

Ezekiel 09 - God Calls the Executioners to Work; Believing Remnant is Marked

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)

(A) Imminent judgment (Ezek 4:1—11:25)

(c) One vision showing cause of the siege (8:1—11:25)

(ii) Marking and slaying those in Jerusalem (9:1-11)

(a) Calling of the Six and the writer (9:1-2)

(b) Directive to mark and slay (9:3-7)

(c) Ezekiel's concern (9:8-10)

(1) Ezekiel's question (9:8)

(2) God's answer (9:9-10)

(d) Announcement of the accomplishment of the mission (9:11)

Ezekiel 9

(ii) Marking and slaying those in Jerusalem (9:1-11)

After observing the four variations of idolatrous worship practiced by the people of Judah in the Temple compound and hearing the divine warning of forthcoming judgment at the conclusion of Ezek 8, Ezekiel is confronted with a detailed description of the consequences of this judgment.

(a) Calling of the Six and the writer (9:1-2)

1 Then He cried out in my presence with a loud voice, saying, "Come forward, you executioners of the city, each *with* his weapon of destruction in his hand."

1 Then He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, "Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand."

1 Then the Spirit shouted right in my ears with a loud voice! "Come forward," he said, "you executioners of the city, and bring your weapon of destruction in your hand!"

1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

- This account of the man with the "scribe's kit" (or "writer's inkhorn," v2) continues Ezekiel's vision that began in 8:1

- Almost immediately after God declared His refusal to show any mercy to His people, regardless of their please, Ezekiel's attention is grabbed by the sound of a loud voice

calling forth the executioners

— It becomes evident that these executioners are not literal government officials in Jerusalem, but rather angelic beings appointed to execute God's judgment on the city

2 And behold, six **men** came from the direction of the **upper gate which faces north**, each *with his smashing weapon* in his hand; and among them was **one man clothed in linen** with a **scribe's kit** at his waist. And they came in and stood beside the **bronze altar**.

2 Behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

2 All of a sudden, I noticed six men approaching from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north. Each of them held a destructive weapon in his hand. Among them there was one man, clothed in linen, who was equipped with a writing set at his side. They went in and presented themselves beside the bronze altar.

2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

- "...men" - angels

- "...upper gate which faces north" - mentioned earlier in 8:3, was the principal entrance on the north side of the Temple compound (Cf. 2 Kings 15:35); it later became known as the Gate of Benjamin (Cf. Jer 20:2) and the New Gate (Jer 26:10; 36:10)

— It is significant that these executioners approached from this particular gate and direction because historically, when God's judgment fell upon Judah, it originated from the north

- "...smashing weapon" - *keli mappats*, literally "an instrument of shattering"; most scholars agree this referred to a battle axe

— Thus, each of these six executioners were armed with a battle axe

- "...one man clothed in linen" - Hebrew scholars believe this was the archangel Gabriel, and it's a good possibility that is correct based on his description in Daniel (Cf. Dan 10:5; 12:6-7)

- "...scribe's kit"- or "inkhorn"; it is a small box that carried tools used by a scribe: pens, ink, and a knife

- "...bronze altar" - the altar of sacrifice (Cf. 1 Kings 8:64; 2 Kings 16:14; 2 Chr 1:5-6; 4:1)

(b) Directive to mark and slay (9:3-7)

3 Then the glory of the God of Israel ascended from the cherub on which it had been, to **the threshold of the temple**. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose waist was

the scribe's kit.

3 Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case.

3 Then the glory that is Israel's God arose from the cherubim on which he had been seated and settled on the threshold of the Temple. He called out to the man dressed in linen who wore the writing case at his side.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

- Before the command to mark and destroy went out, the Shekinah Glory of God began to move, rising up from the cherubs which were above the Mercy Seat, overshadowing the Ark of the Covenant (Cf. Ex 25:18-22; 37:7-9; 1 Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7,10-11)

- "...the threshold of the temple" - the Shekinah moved from its normal location between the cherubs to the front entry door to the Temple

— The Shekinah moving to the entry door will be repeated again in Ezek 10. The purpose of this movement is to give Ezekiel a revelation of the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

— The second event (in Ezek 10) will mark the first step toward the Shekinah's final departure

- Once the Shekinah moved to the entry door to the temple, a call went out to the man (angel) with the scribe's kit (Cf. v2)

4 And the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and make a mark on the foreheads of the people who groan and sigh over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst."

4 The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst."

4 The LORD told him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of everyone who sighs and moans over all of the loathsome things that are happening in it."

4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

- This angel (Gabriel?) was commissioned by God to go throughout the city and mark the foreheads of the believing remnant—those who were appalled at the idolatry and abominations going on in the Temple compound

- The purpose of the mark was to protect the believing remnant from the impending divine judgment
- Marks are symbols of divine protection (Cf. Gen 4:15; Rev 7:1-4)

5 But to the others He said in my presence, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare.

5 But to the others He said in my hearing, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare.

5 As I continued to listen, he also told the others, "Follow him through the city and start killing. Don't spare anyone you see, and don't show pity of any kind.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

- The instructions to the six other executioners was to follow the man/angel with the scribe's kit and "strike" (kill) those who did not receive the mark

6 Utterly kill old men, young men, *female* virgins, little children, and women, but do not touch any person on whom is the mark; and you shall **start from My sanctuary.**" So they started with the elders who *were* before the temple.

6 Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary." So they started with the elders who *were* before the temple.

6 You are to execute old men, young men, young women, little children, and women. But don't touch anyone who has been marked. Begin at my Holy Place!" And so they started with the elders who *were* in standing in front of the Temple.

6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house.

- No group was off-limits for this judgment...it was to be complete judgment on all but the believing remnant

- "...start from My sanctuary" - they were commanded to begin the executions where idolatry was most prevalent

7 He also said to them, "Defile the temple and fill the courtyards with the dead. Go out!" So they went out and struck and killed *the people* in the city.

7 And He said to them, "Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" Thus they went out and struck down *the people* in the city.

7 "Desecrate my Temple," he told them, "and fill its courtyard with the dead!" So they went out and began striking down people throughout the city.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

- "...Defile the house" - corpses would be piled up in both the Inner Court and the Outer Courts of the Temple compound

— Under Mosaic Law, contact with a dead body rendered a person unclean (Lev 21:11; Num 19:11-18). Thus, once the Temple compound was filled with dead bodies, the entire area would become ceremonially defiled.

- Compare the actual happening (2 Chr 36:17-18)

(c) Ezekiel's concern (9:8-10)

(1) Ezekiel's question (9:8)

8 And as they were striking *the people* and I *alone* was left, I fell on my face and cried out, saying, "Oh, Lord GOD! Are You going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel by pouring out Your wrath on Jerusalem?"

8 As they were striking *the people* and I *alone* was left, I fell on my face and cried out saying, "Alas, Lord GOD! Are You destroying the whole remnant of Israel by pouring out Your wrath on Jerusalem?"

8 While they were out carrying out the executions, I was left alone. So I fell on my face and cried out, "O Lord GOD, are you going to destroy all of the survivors of Israel when you pour out your anger on Jerusalem?"

8 And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

- Ezekiel made intercession and a plea as he watched the slaughter that God had ordered
— The images of destruction that Ezekiel saw obviously overwhelmed him and caused him distress, so he implored God to not wipe out all that was left of Israel

(2) God's answer (9:9-10)

9 Then He said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great, and the land is filled with blood, and the city is **full of perversion**; for they say, 'The LORD has abandoned the land, and the LORD does not see!'

9 Then He said to me, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great, and the land is filled with blood and the city is full of perversion; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!'

9 "The house of Israel and Judah is guilty—and theirs is a stubborn guilt, at that!" he replied to me. "The land is filled with blood, and the city overflows with injustice, because they keep saying, 'The LORD has abandoned the land,' and 'The LORD isn't watching.'

9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

- God responded to Ezekiel's plea by reaffirming the absolute necessity of judgment
- Ezekiel had witnessed the extent of the moral decay in Ezek 8; as a result of this evil, the land was "full of blood." When worship of God degenerates, idolatry grows, and then immorality, violence, and murder follow.
- "...full of perversion" - *mutteh*, perverted justice; the land was full of perversion because the people had rebelled against God's moral law
- This perversity was evident in the words of the leaders: "The LORD has abandoned the land, and the LORD does not see!"
- They had completely misinterpreted God's judgments that had come with the first and second deportations to Babylon. They wrongly assumed that these events were only possible because God had departed from them. The real problem, however, was that it was they who had distanced themselves from God through their own sin.

10 But as for Me, My eye will have no pity nor will I spare, but I will bring their conduct upon their heads."

10 But as for Me, My eye will have no pity nor will I spare, but I will bring their conduct upon their heads."

10 So as for me, I'm not going to show pity, and I won't look in their direction with mercy. I'm repaying them for what they have done."

10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

- God reiterates that this judgment will be without mercy
- The lack of compassion was not because God took pleasure in implementing such severe judgment. Rather, it was His way of having the people reap the dreadful results of what they had sown.

(d) Announcement of the accomplishment of the mission (9:11)

11 Then behold, the man clothed in linen, at whose waist was the scribe's kit, reported, saying, "I have done just as You have commanded me."

11 Then behold, the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case reported, saying, "I have done just as You have commanded me."

11 Then I noticed the man dressed in linen who wore the writing case by his side as he brought back this message: "I've done as you have commanded me."

11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

- The angel (Gabriel?) with the scribe's kit, who marked the believing remnant, returned and reported that his task had been completed successfully