

'Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.'

Ezekiel 36:32-35.

You are warmly invited to meetings arranged by the
Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, to be held, God willing, at
NEW LIFE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
44 SALUSBURY ROAD, LONDON, NW6 6NN

Theme for 2017 – The Glory of God – Studies in the Book of Ezekiel

October 27th, 7pm

Subject: The Vision of the Millennial Temple (40-46)
Speaker: Richard Monteith

November 24th, 7pm

Subject: The Vision of the New Land of Israel (47-48)
Speaker: David McMillan

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ISSN 1351-4768

Watching and Waiting

LIGHT FOR PERILOUS TIMES

SCRIPTURAL

Reformed, Protestant, Puritan, Prophetical, Expository, Doctrinal

Volume 29, No 4

October-December, 2017

Quarterly, £4 per annum

**This magazine is issued by the
SOVEREIGN GRACE ADVENT TESTIMONY**

(Registered Charity No. 261489)

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The objects are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. James 5:8
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. Jude 3
3. To note passing events in the light of 'the Scripture of Truth.' 2 Peter 1:19
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Acts 17:11
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for Truth. Acts 1:8
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. 2 Timothy 2:19
7. To call for separation from false ecumenism. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

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Martin Luther

Many Christian organisations and items of literature will, at this time, be mentioning the great Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther; and those that do not, should do.

It was 500 years ago, on 31st October, 1517, that he nailed his 95 thesis to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral, taking a stand against the wickednesses of Rome. This act, under God, with subsequent events, led to the Protestant Reformation, which has been such a blessing.

It is shameful that some professing Christian leaders speak as if the Reformation was a mistake, thinking that it contradicted the desire of the Lord Jesus for unity. Mr Fromow used to say that true unity was organic, not organized. It is abundantly plain that ecumenists do not understand the obvious.

We are not one with, and consequently cannot unite with, those who deny the one sacrifice of Christ and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. We marvel and are thankful to God for the courage that He gave to Luther enabling him to take the stand he did, and we would wish that all true believers in the present days had a similar confidence in God and love for truth.

It is well to remember his forceful and impressive words spoken when called to give account of himself at the Diet of Worms. He said towards the conclusion of the assembly, 'I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to the Councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall lead me to make acknowledgment of error, I cannot and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.' Those words shook the papacy.

He brought to light the great Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, but we recognize that he did not understand everything. He failed to appreciate God's love and purposes for the Jewish nation, or prophetic truth generally; and on other issues he showed himself to be a mere man, but in spite of this, we admire him for the bold stand he took in accordance with the light given to him at such a dark period of history.

We believe there is **'No Priest but Christ; No Sacrifice but Calvary; No Authority but the Word of God; No Confessional but the Throne of Grace.'**

'Tis passing strange to thinking minds that fire or sword came not to thee,
 So keen and to the mark thine aim at Romish villainy;
 Surely God covered thee the while thy lifted eyes confronted kings;
 He gave thee mid the blaze of thrones 'the shadow of His wings.'

(Extracted from a poem entitled 'Luther' by Mrs M A Chaplin).

The Vision of Ezekiel's Commission (Ezekiel 2 and 3)

By Gordon Dane

(This is a summary of a message given at a Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony meeting held in London on Friday, 24th February, 2017. The message was recorded and CDs and cassette tapes are available; or it may be downloaded from our website).

The first chapter of the book of Ezekiel is set in the year 593 BC, five years after the armies of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had come on a punitive expedition against Jerusalem because Jehoiakim the King had decided he would not pay tribute any more.

As the Babylonians had drawn near the city the people had become very fearful and to add to this King Jehoiakim had died and his son had taken over, and in the uncertainty and confusion he had surrendered and submitted himself to the enemy forces. There had to be a punishment however and it was that the cream of Jerusalem society would be deported to Babylon. So the King and the royal family went into captivity and the nobility and the priesthood and the top men in industry and commerce were all taken captive, leaving just the rags and tags of society to live in Jerusalem. Ezekiel was among the cream of society who were taken into exile in Babylon and he was as stunned as anybody else at this unfortunate turn of events. The prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah 31: 5 had said, 'As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and passing over He will preserve it.' They had taken that prophecy and misunderstood it to mean that Jerusalem could not ever be captured no matter what the people did.

It seemed now as if God had let them down and their faith was shattered. They felt that it was not their fault but God's fault and they never thought of asking if their sin had built up to such a degree that God was now justified in teaching them a lesson. They were discouraged.

Then they were also demoralised because their leaders were speaking with different voices. Back in Jerusalem and also in Babylon some of their leaders who claimed to be prophets of the Lord were saying, 'Do not worry. It will not last for too long. Two or three years and you will be back home in Jerusalem.' Jeremiah was saying, 'Do not believe these false prophets who say it is going to be two or three years before you are back; it will be seventy years. 'Well,' they said, 'Which do you believe - two years or seventy years?' They were confused as to whom they should listen. There was a mixed message.

And there are many of God's people who are confused and demoralised today in the church. But there is an answer to that need and it is illustrated in the Book of Ezekiel. In this situation God called one young man at the age of thirty. He was a priest and at the age of thirty a priest took up his duties in the temple. It looked as if Ezekiel would

never be able to perform his duty in the temple because of his captivity but just when it all seemed hopeless God came to Him. And to encourage him in the work God gave Ezekiel a vision. That vision is the mighty vision that is recorded in chapter 1 of this book. It was as if God was showing Ezekiel that after all He was in control. Ezekiel was given a remarkable vision of the glory of God. But He was not just given a vision, he heard a voice. Look at chapter 2 verse 1 'And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.' God was not just going to encourage him but call him into a new sphere of labour. The difficulty was going to be an opportunity as far as the ministry of Ezekiel was concerned. Of course we know that God does not speak to us directly in visions or in the same way that He spoke to Ezekiel; in this day we have God's full revelation in His Precious Word. What a need there is in this day for God's people to hear a word. And we need to know what to do in a day of difficulty and in a day when we are under the chastisement of God. We need to hear the speaking voice of God to our hearts. God told Ezekiel that He was giving him a new job. He was not to be a priest but a prophet; but he was to be a prophet in very difficult circumstances. Ezekiel was not going to have success by the world's measure of success. It was what God wanted him to do. We today live amongst people who are adamant against the gospel and do not want to hear or heed what God's Word has to say so it is interesting to see what God wanted His prophet to do.

It is a day when there is much discouragement amongst the people of God; and there are many messages coming to God's people. Some say the Church needs to bring in innovations and something that will tickle the ears of the people and water the message down; that we need something different. That is why this portion of Scripture is so relevant for this present time. Ezekiel was called to a rebellious people, and in such a situation, God wanted His prophet to preach. There are a number of things that I want you to see here in this vision of the call of Ezekiel.

The Call to Ezekiel

We have noticed that Ezekiel heard a voice from God and this voice gave him a call. Look at verses 3 and 4, 'He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.' God chose and took this man from among His people to be His messenger to that generation. He was called of God. That is vital for the Lord's work. Every child of God is a labourer in the Lord's harvest field and all people who are redeemed should labour as they have time and opportunity to forward the cause of God among men, but it is vital that those who are pastors or missionaries or full time in the Lord's work have His call.

That is the first thing needed in this day when things are so difficult. We need people who are sent by God. Whatever our service, if we are to be effective we must have the

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call of God. It has been recognised by spiritually-minded Bible students throughout the centuries that in order to do efficient service in the Master's cause, they must have a definite call from the Lord.

In Ezekiel's day there were many false prophets. They were men who professed that they had the Word of the Lord but they were preaching a message that men wanted to hear. It was a message that was going to tickle the ears of people. Jeremiah said of these false prophets, 'They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.' The sad thing is that down the centuries there have been those who have professed to give a word from God and they have not been called by God. There are a few things about the call:

The Title. Notice the title that the Lord uses. Look at chapter 2:1, 'He said unto me, Son of man.' This title, 'Son of man' is ninety times or so in the Book of Ezekiel. The only other book in the Old Testament in which it appears, is Daniel. It is in the New Testament, where the Lord Jesus Christ called Himself the 'Son of man.' Then in the epistles, the apostles also called Him the 'Son of man.' It was the favourite title of the Lord Jesus Christ for Himself. Around eighty-six times He spoke of Himself as the 'Son of man.' You find as you go to Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Gospels, that 'The Son of man' is always used in a prophetic sense.

It is allocated to Daniel, Ezekiel, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, and there are a few things that are common to each of those three individuals. The first is **rejection**. Their own people rejected them. The second thing is **humiliation**. Daniel was cast into the den of lions. Ezekiel was subject to great humiliation for obeying the Word of God. Then we read of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

Sometimes people think that to be a minister, a pastor or missionary is all sunshine. That is not so. Every Christian knows that there is a battle against the world, the flesh and the devil, but in the front of the battle there are certainly the onslaughts of hell. In this day of hardness and difficulty we have that onslaught. We seem to be facing government and the immorality of society. By giving Ezekiel this title, the Lord was speaking to him of the cost that he was to pay as the prophet of God. All who serve God need to realise that they are called to humiliation!

In addition, the title 'Son of man' speaks of **exaltation**. It is always the plan of God that there cannot be glorification before humiliation. It says in Ezekiel 1:28 and 2:1, 'When I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of One that spake. And He said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me.' One thing is sure and that is that we do not need preachers who have no vision of God; those for whom the whole business is merely an education exercise, skills nicely decked out from homiletics classes. In a declining culture this is non-negotiable. In times of great revival everybody talks about God, but in times when the whole culture is moving in other directions it is essential that those who proclaim the

Word of God have their eyes fastened on what God is like in all His transcendent glory and thus speak out of the fear of this Living God.

The Task. Notice the task to which he was called. Look at verses 3 and 4, ‘He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.’

The Lord had a specific task for him to do. This was not an overseas missionary call for Ezekiel. Look at verse 5. ‘For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel’ (3:5). He did not have to go to a language school for the mission field to which he was called. It was a home missionary work. There was no language barrier, and that was some help to him. The Lord told him that the task was not going to be easy. He was sent to a rebellious house. That word ‘rebellious’ occurs frequently throughout this book - Israel is called a rebellious nation. It was a call to speak God’s words and be fearless (2:3-8). God warned the prophet that Israel was obstinate and stubborn, and He said several times in these three chapters, ‘Say unto them.’ It is what the sovereign Lord **says** - not what He does, or thinks, or feels, or loves. All we know of what God thinks, or does comes to us through what He says. The danger is that some do not want to listen. However, Ezekiel was to preach God’s Word whether they would listen or fail to listen (verse 5). They were a rebellious house, but they would at least know that a prophet had been among them. Ezekiel was not to be afraid of them, or their words, or be terrified by them. Though they were rebellious, the prophet must speak God’s words to them.

That is what we are to do in a day of declension. Do we forget about the pulpit? Do we bring in the drama? Do we bring in the bands? Do we bring in all of these accoutrements? No! What does God say? ‘Speak unto them and say, Thus saith the LORD.’ That is preaching the Word, and we are to preach in season, out of season, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. We are not to be afraid. The world wants to shut the mouths of God’s people so that we are not allowed to speak in the work-place, or in the public square, or in the council chamber, or in parliament. The world wants that but the Lord says in a day of stiff heartedness and rebellion, ‘Speak unto them, and say, Thus saith the LORD.’ We have a message to bring in this day, as in any other generation.

The Conditions for Ezekiel

Look again at verses 3 and 4, ‘He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.’

The conditions Ezekiel had to face were hard. He was called of God but he would not have ‘success.’ Look at what is said in verse 7, ‘Thou shalt speak My words unto them,

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whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.' That is so striking. We live in a day when success is measured by numbers or effects, with tangible outcomes. We must never say we are not looking for tangible outcomes in the Lord's work. It is our constant prayer that God would breathe with His Spirit and that souls would be saved yet we see from this portion that these things are not always the measure of success in the Lord's work and that there can be success without our seeing much fruit. In these days when people seem to be as adamant against the gospel as they were in the days of Ezekiel that is very interesting.

Notice too that success is not necessarily an indicator of the Lord's call, and lack of success is not necessarily an indicator that a man does not have the Lord's call. There are large sections of God's people who do not understand this. We have to say that in normal circumstances, if we sow we will reap. The Bible says in Psalm 126:6, 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' That does not mean that there may be times when the harvest is not outward. We need to remember that while the gospel is a savour of life unto life that it is also a savour of death unto death. There are times when the work of God is very difficult. That is why Paul wrote to Timothy and urged him to preach no matter what the conditions may be. He said, 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season.' There are off-seasons in God's work as well as in-seasons. Some have a rose tinted perception of the work of God. They think that to serve God as a missionary or pastor is to be in the limelight, but Ezekiel's call shatters all possible false conceptions concerning what it is to serve the Living and True God. What we need to do is be faithful no matter what kind of condition we face.

Unreasonableness. Ezekiel faced a condition of unreasonableness: God said of those to whom Ezekiel was sent, 'I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.' 'Being a Wycliffe Bible translator would have been a straightforward assignment in comparison with what Ezekiel had been called to do.' The problem was not language, but utter rebellion against God. God said in chapter 3:7 that they were not going to listen and that it was not Ezekiel they were rejecting, but Him! He told Ezekiel the reason why he was going to be humiliated was because the people were a rebellious people - they did not want Jehovah as their God!' In chapter 2:3, they are called 'the sons of Israel,' signifying the hereditary nature of their rebellion. Jacob had the nature to wrestle against God, and God was saying, they were all like their father Jacob, wrestling and rebelling against Him.

What had happened was that Israel had sunk to an all-time low, to the level of the heathen, the Gentile world, and they were beginning to live like the people around them. In our terms, the world was in the church, and the church was in the world. God labels them as a rebellious, impudent, hardhearted people (verse 4).

Unresponsiveness. There also was unresponsiveness. Really, it was a refusal to

acknowledge the sovereignty of God. To put it into our terms today, it is refusal and rebellion to recognise the lordship of the Saviour in our lives! It is serious because it is a sin that causes God Almighty to call His people by a name that He calls the wicked world!

If success was measured by responsiveness, Ezekiel would be regarded as one of the greatest failures in all history. However, his success was measured by another standard.

This is the standard whereby we know he had succeeded, they would know that a prophet had been among them (2:5). In other words, when everything that Ezekiel prophesied befell this nation they would remember one solitary man who warned them and called them to repent. We need to so labour that people today will know that there was a servant of God among them. They need to hear the warnings of God and the standards of God's Word even if they will not listen to anything that is said.

In Matthew 11, the Lord said to His people who were like spoilt children, 'If the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes' - even Sodom would have repented; but Israel were a rebellious people, stiff-necked, hardened!

In the light of this we ask a question of ourselves, as we seek to preach the gospel to a world around that is dying, how can we measure success? Is it numbers? Is it conversions? Is it the buildings which we erect? Is it the money that we cash in every week? Is it the talent that we have in the pews?

Now do not misunderstand me. We ought to strive to be as fruitful as possible, and we ought not to be content at any time when folk are not being saved, or when our lives show a lack of progress. What is clear in this Scripture is the sobering reality that Ezekiel's success and faithfulness could not be measured by numbers. He was told he was to go, but they would not listen to anything he said. However, he had a great high calling because his ministry was to be for God's eternal glory!

John Calvin said, 'When God wishes to move us to obey Him, He does not always promise us a happy outcome to our labour - but sometimes He wants to test our obedience to the point that He will have us be content with His command, even if people ridicule our efforts.'

Sometimes we have to recognise that even seeming failure is God's work done. Think of the pioneer missionaries that have gone to the mission field and were attacked by the natives, and immediately died. It seems that was a waste of time - all that preparation, all the money to send them out, all the learning and then they had no time to proclaim the gospel; but we know that far from being a waste of time, God's sovereign purpose was fulfilled.

I do not want you to believe that if you are bearing no fruit that must mean that you are very faithful. That is not what is being taught. If we are not bearing fruit we need to ask ourselves questions. The point of this teaching in the Book of Ezekiel is that we must do all that we can toward the salvation of souls, but God is the One Who opens men's and women's hearts!

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The amazing thing about our God is that He works all things together for good. He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him! Those pioneer missionaries that went to the foreign mission field, and only days after they arrived, after a gruelling journey, without even speaking a word for Christ, were killed, were their lives wasted? At the Judgment Seat it will be manifest that their primary desire was the glory of God, even if souls were not saved.

It may take a greater call to go and see nothing, than to see mighty things - and Ezekiel had to have a vision of God, because he was to go into a ministry that was not going to be visibly fruitful. William Greenhill, the Puritan, commented upon this, saying: 'Sometimes God gives large encouragement, large promises, hope, success, providing for our infirmities - at other times a bare commission, a command, must suffice to do that which would make one's heart ache. It is His prerogative to send whom He will, and upon what service He will.'

The Navy slogan used to be, 'Join the Navy and see the world.' In verse 6 of this chapter you see that to join the prophets is to be cast among prickles and thorn bushes, to sit on the scorpion. Ezekiel was called to absolute humiliation, rejection and broken-heartedness. He was called to very little tangible fruit, yet the amazing thing is this prophet was the exact opposite of the rebellious people. His life was the antithesis of their behaviour! Without God's power Ezekiel, literally, could do nothing. What a lesson! Is that not what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples?

The Challenge to Ezekiel

In the face of Ezekiel's call of God to work in such difficult conditions there was a challenge to his heart.

The Challenge of Obedience. Look at chapter 2:8, 'But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.' He listened to the Lord, when his people were not listening. He was obedient to the Word of God. When he saw the vision of God, he fell down (1:28) - a picture of his humble submission. When he was commanded to rise to his feet (2:1), he rose to his feet. The reason this man was able to obey the Word of God was because he received an infusion of the Spirit of God! 'The Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me' (2:2).

The Spirit enabled him to hear the Word of God. God handed the scroll of His Word to him, and caused Ezekiel to eat it (3:2). The whole picture is just an out-living of the name Ezekiel, 'God strengthens.' In fact, we could translate it, 'God hardens.' Ezekiel had to be a hard man, and when his vision was over, the Spirit lifted him and set him among the exiles back beside the river Chebar in the concentration camp. He sat there for a week absolutely motionless and stunned. What was the point of all this? The message, not to be missed, was, without God's power Ezekiel, literally, could do nothing. What a lesson! That is what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, 'Without Me, ye can do nothing!'

Today we live in a different era, and the role of the Holy Spirit has changed from Old Testament times. Then, the Spirit came to specific people to accomplish specific tasks, and He rested upon a person for a period of time. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured upon the church, equipping God's people to go and preach the Word. One author says: 'This is now the age not only of the priesthood of all believers, but of the prophethood of all believers.' That is not prophesying in a charismatic way, but in the heralding of the Word of God!

The theme of the Book of Acts is the coming of the Spirit, His being given to believers to witness to Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. That was why the Lord told them before He ascended that they could do nothing without the Spirit of God, but they were to tarry in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father came, and they would be given power from on high! On that day linguistics was not a problem because the gift of tongues was given. The problem still today is not linguistics, but it is the same as Ezekiel had; that is, a rebellious, stiff-necked people that will not hear the Word of God, they are dead in trespasses and sins. The need today is not language but new life from God! We need men and women who are born-again and touched of the Spirit!

This is so relevant to the church today, because there is a great debate on the question, what can we do to bring more people to Christ? Should we use new methods and gimmicks to make sinners more comfortable in the church? The message of Ezekiel to that cry would be, 'No!' The need is for God's people to fall on their face before Him, and be equipped and anointed of the Holy Ghost to do what is a supernatural task.

The Challenge of Training. God had to equip Ezekiel. 'Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this scroll, and go speak unto the house of Israel' (3:1).

What a glorious picture. Ezekiel, like Adam, was given a test. It was a test that revolved around the idea of eating. Adam was told, 'Do not eat of the tree;' but Ezekiel was told, 'Eat the scroll.' It is the opposite, and it is the reversing of all the mess that man has made. That scroll was not like the fruit of the tree that was good for food, pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom. Rather it was a scroll that did not look very appetizing, written on both sides with lament, mourning and woe upon it; but Ezekiel found that it tasted as sweet as honey. It is amazing that this is the only thing Ezekiel did in the whole vision, and it was given to him, but this would equip him to take the unpalatable message to his fellow exiles.

Like John on the Isle of Patmos in Revelation 10, who also swallowed the Word of God - it was sweet to his taste, but it says of John that when it reached his stomach it was sour. Sweet to the mouth, sour to the stomach, because taking the Word of God to a dying, rebellious, hard-headed nation is a bitter-sweet experience!

John the Baptist found that. The two witnesses in Revelation 11 found that as well. Paul tells us that to some it is a savour of life, but to others it is a savour of death unto death, and they will oppose it and do all in their power to exterminate the message of the Gospel. In verses 8-9, God told him to give His Word even though they would not receive it, and He will make his head hard. It is interesting to compare Ezekiel with Jeremiah. Jeremiah had a soft heart, but God gave Ezekiel a hard head. That

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presupposes that he must have had a soft heart, because he needed God to harden him! God was telling Ezekiel that the children of Israel were hard-headed, but He was going to make his head even harder than theirs. We need hard-headed men and women today to serve God, people like Ezekiel, infused by the Spirit of God, people ingesting the Word of God. Is our service purely for the glory of God? Do we rely on ourselves or on the Spirit of God? Prayer is the sole test, as our emphasis on prayer will reflect how much we are relying on God.

The Commission of Ezekiel

Look at verses 16-17, 'And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me.'

The watchman has the fearsome responsibility of being the only man between a sleeping city and disaster. He is trusted implicitly by those he is set to guard; and if he fails them, he is responsible. The watchman's job, Ezekiel's job, was to warn the people when danger was coming. He was to warn the wicked that if they did not turn from their wicked ways, then they would die in their iniquity. And he was to warn the righteous as well, 'Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul' (3:21).

We need warning that sin is just as dangerous now as it has ever been. In the believer, the old nature is on a spring, and the slightest relaxation of pressure keeping that spring down will trigger it off; and it will be welling up inside us in a way we did not believe possible. We, God's people, need constantly to be reminded by the watchmen of God of the potential of sin within us, and so to keep close to Christ; to maintain a disciplined life, dominated by the Spirit of God, lest sin comes, and begins to get the dominion over us.

God set Ezekiel as a watchman. Daniel Webster, statesman, lawyer, and orator, once said, 'The most important thought I ever had was my individual responsibility to God.' I want you to see what the watchman does.

The Watchman Protects. Just as a watchman is assigned to protect something or somebody, a preacher is assigned to protect the saints from false teaching, discouragement and sin. Sadly, there are those who will avoid controversy at any cost.

They feel it is not part of their calling to deal with false teaching and the apostasy of the day. I want to say that it is very much part of the responsibility of the true watchman. If the watchman is going to protect his charge he has to be aware of the dangers and warn of them. He is also sent to the lost as a protection against going to hell. Of course, a watchman can only warn. The hearer has an accountability to God, but the preacher has to be aware of what is going on and have a willingness to put himself in danger to make sure that protection is given.

The Watchman Patrols. The watchman will move about, being on the alert for

trouble. The godly pastor will move through his congregation looking for those things that need prayerful attention. He will see where wickedness is being promoted. He will be interested when dangerous notions are being propagated among his community.

The Watchman Perceives. In Old Testament times, the job of the watchman was to sit in a tower and keep a constant vigil, perpetually scanning the horizon to see if any enemy came near. He had to be awake and alert all the time. But Ezekiel's job as a watchman would be a little different. His job was not only to keep his *eyes* open to watch for the enemy, but to keep his *ears* open to hear God's Word. God said, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me.' Ezekiel's job was to listen attentively to God's word of warning. A watchman was on the alert to both hear and see.

A good watchman could perceive problems. A man of God can perceive spiritual difficulty. With the many exhortations in the New Testament to watchfulness, God's people are to be on the alert for the signs of Christ's coming. We think of the exhortation in Matthew 24:41-43 to be watching and waiting, 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.'

The Watchman Proclaims. He is not silent when he spots trouble. He takes action. Obviously to scan the horizon for an approaching enemy was not a watchman's only job. If all he did was watch for the enemy, what good would he be? He had to watch **and** give warning when he saw disaster coming. If he simply saw the enemy coming with full force, yet did nothing to warn the people, how worthless he would be!

Ezekiel was to warn people of the impending disaster when he heard that God would destroy the wicked for their sin. God told him, 'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.'

Ezekiel had to warn the people of their sinful rebellion against God. He had to warn them of their wickedness and injustice. He had to warn them of their complacency and backsliding. He had to warn them of God's impending judgment against their sin.

You will notice the accountability of the watchman. If the danger threatens and the watchman neglects to warn the wicked, he 'shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand'

We need to be those watchmen, and proclaim the message whatever the world thinks, whether or not they will listen.

It is important to notice that any failure of the watchman does not affect the accountability of the wicked person, or stop the judgment. The wicked man still 'shall die in his iniquity' but the watchman is also held accountable for his failure. One commentator summed it up this way, 'All prophets (and also New Testament teachers)

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stand in double jeopardy, because they are responsible both to God and to man.' So there is an awesome responsibility here. Paul said to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:26-27, 'Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' Are we doing this work of warning? A theatre manager asked a young man applying for the job of usher what he would do if a fire broke out. The young man quickly answered, 'Do not worry about me. I would get out.'

Many Christians respond this way. What are we doing about the lost around us? If we are thinking, 'I am not worried. I will be all right,' we probably need to be reminded that we are spiritual ushers. It is not enough to get ourselves or even our families out. We should think of helping others.

This is a day of hardness, a day of rebellion, in which many people of God are discouraged. In such a day we need people who see God; people who have a vision of God; people who are filled with the Holy Ghost; people who have a degree of hardness, and are willing to stand no matter what people say, no matter how people despise them.

Then we need to speak. Do not let the devil cower us. Do not let the devil shut our mouths. We read in the papers of people who have been taken off the streets and have been put in court. They have to defend themselves for preaching the gospel of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil wants to shut the mouths of God's people. But in a day of hardness and difficulty, God said to Ezekiel, 'Have not I sent thee?' God sends us forth. It might be hard. It might be difficult but our one aim and one desire needs to be that all glory is brought to the Name of our Saviour.

Letter from a Subscriber: We give below an extract of a letter from a Christian Minister in the North of England:

'I felt you should know that I have found reading the 10 volumes by B W Newton to be a great blessing. I hardly need say, for you will know only too well, that there seems to be little appetite these days for the Prophetic Word and I believe this accounts for much spiritual lethargy and unawareness of the great things God has in store for us.

'I set myself the task of reading one volume per week, starting on 1st March, 2017, and finished as planned, on 10th May.

'It may interest you to know that I am about to donate these volumes to a small library for Local Preachers ... My hope is that it will attract a few readers, initially from preachers, but then extend to other lay folk locally, in order to give them a further appetite for the written and revealed words of God.

'Thank you again for making the books both available and readily affordable; you send blessings upon many people.'

H Barrie Morris, 28th June, 2017

The Unparalleled Bible

By Sir Monier Williams, Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University

(This article is taken from a leaflet published by the Bible League approximately 100 years ago).

When I began investigating Hinduism and Buddhism I began to believe in what is called evolution and growth of religious thought. I am glad of the opportunity of stating publicly that I am persuaded I was misled by the attractiveness of such a theory, and that its main idea was erroneous. And now I crave permission at least to give two good reasons for venturing to contravene the favourite philosophy of the day.

Listen to me, ye youthful students of the so-called sacred books of the East: search them through and through, and tell me – Do they affirm of Vyasa, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed, what our Bible affirms of the Founder of Christianity, that He, a sinless Man, was made sin? Not merely that He is the eradication of sin, but that He, the sinless Son of Man, was Himself made sin. Vyasa and the other founders of Hinduism enjoined severe penances, endless lustral washings, incessant purifications, infinite repetitions of prayer, painful pilgrimages, arduous ritual and sacrificial observances, all with the one idea of getting rid of sin. All their books say so. But do they say that the very men who exhausted every invention for the eradication of sin were themselves sinless made sin?

This proposition put forth in our Bible stands alone; it is wholly unparalleled; it is not to be matched by the shade of a shadow of a similar declaration in any other book claiming to be the exponent of the doctrine of any other religion in the world.

Once again, do these sacred books of the East affirm of Vyasa, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Mohammed, what our Bible affirms of the Founder of Christianity, that He, a dead and buried Man, was made life? Not merely that He is the giver of life, but that He, the dead and buried Man, is life. All that I contend for is that such a statement is absolutely unique; and I defy you to produce the shade of a shadow of a similar declaration in any other sacred book of the world. And bear in mind that these two matchless, unparalleled declarations, intimately, indissolubly connected with the great central facts and doctrine of our religion; the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Christ.

The two unparalleled declarations quoted by me from our holy Bible make a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East, which severs the one from the others, utterly hopelessly, and for ever; not a mere rift which may easily be closed up, but a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought; yes, a bridgeless chasm which no theory of evolution can ever span.

Called Home

Paul John Flory was called home on 18th April, 2017, age 88. Born in Ipswich in Suffolk, he attended 'Zoar' Strict Baptist Chapel in that town and profited under the ministry of Pastor James Smith. He moved to the London area in 1971, living in Enfield and for a short while, joined with the Strict Baptist Church at Edmonton. Due to the chapel closing, he subsequently went to a Brethren Assembly. He has been a faithful supporter of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony and has regularly attended our monthly meetings, helping by serving at the organ. For many years he has been a trustee of the Testimony as well as a member of the committee.

Subscription Forms: When sending the last issue of the year, we usually include a subscription form with the magazine. We know that many of our readers have busy lives and do not find it easy to write letters, and the form is accordingly included for the use of such. Some friends have already sent, but if this is the case, the form can be used at a later date. We would again express our thanks to the many friends who give so generously to the Lord's work through the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony.

S.G.A.T. Meetings: God willing, 2018 will be the centenary year of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony and meetings have been arranged, the theme for the year being 'The Teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.' We trust that friends will be interested in this chosen theme, and we would like to see others come to our meetings, which we expect to hold on the fourth Friday of each month except August and December. The Spring Conference is in April and the Autumn Conference in September, when we have afternoon meetings at 4.pm. in addition to the usual evening meetings. All evening meetings are at 7.pm. So that you can insert the dates in your diary and arrange to be present, we would mention that the suggested programme is due to be as follows:

January 26.....Christ, the Son of David *Martin Humphrey*
 February 23.....To be arranged. *To be arranged*
 March 23.....Christ, the Good Shepherd of His Sheep *Paul Toms*
 April 27 (Aft).....The Resurrection of the Just. *Brian McClung*
 (Even) ..The Stone of Israel *Brian McClung*
 May 25.....Judging the Kingdom *John Douglas*
 June 22.....The Parable of the Tares *Ivan Foster*
 July 27To be arranged. *To be arranged*
 September 28 (Aft).....Concerning the Temple *Ian Shaw*
 (Even)....Concerning Moses and the Prophets. *Ian Shaw*
 October 26Concerning His Coming *David McMillan*
 November 23The Throne of His Glory. *Richard Monteith*