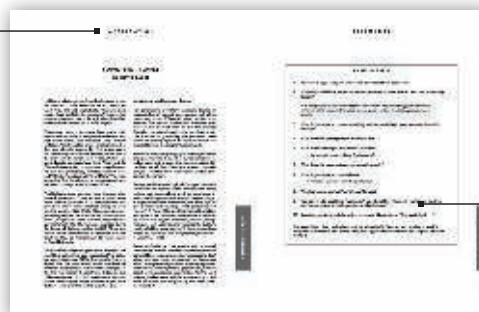
## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



**Tabs** indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

**WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 4, 2022**

**LESSON AIM:** **Serve as a watchman if you see your brother or sister turning away from Christ.**

**UNIT:** Ezekiel (Part 2)

**THEME:** Hope for Sinners

**LESSON TEXT:** Ezekiel 33:1-16

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Jeremiah 26:1-9; Acts 20:20-21; 2 Timothy 4:1-5;  
James 5:19-20

## THE WATCHMAN

BY MARK SCOTT

Being a watchman comes with a price. Night watchmen must fight sleep. Day watchmen must fight crowds. Some watchmen must fight thieves. Spiritual watchmen, like prophets and church leaders, are no different. Risks come with the job. The task at first pass might sound glorious, but true watchmen carry around some angst about their “labor.”

Ezekiel’s ministry of judgment on fallen Israel (chapters 1–24) and judgment on Ammon, Tyre, and Egypt (chapters 25–32) has turned to a ministry of being a watchman to *the people of Israel* (chapter 33) and specifically to the leaders of Israel (chapter 34). The word *watchman* denoted someone who was fully aware of the surroundings. It referred to someone stationed on the city wall who could see the enemy approaching and sounded the alarm for the people. Failure in this duty carried a death sentence to the watchman. In the case of Israel, God was the ultimate watchman (Psalm 66:7).

### The Watchman’s Message

Ezekiel 33:1-9

The chosen watchman’s duties were announced in verses 1-6. Ezekiel was chosen by God as Israel’s prophetic watchman in verses 7-9. He is referred to with the prophetic title *son of man* (four times). God’s revelation came to Ezekiel (*The word of the Lord came to me*). God’s sword (knife or dagger) referred to Babylon that he had raised up against Israel. When the watchman saw Babylon coming, he was to *warn* (teach or admonish) the people by blowing *the trumpet* (shofar or ram’s horn). Trumpets were used to summon soldiers to battle, announce festival days, and call various assemblies to order.

The people bear the responsibility of how they respond to the watchman’s message. If the watchman sounds the warning and the people do not *heed* it, they have only themselves to blame for the coming judgment (thus the phrase, *their blood will be on their own head*). But if the watchman fails in his responsibility to warn the people, then the watchman bears the responsibility for the judgment coming on the people.

This is repeated for emphasis to Ezekiel in verses 7-9. He is to challenge the *wicked person* to be dissuaded (warned) from wicked ways. If Ezekiel failed in this job, the responsibility fell on Ezekiel, but if Ezekiel warned the wicked, and the wicked refused to turn away from the

wickedness, then that person will suffer the consequences and Ezekiel will be saved.

### The Lord’s Heart

Ezekiel 33:10-11

Clearly the Lord did not like speaking this harshly. It burdens him to speak of the people’s *offenses* (transgressions or rebellions) and *sins* (and the guilt associated with them). These things cause Ezekiel’s people to be weighed down and *waste away* (pine away or be consumed). The text could not be clearer. The Lord takes *no pleasure* (delight or favor) *in the death of the wicked*. His righteousness demands that sin be punished. Otherwise he would not be true to himself. But the Lord’s heart is churned within him (Hosea 11:8). The Lord pleads to his people through Ezekiel to *turn* (repent)—in fact, he says this twice. The question is haunting: “*Why will you die, people of Israel?*” Sin does more than break God’s law; it breaks his heart.

### The People’s Obedience

Ezekiel 33:12-16

There is no substitute for uncompromised and heartfelt obedience. Few things delight the Father more than that. This paragraph makes that abundantly clear. If a *righteous* person (someone who lives by God’s standards and holiness) starts practicing disobedience, then his former righteousness is disregarded (counts *for nothing*). On the other hand, if a wicked person gives evidence of genuine repentance, then his former wickedness will not be held against him. This standard makes clear that God is both just and the justifier (Romans 3:26).

This may sound at first pass like works righteousness, but Ezekiel’s message goes on to say that if righteous people begin to *trust in their righteousness and do evil*, what they did will be forgotten and they will *die for the evil they have done*. The flip side is true for the wicked person who turns his heart toward God. His wicked deeds will be forgotten. Three specific sins are mentioned that may have been issues during this Babylonian occupation—pledges for loans, thievery, and not following the decrees of the Lord.

The Lord could never be charged for not being fair and loving. A watchman has the privilege of announcing both the judgments of God and the love of God. Either way, it is hard work. ■

## SOUND THE TRUMPET

BY DAVID FAUST

I told my grade school music teacher I wanted to play the trumpet, but she looked at me and shook her head. “No,” she said emphatically. “You have a big mouth. You should play the trombone.” I used my big mouth to play trombone in the high school band, but secretly I always envied the trumpet players.

Throughout history, trumpets have made their mark—and not only in symphony orchestras and high school bands. Jazz innovators Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong had unique singing voices, but they also played trumpets. In 1964, at the age of 63, Armstrong knocked The Beatles off the top of the chart with his rendition of “Hello, Dolly.” That same decade, trumpet player Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass cranked out popular songs listeners still hum along with today, including “Spanish Flea” and “This Guy’s in Love with You.” Many TV viewers remember Doc Severinsen, the trumpeter and band leader for Johnny Carson’s *Tonight Show*.

The Bible mentions trumpets more than any other musical instrument. Some ancient trumpets were made of silver (Numbers 10:2), but most were hollowed-out rams’ horns (*shofars*). Trumpets were used to worship God (Psalm 98:6), announce approaching festivals (Leviticus 23:24), call troops into battle (Judges 3:27; 6:34), and alert people to danger (Nehemiah 4:18-20). Trumpets sounded during the battle of Jericho (Joshua 6:4-20). There was even a Jewish festival called the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6)—today known as Rosh Hashanah.

When the final judgment approaches, the Lord “will send his angels with a loud trumpet call” to gather his people (Matthew 24:31). The apostle Paul predicted that “the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” at the final resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:16). John’s vision of the future includes seven angels whose trumpets signal woes that will come upon the earth (Revelation 8:2).

### Unwelcome but Necessary Sounds

For generations of military members, bugles or trumpets literally served as a wake-up call when the rousing notes of “Reveille” stirred soldiers from slumber. This kind of trumpet call illustrates what the Lord had in mind when he told the prophet Ezekiel to be a watchman for the people of Israel. Like a soldier on guard duty, the watchman “sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people” (Ezekiel 33:3).

How does this principle apply to us today? Parents and grandparents, it is part of our responsibility to wake, warn, and prepare the next generation for battles they will face. Preachers, it is our responsibility to sound the alarm when we see spiritual dangers on the horizon.

Being a watchman is a tough job. Trumpet blasts are unwelcome sounds in a culture where no one wants to hear bad news—where a call to repentance or even a mild suggestion of wrongdoing can trigger a negative response. Remember, the Bible says to give the reasons for our hope “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15), speaking truth with wisdom and grace. If we call others to repentance, we must do so with humility, self-awareness, and tact, recognizing our own weakness and vulnerability. But let’s not be afraid to speak up, for “if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8).

**Personal Challenge:** Has anyone ever “sounded the trumpet” to warn you about impending spiritual danger? Have you ever done that for someone else? When you see others threatened by dangerous ideas, what prevents you from speaking up—fear of rejection, unwillingness to get involved, caution about coming across as judgmental? Ask the Lord to give you boldness and discernment so you will know when and how to speak up and when to remain silent. ■

# DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How well did you carry out your “I will” statement from last week?
2. When in your life have you either warned someone or been warned about an impending danger?

Ask two people to read aloud **Ezekiel 33:1-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then, as a group, quickly restate the passage in your own words.

3. What do you learn about accountability and responsibility for one’s actions from this passage?
4. What does this passage teach you about God?
5. What does it teach you about God’s holiness?
  - What does it teach about God’s grace?
6. What does the passage teach you about humanity?
7. What do you learn about obedience?
  - What do you learn about repentance?
8. Who has been a spiritual “watchman” for you?
9. How can you be a spiritual “watchman” for others? For whom will you “sound the trumpet” to warn them about impending spiritual danger?
10. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: “This week, I will . . .”

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Ezekiel 36:16-32**. You can also read next week’s supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. **■**