

Ezekiel 9 – the Birthmarks of a Believer

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

9:1 Then He [capital H] called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, “Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each *with* a deadly weapon in his hand.”² And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer’s inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

As Ezekiel stood in the temple's inner courtyard, not just bummed but broken-hearted by the abominations being practiced, the Lord announced called with a LOUD voice those who had “charge” over the city. Keep in mind, this is the city of Jerusalem.

V. 2 identifies six men, but as we read with both hindsight and foresight, it’s fascinating to discover these are actually angels.

Right off the bat we’re reminded of a couple of things about angels.

1. Angels often appear, in the form of men.
2. Angels, both good and bad, are assigned geographical territories at times. (Daniel 10:13 (the prince of the kingdom of Persia), 20 (prince of Greece); 12:1 (Michael watches over the nation of Israel); Isaiah 14; Mark 5:10). The glorified Lord called Pergamum the place where “Satan’s throne is” (Rev. 2:13, KJV). Jesus also spoke concerning the religious life of Smyrna, identifying the synagogue there as belonging to Satan (Rev. 2:9-10).

(Theoretically a haunted house is possible – not of human spirits, but angels and demons)

Here are six angels who have “charge” over the city.

Ezekiel is able to hear God call these particular angels near.

He commands them to bring their deadly weapons, which turn out to be battle-axes.

But then, another one among them, appears to be dressed differently. He was clothed in linen.

According to Exodus 28:29-42 the priests were clothed in linen and Daniel 10:5; 12:6-7; Revelation 15:6 glorious angels were also clothed in linen.

For us, linen might not be all that significant, but to them it was usually linked to being directly involved in Divine service.

BKC, *“The linen clothing suggested dignity, purity, or divine origin (cf. Dan. 10:5; 12:6–7; Rev. 15:6).”*

Why was this one dressed differently? You think it was a fashion statement? Not quite, he was dressed differently because he had a different responsibility, he didn't have a battle-axe in his hand, but a writing kit.

BKC, *"The 'writing kit' was literally, a 'case for the scribe.' 'Case' is an Egyptian loanword, meaning a case for carrying reed pens with an inkhorn attached."*

9:3a Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.

At this point Ezekiel mentions the glory of God was tragically leaving, having gone up from the cherub," which is the Holiest of Holies, to the threshold (the door) of the Temple. He's basically saying the glory of God was leaving the Temple.

We see something similar in Ezekiel 10:4, 18-19, tragically it reveals God's further departure from Jerusalem.

Alexander, *"The Lord vividly demonstrated his readiness to judge by withdrawing His glory from His people. God's glory moved from the Most Holy Place to the entry of the temple to assign the tasks of judgment."*

(Something similar had happened back in 1 Samuel 4:21)

9:3b And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴ and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."

So the angel with inkhorn wasn't going to write a letter, God calls him to mark, to brand, to tattoo certain people on their foreheads.

(Can't miss it if it's on the forehead!)

Adam Clarke, *"This is in allusion to the ancient every-where-used custom of setting marks on servants and slaves, to distinguish them from others. It was also common for the worshippers of particular idols to have their idol's mark upon their foreheads, arms."*

So, this was God **marking** His people.

We see the same providential practice in Genesis 4:15, and in Revelation (7:3-4).

Revelation 7:3-4 (NKJV) "Saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'" ⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed."

What was the determining factor from a practical sense? How would this marker know who to mark?

...those in the city who grieved and lamented over all the detestable things that are done in it."

Wow! It makes me search my heart!

What's my reaction to the evil in the world today?

Fears or tears? Do I ask why, or do I sigh? Do I tell them how bad they are and how they're gonna reap, or do I weep?

Now, don't get me wrong, there's a place for putting evil doers in their place for their sin, but, first I think it would be good for me to weep over their sin.

Psalms 119:136 (NKJV) "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because *men* do not keep Your law."

This may be more important than we realize. Here in Ezekiel everyone was divided in only two camps those who cried and sighed over the abominations, and those who didn't!

Matthew 5:4 (NKJV) "Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

***Luke 7:36-50**

David Guzik, "The remnant was those who had broken hearts over the idolatry and wickedness of the city, men like Jeremiah."

Trapp, "Let us mourn in times of sinning, so shall we be marked in times of punishing."

F.B. Meyer, "Amid scenes of judgment, whether in the Church or the world, there is always a remnant, upon whom is the mark; on Lot in Sodom; on Israel amid the plagues of Egypt; on Rahab in the fall of Jericho; on the 144,000 at the Great Tribulation. They are safe amid the fiery indignation which devours the adversaries."

In reference to the mark Wright noted, "There is a prophetic significance in the Hebrew word for the mark. It is the Hebrew letter T (Tav), which at that time was written as a cross."

Here's a picture of it:



(Passover – Doorposts and Lintels)

It won't be sin issue, it will be a Son issue, the one who died for our sins there on the cross of Calvary.

The birth-MARK of the believer.

9:5 To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. 6a Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary."

We should weep over sin, and we should also weep over the judgment of sinners.

God told the executioners who would be leading the way for the Babylonians, to kill and utterly slay, everyone and anyone else – without their birthmarks.

(Age of accountability)

In v. 6 we find that judgment would begin in God's sanctuary.

Feinberg, *"In the sanctuary God should have been most honored, but there He was most dishonored and provoked, and there His holiness would most fully and certainly be vindicated."*

Peter said the same thing for the future judgment, it would begin in the "church."

1 Peter 4:17 (NKJV) "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

So, it starts with the posers, pretenders, all the people came to church but didn't come to Christ. All the people who served in ministry but never served God.

To whom much is given, much more will be required (Luke 12:48).

It's a heavy warning to us, who attend, who hear and who are involved within the Christian campus, but it's also a heavy warning to everyone else.

Proverbs 11:31 (NIV) If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!"

And not just beginning with judgment on the temple, it began with the elders in the temple.

9:6b So they began with the elders who were before the temple. 7 Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" And they went out and killed in the city.

In Ezekiel 8 we read about the Jewish elders IN the Temple who were living in secret sin. We read about others who were openly worshipping the sun.

God told the executioners, start with them. To the Jew one the most horrendous form of defilement, was that of a dead body, especially in the temple courts.

O the heavy responsibility we have as leaders!

James 3:1 (NKJV) "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

9:8 So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left *alone*; and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, "Ah, Lord God! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?"

Ezekiel had a hard message of judgment to not only share but bare; when he saw it in this vision, he was undone – devastated!

Warren Wiersbe, *"For all Ezekiel's outward appearance of severity, beneath the hard shell there was a heart that felt deeply for and with his people. He did not relish the message of judgment that he had to give, still less the reality that followed when the message was rejected."*

Ezekiel was broken-hearted, GOD was broken-hearted!

Ezekiel would later write in **Ezekiel 33:11 (NKJV)** "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"

God would have a remnant, but the sentence needed to be severe.

9^a Then He said to me, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity;

We could pause there – bloodshed – homicide, suicide; a generation of abortion; war, genocide, weapons of mass destruction; the land is full of bloodshed.

The perversity in every way imaginable, our heart aches at the abuse of children, sexual slavery, rape and incest, gay lifestyle and gender confusion, transition...without parental consent.

Dwight Longenecker, "First, we overlook evil. Then we permit evil. Then we legalize evil. Then we promote evil. Then we celebrate evil; then we persecute those who still call it evil."

God knew what He was doing when He established the family, what a tragedy what we've done as a society. I pray that we as a church would continue to pray, be lovingly strong, and never capitulate to the pressure of culture.

When we say what does the Bible say, we say what does God say.

9^b for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!'

The Lord has left us. The Lord can't see us!

Here in Ezekiel we see the glory of the Lord was about to leave, but hadn't yet left. He was there...at the threshold.

He can see, let's live in light of that sight...because God's overriding attribute is holiness.

10 And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head."

The Day will come when the longsuffering of the Lord will spare no longer.

11 Just then, the man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn at his side, reported back and said, "I have done as You commanded me."

V. 11, the angel returns – "Mission accomplished, I've done as You've commanded me, I've marked those who are Yours!"

Each person's destiny was determined by their character...their character was determined by their cry, their sigh...over sin.