
EZEKIEL 9: 1 Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause those who are in charge of the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

The vision in this chapter seems intended to denote the general destruction of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, excepting a few pious individuals that were distressed at the abominations that were committed in the land; who, in order to be delivered from the general calamity, were Marked, in allusion, perhaps, to the custom of eastern princes, who marked their servants in the forehead, or rather to the custom very frequent among the Pagan worshippers, of indelibly imprinting on different parts of their body the marks of their idols. To indicate, likewise, that God was soon to forsake the temple, the shechinah, or glorious symbol of his presence, is seen to remove from the inner sanctuary to the threshold or door of the temple, Eze 9:1-7. The prophet intercedes for his people; but God, on account of the greatness of their sins, will not be entreated, Eze 9:8-11.

Verse 1

Cause them that have charge over the city - By those six men with destroying weapons the Chaldeans are represented, who had received commission to destroy the city; and when the north is mentioned in such cases, Chaldea and the Chaldean armies are generally intended. There appears to have been six men with a sort of slaughter-bills, and one man with an inkhorn. These may represent the seven counsellors of the eastern monarchs, who always saw the king's face, and knew all the secrets of the government. One of them was that minister who had the office of reporting concerning criminals, who carried the book of death and the book of life into the presence of the king, where the names were entered of criminals who were destined to suffer, and of those who were either considered as innocent or recommended to mercy; those of the former in the book of death, those of the latter in the book of life. This person with the inkhorn might be termed, in our phrase, the recorder.

EZEKIEL 9: 2 Behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lies toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in their midst clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. They went in, and stood beside the bronze altar.

Verse 2

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

EZEKIEL 9: 3 The glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side.

Verse 3

And he called to the man - The person here who called was that who sat on the chariot of the Divine glory. See Eze 1:26.

EZEKIEL 9: 4 The LORD said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in its midst.

Verse 4

Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh - 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, etc. These are called sectarian marks to the present day among the Hindoos and others in India. Hence by this mark we can easily know who is a follower of Vishnoo, who of Siva, who of Bramah, etc. The original words, והתוית תו vehithvitha tau, have been translated by the Vulgate, et signa thau, "and mark thou tau on the foreheads," etc. St. Jerome and many others have thought that the letter tau was that which was ordered to be placed on the foreheads of those mourners; and Jerome says, that this Hebrew letter ט tau was formerly written like a cross. So then the people were to be signed with the sign of the cross! It is certain that on the ancient Samaritan coins, which are yet extant, the letter ט tau is in the form +, which is what we term St. Andrew's cross. The sense derived from this by many commentators is, that God, having ordered those penitents to be marked with this figure, which is the sign of the cross, intimated that there is no redemption nor saving of life but by the cross of Christ, and that this will avail none but the real penitent. All this is true in itself, but it is not true in respect to this place. The Hebrew words signify literally, thou shalt make a mark, or sign a sign, but give no intimation what that mark or sign was. It was intended here to be what the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels and door-posts of the Israelites was, namely, a notice to the destroying angel what house he should spare. As the whole of this matter only passed in vision we are bound to neither letter, nor any other kind of figure. The symbolical action teaches us that God, in general judgments, will make a distinction between the innocent and the guilty, between the penitent and the hardened sinner.

EZEKIEL 9: 5 To the others he said in my hearing, Go through the city after him, and strike: don't let your eye spare, neither have pity;

EZEKIEL 9: 6 kill utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and little children and women; but don't come near any man on whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the old men that were before the house.

Verse 6

Begin at my sanctuary - Let those who have sinned against most mercy, and most privileges, be the first victims of justice. Those who know their Lord's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. The unfaithful members of Christ's church will be first visited and most punished. But let not those who belong to the synagogue of Satan exult in this, for if judgment begin at the house of God what will the end be of them who obey not the Gospel! However, the truly penitent of all

descriptions in such cases shall be safe. The command of God is, "Set a mark on all them that sigh and cry;" and his command to the destroyers is, "Come not near any man on whom is the mark."

EZEKIEL 9: 7 He said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!"

They went out, and struck in the city.

Verse 7

Defile the house - A dreadful sentence, Let it be polluted, I will no more dwell in it; I now utterly forsake it.

EZEKIEL 9: 8 While they were killing, and I was left, I fell on my face, and cried, and said, "Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all the residue of Israel in your pouring out of your wrath on Jerusalem?"

Verse 8

Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, On thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? - These destroyers had slain the seventy elders, the twenty-five adorers of the sun, and the women that mourned for Tammuz; and on seeing this slaughter the prophet fell on his face, and began to make intercession.

EZEKIEL 9: 9 Then he said to me, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perversion: for they say, 'the LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD doesn't see.'

Verse 9

For they say, The Lords hath forsaken the earth - אֶת הָאָרֶץ eth haarets, "this land." He has no more place in Israel; he has quite abandoned it; he neither sees nor cares, and he can be no longer the object of worship to any man in Israel. This seems to be the meaning; and God highly resents it, because it was bringing him on a level with idols and provincial deities, who had, according to supposition, regency only in some one place.

EZEKIEL 9: 10 As for me also, my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way on their head."

Verse 10

Mine eye shall not spare - They say, the Lord seeth not: this is false; I have seen all their iniquities, and do see all their abominations; and I will bring deserved judgment upon them, and then that eye which now sees will neither pity nor spare.

EZEKIEL 9: 11 Behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, "I have done as you have commanded me."

Verse 11

I have done as thou hast commanded me - Angels and men must all give account of their conduct to God; for although he is every where, and his eye sees all things, yet they must personally account for all that they have done. I have done as thou hast commanded me. The penitents are all signed; the penitents are all safe. This is good news for them that mourn.