

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part VII: Visions Of God's Judgment And Departure From His Temple, Ezekiel 9:1-10:22

A. The Vision Of God's Slaying All Who Even Tolerated Abominable Sin

(Ezekiel 9:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. Ministering to a spiritually hardened, rebellious people is a humanly overwhelming task, but God at times directs some of His servants to function in that kind of a ministry.
- B. Regardless of the acceptance of sin in a hardened, rebellious people, God's servant must remain intolerant of it, the lesson of the Ezekiel 9:1-11 vision of God's slaying of all who even tolerated abominable sin.
- C. We view this passage for insight and application in ministering in our era (as follows):

II. The Vision Of God's Slaying All Who Even Tolerated Abominable Sin, Ezekiel 9:1-11 ESV.

- A. In the context, God in His glory by which He had appeared to Ezekiel in his call to his prophetic ministry cried in a vision in Ezekiel's ears in a loud voice, summoning the executioners of Jerusalem, Ez. 8:4 with 9:1.
- B. Six men with lethal weapons approached the temple from the upper gate to the north, and with them was a seventh man who was clothed in linen and had a writing case at his waist, Ezekiel 9:2a ESV. These seven approached the temple area and stood beside the bronze altar, bronze representing judgment, Ezekiel 9:2b.
- C. Ezekiel then saw the glory of the Lord rise up from the mercy seat between the cherubim on the ark of the covenant in the Holiest of Holies where He had always resided and move to the threshold, that is, to the doorway to the Holy Place that faced the outside courtyard. Ezekiel 9:3a. This relocation indicated God was about to punish the city and temple area in such a way that it would violate the temple's ceremonial holiness to where God would not even be comfortable sitting atop His usual spot of the mercy seat.
- D. God there called to the man with the writing case to pass through the city of Jerusalem and write the Hebrew letter *taw* on the forehead of all the people who sighed and groaned over all the abominations that were being committed in the city, Ezekiel 9:3b-4. This letter was in the shape of a cross in Ezekiel's time. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, Ezekiel 9:4. [This event prefigures the sealing of the 144,000 servants of the Lord in the Great Tribulation in Revelation 7:1-8 to preserve them from harm as they minister for the Lord.]
- E. To the other six men with the lethal weapons, the Lord told them to follow the man with the writing case through the city and smite every person who did not have the letter *taw* on their foreheads, to show no mercy unless they had this mark, Ezekiel 9:5. Whether the people were old or young, whether they were maids, children or women, they were to slay them but not harm those with the *taw* on their foreheads, Ezekiel 9:6a.
- F. This execution was to begin at the temple of God in accord with Scripture's principle that God's judgment begins at the house of God, with the people of God themselves. (Ezekiel 9:6b with 1 Peter 4:17)
- G. The executioners then began to slay the elderly men who were in front of the temple, the men who were either worshiping or tolerating the worship of the sun with the backs of the worshipers to the temple, Ezek. 9:6c, 16.
- H. God directed the executioners to defile the temple itself with dead bodies in this judgment, to fill the temple courts with the slain, so they obeyed, going forth and slaying throughout the entire city, Ezekiel 9:7.
- I. In the process, they went about killing everyone, leaving Ezekiel by himself, so Ezekiel in shock fell on his face and cried unto the Lord, exclaiming, "Ah Lord God! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in the outpouring of Your wrath on Jerusalem?" (Ezekiel 9:8 ESV)
- J. God replied that the guilt of Israel and Judah was exceedingly great, that the land was full of the blood of the innocent and the city full of injustice, for they claimed the Lord had forsaken the land so that He did not see their sins, Ezekiel 9:9. God thus expected Ezekiel himself to maintain an intolerant attitude toward such sin!
- K. Accordingly, the Lord said that He would not pity or spare, that He would punish them for their sins, Ez. 9:10.
- L. Finally, the man with the writing case returned to report he had fulfilled God's solemn assignment, Ezek. 9:11.

Lesson: *In a vision that shocked Ezekiel, the Lord revealed that He would destroy everyone in Jerusalem who did not intolerantly sigh or groan over the abominable sins being committed in the city, and that starting with the temple where the spiritual leaders of the nation were supposed to be ministering unto the Lord. All who were involved in these evil deeds or who even tolerated them were condemned to be slain by the Lord.*

Application: *God requires that we not only not commit acts of sin, but that we not tolerate them, that we rather sigh and groan over sin or be considered as participating in it! May we then neither commit nor tolerate sin!*