

## Ezekiel Chapters 33-34 - John Karmelich

Title: Accountability and Hope

Yes, accountability is an "ugly word" that Christians realize and don't think about very much. Yes, we Christians realize we live in a "saved by His grace alone world" and we also know we're accountable to Him. In short it means we won't be punished in heaven when we blow it! At the same time, we realize God holds all of us accountable to use our lives for His glory. As I like to ask, "I'm saved to do what?" Daily, I pray to ask God what His desire for me is today! The Bible teaches us what God expects of us and we're free to do what we want outside of what His law requires. When it comes to accountability it doesn't mean we must be perfect! At the same time, that's no excuse not to try to make a difference for Him in the first place!

That leads to the second word in this title: Hope. One of the things I thought about as I studied both of these chapters is why did Ezekiel jump from the topic of accountability to God, to the topic of Jesus as the one who will return one day to rule over the world? In other words, why jump from accountability to hope? It comes down the fact even though all of us fail to live as God truly desires, there's still hope of a wonderful eternal future. Until that occurs, we're accountable to God to use whatever gifts that He has given us so we can be a witness for Him to others around us!

I'm getting into all of this because the focus on these chapters is our accountability to God. In effect we are transitioning from why God judges Israelites and other nations to what all that means for now on! It will lead us to many chapters teaching things that have occurred within the last 100 years and what will occur in the future! Before Ezekiel can get there, he needs to stay in the moment to focus on judgment against the land of Israel (destruction by Babylon, Ezekiel just heard that news in these chapters)! Yes, we know Israel's around today, which means God isn't done with them as an entity! That leads me back to the issue of our accountability! Even as committed Christians, we must grasp our accountability that He requires of us both in this lifetime and the next one! That's the underlying theme of two chapters of Ezekiel speaking to the Jewish exiles with him and us as well! Bottom line, it's accountability and still having hope God's going to literally return one day to rule the world. Until then, we must be a witness for Him! That's the reason He saved us in the first place. With that said lofty speech out of my system, I'll begin on details:

Both chapters focus on what God's called us to do, be a witness for Him. In Chapter 33, Ezekiel uses a description of a "night watchman" keeping an eye out for danger. The point is if the watchman does the job he or she is supposed to do (report danger) then that watchman holds no guilt if the job was done! I suspect Ezekiel thought of himself as a watchman. The point for his audience, who you may recall was Jewish "called" people who were in exile because they failed to live as God desires. Yes, we're back to the issue of accountability. I realize no one is perfect and it's not a call to "work harder". It's simply to remind us God didn't save us to be "lazy bums", but to use our lives to make a difference for Him. The way I look at Old Testament laws is God holds us accountable for them, except in cases where Jesus is telling us that's for Jewish people only (e.g., Old Testament food laws). On issues the bible is silent on, my view is we're free to make the best decisions we can.

Studying the text, one gets the impression the Israelites liked to listen to Ezekiel. Maybe they figured it was good entertainment or they felt "spiritual" listening to him. The problem of course is failure to put their money where their mouth is so to speak! Like the bumper sticker says, "Anyone can honk but real men tithe for Jesus!" (I'm not saying tithing is a requirement, just making a point about using one's life

for Jesus is the key!) In fact, in the middle of Chapter 33 Ezekiel states that until one dies it's never too late to repent of one's sins and turn to Jesus (so to speak)! Ezekiel's telling his audience despite the fact the Babylonians conquered their land one can turn to God at anytime and He will forgive. If that's true, why not wait till our "deathbed"? First nobody is aware when they'll die. Next, it is a reminder we've a choice in life, to live for God or oneself! I realize I'm preaching to the choir again, so let's move on!

That leads to the news of the fall of Jerusalem. Bible experts say it may have taken 6 months to a year for word to reach Ezekiel as escape from the Babylonians was a challenge to put it simply! Apparently, Ezekiel was mute for a while till this guy showed up! Ezekiel talked about a popular saying in Israel at that time. In effect it was, "God gave us that land so this captivity must end soon"! That leads me back to my title of accountability and hope! Ezekiel lays into them about accountability! His audience wants to listen to him speak, but obviously they're stuck on "listening, but not acting as God desires"!

In chapter 34, Ezekiel changes the focus from those not willing to listen to His message to their leaders probably both in Israel and there among them! The idea of being a minister is to be a servant. What is the problem were false prophets financially benefited from teaching "fake news" of the Babylonians. It appears these leaders were living much better off than those they're ministering to. It does not mean the rest of the Israelites were "off the hook". One of the reasons God called Ezekiel to preach to those who were in captivity is to teach it's never too late to repent as long as we're breathing! At the same time, it also means leaders, especially false teachers were liable for not teaching what God wants His people to know about using their lives for His glory!

That natural leads to natural discussion of judgment. Is God just going to judge those false teachers, or is everyone "on the hook"? That of course leads to a speech about God's judgment. One of the reasons that Christianity is so wonderful is we are never condemned for our sins! We could suffer in this life as punishment for sin (e.g., go to jail for theft as an obvious example). God completely forgives us. What we are accountable for is our witness to Jesus and our willingness to learn from Him. Christians often feel a sense of guilt of not doing enough. My attitude is to pray about what is His desire for me, while everything is in effect, His problem!

That leads back to the issue of hope: Ezekiel ends this section reminding us that the "Son of David" is going to return one day to rule. (For the few who don't know Son of David is a title for the Messiah or Jesus as we Christians call Him!) That implies all our efforts are never good enough, and it'll take God Himself to return one day in order to have a world as God intended it to be. Obviously, God desires we use our lives as a witness for Him. The implication is that's not enough to have a perfect world, but the time for that time era to begin is God's business and not ours! Ours is to do what He commands, which is to find ways to use our lives for His glory. Of course, that means time studying His word and prayer for guidance. Just saying time's the most valuable thing God's given us and using it for His glory is the greatest use of His time! (OK, I preached a few pages here, so I did my "watchman on the wall" duty!) I always preach what God calls me to do is different than what He calls others, so pray for wisdom and find ways to use your life to glorify Him! Thanks for reading!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!