EZEKIEL'S PARABLE OF THE WATCHMAN AND THE EDITING OF EZEKIEL

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Ezekiel's parable of the watchman is very important for understanding his sense of mission, explaining his intense concern in his touring of Palestine and other places. It is thus worthy of the highlighting it receives at the hand of the final editors in their double usage of this material to head two sections of the book addressed to God's people Israel. The parable consists of three parts: (I) xxxiii 1-6, which is preserved in Chap. xxxiii alone; (II) xxxiii 7-9, with its close verbal parallel in iii 17-19; and (III) iii 20-21, which is preserved in Chap. iii alone. One thus sees that each chapter contains two of the three parts—Chap. xxxiii containing the first two and Chap. iii the last two, each of them sharing the central portion.

This duplication between Chaps. iii and xxxiii is not limited to the watchman passage alone, but it is a part of a whole series of parallels between Chap. xxxiii and the rest of the book. We shall begin by focusing upon the structure and contents of Chap. xxxiii in relation to iii 12-27. The following outlines are to be consulted in the subsequent analyses:

STRUCTURE OF EZEKIEL iii 12—v 17

I. Ezekiel goes to the Exiles (iii 12-15)
   A. Borne by the Spirit amid visionary circumstances (Vss. 12 f.)
   B. Borne by the Spirit under the Lord's strong hand (Vs. 14)
   C. Arrival at Tel-abib, where he sits overwhelmed seven days (Vs. 15)

II. Ezekiel's Appointment as a Watchman (iii 16-21)
   A. God's word after seven days (Vs. 16)
   B. His appointment as watchman for Israel (Vs. 17)
   C. The watchman's responsibility for the wicked (Vss. 18 f.)
      1. if he does not warn the wicked (Vs. 18)
      2. if he does warn the wicked and he does not repent (Vs. 19)

I hope to show this in a forthcoming article in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, revised edition. Meanwhile, it may be pointed out that amazement with regard to the knowledge of Ezekiel concerning Tyrian ships and commerce has led some scholars already to posit Ezekiel's visit to Phoenicia at some time.
D. The watchman's responsibility for the righteous (Vss. 20 f.)
1. the case of the backsliding righteous (Vs. 20a)
2. if the watchman does not warn him (Vs. 20b)
3. if he warns the righteous and he does not backslide (Vs. 21)

III. Ezekiel's Appointment as Yahweh's Servant (iii 22—v. 17)
A. The vision of Divine Glory in the Plain under the Lord's Hand (iii 22-24a)
B. Ezekiel's mission as Suffering Servant: confinement and dumbness (iii 24b-26)
C. The prospect of prophetic speaking (iii 27)
D. Symbolic actions (embodifying motif of prophetic suffering) (Chaps. iv-v)

STRUCTURE OF CHAPTER XXXIII

I. God's Word for the Exiles (xxxiii 1-20), section marked off by Vs. 1
A. The role of the watchman (Vss. 2-9)
1. Ezekiel to address this to the exiles (Vs. za; cf. 3:11)
2. The watchman's mission to the nations (Vss. 2b-6)
   a. when a land chooses a watchman (Vs. 2b-d)
   b. if the watchman blows the trumpet (Vss. 3-5)
      (1) circumstance and action (Vs. 3)
      (2) consequences if one does not take warning (Vs. 4)
      (3) justice of such consequences (Vs. 5)
   c. if the watchman does not blow the trumpet (Vs. 6)
      (1) circumstance and action (Vs. 6a)
      (2) consequences (Vs. 6b)
3. The watchman's mission to Israel (Vss. 7-9)
   a. his appointment as watchman (Vs. 7)
   b. if he does not warn the wicked (Vs. 8)
   c. if he warns the wicked but the does not repent (Vs. 9)

B. Repentance and the hope of the despairing (xxxiii 10 f).
C. Contrastive consequences of turning from righteousness and turning from wickedness (Vss. 12-20)
1. Main discussion (Vss. 12-16)
2. Yahweh's justice maintained (Vss. 17-20).

II. Fugitive from Jerusalem comes to Ezekiel in the Exile (Vss. 21 f.)
A. Coming of the fugitive with news of Jerusalem's destruction (Vs. 21)
B. Release from dumbness the night before by reason of the Lord's hand (Vs. 22)

III. God's Word for Ezekiel (Vss. 23-33), section marked off by Vs. 23
A. Squatters' strife in the Land of Israel and God's message for them (Vss. 24-29)
B. Disappointing response to Ezekiel's eloquence among the exiles (Vss. 30-33)