
EZEKIEL 33: 1 The LORD's word came to me, saying,

The prophet, after having addressed several other nations, returns now to his own; previously to which he is told, as on a former occasion, the duty of a watchman, the salvation or ruin of whose soul depends on the manner in which he discharges it. An awful passage indeed; full of important instruction both to such as speak, and to such as hear, the word of God, Eze 33:1-9. The prophet is then directed what answer to make to the cavils of infidelity and impiety; and to vindicate the equity of the Divine government by declaring the general terms of acceptance with God to be (as told before, chap. 18) without respect of persons; so that the ruin of the finally impenitent must be entirely owing to themselves, Eze 33:10-20. The prophet receives the news of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, about a year and four months after it happened, according to the opinion of some, who have been led to this conjecture by the date given to this prophecy in the twenty-first verse, as it stands in our common Version: but some of the manuscripts of this prophet consulted by Dr. Kennicott have in this place the Eleventh year, which is probably the genuine reading. To check the vain confidence of those who expected to hold out by possessing themselves of its other fastnesses, the utter desolation of all Judea is foretold, Eze 33:21-29. Ezekiel is informed that among those that attended his instructions were a great number of hypocrites, against whom he delivers a most awful message. When the Lord is destroying these hypocrites, then shall they know that there hath been a prophet among them, Eze 33:30-33.

EZEKIEL 33: 2 Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and tell them, When I bring the sword on a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman;

Verse 2

Son of man - if the people of the land take a man - The first ten verses of this chapter are the same with Eze 3:17-22; and to what is said there on this most important and awful subject I must refer the reader. Here the People choose the watchman; there, the Lord appoints him. When God chooses, the people should approve.

EZEKIEL 33: 3 if, when he sees the sword come on the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

EZEKIEL 33: 4 then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet, and doesn't take warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be on his own head.

EZEKIEL 33: 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and didn't take warning; his blood shall be on him; whereas if he had taken warning, he would have delivered his soul.

EZEKIEL 33: 6 But if the watchman sees the sword come, and doesn't blow the trumpet, and the people aren't warned, and the sword comes, 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.

EZEKIEL 33: 7 So you, son of man, I have set you a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

EZEKIEL 33: 8 When I tell the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you don't speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand.

EZEKIEL 33: 9 Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he doesn't turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.

EZEKIEL 33: 10 You, son of man, tell the house of Israel: Thus you speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are on us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?

Verse 10

If our transgressions and our sins be upon us - They are upon us, as a grievous burden, too weighty for us to bear: how then can we live under such a load?

We pine away in them - In such circumstances how consoling is that word: "Come unto me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

EZEKIEL 33: 11 Tell them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, house of Israel?

Verse 11

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked - From this to the twentieth verse inclusive is nearly the same with Ezekiel 18, on which I wish the reader to consult the notes.

EZEKIEL 33: 12 You, son of man, tell the children of your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his disobedience; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness; neither shall he who is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sins.

EZEKIEL 33: 13 When I tell the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he has committed, therein shall he die.

Verse 13

If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity - If he trust in his acting according to the statutes and ordinances of religion, and according to the laws relative to rights and wrongs among men, and in other respects commit iniquity, he shall die for it.

EZEKIEL 33: 14 Again, when I say to the wicked, You shall surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

EZEKIEL 33: 15 if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

EZEKIEL 33: 16 None of his sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him: he has done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

EZEKIEL 33: 17 Yet the children of your people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

EZEKIEL 33: 18 When the righteous turns from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, he shall even die therein.

EZEKIEL 33: 19 When the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

Verse 19

He shall live thereby - "The wages of sin is death;" the "gift of God is eternal life." It is a miserable trade by which a man cannot live; such a trade is sin.

EZEKIEL 33: 20 Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not equal. House of Israel, I will judge every one of you after his ways.

EZEKIEL 33: 21 In the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, one who had escaped out of Jerusalem came to me, saying, The city has been struck.

Verse 21

In the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month - Instead of the twelfth year, the eleventh is the reading of seven of Kennicott's MSS., one of De Rossi's, and the Syriac. My own, mentioned in the preceding chapter, reads with the present text. This was on Wednesday, Jan. 25, A.M. 3416 or 3417.

One that had escaped out of Jerusalem - After it had been taken by the Chaldeans.

Came unto me, saying, The City Is Smitten - This very message God had promised to the prophet, Eze 24:26.

EZEKIEL 33: 22 Now the hand of the LORD had been on me in the evening, before he who was escaped came; and he had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more mute.

Verse 22

My mouth was opened - They had now the fullest evidence that I had spoken from the Lord. I therefore spoke freely and fully what Good delivered to me, Eze 24:27.

EZEKIEL 33: 23 the LORD's word came to me, saying,

EZEKIEL 33: 24 Son of man, they who inhabit those waste places in 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.

Verse 24

Abraham was one - If he was called to inherit the land when he was alone, and had the whole to himself, why may we not expect to be established here, who are his posterity, and are many? They wished to remain in the land and be happy after the Chaldeans had carried the rest away captives.

EZEKIEL 33: 25 Therefore tell them, Thus says the Lord GOD: You eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood: and shall you possess the land?

Verse 25

Ye eat with the blood - Abraham was righteous, ye are unrighteous. Eating of blood, in any way dressed, or of flesh from which the blood had not been extracted, was and is in the sight of God abominable. All such practices he has absolutely and for ever forbidden. Let the vile blood-eaters hear and tremble. See the note on Act 15:20, and the passages in the margin.

EZEKIEL 33: 26 You stand on your sword, you work abomination, and every one of you defiles his neighbour's wife: and shall you possess the land?

Verse 26

Ye stand upon your sword - Ye live by plunder, rapine, and murder. Ye are every way impure; and shall ye possess the land? No.

EZEKIEL 33: 27 You shall tell them, Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him who is in the open field will I give to the animals to be devoured; and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

Verse 27

They that are in the wastes - He seems to speak of those Jews who had fled to rocks, caves, and fortresses, in the mountains; whose death he predicts, partly by the sword, partly by wild beasts, and partly by famine.

EZEKIEL 33: 28 I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; and the pride of her power shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, so that no one shall pass through.

EZEKIEL 33: 29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

EZEKIEL 33: 30 As for you, son of man, the children of your people talk of you by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Please come and hear what is the word that comes out from the LORD.

Verse 30

The people still are talking against thee - רב bach should be rather translated, "concerning thee," than "against thee;" for the following verses show that the prophet was much respected. The Vulgate translates, de te; the Septuagint, περι σου, "concerning thee," both right.

Talking by the walls and in the doors of the houses is not a custom peculiar to the Copts, mentioned by Bp. Pococke, it is a practice among idle people, and among those who are resting from their work, in every country, when the weather permits. Gossiping in the inside of the house is not less frequent, and much more blamable.

EZEKIEL 33: 31 They come to you as the people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but don't do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their gain.

Verse 31

As the people cometh - As they are accustomed to come on public days, Sabbaths, etc.

With their mouth they show much love - They respected the prophet, but would not bend themselves to follow his precepts. They loved earthly things, and did not relish those of heaven.

EZEKIEL 33: 32 Behold, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they don't do them.

Verse 32

As a very lovely song - They admired the fine voice and correct delivery of the prophet; this was their religion, and this is the whole of the religion of thousands to the present day; for never were itching ears so multiplied as now.

EZEKIEL 33: 33 When this comes to pass, (behold, it comes), then shall they know that a prophet has been among them.

Verse 33

When this cometh to pass - then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them - What I have predicted, (and it is even now at the doors), then they will be convinced that there was a prophet among them, by whose ministry they did not profit as they ought.