

Ezekiel 33 - Ezekiel Commissioned as a Watchman; Ezekiel's Message to Israel; Ezekiel's Muteness Removed; Ezekiel Rebukes Two Groups (Survivors & Exiles)

III. Restoration of Israel (Ezek 33:1—48:45)

(1) Ezekiel's recommissioning (33:1-33)

(A) Ezekiel's reappointment as a watchman (33:1-9)

(a) General duty of a watchman (33:1-6)

(b) Ezekiel's duty as a watchman (33:7-9)

(B) Ezekiel's message to Israel (33:10-20)

(a) Turn from sin (33:10-11)

(b) Individual responsibility (33:12-20)

(C) News of Jerusalem's fall (33:21)

(D) Ezekiel's dumbness removed (33:22)

(E) Ezekiel rebukes two groups (33:23-33)

(a) Israelites who remained in the land: false hope (33:23-29)

(b) Ezekiel's hearers in Babylon: false hearers (33:30-33)

Ezekiel 33

The book of Ezekiel can be divided into five major parts, with the fourth spanning Ezek 33-39. As a whole, these chapters focus on the restoration of Israel, addressing both types of restoration seen earlier in the text. Sometimes Ezekiel refers to Israel's restoration in unbelief, which serves as a precursor to the judgment of the tribulation. Other times, he speaks of the ultimate restoration in faith, laying the groundwork for the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom. The central emphasis of Ezek 33-39 is on this final, global regathering of Israel in faith, leading to the nation's ultimate blessing. Thus, these chapters pivot from the previous focus on judgment to the theme of restoration, with Ezek 33-35 emphasizing the removal of every obstacle to Israel's restoration and Ezek 36-39 dealing with the restoration itself. Three specific obstacles are addressed: unbelief in Ezek 33; false rulers

in Ezek 34; and the nation of Edom, a significant impediment to Israel's restoration, in Ezek 35.

Ezek 33 marks a significant transition in Ezekiel's prophetic ministry: After announcing the doom of the heathen peoples, he reverts to the destiny of his own nation. But he no longer warns and threatens, because his predictions have become a tragic reality. He is now charged with the task of preparing the remnant of Israel for the coming restoration. Indeed, Ezekiel shifts to delivering messages of hope, focusing on strengthening the Israelites rather than chastising them. This turning point in Ezekiel's ministry is symbolized by the reopening of his mouth and his recommissioning as a prophet.

Ezek 33 contains recurring themes that have been previously addressed in the book. In particular, there are two notable echoes of earlier content. The first is the commission to the watchman, which was originally discussed in Ezek 3. The second echo concerns the exhortation to individual responsibility, which first appeared in Ezek 3 and was later reiterated in Ezek 18. Essentially, Ezek 33 serves as a form of repetition—a summary of previously covered material—before transitioning into a new section that focuses on the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel.

(1) Ezekiel's recommissioning (33:1-33)

(A) Ezekiel's reappointment as a watchman (33:1-9)

(a) General duty of a watchman (33:1-6)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

1 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

1 This message came to me from the LORD:

1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- A new oracle from the Lord to Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet's role as a watchman

2 "Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, '**If I bring a sword upon a land**, and the people of the land take one man from among them and **make him their watchman**,

2 "Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman,

2 "Son of Man, speak to your nation's children and tell them: 'If I bring war to a land, and the people of that land appoint one of their conscripted men to serve as a sentinel,

2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

- God commanded Ezekiel to address "the sons of your people" (the Jewish people). The audience for Ezekiel's oracles now changes from the Gentile nations (Ezek 25-32) to the Jewish people.

- "...If I bring a sword upon a land" - God is indicating that a judgment was coming

- "...make him their watchman" - the people of the land that would undergo judgment are described as selecting a man from amongst themselves (the Jews) to serve as a "watchman"

— They were to pick a man from among their people (the Jews) because it ensured loyalty. A watchman who was Jewish would be more likely to protect his people than a Gentile.

— "watchman" - not a new concept and not unique to Ezekiel. A broader understanding of this role can be found in several other OT passages (Cf. 2 Sam 18:24-25; 2 Kings 9:17; Is 21:6,11-12; 56:10; Jer 6:17; 31:6; Hosea 9:8; Amos 3:6; Hab 2:1). These passages offer a more comprehensive picture of the watchman's temporal and prophetic functions.

The biblical concept of the watchman is drawn from the military, where a watchman's duty was to warn of approaching threats. However, in Ezekiel's role, this concept took on a deeper meaning. Instead of alerting people to military dangers, the prophet's task was to deliver legal decisions from God. When God declared, "You will surely die" (Ezek 3:18), it was this divine verdict that Ezekiel was responsible for communicating. In that regard, he was more of a watchman than a sentinel or soldier, who was usually associated with military or strategic posts and would have been actively involved in warfare. It was God Himself who provided the watchman with the warning. Ezekiel's role was not to assess the danger by his own powers of observation, but only to convey a divine warning.

3 and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the horn and warns the people,
3 and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people,

3 and if he notices that violence is approaching and sounds an alarm to warn the people,

3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

- The watchman's job was to be vigilant watching for any sign of an invading army, and to sound the alarm when he detected danger approaching. The alarm (a trumpet) would alert the people and give them forewarning of coming danger.

4 then someone who hears the sound of the horn but does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his *own* head.

4 then he who 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.

4 then if anyone who hears the sound of the alarm does not heed the warning, when the sword arrives and destroys him, his shed blood will remain his own responsibility.

4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

- Once the watchman saw and alerted the people of the coming danger, he had fulfilled his responsibility. The duty then shifted to the citizens, who when hearing the trumpet sound, must respond appropriately.

- If anyone heard the watchman's trumpet warning, understood its significance, but failed to take action to protect himself, and was then killed during the ensuing invasion, he was the one at fault for his own death.

5 He heard the sound of the horn but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have saved his life.

5 He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life.

5 After all, he heard the alarm sounding, but did not heed the warning, so his shed blood will remain his own responsibility. If he had heeded the warning, he would have saved himself.

5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

- But if the person who heard the warning acted on it to protect himself, he would have saved his life

- Note: this passage in no way refers to spiritual matters as no invading army has the power to cause spiritual death. It also does not refer in any way, shape, or form to possible loss of salvation.

6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the horn and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away for his wrongdoing; but I will require his blood from the watchman's hand.'

6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'

6 If that sentinel notices that violence is approaching, but does not sound an alarm, then because the nation does not take warning and the sword arrives and destroys their lives because of their guilt, I'll seek retribution for their shed blood from the one who was acting as sentinel.'"

6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in

his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

- Verses 3-5 describe the watchman fulfilling his responsibility to warn the people of a coming invasion. If the people did not respond to the warning, it was their problem, not the watchman's.

- Verse 6 presents the contrasting scenario: if the watchman failed to alert the people to coming danger, he neglected his responsibility and duty, thus the people were unprepared for attack. If, due to his negligence, people died, their deaths would be on his conscience and he would be taken away in his iniquity.

- This applied to prophets as well, whose role was to alert the people. If either a watchman or a prophet failed to deliver the warning (which came directly from God), they were held accountable.

(b) Ezekiel's duty as a watchman (33:7-9)

7 "Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me.

7 "Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me.

7 "Now as for you, Son of Man, I've established you as a sentinel for the house of Israel. So whenever you hear a message from me, you are to warn the people⁹ from me.

7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

- "Now as for you, son of man" - the Lord now addresses Ezekiel directly, applying the principles of v2-6 directly to him

- "...I have appointed you as a watchman" - the watchman of v2-6 is Ezekiel. God appointed Ezekiel as Israel's watchman and prophet.

- As a prophet, Ezekiel's duty was two-fold: He first had to hear and receive divine revelation, then relay that warning to the people of Israel. This act of passing on the message is likened to the watchman "blowing the trumpet".

8 When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will certainly die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked about his way, that wicked person shall die for his wrongdoing, but I will require his blood from your hand.

8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.

8 If I should say to a certain wicked person, 'You wicked man, you're certainly about to die,' but you don't warn him to turn from his wicked behavior,¹⁰ he'll die in his guilt, but I'll seek retribution for his bloodshed from you.

8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

- God now outlines the consequences if Ezekiel fails in his role. If God said something and Ezekiel did not declare what God said (deliver the warning), that person would die as a consequence of their sin, and God would hold Ezekiel accountable for that person's blood. This meant that Ezekiel could face physical judgment for neglecting his duty (Cf. 1 Kings 13:26).

9 But if you on your part warn a wicked person to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die for his wrongdoing, but you have saved your life.

9 But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life.

9 However, if you warn the wicked to turn from his behavior and he does not do so, he will die in his guilt, and you will have saved yourself."

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

- This verse explains the opposite outcome from v8: if Ezekiel faithfully carried out his duty and issued the warning from God, and the sinner chose not to repent, the responsibility would lie completely with the sinner. That person would die in their sin as a consequence, but Ezekiel would have delivered his own soul by fulfilling his prophetic duty.

(B) Ezekiel's message to Israel (33:10-20)

The people of Jerusalem previously believed that the mere presence of the Temple guaranteed forgiveness for their sins (Cf. 11:3). Now, they found themselves devoid of any hope of pardon. They felt condemned to waste away in their sins, with no chance for renewal. Their God was treating them as He treated their enemies (Cf. Amos 1-2).

It was Ezekiel's responsibility to lead these disheartened souls toward an understanding of YHWH's covenantal relationship with them. There was no reason for the people of Israel to perish. YHWH was willing to extend mercy to those who turned away from sin.

This passage contains two divine declarations. Each declaration begins with Israel's complaint followed by God's response.

(a) Turn from sin (33:10-11)

10 "Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you have said: "Surely **our offenses and our sins are upon us**, and we are rotting away in them; how then can we survive?"'

10 "Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus you have spoken, saying, "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we are rotting away in them; how then can we survive?"'

10 "'Now, Son of Man, tell this to the house of Israel: 'You keep saying, "Our crimes and sins burden us so much that we're rotting away, so how can we keep on living?"'

10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?

- In v2-9, God outlined the responsibility of the watchman. Now, the focus shifts to the responsibility of the hearer.

- "...our offenses and our sins are upon us" - the essence of this complaint is the Israelites' acknowledgement of their sinful state. The people were so deeply entangled in their sins that they questioned their ability to survive.

— This attitude of recognizing their sinful state is very different than their attitude in Ezek 18 (before the destruction of Jerusalem). By this time, Jerusalem had already been destroyed, so the question of the exiles was "how then can we survive?"

11 Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, '**I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked**, but rather that the wicked **turn from his way** and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then should **you die**, house of Israel?'

11 Say to them, 'As I live!' declares 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, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'

11 "Tell them, 'As certainly as I'm alive and living,' declares the Lord GOD, 'I receive no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Instead, my pleasure is that the wicked repent from their behavior and live. Turn back! Turn back, all of you, from your wicked behavior! Why do you have to die, you house of Israel?'"

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

- God's response to their question (v11) was the same answer He gave them before; it remained the same as it always had been in the past. His character and expectations had not changed.

- "...I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked" - this is why God sent Israel prophets and watchmen...because He finds no joy in the demise of His people. Instead, He delights in their repentance.

— Isaiah said that judgment was His *strange* work or "unusual task" (Is 28:21)

- "...turn from his way" - an urgent national call for repentance; God called the nation to repent because it was their collective sin that led to Judah's downfall, and it would require national repentance to bring about restoration.
- "...you die"- the life and death discussed here pertain to physical survival or destruction on a national scale

(b) Individual responsibility (33:12-20)

12 And you, son of man, say to your fellow citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous one will not save him on the day of his offense, and as for the wickedness of a wicked one, he will not stumble because of it on the day when he turns from his wickedness; whereas a righteous one will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin.'

12 And you, son of man, say to your fellow citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness; whereas a righteous man will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin.'

12 "And now, Son of Man, say this to your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous won't save them when they keep on committing crimes against me, the wickedness of the wicked won't keep them from remaining away when they're turning from their wickedness, and no righteous person will keep on living by their righteousness when they sin.'

12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.

- The righteousness of the past could not save someone if they turned to sin. Under the Mosaic Law, previous righteous deeds could not offset even a single act of transgression, especially if the act warranted capital punishment.

— Conversely, a person who lived a life of sin but turned from it and repented was accepted by God.

— Thus, a person's righteous past did not preserve them if they committed sin, while a wicked person who genuinely repented was not condemned for their past.

13 When I say to the righteous *that* **he will certainly live**, and **he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits injustice, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered**; but for that same injustice of his which he has committed **he will die**.

13 When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die.

13 "If I tell the righteous person that he will certainly live, if he trusts in his own righteousness and commits evil, none of his righteousness will be remembered, and he will die because of the wrong that he commits.

13 When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

- "...he will certainly live" - this assertion was based on a person's adherence to the Mosaic Law. However, if the righteous person relied on their past deeds to justify sinning, believing that their accumulated righteousness would cover their transgressions, they were mistaken.

- "...he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits injustice, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered" - if they trusted in their righteousness and committed iniquity, all of their prior righteous acts were forgotten and they faced judgment for their transgressions.

— Under the Mosaic Law, each person's accountability was continuous; prior obedience to the Law did not negate the consequences of later disobedience.

- "...he will die" - certain sins were punishable by death under the Mosaic Law; this statement does not refer to spiritual death, but to physical death.

14 But when I say to the wicked, '**You will certainly die,**' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness,

14 But when I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness,

14 "If I tell the wicked person that he will certainly die, if he turns from his sin and acts with justice and righteousness,

14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

- "...You will certainly die" - if God warned the wicked of death, and the wicked person heeded the warning and turned from his sin, his fate would change

15 *if a* wicked person returns a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing injustice, he shall certainly live; he shall not die.

15 *if a* wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

15 returning what has been placed as collateral for a loan, paying back what he has taken, following the regulations that promote life, and committing no iniquity, he will certainly live, and not die.

15 If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

- This verse provides examples of what was considered "practicing justice and righteousness" (v14):

— Returning a pledge, paying back what was taken by robbery, walking in the statutes of life, and committing no further iniquity were all actions mentioned previously, in 18:5-7,21. They demonstrate genuine repentance and adherence to the requirements of the Mosaic Law.

— None of these actions would have warranted capital punishment under the Law, meaning that the focus here is on violations that do not carry the death penalty but still necessitate correction.

16 None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall certainly live.

16 None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live.

16 None of the sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. Since he did what is just and right, he will certainly live.

16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

- This verse explains the outcome of genuine repentance...none of the wicked person's previous sins would be remembered against him.

— By meeting the Law's requirements for restitution and avoiding further wrongdoing, the person was granted life—not because his sins did not require the death penalty, but because he actively responded to the call to repentance.

17 "Yet your fellow citizens say, 'The way of the Lord is not right,' when it is their own way that is not right.

17 "Yet your fellow citizens say, 'The way of the Lord is not right,' when it is their own way that is not right.

17 "Nevertheless, your people's children keep saying, 'Living like the Lord's way isn't right,' when all the while it is their way of living that isn't right.

17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

- Israel's second complaint was that God's judgments were not equal. They accused God of unfairness, questioning why a single act of disobedience should nullify a lifetime of righteousness.

— They also challenged the fairness of a lifetime of wickedness could be forgiven based on repentance and a few acts of restitution. Yet, as this verse points out, it was Israel's way that was not equal.

18 When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, then he shall die in it.

18 When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it.

18 When a righteous man forsakes his own righteousness and commits evil acts, he will die because of those acts,

18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

- God responded by making three key points:

— First, to the righteous, He reiterated the principle of righteousness. If a righteous person turned from his righteousness and committed iniquity, he would die because of it.

19 But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them.

19 But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them.

19 and when the wicked turn away from their wickedness and do what is just and right, he will certainly live because of that.

19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

- Second, to the wicked, He said that if a wicked person turned from his wickedness and did what was lawful and right, he would live because of his actions. This is also a summary of God's previous statement.

20 Yet you say, **'The way of the Lord is not right.' I will judge each of you according to his ways, house of Israel.'**

20 Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

20 "And yet you keep saying, 'Living life the Lord's way isn't right,' But I will judge every one of you according to the way you live, you house of Israel!"

20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

- "...The way of the Lord is not right" - third, God confronted His people again by repeating back to them what they accused Him of doing: His judgments are not fair.

— Israel was challenging God's justice based on the two questions they posed:

1. Why should a single act of disobedience negate a lifetime of righteousness?
2. Conversely, why should a few final acts of repentance erase a lifetime of wickedness?

- "...I will judge each of you according to his ways, house of Israel" - God's final response to Israel's questions emphasizes God's unchanging character and principles: God does not tolerate sin and must punish it regardless of how much righteousness preceded it; and, He always responds to genuine repentance, no matter how much wickedness came before it.

(C) News of Jerusalem's fall (33:21)

21 Now in **the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month, the survivor from Jerusalem** came to me, saying, "The city has been taken."

21 Now in the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month, the refugees from Jerusalem came to me, saying, "The city has been taken."

21 On the fifth day of the tenth month of the twelfth year of our captivity, a fugitive who had escaped from Jerusalem came and informed me, "The city has been destroyed."

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

- "...the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month" - January 8, 585 BC

— On the very day this news was brought, Ezekiel's wife died and he was prohibited to mourn for her (Cf. 24:16-24).

- "...the survivor from Jerusalem" - the arrival of the refugee from Jerusalem who delivered the news to Ezekiel occurred 18 months after the fall of Jerusalem (Cf. 2 Kings 25:1-3; Jer 39:1-3; 52:4-7), confirming the city's destruction and the fulfillment of the prophecy in 24:25-27.

— The arrival of the refugee marked a crucial turning point in Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. Up to that time, the primary focus of his messages had been on the certainty of Jerusalem's destruction, as summarized in 33:1-20. With this event, however, Ezekiel entered a new phase of his ministry, shifting from prophecies of Jerusalem's downfall to declarations about its future restoration.

— The news from the refugee also changed Ezekiel's perception among the exiles. He now stood before his people as a *mopet*, a "sign," serving as living proof of the truthfulness of the divine revelation.

— The short sentence spoken by the refugee was enough to silence the accusations of falsehood made by Ezekiel's critics (Cf. 12:21-28). YHWH had validated the message of His servant, and now it was up to the exiles to recognize the true prophet among them (Jer 28:9; Ezek 33:33).

(D) Ezekiel's dumbness removed (33:22)

22 Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me in the evening, before the survivors came. And He opened my mouth at the time *they* came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless.

22 Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me in the evening, before the refugees came. And He opened my mouth at the time *they* came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless.

22 Now the hand of the LORD had been touching me the evening before that fugitive arrived, so the LORD had given me something to say by the time the messenger arrived the next morning. He opened my mouth and I no longer had nothing to say to him.

22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

- Ezekiel's ritual muteness was lifted. It had been six years since God stuck the prophet's tongue to the roof of his mouth (Cf. 3:26).

— On the evening prior to the arrival of the refugee from Jerusalem, God opened Ezekiel's mouth.

— From this moment, Ezekiel began delivering a new series of prophetic messages, which begin in 33:23 and continue through 39:29.

(E) Ezekiel rebukes two groups (33:23-33)

(a) Israelites who remained in the land: false hope (33:23-29)

23 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

23 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

23 As a result, this message came to me from the LORD:

23 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- A new oracle from God to Ezekiel...

24 "Son of man, **they who live in these ruins in the land of Israel** are saying, 'Abraham was *only* one, yet he possessed the land; so to us who are many **the land has been given as a possession.**'

24 "Son of man, they who live in these waste places in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was *only* one, yet he possessed the land; so to us who are many the land has been given as a possession.'

24 "Son of Man, those who are living among these ruins of the land of Israel keep saying, 'Abraham was only one man, but he was able to possess the land! As for us, we're a multitude, and the land has been given to us as an inheritance.'

24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.

- "...they who live in these ruins in the land of Israel" - a new audience for Ezekiel's prophecies: the surviving Israelites who remained in Judah after the Babylonian deportations and the destruction of Jerusalem.

— These individuals were not part of the believing remnant, but were those who had not been taken into exile.

- "...the land has been given as a possession" - those who remained in the land thought that since God originally gave the land to Abraham when he was just one person, surely now that they were many, they were even more entitled to the land.

— This was flawed logic, a misplaced sense of security, and worst of all, a misinterpretation of God's promises. The people were taking God's divine promise to Abraham out of context and applying it in a way that led to a false conclusion.

— Their logic overlooked the critical issue of sin, which was the true obstacle to their claim to the land. While the land was promised to Abraham and his descendants, and there is no doubt that Israel holds rightful ownership of it, however their ability to enjoy and occupy the land has always been conditioned upon their obedience and faithfulness to the Mosaic Law.

— This is what the survivors in the land failed to recognize: their sin undermined their claim to the Abrahamic Covenant. They relied on their ancestry alone, but this was a severe misunderstanding of God's covenantal promises.

— This mindset and belief system isn't much different than the Jews during the time of Jesus' ministry. Pharasaic Judaism had turned the fundamental belief that every Jew, by virtue of being a descendant of Abraham, automatically held rights to the kingdom (Cf. Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:33,39).

25 Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "**You eat *meat* with the blood *in it*, raise your eyes to your idols as you shed blood.** Should you then possess the land?

25 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You eat *meat* with the blood *in it*, lift up your eyes to your idols as you shed blood. Should you then possess the land?

25 So tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "You keep eating flesh along with its blood, you keep looking to your idols, and you keep shedding blood, and you're going to take possession of the land?

25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

- The Lord's response to the survivor's flawed logic...He answered the question of "Should you then possess the land?" with a resounding "No!" (in alignment with Deut 29:25-29) and lists six sins as the reason:

- "...You eat *meat* with the blood *in it*" - reason #1 is that these survivors were eating meat with blood in it, a direct violation of Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14; 19:26.
- This was a ritual in which the worshippers would stand in a pool of blood and invite the spirits of the dead, demons, and the like, to come and participate in the ceremony.
- "...raise your eyes to your idols" - reason #2 was that they engaged in idolatry, lifting their eyes to idols in defiance of Ex 20:4-5.
- "...you shed blood" - reason #3 is that they committed murder, shedding blood in violation of Ex 20:13.

26 You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?"'

26 You rely on your sword, you commit abominations and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?"'

26 You keep trusting in your weapons, you continue to commit loathsome deeds, men keep defiling their neighbors' wives, and you're going to take possession of the land?'

26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

- "...You rely on your sword" - reason #4, they were guilty of oppression; their lives were based on violence.

- "...you commit abominations" - reason #5, they practiced paganism

- "...each of you defiles his neighbor's wife" - reason #6 is that they committed adultery, in violation of Ex 20:14.

- "...Should you then possess the land?" - God asks them a rhetorical question again, almost mockingly as if to say, "You're doing all of these abominable things, and yet you think you're going to stay and enjoy the land I promised you? What are you thinking? Are you mad?"

— God's answer to His own question is still No, in alignment with Deut 29:25-29.

27 You shall say this to them: 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "As I live, those who are in the places of ruins certainly will **fall by the sword**, and whoever is in the open field **I will give to the animals to be devoured**, and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves will **die of plague**.'

27 Thus you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely those who are in the waste places will fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves will die of pestilence.'

27 "Tell them this: 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "As certainly as I'm alive and living, those who live in the wastelands are certain to die violently, I'll give those who die in the

open fields to the wild animals for food, and whoever takes refuge in caves and fortified places will die of diseases.

27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

- God now presents a two-fold judgment: one directed at the people/survivors (v27) and one directed at the land itself (v28).

- "...fall by the sword" - the survivors would not survive, but would meet a violent end.

Everyone hiding in the "places of ruin" trying to eek out an existence, yet thinking that God would bless them in the land He promised in spite of their grievous sins, would die a violent death.

- "...I will give to the animals to be devoured" - those who were living in open fields would be attacked and devoured by wild animals

- "...die of plague" - those who lived in places they believed they were safe from outside danger would die of disease

- The events involving Gedaliah and their aftermath, as described in the closing chapters of Jeremiah, document the fulfillment of these prophecies.

28 And I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and the pride of her power will be brought to an end; and the mountains of Israel will be deserted so that no one will pass through.

28 I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and the pride of her power will cease; and the mountains of Israel will be desolate so that no one will pass through.

28 Then I'll turn the land into a desolate ruin and her arrogant strength will come to an abrupt end. The mountains of Israel will become so desolate that no one will be able to travel over them."

28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

- Regarding God's judgment on the land itself, He would turn it into a desolation and the object of amazement. The pride of their power, God's promise of the land, would be completely devastated.

29 Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I make the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations which they have committed."

29 Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I make the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations which they have committed."

29 'Then they'll learn that I am the LORD, when I've turned their land into a desolate wasteland because of all of the loathsome deeds that they've committed.'"

29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

- This verse emphasizes the outcome of the judgment once more. The surviving remnant would come to a clear recognition of God's sovereignty through experiencing these judgments. It was only after these prophecies were fulfilled would they truly acknowledge who God is.

(b) Ezekiel's hearers in Babylon: false hearers (33:30-33)

30 "But as for you, son of man, **your fellow citizens who talk with one another about you** by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak one with another, each with his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is that comes from the LORD.'

30 "But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the LORD.'

30 "Now as for you, Son of Man, your nation's children keep gathering together to talk about you beside the walls and at the doorway to their houses. Everyone tells one another, 'Please come! Let's go hear what the LORD has to say!'

30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

- "...your fellow citizens" - God, speaking to Ezekiel, changes His audience to the exiles who were in captivity in Babylon.

- "...who talk with one another about you" - the exiles began to discuss Ezekiel; "talk" here [*davar*] implies a mocking tone. The people were whispering about Ezekiel amongst themselves.

— Previously Ezekiel had been mostly ignored, but now his prophecies could no longer be dismissed so easily. This changed significantly once it was confirmed that Ezekiel's previous prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem had come to pass. After that, the people were more eager to hear what Ezekiel had to say.

— This is significantly different than earlier, when Ezekiel lamented to God that the people didn't believe his words (Cf. 20:49). Sadly, however, the exiles' shift in attitude toward Ezekiel and his prophecies did not lead to their spiritual renewal.

31 And they come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them; for they do the lustful desires *expressed* by their mouth, *and* their heart follows their unlawful gain.

31 They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires *expressed* by their mouth,

and their heart goes after their gain.

31 Then they come to you as a group, sit down right in front of you as if they were my people, hear your words—and then they don't do what you say— because they're seeking only their own desires, they pursue ill-gotten profits, and they keep following their own self-interests.

31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

- The true nature of the people's response to Ezekiel's prophecies was hypocrisy. While they appeared eager to listen to Ezekiel, they were unwilling to act on what they heard. They approached Ezekiel in the way that God's people should, willing to listen to his words, but after hearing the message, they failed to act on it.

— On the surface, they did everything right, but their response was empty and ultimately led to their spiritual failure. They desired to hear God's Word, but they had no intention of obeying it.

32 And behold, you are to them like a love song *by one who has* a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.

32 Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.

32 As far as they are concerned, you sing romantic songs with a beautiful voice and play a musical instrument well. They'll listen to what you have to say, but they won't put it into practice!

32 And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

- Ezekiel's prophecies had become nothing more than entertainment to the exiles. They enjoyed hearing his prophecies, but they had no desire to put what he had to say into practice.

— Although the people clearly recognized the physical fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies and acknowledged him as God's servant, they still failed to grasp and apply the deeper spiritual lessons.

33 So when it comes—as it certainly will—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

33 So when it comes to pass—as surely it will—then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst."

33 When all of this comes about—and you can be sure that it will!—they'll learn that a prophet has been in their midst."

33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

- Even though the people didn't believe Ezekiel enough now to take to heart what he was saying, they certainly would in the future once his prophecies once again were fulfilled. At that point, they would fully recognize him as a prophet of God.

— While this recognition would publicly vindicate Ezekiel, it would not lead to the spiritual renewal of his audience.