Ezekiel 9

Marked Before the Sword: Those Who Sigh and Groan

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before judgment falls, God marks His own. The only thing that set the marked apart was that they grieved over the sin around them instead of joining in. Judgment starts at God's house, and the prophet who preached it falls on his face and begs for mercy — but the man in linen finishes his work, and not one marked person is lost.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 9 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

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.

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.

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;

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.

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:

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice
- **v1** his destroying weapon in his hand
- **v2** six men came from the way of the higher gate
- **v2** clothed with linen *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** inkhorn *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** stood beside the brasen altar
- **v3** the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub
- **v3** to the threshold of the house
- **v4** Go through the midst of the city
- **v4** set a mark upon the foreheads
- **v4** the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations
- **v5** let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity
- **v6** come not near any man upon whom is the mark
- **v6** begin at my sanctuary
- **v6** they began at the ancient men which were before the house

- **v7** Defile the house
- **v8** I fell upon my face
- **v8** wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel
- **v9** The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great
- **v9** the land is full of blood
- **v9** The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not
- **v10** I will recompense their way upon their head
- **v11** I have done as thou hast commanded me

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 9:2 (KJV)

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.

Setting

Chapter 9 continues the vision that began "in the sixth year" of the exile (8:1), about September 592 BC. Ezekiel, still in Babylon, is being shown the temple in Jerusalem. He has just seen four "abominations" — the idol of jealousy, the seventy elders in the dark, the women weeping for Tammuz and the men worshipping the sun (ch. 8). Chapter 8 ended with God saying that when they cry in His ears "with a loud voice," He will not listen (8:18). Chapter 9 opens with God Himself crying out "with a loud voice" (v1) — for judgment. What Ezekiel sees in vision will happen in history when Babylon takes Jerusalem in 586 BC (2 Chr 36:17).

Structure

- vv1–2 — **the executioners come:** "He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice" (v1): "Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand" (v1). "Six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north" (v2), and with them "a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins" (v2). They "stood beside the bronze altar" (v2).
- v3 — **the glory moves:** "the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple" (v3).
- v4 — **the mark:** "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem" (v4), 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" (v4).
- vv5–7 — **judgment begins at the sanctuary:** "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare" (v5). No one is exempt by age, "but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary" (v6). "So they started with the elders who were before the temple" (v6). "Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain" (v7).

- v8 — **the prophet intercedes:** "I fell on my face and cried out" (v8): "Alas, Lord GOD! Are You destroying the whole remnant of Israel by pouring out Your wrath on Jerusalem?" (v8).
- vv9–10 — **God's answer:** "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great" (v9); "the land is filled with blood and the city is full of perversion" (v9), for they say, "The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!" (v9). "My eye will have no pity nor will I spare" (v10); "I will bring their conduct upon their heads" (v10).
- v11 — **the report:** the man in linen returns: "I have done just as You have commanded me" (v11).

Repeated words

city (vv1, 4, 5, 7, 9); clothed in linen / writing case (vv2, 3, 11); mark (vv4, 6); pity / spare (vv5, 10); temple (vv3, 6, 7); midst (v4, three times).

Contrasts

The men who "sigh and groan" over sin (v4) ⟷ the elders who said "the LORD does not see" (8:12; 9:9). The man with a writing case (v2) ⟷ the six with weapons (v2). Marked and spared (v6) ⟷ unmarked and slain (vv5–6). God's glory on the cherub ⟷ God's glory at the threshold, getting ready to leave (v3). The house meant to be holy ⟷ "Defile the temple" (v7). Ezekiel on his face crying for mercy (v8) ⟷ God's settled answer, "very, very great" iniquity (v9). "I have done just as You have commanded me" (v11) ⟷ a people who did whatever they wanted.

Chapter theme (my words)

Before judgment falls, God marks His own. The only thing that set the marked apart was that they grieved over the sin around them instead of joining in. Judgment starts at God's house, and the prophet who preached it falls on his face and begs for mercy — but the man in linen finishes his work, and not one marked person is lost.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 9:1 (KJV)

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.

The executioners (vv1–2)

God answers the elders' claim that He does not see (8:12) by calling for the executioners of the city (v1). Guzik takes them as angels — he cites Feinberg: "angels are frequently called men because of their outward appearance" — and notes that Scripture sometimes links angels with places and nations (Dan 10:13, 20; 12:1). Whether the man in linen is a seventh figure or one of the six is debated; Guzik quotes Keil and Delitzsch taking him as their leader. Linen was the clothing of priests and heavenly beings (Lev 16:4; Dan 10:5; Rev 15:6). Some Christians see in the man in linen the Angel of the LORD, a preview of Christ the Priest who knows and marks His own; others see a high-ranking angel. The text does not say. They come from the north gate — where the idol stood (8:5) and the direction Babylon will come from —

and stand by the bronze altar, the place of sacrifice; Guzik cites Clarke that the people are under sentence of divine justice.

The glory at the threshold (v3)

Ezekiel tracks the glory of God step by step: from the cherub to the threshold (9:3), then out to the east gate (10:18–19), then to the mountain east of the city (11:23). Guzik notes Feinberg's point that Ezekiel follows these movements through the book — and the glory returns in 43:2–5. God does not leave His house quickly or quietly. He moves to the door before He goes.

The mark (v4)

The word "mark" is *tav*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which in the script of Ezekiel's day was written like an X or a cross. Guzik reads it as a protective sign, like the Passover blood (Exod 12:13) and Rahab's scarlet cord (Josh 2:18); he quotes Block calling it a sign of hope. Jewish tradition and Christian tradition have read the letter in different ways. Early Christian writers such as Tertullian and Jerome saw the cross in it; Guzik cites Wright: "Without being superstitious we can rejoice in this anticipation of salvation through the death of Christ on the cross." The New Testament picks up the picture: God's servants are sealed on their foreheads before judgment (Rev 7:3; compare the beast's counterfeit mark, Rev 13:16), and "the Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim 2:19). Notice who is marked: not the strongest or the most religious, but those who "sigh and groan" over the city's sin. Guzik quotes Trapp: "Let us mourn in time of sinning: so shall we be marked in times of punishing." Jeremiah, weeping in Jerusalem in these same years, is a living example (Jer 9:1; 13:17).

"Start from My sanctuary" (vv5–7)

The command is terrible, and Scripture records it really happened: Babylon "had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm" (2 Chr 36:17). Judgment starts with the elders standing before the temple — the same leaders of chapter 8. Guzik connects this with 1 Peter 4:17: "it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God." He cites Feinberg's point that God was most dishonored where He should have been most honored, and Wiersbe's that they had defiled God's house by their lives and would now defile it by their deaths. God orders His own temple defiled: a holy house that shelters idols is no longer holy to Him (Jer 7:4, 11, 14). Hard as the passage is, the mark comes first (v4): no one God marked was touched (v6).

The prophet on his face (vv8–10)

Ezekiel is left alone among the slain and falls down crying, "Alas, Lord GOD!" (v8) — the same cry he will raise again in 11:13. Guzik cites Taylor that behind his hard message Ezekiel had deep compassion. The question is honest: is anyone going to be left? God does not rebuke the prayer, but He explains: the iniquity is "very, very great," the land full of blood, the city full of perversion — and the people still say "the LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!" (v9; 8:12). Their own words are quoted back as the charge. Guzik cites Block: since the righteous are already marked, the fate of the wicked is sealed. God brings "their conduct upon their heads" (v10) — He gives them what they chose.

"I have done just as You have commanded me" (v11)

The chapter ends not with the executioners but with the man in linen reporting that the marking is finished. Guzik cites Alexander that this assures Ezekiel not all of Judah had strayed, and Feinberg compares Jesus' words in John 17:4, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." The faithful were all counted and kept.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **executioners / those in charge — *pequddah* (H6486):** oversight, visitation, punishment.
- **destroying — *mashcheth* (H4892):** destruction.
- **shattering — *mappats* (H4660):** a smiting, shattering.
- **linen — *bad* (H906):** white linen, the priestly fabric.
- **writing case — *qeseth* (H7083):** a scribe's inkhorn.
- **glory — *kabod* (H3519):** weight, honor, splendor.
- **cherub — *kerub* (H3742):** a cherub, angelic guardian of God's presence.
- **threshold — *miphtan* (H4670):** a threshold, doorsill.
- **mark — *tav* (H8420):** a mark, the letter tav (written like an X or cross).
- **sigh — *ʾanach* (H584):** to sigh, groan.
- **groan — *ʾanaq* (H602):** to cry out, lament.
- **sanctuary — *miqdash* (H4720):** a holy place.
- **remnant — *sheʾerith* (H7611):** a remainder, survivors.
- **perversion — *mutteh* (H4297):** perverseness, injustice.
- **conduct — *derek* (H1870):** a way, road, manner of life.

Cross-references

Gen 18:23–25; Exod 12:13, 23; Josh 2:18; 2 Chr 36:15–17; Ps 119:136; Jer 7:4–14; Jer 9:1; Ezek 8:12; Ezek 10:2–7; Ezek 10:18–19; Ezek 11:13, 23; Ezek 43:2–5; Mal 3:16–17; Matt 5:4; John 17:4; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 Pet 4:17; Rev 7:3; Rev 9:4; Rev 13:16; Rev 14:1.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 9:4 (KJV)

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.

Command to obey — "put a mark on the foreheads."

God's first order was not to strike but to mark. Before judgment, He finds His own. I want to be among those who "sigh and groan" over sin — beginning with my own — and not shrug at it. That is the mark of a heart God keeps (Matt 5:4).

Sin to confess — "the LORD does not see!"

The people said it twice (8:12; 9:9), and the second time God quoted it back as the charge. I'll confess the places where I've acted as if God doesn't see — and where I've stopped grieving over what grieves Him.

Warning to heed — "start from My sanctuary."

Judgment begins at God's house (1 Pet 4:17). Being close to the temple did not protect the elders; it made them first. Church attendance, Bible knowledge, a ministry title — none of that is the mark. I'll examine my heart before I examine anyone else's.

Promise to trust — "do not touch any man on whom is the mark."

God knows exactly who is His (2 Tim 2:19). In the worst day Jerusalem ever saw, not one marked man was overlooked. For the man in prison or in a broken home who feels lost in the crowd and forgotten: God's Man in linen knows your name and has marked you as His in Christ. "I have done just as You have commanded me" (v11) — His work of keeping His own is finished.

Example to follow — Ezekiel on his face

Ezekiel preached judgment without enjoying it. When it fell, he fell on his face and begged for the remnant (v8). That's the posture I want toward the men I disciple — and toward the ones who reject the message. Tell the truth plainly, then get on my face and pray for them.

Worship

The LORD is holy and sees everything. He does not judge in a hurry; His glory lingers at the threshold. He is just to give men their own conduct, and gracious to mark His own before the sword falls. In Christ the mark is the cross — and I am kept.

Prayer

Lord GOD, You see what is done in Your house and in my heart. Give me a heart that sighs and groans over sin instead of growing used to it. Thank You that You know and keep those who are Yours. Make me faithful to finish what You command, and give me Ezekiel's compassion to fall on my face for the men I love. Amen.