

## Sermon #64 — *Isaiah Series*

Title:        **THE WATCHMAN**

Text:        Isaiah 21:11-12

Subject:    *The Burden of Dumah*

Readings: *Jimmy Bowman and Rex Bartley*

Introduction:

My text is Isaiah 21:11-12.

(Isaiah 21:11-12) “The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? (12) The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.”

### **DUMAH IS EDOM**

“*The Burden of Dumah*” — After reading all the commentaries I have and consulting all the authorities at my disposal, I am convinced that no one really knows who Isaiah was addressing when he spoke of “*The Burden of Dumah*.” The only indication we have is the reference made to Mt. Seir, which was in Edom. So, I am compelled to assume that Dumah refers to Edom and the Edomites.

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In this chapter and the ones preceding it, Isaiah prophesied of the judgment of God upon all the nations surrounding Judah. Those prophecies literally came to pass at God's appointed time. However, as Judah represented the church of God's elect, the pagan nations surrounding Judah were but representative of the world in which we live, the world of spiritual darkness and religious superstition.

## **BABYLON FALLEN**

In the first 10 verses of this 21<sup>st</sup> chapter, the prophet of God foretold the fall of Babylon. While he was referring to that ancient city in a literal sense, his prophecy looked through the ages of time to the destruction of spiritual Babylon, all pagan, free-will, works religion, which encompasses and deceives the whole world (cf. vv. 9-10 and Revelation 18:2-3).

God has an elect people in all the nations of the world whom he will call out of Babylon, that they may escape both her sins and her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

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- Babylon represents all false religion.
- God does not say, “Stay where you are and try to reform Babylon.”
- God says, “*Come out of her!*” (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

(2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1) “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, (18) And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (7:1) Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all

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filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

- We are cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:3-5).
- We cleanse ourselves by bathing ourselves in the blood of Christ by faith, abandoning all hope of salvation by our own works. — Abandoning the religion of Babylon!
- The perfecting of holiness is faith in Christ. — Holiness is perfected in us when we are made “*made partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 12:14). — This perfecting of holiness is made evident to us by faith in Christ.

In Isaiah 21 the prophet of God tells us of one among the cursed sons of Edom or Dumah, who, upon hearing of the night of judgment and destruction, cries out for help and direction — “*Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?*”

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I readily acknowledge my inability to explain the detailed prophetic significance of “*The Burden of Dumah.*” I will leave it to other men, who are either wiser or more foolish than I am, to unravel. But I am confident that God has given me the message these words were intended to convey.

(Isaiah 21:11-12) “The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? (12) The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.”

**Proposition:** God’s servants, faithful gospel preachers, are watchmen set by him upon the walls of Zion, to keep the doors of his house and watch over your souls.

**Divisions:** I want to divide our text into four parts, which will be the four points of my message.

1. The Watchman Addressed
2. The Question Asked
3. The Answer Given

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### 4. The Watchman's Counsel

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1<sup>st</sup> — **The watchman himself is addressed.** — But who is he? Who is this watchman to whom the man from Seir addressed himself?

**Some say that the watchman is God himself.** — And there is a blessed sense in which God himself is the Watchman over the world and particularly the Watchman over his elect. Daniel describes the three Persons of the Holy Trinity as watchers (Daniel 4:17).

(Daniel 4:17) “This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

Acts of watching are ascribed to the omniscient God throughout the Scriptures.

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- He watches over the sins of men to punish them in the last day.
- He watches over his elect to be gracious to them to bless them.
- He watches over all things for the salvation of his people and the everlasting glory of his own great name.

The Hebrew word translated “watchman” is applied to the Lord God in Psalm 121:4-5, where it is translated “Keeper” — The Lord himself is our Watchman in the sense He is our Keeper.

(Psalm 121:1-8) “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (2) My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. (3) He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. (4) Behold, he that keepeth (**watches over**) Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD *is* thy keeper (**watchman**): the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand. (6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. (7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall

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preserve thy soul. (8) he LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

- He keeps us in his providence.
- He keeps us by his grace.

**Others say that our text refers to Christ, our Messiah and Redeemer.** — Again, we rejoice in the fact that Christ, who is our eternal Surety and almighty Shepherd is our Watchman.

- Like a shepherd watches his sheep. — Christ has watched over his own from everlasting, to guard us, protect us, defend us, and save us.
- We are preserved and kept in his hands.
- He watches over us at all times. — We are the apple of his eye.

We rejoice in the fact that the Lord our God watches over us and keeps us. We are under our Father’s eye, secure in our Savior’s hands, and kept by the Spirit of Grace.



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**But I am confident that the watchman of our text is the prophet of God, a gospel preacher.** God's prophets and preachers are watchmen set upon the walls of Zion to watch over the souls of men.

- Isaiah was a watchman (21:6-10).

(Isaiah 21:6-10) “For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. (7) And he saw a chariot *with* a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, *and* a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed: (8) And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights: (9) And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, *with* a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. (10) O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.”

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- Jeremiah was a watchman (1:5).

(Jeremiah 1:4-10) “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, (5) Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (6) Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. (7) But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. (8) Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. (9) Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. (10) See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”

- Ezekiel was a watchman (33:7-16).

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(Ezekiel 33:7-16) “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. (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. (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. (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? (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? (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

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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. (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. (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; (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. (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.”

**Every true gospel preacher is a watchman set for the salvation of God’s elect** (Isaiah 52:8).

(Isaiah 52:8) “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for

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they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.”

This word “*watchman*” is an allusion to a shepherd who is responsible for a flock of sheep. It also refers to one who stands guard over a city or a garrison in time of war and unrest (Isaiah 62:6-7). **God’s servants are men whose business and responsibility it is to watch over the souls of men, as they that must give account to God himself.**

- They are to warn sinners of the danger they are in and show them the way of life - Faith in Christ (Ezekiel 33).
- They are to arouse, awaken, and reprove sleeping saints (Song of Solomon 3:3; 5:7).
- They are to protect the flock of God from wolves.

It is a sad day when Zion’s watchmen are blind and sleepy, ignorant and greedy. But they often are (Isaiah 56:9-11).

(Isaiah 56:9-11) “All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest. (10)

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**His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. (11) Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain,** from his quarter.

- God places the watchman where he would have him.
- And the watchman is responsible for the souls of those whom God has placed under his care!

**Another part of the watchman's work is to give the time of the night, so that God's people may know what is past and what is yet to come.** The watchman addressed in our text is God's preacher, whose responsibility it is to discern times and seasons, and to instruct men and women in the knowledge of the Lord. Next, I want us to take notice of...

## THE QUESTION

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2<sup>nd</sup> — **Now, let's look at the question asked of the watchman.** Someone in Seir, who had heard the burden of Dumah, being aroused and awakened by the warning of God's impending wrath, cried out to God's watchman — *“Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?”*

To paraphrase, the question is — “What has happened since nightfall? Have you observed any movement? Is the enemy near? Is danger at hand? — What can you tell me about the night of darkness and affliction which has come upon us? When will it be over? How much of the night is gone? What is there yet to come? What news do you have?”

**There was a night of darkness that preceded Christ's incarnation — Darkness in Israel and darkness in all the Gentile world** (Isaiah 60:1-3).

(Isaiah 60:1-3) “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. (2) For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall

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be seen upon thee. (3) And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

**The Spirit of God tells us plainly that there shall be a night of great darkness that will precede our Lord’s second coming** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:19). — **The Loosing of Satan for a Little Season!**

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-17) “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, (2) That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (3) Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (4) Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (5) Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with



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you, I told you these things? (6) And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. (7) For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. (8) And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (9) *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, (10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (11) And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (12) That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (13) But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord

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Jesus Christ. (15) Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. (16) Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, (17) Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

(1 Corinthians 11:19) “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”

**And a night of darkness in the soul always precedes Christ’s coming in saving power** (Psalm 107:10-15).

(Psalm 107:10-15) “Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; (11) Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: (12) Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help. (13) Then they cried unto the

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LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. (14) He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. (15) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

Holy Spirit conviction is a night of darkness in a man’s soul! But the night of darkness is the forerunner of light. The question is asked, “*Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?*” Look at the text again and see...

## THE ANSWER

3<sup>rd</sup> — Here is the watchman’s answer to the question, “What of the night?” It is honest and straightforward. “*The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night.*”

John Gill wrote — “There is a morning at hand and a night will follow: a morning of prosperity and a night of adversity. And as sure as the one comes, so will the other. There will be a constant

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succession and revolution of these until the end of time.”

**You can be sure that night will follow morning there will be a night.**

- The morning of youth and health will be followed by the night of sickness and old age;.
- The morning of prosperity will be followed by the night of need.
- The morning of opportunity will be followed by the night of report.
- The morning of labor will be followed by the night of rest.

Let me see if I can make a practical application of this to our own hearts and lives. **First, I address you who are yet in the dark night of sin and unbelief.**

- *“The morning cometh!”* The morning of opportunity is now risen upon you. *“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”*
- When the morning of opportunity is over, the night of awful darkness will seize you forever (Proverbs 1:23-33; Luke 13:24-25).

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(Proverbs 1:23-33) “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. (24) Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; (25) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; (27) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. (28) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: (29) For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: (30) They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. (31) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (32) For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (33) But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

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(Luke 13:24-25) “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (25) When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.”

**Yet, God does not promise his people a bed of roses filled with ease.** If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness shall shine in your soul. But, be assured, you will yet have your night seasons of —

- Temptations!
- Falls!
- Unbelief!
- Languishing!

**Second, let me address you who are God’s dear saints in a night of darkness — “The morning cometh!”**

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- When the night of trial is over, the morning of comfort will come. — Abraham and Isaac - (Genesis 22).
- When your night of languishing is over, the morning of revival will come.
- But, as long as we are in this world, night will follow morning, as surely as morning follows night. — That is the message of the Song of Solomon and of Ecclesiastes.

*“The morning cometh, and also the night!”* — But, blessed be our God, there is a morning coming that shall last forever (Revelation 21:22-25).

(Revelation 21:22-25) “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (23) And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. (24) And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. (25) And the gates of it shall

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not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”

## THE COUNSEL

4<sup>th</sup> — **In the last part of Isaiah 21:12 you will see the watchman’s counsel.** The counsel is the same for all. And the counsel is the same whatever it is that you need. — *“If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”* There is no time for trifling. I am in dead earnest. God is in dead earnest. And you better be in dead earnest. The watchman’s answer to the sinner who is alarmed by God’s impending wrath upon his sin is threefold:

1. **“Inquire ye!”** — That is to say, *“Seek the Lord while me may be found.”*
2. **“Return!”** — Repent of your sin, your sins, and your righteousness.
3. **“Come!”** — Come to Christ, oh come today, the Father, Son and Spirit say. — *“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”*



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(Hebrews 13:7) “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.”

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.”

Amen.