

# The Persistent Purpose of God - Part 7

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the significance of the title 'Son of Man' and the function of a watchman in Ezekiel's prophecies, emphasizing the importance of being a personal embodiment of the message and understanding things that mean death for the church.*

**Duration:** 1:04:26

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 2:1, Ezekiel 3:1, Ezekiel 3:17, Ezekiel 4:1, Ezekiel 16:1, Ezekiel 33:1, John 20:25

**Topics:** "Gods Purpose", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of a watchman's role in understanding and proclaiming God's message. He explains that there are three key elements to this role: presentation, representation, and declaration. The watchman must first understand God's idea, which is the manhood of a certain character. This idea is then represented in a tangible form, and from there, the message is preached. The speaker also highlights the responsibility of the watchman to discern the difference between the way of life and the way of death, and to clearly communicate this to others.

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## Transcript

Having an open air meeting today, I'm going to ask your permission to take my coat off. When it warms up, I'll take the coat off. Now we come back again to the prophecies of Ezekiel.

There is a large section of this book with which we shall not be able to deal in detail. So we must find some comprehensive way of dealing with it simply. I think that way will be by looking at the three different titles by which Ezekiel was called.

Perhaps you have noticed that in these prophecies, Ezekiel has three different titles. And these three titles gather into themselves this large section of the book. The first of the three is Son of Man.

Look at chapter two. And he said unto me, Son of Man. And he said unto me, Son of Man.

Chapter three and verse one. And he said unto me, Son of Man. Verse four.

And he said unto me, Son of Man. And so it goes on. Right through the book, that is one of the main titles of the prophet.

Perhaps you would like to go right through and note how many times it occurs. We note then at the beginning that this title was peculiar to the prophet Ezekiel. No other prophet is called by this name in the same way.

It marks out Ezekiel in a special way. Now we know that the Lord Jesus chose as his favorite title for himself, The Son of Man. But we must not think of Ezekiel in the same way.

In this title, Son of Man, Ezekiel was unique among the prophets. Jesus, as the Son of Man, was unique among all men. So let us be careful not to confuse the two titles, Son of Man and The Son of Man.

If there is any relationship or similarity, it is in the function and not in the person. That is the matter that we shall now consider. We have seen that on the throne above it, there was the likeness as on a man.

And we have seen that the predominant feature of the cherubim was the man. Therefore we take note of this place of man in this book. It is a special idea.

We also know that man means representation and speech for God. Man is not only a person, he is a divine idea. There is a man upon the throne.

While that man is a person, he is not only a person, he is a divine idea. The idea in God's mind in creating man was that he should represent God. Let us make man after our own image, in our own likeness and after our own image.

Man is God's fullest thought and God's final thought. In the creation, God ended with man. And he headed all things up into man.

When God has reached such a man, he pronounces his verdict, and takes his rest. When he has the man according to his intentions, then he says about everything, it is very good. And then God takes his rest.

God finds his rest when he has his man according to his mind. But that is not the end of everything. At that point God looks for reproduction.

He says to that man, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. And the law of creation was that everything should reproduce after its own time. Things were never intended to change therefore.

I think this is a little blow at evolution. I think this is a little blow at evolution. Everything was given a definite and distinct form.

It was a kind of creation. And everything was to reproduce after its kind. A jellyfish was not to reproduce a monkey.

And a monkey was not to reproduce a man. Everything after its own time. Now you see, God has made man.

And before man has fallen, God says, be fruitful. God's idea was that unfallen man should fill the earth. But we know that that man fell.

And the earth was filled with a kind of man that God named. He fixed the number of his years. That man should not go on indefinitely.

I think you see from this that God's idea is a man according to his own mind. In a full way, the Lord Jesus was that. Therefore he is the son of man.

And in a sense we can say he was the only son of man. But the principle are for the people of God. And that is where Ezekiel comes in.

It is not the person but the function. It is the principle. So the son of man speaks of two things.

It means bringing into view God's original thought and pattern. That was a principle that the Lord was one. Israel is a man in God's eyes.

But in this book, Israel is not the man. In this book, Israel is a man which has been marred. And God is now moving along the principle of manhood to recover that idea in Israel.

Later we shall find that he was unable to do it in Israel as a whole. And he therefore sought to realize it in the Romans. But the Old Testament closes with this idea as a complete failure in Israel.

When we move into the New Testament, we find ourselves in the presence of the one new man. That is the corporate man which is the church. But we are not going on to that this morning.

We are just with the principle. Son of man in principle means speaking in relation to an original thought and pattern of God. You have got to recognize that as the key to the whole of these prophecies.

What is it all about? What does this whole book mean in all its parts? Well, this title, Son of Man, is scattered right over the book. And it means that the governing thought of God is this conception of man according to God's mind. If God sends this collective man into captivity, it means that that man cannot stand before him any longer.

God has given this concept of man according to God's will. It means God must have another kind of man. The great illustration of that, of course, is the bringing up of another kind of man.

And a new spirit. Well, I think that is enough to indicate the meaning of this title. God is moving for the recovery of his original thought.

That thought has been lost. This is all what Paul meant in speaking to Timothy as the man of God. His appeal to Timothy was, O man of God.

That is God's man. That is what God is after. Now we must take this up as to our ministry.

We come into this. What are we here for? It is that God may have this corporate man according to his own mind. That is the meaning of Ephesians chapter 4. Till we all come to the unity of the faith, to the full knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, God is working toward this corporate man.

We must remember that God's idea is man. I would emphasize that. Because so many people seem to think that God's idea is some organization.

Some institution. Something that is called the church. A way of doing things.

And certain teaching. A whole system. And God is not after that.

God is not after the church just as the church. The object of the church in God's mind is that it should be an expression of Christ. The church is the body of Christ.

It is not a system of teaching. It is not a special form of practice. It is a man.

And it is Christ in corporate expression. We shall come to that later in this book of Ezekiel. But we take up this principle.

It is a very important thing for us to recognize. Well, here this man principle speaks of three things. First of all, a presentation.

God presents his idea. And then a representation. Something that expresses that which is presented.

And then a declaration. A preaching concerning that. The thing is presented.

As a divine thought. And then the thing is represented in a body. And out of that comes the message.

Now have you got those three things? First there is the vision. The man is presented. You see the man in the throat.

You get God's idea. God's idea is manhood. Manhood of a certain character.

From that God has a representation of this. Something which embodies the idea. And then when God has got that which embodies the idea, there is a message.

We must not put it in the other order. Preaching it first. We must first of all have seen it.

And then there must be an expression of it. There must be that to which we can point and say this is God's idea. This is it.

The message must come out of something that actually exists according to God's mind. I think I need not stay with that any longer. But you see that applies firstly to Christ.

You must first of all have seen the Lord. And then that must have produced something in you. So that it is not only objective and abstract.

But the Lord has done something in you as you have seen. And then out of that comes your ministry. The same applies to the church.

First there must be a revealing of the church. And then there must be a representation of the church. And out of there existing a definite expression of the church, the message goes out.

It is almost impossible to preach the truth unless there is something behind it. It is essential that we are able to say this thing works and I can show you where it works. That will become very clear when we come to our next show.

But I do hope that you have got hold of this first idea. The principle in this first title There is a very great deal of the mind of God in that title. Now we go to the second title of Ezekiel.

In chapter three. Verse seventeen. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.

In chapter thirty-three. Verse one. The word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon the land, the land and the people of the land, Take a man from among them and set him for their watchman.

If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, He blow the trumpet and warn the people and so on. Verse six. But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet and the people be not warned, Verse seven.

So thou son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. So the second title of Ezekiel is a watchman. Well this idea is not peculiar to Ezekiel.

We have the watchman in other prophets. Or shall we say we have the function of the watchman in other prophets. Habakkuk said, I will stand upon my watch.

That is the function of the watchman. In Isaiah we have watchman, watch of the night. So again we have the function.

Was exactly called a watchman. And as you have noticed, That title was applied to him at the beginning of his ministry And later at his re-commissioning. Now this title and this function need not keep us very long.

We just ask ourselves the question, what is the function of a watchman? First of all the function of the watchman is to know and to declare the time. That was always an idea associated with the watchman. Right down to modern times that is true.

I don't know whether it is true in China Or in other parts of the world But until quite recently it was true in Great Britain. In the country places The watchman went round at certain times of the night And blew his trumpet or rang his bell and shouted the time. Someone is asking the time.

Watchman, what is the time? And the watchman answers, the morning cometh and also the night. The first thing about a watchman He must know what time it is in the purpose They are trying to do a lot of things out of time. There are some people who are confused in the dispensations over this.

In this dispensation God is doing a special thing And it is of the greatest importance. There may be some truth in them But it has a special purpose and meaning. There are some teachings and practices That is to take people from God In this age, the purpose Is to take them out Or to do something wrong The question to be asked Is whether God is in this age They fall by one thing Has that something to do with this earth now?

If it has, then that is not what God is doing in this dispensation God is taking out of this dispensation Whether it is Israel or anything else That is not God's concern in this dispensation And with this earth Does not belong to this dispensation That is why the Lord Jesus Left this earth and went to heaven This dispensation is characterized By a heavenly And not an earthly thing That is a major test of everything Now of course I could spend a lot of time In speaking about What God is seeking In this dispensation That will come later in the book to be seen This morning We are just underlining This truth A watchman's first business Is to know the time And then to give a very clear message As to what the time is If his note is not clear And distinct People will not know what the hour is I

do ask you brothers in ministry To go and think much about that The whole matter of how much The Lord is with you Will depend upon How much you are with the Lord In the purpose of the hour If you are trying

To do something That God does not want done At this time You are wasting your time And you are wasting Your strength The function of the watchman Then is to be eyes For the people of God And then the second thing To discern What the situation is And what it will lead to All this is contained In this description Of the watchman's word Which the Lord gave to Ezekiel The watchman is looking out He sees certain things And he discerns What those things imply He sees that there are certain things Mean something evil For the Lord's people These are signs That there is evil coming If these

things are not Guarded against The result will be death You see that is what is here In the description And then on the other side He sees the way of life And he is able to say Now that is the way of death And that is the way of life But the watchman has to be familiar With what is in the way of life And what is in the way of death So he has to discern The situation And recognize The way in which Things are going It is a It is a very Big responsibility We are all called to be watchmen And we must have an Unmistakable message We must understand the things That mean death For the church Because so very much Of these prophecies are gathered Into that All these things That Ezekiel was Commanded to do Are gathered into that title You look at chapter 4 You see the strange things That the Lord

commanded Ezekiel to do He commanded him to take a tile And to draw on it A picture of Jerusalem And then he was told To lie on his left side For 390 days And then to uncover his arm Before all the people Then the Lord said That he would put bands upon him So that he couldn't move And he would make his tongue Cleave to the roof of his mouth So that he couldn't speak And then he was told That he must become a baker And he must make enough bread To last 390 days Then he was told To take a sharp razor To shave his head Of all his hair And then to weigh the hair in balances These are all strange things He was to do all these things In the sight of all the people And then when you get well on In the book In chapter 24 Ezekiel's wife dies And he is not allowed To mourn for her He is to just go

on As though nothing had happened Everybody would look at him Strange It is all gathered Into this title And we just gather it up It means that The message of Ezekiel Was first of all Wrought into his own experience He was taken Through the message Before he gave it The things that he was to say Were already wrought In his own life I do not know How far we are to take this literally I do not know How far we are to take this literally But I do want to tell you Try to lie on your left side For three hundred and ninety days Without moving That is experience The thing has been wrought Into you by experience This is not a theory This is not just a lie Well you do any of these things And you see that The thing being personal It is something That happens to you That's the whole point The

messenger Must be a personal Embodiment of his message It must not Just be things that we say It must be things That have been wrought Into our own life You see Ezekiel did not Just give a message Ezekiel was the message When the people Looked at him They saw the message Well you can see What a big principle That introduces John put it in this way We speak that We do know And testify That which we have seen Our hands have handled There must not be Any gap Between the teacher And his message The teacher And the message Must be one thing Our position Must not be one Of just doctrine Or theory Our teaching Must be ourselves The message must be seen In our history Our message Must be seen In our experience That is to say In our experience But of course The Lord Has dealt with us a lot If the

Lord really Gets hold of us He will not let us just give out theories We take three illustrations Peter's commission Was to shepherd the flock And in his letters As you know He speaks much about that He speaks to the elders And says shepherd the flock Over which the Lord Has given you What is the chief feature Of a true shepherd Well if we take the Lord As the example The chief feature of a true shepherd Is

that he Lays down his own Soul for the sheep Notice I have chosen the word Soul That is the word That the Lord Jesus used He spoke about The disciples later Now Peter Had a very strong And big soul And Peter had a big one of those And Peter's great life lesson Was how If the soul Is the mind And the feelings And the will We can see what a big one Peter had He had a will of his own And

he had feelings of his own And he was always pushing These things to the fore Peter's life was You know and I forgot The whole life of Peter Peter was not A professional shepherd He had the principle of Pastor to the apostle Paul's great ministry Was concerning The church as the body of Christ Relatedness Dependence Interdependence Heavenliness Spirituality Dependence Interdependence The last one Spirituality Now did not Paul Have to have those things Wrought into him When you Remember Saul of Tarsus You have the very Embodiment of Independence Personal action And earthliness And unspirituality Saul of Tarsus had no Sense of dependence Of relatedness But see how the Lord Took him in hand And right from the point Now Paul Was a sign For the dispensation You think about that We know the

purpose Of this dispensation It is the church Which is his body That is not just an idea That revelation That revelation All independence Had to be destroyed All unrelatedness Had to be removed All earthly expectations Had to be taken away Paul had to have His whole life Constituted on the basis Of the message that was given to him He was assigned To the dispensation That is why We make so much of Paul And now what about John What was John's particular message The ministry of John Particularly related to life That is the big word Of John through all his writing John became the embodiment Of that principle of life Triumphant over death When all the apostles Had long gone to the Lord John is still going on He outlived all the others Not because he had An easier time than the others John

suffered with the others At last John died As others had died But here is a testimony To divine life in spirit Mind and body The point is that John Really personally represented The message that he gave Peter, Paul, John Could say I am your sign Brothers and sisters You and I have got to be able to say the same People must see in us The message Not only hear it from our lips But say that that message is true In our history and experience Now I have stolen Some extra time But we'll make up for that

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