

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Elohim has Left the Building”

9:1-11

“Elvis has left the building!” is a phrase that was often used by public address announcers following Elvis Presley concerts to disperse audiences who lingered in hopes of an encore.

Al Dvorin, a concert announcer who traveled with Elvis throughout his career, made the phrase famous when his voice was captured on many recordings of Elvis' live performances.

It was originally used by promoter Horace Lee Logan on December 15, 1956, to plead with concert goers not to leave a concert hall to try to see Elvis as he left, but to instead remain to see the other acts. The full quotation was *“Please, young people... Elvis has left the building. He has gotten in his car and driven away.... Please take your seats.”*

In chapter nine of Ezekiel God was leaving His building. His glory was departing from the holy of holies in the Temple at Jerusalem.

It was still fully six years before the third and final siege against Jerusalem would end with the destruction of the Temple and the slaughter of many Jews. But from God's point of view it was so certain that it was already over.

In verse three we'll read that *“the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.”*

The Lord continues moving away from the sanctuary in chapter ten:

Ezekiel 10:19 And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

In chapter eleven the Lord exits the city itself:

Ezekiel 11:22 So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them.

Ezekiel 11:23 And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.

Can God's glory depart from a church?

- Jesus warned the first century church at Ephesus that if they did not repent and return to their first love for Him that He would remove the power of their testimony.
- He told the church at Sardis that even though they had a name that they were alive they were really dead.

Let's follow the Lord as He departs the Temple in the sixth century with an eye towards avoiding His removing the power of His testimony or falling into thinking we are alive when we are really dead.

Ezekiel 9:1 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."

Ezekiel 9:2 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.

When we last left Ezekiel he had been transported by the Spirit in a vision from his home in Tel Abib, Babylon, to the Temple at Jerusalem. There the Lord showed him a number of abominable idolatrous practices being performed by the Jews.

God's longsuffering waited for the people to repent. He more than waited; He warned. But the time for waiting and warning was ended.

He called for "six men," who by their description and duties we understand to be angels. They are said to "have charge over the city."

Every now and then we get a glimpse of the spiritual world all around us. In the Book of Daniel we see that the angel Gabriel was detained by a mighty demon, called the Prince of Persia, until Michael the archangel came along. Elijah asks God to open the eyes of his servant to see the heavenly armies surrounding and protecting them. Here in Ezekiel we see that six mighty angels had charge over Jerusalem.

Reading about these things some believers have concluded that there are territorial demons and that we must identify them and go to spiritual battle against them.

That's a huge unscriptural leap into weirdness! Angels fight angels but we do not. If you want to do battle, you're told how in the Revelation where we read of God's saints, "they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony, they loved not their lives unto death."

Want to fight demons? Walk with the Lord with a good testimony and be willing to give all of yourself serving Him. There's no need to get the names of territorial demons.

The angels who had charge over Jerusalem were reassigned to carry out judgment against the Jews. They came with battle-axes and, in a moment, we'll see that they go through the Temple and the city slaughtering Jews.

The angels don't literally slaughter the Jews. The Babylonian army will slaughter the Jews when the siege ends and they breach the walls. What is being conveyed in the vision is that the real protection of a sanctuary or a city or a nation is God. And the real judgment against a people comes from God - regardless the agent He uses.

You are introduced to a seventh person. He is armed, as it were, with an "inkhorn," which is a small case with writing implements in it.

Ezekiel 9:3 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;

Ezekiel 9:4 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."

Some among the population of Jerusalem were grieved by the sins of their fellow Jews. They sighed and cried "over all the abominations" that were being done.

Are you sensitive? Or desensitized? The world, the flesh, and the devil are all working overtime to desensitize you to sin. The Holy Spirit, however, lives within you. He remains sensitive to sin. Let Him lead you in a path of righteousness, along the narrow path filled with the joy of the Lord.

If you and I are not grieved about sin then chances are we are grieving the Holy Spirit in our sin. Sin is only pleasurable for a season. In the end it brings death and destruction. Look past the moment to eternity.

What was the "mark" of the blessed? Scholars say that the word translated "mark" is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, pronounced tav or tau. It was a simple mark, two crossed lines similar to an 'x.' Some have tried to insinuate that it was a form of the Cross but that is probably going too far.

Those marked were saved from the slaughter.

Ezekiel 9:5 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.

Ezekiel 9:6 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.

When reading this the emphasis should be on their sin. Sin is an equalizer of persons. It brings death upon you no matter your gender or status or age. The wages of sin is death and we all deserve it, young and old, male and female.

God had made a way for mankind to atone for sin in the sanctuary but they had abandoned it when they abandoned Him. Now He was abandoning them to their natural state.

“They began with the elders.” Leaders, take note! Before we blame or judge others let’s go before the Lord and examine ourselves.

Ezekiel 9:7 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.

The Temple was to become a morgue. Piles of the slain were to be dragged in to its courts. It would be quite literally a ‘dead’ church!

When sinners who need Jesus come in to the church then we are a hospital for them. When saints come in to the church living in and practicing habitual sin then it is a morgue.

Ezekiel 9:8 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?"

Didn’t God instruct the angel-cutioners to spare the marked men and women and children? Yes, but Ezekiel was fearful they would be caught in the carnage.

Carnage is coming. It isn’t the Mayan prediction of 2012. It is God’s promise of the time of Jacob’s Trouble, the seven year Great Tribulation.

We will not go through any portion of the great and terrible time of trouble that is coming upon the earth. But in the world, until that time, we will have tribulation. It may be tribulation with a little “t,” but it can seem awfully major when we are going through it.

The Lord knows those who are His. Believers are said to be “sealed” with the Holy Spirit, “who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14). The picture of being sealed with the Spirit is

one of ownership and possession. God has promised eternal life to all who believe in Christ, and as a guarantee that He will keep His promise He has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell the believer until the day of redemption.

Prior to Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven, the Holy Spirit had a "come and go" relationship with people.

- The Holy Spirit indwelt King Saul, but then departed from him (First Samuel 16:14).
- Instead, the Spirit came upon David (First Samuel 16:13).
- After his adultery with Bathsheba, David feared that the Holy Spirit would be taken from him (Psalm 51:11).

All of this changed after Jesus' ascension into Heaven. The Holy Spirit began permanently indwelling believers. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of God's promise to always be with us and never forsake us.

Angels and demons can see we have been sealed. It's like a mark. We are marked men and women.

Are we making our mark, so to speak, by living consistent with our faith in Jesus? While the sealing of the Spirit is not really visible, its effects ought to be. Nonbelievers especially ought to be able to see and sense something different from your words and your walk.

The angels "went out and killed in the city." Their actions in this vision represented what would happen shortly at the hands of the Babylonian army.

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 bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!'

Ezekiel 9:10 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."

“Bloodshed” and “perversity” summarized Jewish society. Violence and immorality. We are right there as a society.

People wonder, Where is America in Bible prophecy? If the rapture happened right now our nation would be devastated. Those left behind would fall in line with some kind of global government.

We talked about the worldview of the Jews last week. It was, “the Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see.” ***Neither were true!***

How does it help to blame God for pain and suffering? If you eliminate God then what hope is there? What help is there?

None. None whatsoever. I studied existential philosophy - whose worldview is essentially that if there is a God He has forsaken His creation and we are on our own. Their conclusion is that life is absurd at best; it has no meaning or purpose. Great starting point, huh?

God would “recompense their deeds on their own head.” There is personal responsibility for our actions. I say there must therefore be free will.

Do I understand my free will and God’s absolute sovereignty? No. I am not asked to understand it. If my efforts to understand it eliminate one or the other than I have ventured into a realm of extra-biblical speculation.

Ezekiel 9:11 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."

Those to be spared were now properly marked. The killing could begin.

One day the very last believer of the church age in which we live will be sealed with the Holy Spirit. Jesus will resurrect and rapture His church. After that the Great Tribulation can begin.

In the mean time, you are marked to make your mark.

