

Marking the Godly

(8) Ezekiel 9

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Ezekiel 9:1-4 – Marking the Godly

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.”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.

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. 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.”

v1-2 – What does Ezekiel see next in his vision?

Let those who have charge over the city draw near: In his vision of Jerusalem and the corruptions at the temple, Ezekiel heard God speaking with a **loud voice**, calling forth **six men** who, in some sense, had **charge over the city**.

- Those who had charge over the city were those whom God set to watch over the welfare of the city. They were not earthly agents, but heavenly. Angels are frequently called men because of their outward appearance.

What was the significance of the six ‘men’ being armed?

Each with a deadly weapon in his hand: The **six men** of Ezekiel’s vision were armed, each with a **battle-ax in his hand**. It’s best to understand these **six men** as angelic beings with responsibility over Jerusalem.

What was the significance of the six “armed men” coming from the north?

The gate was toward the north of the city, the direction from which the Babylonian invaders came, as well as the area where the idolatries had taken place.

What was special about one of the men?

One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer’s inkhorn at his side: there was one dressed differently and who also carried an **inkhorn**, ready to write.

- *Linen* was the fabric used for the dress of priests (Exod. 28:29–42) and angelic beings (Dan. 10:5; 12:6–7), two classes of beings directly involved in divine service.

What was the significance of there going to the bronze altar to get their instructions from God?

The men – who actually seem to be angels – were ready for service.

- To signify that the people against whom they had their commission were, for their crimes, to be sacrificed to the demands of Divine justice.

v3 – What happened to the glory of the Lord?

The glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub: The visible representation of God’s **glory** rose up higher than where the cherub stood.

- God’s glory moved from the Most Holy Place to the entry of the temple to assign the tasks of judgment.

v4 – What were the angelic men called to do?

Go through the midst of the city...put a mark on the foreheads: God commanded the one with the inkwell to **mark** the righteous men of the city.

- Ezekiel 9:6 shows this was a protective identification, to protect them in the coming invasion.

Does this mean that God was sparing only the righteous from the Babylonians?

It is likely that this was a mark to protect them spiritually for the age to come. Because in this world...

Matthew 5:45 – He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

There is a prophetic significance in the Hebrew word for the mark. It is the Hebrew letter T (Tau), which at that time was written as a cross. We can rejoice in this anticipation of salvation through the death of Christ on the cross.

What was the test of those who would receive the mark in Jerusalem?

Of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations:

The remnant God would spare had nothing to do with age or perceived innocence. The remnant was those who had broken hearts over the idolatry and wickedness of the city, men like Jeremiah.

What is a sigh?

A moaning that is a symptom of a broken heart and intense grief over impending doom.

Where else do we hear of God marking His people?

Revelation 7:3 – *Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.*

This describes God’s servants again being sealed on their foreheads. Revelation 13:16 (and several other passages) also describe a later Satanic counterfeit of this mark, identifying allegiance to Satan and his false messiah.

Who are those sealed during the Tribulation?

The 144,000 are first mentioned in Revelation 7:4, “*Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.*” This passage comes in an interlude between the judgment of the sixth seal of the tribulation (Revelation 6:12–17) and the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1).

What does it mean that the 144,000 are sealed?

They will have the special protection of God. They are kept safe from the divine judgments and from the wrath of the Antichrist. They can freely perform their mission during the tribulation.

- It had been previously prophesied that Israel would repent and turn back to God (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25–27), and the 144,000 Jews seem to be a sort of “first fruits” (Revelation 14:4) of that redeemed Israel.
- Their mission seems to be to evangelize the post-rapture world and proclaim the gospel during the tribulation period. As a result of their ministry, millions—“*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language*” (Revelation 7:9)—will come to faith in Christ.

How does God mark His people today?

Ephesians 1:13–14 – *having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

The word sealed in the New Testament comes from a Greek word that means “to stamp with a private mark” in the interest of keeping something secret or protecting or preserving the sealed object.

- Seals were used for official business: a Roman centurion, for instance, might have sealed a document meant only for the eyes of his superior.

How is the Holy Spirit in us a guarantee of our salvation?

Because we cannot have the Holy Spirit in us unless our human spirit can be made alive...

John 3:3, 6 – *unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

The presence of the Holy Spirit helps us to know the things of God by speaking to us through our regenerated human spirits...

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

Eze 9:5-7 – The command to kill in judgment.

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. ⁶ 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. 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.*

What did God command the angels with weapons?

Go after him through the city and kill: God commanded the other of the six men to use their weapons of judgment against the city as a whole, sparing none except **anyone on whom is the mark.**

How do we know that the Babylonians as God’s agents had no pity?

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; He gave them all into his hand.*

History bears out the ruthlessness of the Chaldeans.

How do we reconcile the fact that angels did the killing in Ezekiel's vision but it was the Babylonians who did the killing on earth?

The vision of the angels killing was a spiritual representation of what played out on earth.

- Angels influenced human agents to do the killing.
- Not all the death was a direct result of the Babylonian army but it was all orchestrated by the angels under the command of God.

Does God killing people make Him a murderer?

The misconception that "killing" and "murder" are synonymous is partially based on the King James mistranslation of the sixth commandment, which reads, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). However, the word kill is a translation of the Hebrew word ratsach, which nearly always refers to intentional killing without cause. The correct rendering of this word is "murder."

- The same Law that forbids murder permits killing in self-defense (Exodus 22:2).
- In order for God to commit murder, He would have to act "unlawfully."
Deuteronomy 32:4 – His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He

Isn't executing innocent children murder?

Compared to God's holiness, there is no such thing as an "innocent" person. All have sinned (Romans 3:23), and the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23a). God has "just cause" to wipe us all out; the fact that He doesn't is proof of His mercy.

- When God chose to destroy all mankind in the Flood, He was totally justified in doing so:
Genesis 6:5 – Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually

Also, there is a difference between physical death and spiritual death... just because a person suffers physical death does not mean they will not have eternal life.

Why would God punish children for the sins of their fathers?

Exodus 34:7 – by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation

The effects of sin are naturally passed down from one generation to the next. When a father has a sinful lifestyle, his children are likely to practice the same sinful lifestyle.

- Effectively, there are no private sins that do not have an impact on others.

Does that mean our parents are to blame for our sin?

This is not biblical. God's warning to visit iniquity on future generations is part of the Old Testament Law. A generational curse was a consequence for a specific nation (Israel) for a specific sin (idolatry).

- The cure for a generational curse has always been repentance. When Israel turned from idols to serve the living God, the "curse" was broken and God saved them (Judges 3:9, 15; 1 Samuel 12:10-11).
- Yes, God promised to visit Israel's sin upon the third and fourth generations, but in the very next verse He promised that He would *show "love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:6). In other words, God's grace lasts a thousand times longer than His wrath.

How may we break out of any "generational curse" we may have?

The answer is salvation through Jesus Christ. A Christian is a new creation...

2 Corinthians 5:17 – if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

A child of God cannot still be under God's curse...

Romans 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus

The cure for a "generational curse" is repentance of the sin in question, faith in Christ, and a life consecrated to the Lord...

Romans 12:1-2 – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What was the point of the angels beginning their judgment at the sanctuary?

God decrees that judgment should begin at His house. Peter later applied this principle to the people of God under the New Covenant...

1 Peter 4:17 – 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?

Therefore, these judging angels **began with the elders who were before the temple.**

For what will God judge the church of today?

Revelation 3:16 – *because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

For thinking and acting like we are spiritually wealthy when we are not...

2 Timothy 3:1-4 – *in the last days perilous times will come... having a form of godliness but denying its power*

Just because we live in the Laodicean Age of the church, this does not mean we have to be Laodicean believers.

How were the angels to defile the temple?

Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain:

In Ezekiel 6:4-5 and 6:13, God promised that He would defile and desecrate the pagan altars on the high places because of Israel's idolatry. Here He promised the same desecration at His own house.

- These people had defiled God's house by their wicked lives, and now they would defile it further in their terrible deaths.

Eze 9:8-11 – Ezekiel's Grief & God's Explanation.

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?"*

⁹ *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!'"* 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."* 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."*

How did Ezekiel react to the vision of killing?

I fell on my face and cried out: Though Ezekiel had many times announced such a severe judgment, when he actually saw it carried out in his vision, it made him completely undone.

What did Ezekiel ask God?

Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel:

In desperation (**Ah, Lord God!**), Ezekiel begged God to not destroy the **remnant** as He poured out His **fury on Jerusalem**.

How did God justify the carnage?

The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great: God reminded Ezekiel of what he had been

preaching—that as terrible as the judgment was, it was fully deserved and a long time in coming.

What do the people suffering the judgment of God believe about Him?

The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see: This is what the leaders of the city said earlier in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 8:12). Because of their persistent, offensive rejection of God Yahweh vowed, **My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity.**

v11 – What do we learn about angels given that the marking angel reported back?

Angels are diligent and accountable in their service.

- Angels and men must all give account of their conduct to God; for although he is everywhere, and his eye sees all things, yet they must personally account for all that they have done...

Romans 14:12 – *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*

What does knowing that we must give an account to God about our lives tell us about this mortal life?

- This mortal life is a test to determine who will spend eternity with their Creator and who will not... who will accept the provision God made for eternal life by believing in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- And once we have eternal life, to what degree we will participate in what God will be doing in eternity (rewards, treasure in heaven).

What did the angel report?

I have done as You commanded me: The angel could report that he had marked the faithful remnant in Jerusalem.

- This was an encouragement to Ezekiel that all Judah had not strayed from God, the righteous ones had been marked.

What applications from Ezekiel chapter 9 come to mind from our discussion today?

- Spiritual warfare is real so we should take Ephesians 6 seriously and thus seek spiritual solutions (that is, God's intervention) into difficulties we encounter in our lives.
- God has marked His people for salvation; we have eternal security; Physical death is not something we have to fear!
- The cycle of generational sin can be broken, repent and seek God's forgiveness; He is a merciful God!
- This life is a test to see who will spend eternity with the Lord, and for those who do, to what extent do we get to be involved in what God will be doing in eternity.