

Ezekiel Part 9 (Ezekiel 9)

Summation of the structure of Ezekiel:

- a. ***The Reality of God*** (1:1–3:27). These opening chapters center on Ezekiel's call and vision of the character of God.
 - b. ***The Reality of Judgment*** (4:1–32:32). The first two-thirds of the book contains judgment messages that announce the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem (4:1–24:27). Ezekiel's prophecies against the nations follow (25:1–32:32).
 - c. ***The Reality of Restoration*** (33:1–46:24). With the judgment messages as a background, Ezekiel turned to the theme of restoration. He presented the promise of restoration (33:1–37:28), the power of restoration (38:1–39:29), and the prospect of restoration (40:1–46:24).
 - d. ***The Reality of Redemption*** (47:1–48:35). Ezekiel realized the promise of restoration in a prophetic vision as he saw the fulfillment of promises in the river of life (47:1–12), the land (47:13–48:29), and the city of God (48:30–35).
1. It is difficult to comprehend the implications of the message of Ezekiel, especially chapters 6 and 8, without some familiarity of Canaanite worship and theology.
 2. Canaanite worship first became a problem for Israel after the Egyptian bondage and years of wilderness wandering just prior to the conquest.
 3. As the Israelites approached the land after the forty years in the wilderness, they advanced toward Canaan on the east side of the Dead Sea.
 4. As they neared the land of Moab, Balak the king became concerned. He heard how God miraculously had protected and cared for the Israelites in the wilderness.
 5. He also heard the stories of how God had driven out their enemies before them, and he wanted to prevent a similar fate. (Numbers 22:1ff.)
 6. So - Balak sent his representatives to employ the services of a young man named Balaam, noted as a seer and well known for his ability to pronounce curses. (Numbers 22:5ff.)
 7. Balak employed the young man to go to the high places of Baal worship that overlooked the camp of the Israelites.
 8. From that vantage point he was to pronounce a curse on the Jews. But each time Balaam opened his mouth to curse Israel, he blessed them instead.
 9. He made several such attempts, and each time the results were the same. Numbers 24 contains a lengthy blessing that angered Balak (24:10).
 10. However - Balaam explained he could not go beyond the will of God in this matter. (24:13)
So - after finishing the blessing, he returned home. (24:25)
 11. Numbers 25 reports Balak's ultimate success. Having failed in his attempt to curse the Hebrews, Balak invited them to dwell among his people. Not until later do we learn the complete details.

12. Numbers 31:16 says that Balaam advised the women to seduce the Israelites and bring the judgment of God upon them. What Balaam failed to accomplish directly he almost succeeded at indirectly.
13. The judgment of God fell upon Israel, and Balak was spared. The real tragedy of this story is that Israel continued toward Baal worship when they entered the land of Canaan.
14. God originally intended for no Canaanites to be left in the land after the conquest His motive was to preserve the spiritual integrity of Israel.
15. When they entered the land, they were deceived into believing that the Canaanites were no threat. So rather than ridding the land of them as the Lord had instructed, Israel sought ways to coexist with the Canaanites. (Judges 1:27–36)
16. The Canaanites would trouble them throughout their history.
17. From these early days in the history of Israel onward, Baal worship continued to plague the nation until after the exile in Babylon.
18. The attraction of Baal worship for the Jews went beyond immorality. It also included the promise of agricultural, animal, and human fertility.
19. Chapter 9 details the coming judgment.
20. First the agents involved are introduced—the executioners who would carry out the slaughter and the man in linen who would protect the faithful.
21. **9:1–2** Ezekiel heard a voice, evidently the voice of God, which called for the “executioners” of the city to come forth with their weapons (v. 1).
22. The word “executioners” refers to those in charge of the city of Jerusalem who sometimes had authority to administer discipline.
23. While they were called “men” in v. 2, it becomes clear in subsequent verses that they were more than human and were divine messengers or angels.
24. It was not uncommon for angels to be called “men” in Scripture. (Genesis 18:2; 32:24)
25. God personally summoned these messengers to chasten His people as He had promised. (8:18)
26. At the command of the Lord six “men” came forth by way of the upper gate, which was built by Jotham (2 Kgs 15:35) and was located at the northeast corner of the temple complex. (9:2)
27. This was the same area where Ezekiel had seen the sun worshipers (8:16) and the image of jealousy. (8:5)
28. Each of the “men” had a “deadly weapon” (v. 2) or battle ax in his hand.
29. Accompanying these executioners was a seventh “man” dressed in the white linen of a priest. He had a scribe’s writing kit at his side.

30. This writing kit usually was made from an animal horn. It had a palette with a slot for pens and a hollow place for two kinds of ink, usually black and red. Professional scribes usually carried this kind of equipment.
31. Upon their entry, they took up their station by the brazen altar in the inner court.
(Ezekiel 9:2)
32. **9:3-6** As they stood in place, the glory of God that rested above the cherubim on the mercy seat in the holy of holies rose and moved to the threshold of the sanctuary.
33. This was the first stage of the departure of God's presence from his sanctuary, which concluded in 10:22.
34. Before the executions commenced, the messenger in white linen was instructed to go through the city and place a mark on the forehead of those who "grieve and lament" over the detestable things done in the temple (v. 4).
35. The "mark" was therefore to distinguish the righteous from the guilty. Its use here was to identify the righteous and exempt them from judgment.
36. God's judgment always was tempered with mercy. The "man" in white linen marked those who were grieved over the sins of Judah.
37. These were spared and became a small remnant of hope for future restoration. They were spared by receiving a mark.
38. Those judged by the executioners were from five all-inclusive groups: the old men, the young men, the maidens, the women, and the children.
39. God plays no favorites and gives no exemptions. Divine justice is served by the fact that no one who is guilty will be spared (9:5-6). Judgment not only included God's own people; it began in His sanctuary.
40. **9:7-11** Normally a corpse was not allowed in the sanctuary because a dead body was considered unclean.
41. Since the temple already had been defiled by the worshipers seen in Ezekiel 8, the executioners were told to "defile the temple" and to "fill the courts with the slain" (v. 7). Justice was more important than ritual purity.
42. Ezekiel's plea for mercy (v. 8) showed how deeply he felt the needs of the people. Although he was tough and outspoken (3:9), he had a compassionate heart (9:8).

Their sin was great, the land was filled with violence and bloodshed, and the city was filled with injustice. Therefore - there would be no relaxation of judgment (v. 10).