

### Ezekiel's Vision of Executions in Jerusalem

#### Ezekiel 9

Ezekiel 9: *"Then He 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."<sup>2</sup> And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-axe 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.*

<sup>3</sup> *Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; <sup>4</sup> 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."*

<sup>5</sup> *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. <sup>6</sup> 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." So they began with the elders who were before the temple. <sup>7</sup> 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.*

<sup>8</sup> *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?"*

<sup>9</sup> *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; for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!' <sup>10</sup> 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."*

<sup>11</sup> *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."*

#### Background Notes

The prophet Ezekiel ministered to the people through drama, through sermons, and through visions. The use of these three means brought the message home to the heart of the people with greater impact. This is still true today. The more we're able to communicate the Christian message in a variety of ways, the more impact it will have on the people around us.

Ezekiel was called to the unpleasant prophetic ministry of pronouncing judgment on Judah and Jerusalem because of the nation's sins. Later in the book (chapter 33) Ezekiel's prophetic ministry became more pleasant, because he began to prophesy about Israel's restoration. However, except for the first couple of chapters and a short section about Israel's restoration in chapter 20, the book of Ezekiel is primarily about judgment - the judgment of God's people and the judgment

of foreign nations because of sin. (That's why we don't often study or hear much preaching from the first half of the book of Ezekiel!) Learning more about God's judgment of Judah and Jerusalem in Old Testament times is not as exciting as studying about our blessings in Christ now, or learning about the great events in our future. However, all of Ezekiel is God's inspired Word, so it's important for us to study the entire book – judgment and all.

Chapters 8-11 constitute a four-part vision that God gave Ezekiel, about God's coming judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. In chapter 8 Ezekiel was transported to Jerusalem in the vision. There he saw all the idolatry and gross wickedness that was going on in the Temple area.

In chapter 9, Ezekiel saw the execution of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The six men who were the guards or executioners (v1-2) were probably angelic beings sent by God to carry out His judgment. The executions were to begin in the Temple area where the idolatry was centered, and move out from there. No pity was to be shown, regardless of age or gender (v5-6). The people had defiled God's Temple with their idolatry; now the Temple would be defiled by their dead bodies. *"Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain" (v7).*

The execution seen in this vision literally took place in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies conquered Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 36:17: *"Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak."*

The wrath of God against the wickedness of the ungodly is clearly seen in Ezekiel 9. Even Ezekiel was awestruck by the extent of God's wrath and judgment. Verse 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?"*

God told Ezekiel that His great wrath was because of the people's *"exceedingly great"* sin and iniquity. Verses 9-10: *"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; for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!' 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."*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The glory of God demands that the ungodly face the judgment of God.

The overall theme of the book of Ezekiel is "the glory of God," and in the broad outline of Ezekiel, chapters 1-24 are about the departure of God's glory from Israel. The glory of the Lord filled the Holy of Holies in the Temple, and was centered between the cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant. Why did God's glory depart from Israel? The answer is **idolatry** - and the extreme wickedness of the people. Before God's judgment fell on the sinful people, the glory of God departed.

The first stage of this departure is described in verse 3: *“Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.”* The glory of God left from between the cherubim overlooking the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant, and moved out from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the Temple. The glory of God demands that the ungodly face the judgment of God.

Some people think that God should just forgive everyone and forget about judgment. Listen – that’s impossible. God can’t do that! He is an absolutely holy God, and He **must** judge sin. God’s holiness and His glory go together. You can’t have one without the other. The glory of God is not just a “bright light.” ***His glory is a moral glory***, and His moral glory demands the judgment of the ungodly.

That’s why hell exists. Hell does not take away from the glory of God, as some people think. Hell ***maintains*** the glory of God. The glory of God would be tarnished if the evil committed by angels and mankind went unpunished. The glory of God demands that ungodly people face the judgment of God.

## **2. The mark of the cross protects the godly from the judgment of God.**

In the vision, Ezekiel saw a man who was clothed in white linen, suggesting purity. He had the writing case of a scribe around his waist. The man was told to put a mark on the godly people. Verse 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.”* Verse 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.”*

Notice that anyone who had the mark was protected from the judgment of God (v6). It reminds us of the future Tribulation period, when the Lord’s godly servants will receive a mark for protection on their foreheads. Revelation 7:3-4: *“Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred and forty-four thousand.”*

The mark in Ezekiel 9:4 was literally the letter “*taw*,” the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew script, the *taw* was shaped like a cross. What a picture of salvation! What protects us from the judgment of God? It’s the cross! The cross is our only protection from judgment, because it was on the cross that the Lord Jesus experienced God’s judgment for our sins in our place. He took God’s judgment upon sin when He died for us, so we would not have to experience the wrath of God.

When we acknowledge our sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, figuratively speaking, we are “marked with the cross.” We are now protected from the judgment of God against sin, because the benefits on the cross have been applied to us. The mark of the cross protects the godly from the judgment of God.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Do you have the mark of the cross?**

What does God see when He looks at you? Does He see everything but the mark of the cross? Does He see education and success but no mark of the cross? Does He see all kinds of activity (including religion) but no mark of the cross? Does God see the mark of the cross on you?

Would you like to receive the protective mark of the cross? You can receive the mark of the cross today, and when you do, you will be protected forever from the wrath of God against sin. Acknowledge that you are a sinner and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. John 3:37 says, *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him.”* Do you have the mark of the cross?

### **2. Do we sigh over sin?**

Verse 4: *“And put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”*

Verse 4 says that the godly remnant sighed and wept over the idolatry and wickedness that was being committed in their midst and throughout the Land. The godly people were sensitive to sin. They showed their faithfulness and their true attitude of heart by weeping over the sins of their city and their nation.

What about us? Do we sigh over sin? Unfortunately many Christians have become desensitized to sin - even gross sin! Sins that used to appall us no longer disturb us as they once did. We see and hear about these sins so often in the media - and comedy shows make these sins the source of jokes and laughter. As a result, many of us have become desensitized to these sins. Worse yet, some Christians even get caught up in these sins! How sad.

We need to become more sensitive to sin as God sees it by reading and studying His Word. This chapter tells us that God is pleased when we are upset about sin. Do we sigh over sin?