An Angel with an Inkhorn

"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."
Ezekiel 9:4

Suggested Reading: I Kings 22; I Chronicles 21; Psalm 12; Ezekiel 8-9; II Peter 2; Revelation 14,22.

Introduction:

1. We are at the beginning of a new year, when every saint ought to be preparing his/her heart to seek the Lord.
2. The preparation of your heart to set your affection on heaven and hate this world is the essence of our faith.
3. Judgment is coming: the wickedness of America and the carnality of Christianity are both a stench to God.
4. The decline of our nation and the churches of it is accelerating into a freefall that has only hell as a bottom.
5. It is my duty to warn both the wicked and the righteous to be free from their blood (Ezek 3:17-21; 33:1-6).
6. It is my duty to remind often of God's demand for holiness and His judgment for lacking it (II Pet 1:13; 3:1).
7. The blessed God of heaven is neither asleep nor approving what is going on – invisible things are being done.
8. Let us read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 9 to see past the veil of sense and sight into His terrible spirit world.
9. I am nothing! But the God I represent is everything; and you will have to deal with Him, not me. Repent!

The Context

A. Ezekiel was a priest and prophet taken captive with King Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the total captivity of Judah in Babylon (1:1-3 cp II Kgs 24:10-20).
B. Ezekiel had warning messages against Judah for their horrible spiritual adulteries bringing wrath.
C. Ezekiel is in the midst of a 4-chapter vision (8-11). Compare Ezekiel 8:1-4 with Ezekiel 11:24-25.
D. This vision is 5-6 years before the final destruction and desolation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.
E. Ezekiel had just witnessed four abominations occurring back in Jerusalem among the Jews (8:1-18).
    1. The first abomination was an idol provoking God's jealousy in the court of the temple (8:5-6); and many churches today have brought pagan things of all kinds into the church, especially Rome. Remember, even covetousness is idolatry to our holy God (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5).
    2. The second abomination was private idolatry by seventy ancient men of Israel (8:7-12); and many church leaders and elders today have their secret idols and stumblingblocks of iniquity.
    3. The third abomination was women keeping the lascivious and lewd customs of the heathen for Tammuz (8:13-14); and the women of many churches today dress, talk, act, and live like whores.
    4. The fourth abomination was men holding a sunrise service in the temple of God (8:15-16); and many churches today meet at sunrise after the Spring Equinox to sing hymns toward a rising sun.
F. The aggravating factor to God was Israel's flippant attitude toward His worship (8:17). He called for the death penalty for light treatment of parents, let alone the great and dreadful God (Deut 27:16).
    1. Carnal Christians today will say, "It doesn't matter how we do things. God doesn't care."
    2. Carnal Christians today will post signs in the community: "Casual worship – come as you are."
    3. Carnal Christians today will say, "Doctrine is divisive; Jesus just wants us to love one another."
    4. Carnal Christians sing "Happy Birthday" in the church and pass out bubblegum with laughs.
    5. The flippant, irreverent, profane, and blasphemous approach to worship today is horrible.
G. Therefore, God was going to deal in fury without pity or mercy, regardless of their prayers (8:18); and such judgment must soon come on America, or God will need to apologize to Sodom!

The Text

9:1 The Angel of the LORD speaks: He has been the main character thus far in the vision (8:1-18). This is no mere angel: He takes on speech of God, and Ezekiel calls Him God (8:6,18; 9:4,8). The Angel of the LORD called forth high-ranking angels charged with protecting Jerusalem.

These words are not spoken to Ezekiel, but in his hearing: we compare 9:5; as we see the lack of "son of man" (8:5,6,8,12,15,17); and we see Ezekiel surprised by "behold" (9:2).
The use of six "men" is understood exactly as in 40:3; Gen 18:1-2; 32:24; Daniel 10:5; Luke 24:4.
The angels were told to report to the Angel of the LORD with their weapons of mass destruction.

9:2 Ezekiel is surprised as he saw six angels reporting for their assignment with weapons of slaughter.
Among these six angels with slaughter weapons is another angel in linen with a writer's inkhorn.
The linen, common for angels (Dan 10:5; 12:6-7), represents the holiness of God's elect angels.

9:3 The incredible glory of God, which Ezekiel had earlier seen (1:1-28), moved to the temple's door.
The glory of God, once promised perpetually between the cherubim, was leaving the temple.
Ezekiel saw and heard the LORD calling the angel with the inkhorn forward for his assignment.

9:4 The LORD sent the angel with ink to identify and mark every righteous inhabitant of Jerusalem.
The spiritual trait deserving this special mark from God was a holy hatred for religious adultery.
Though the city was almost all given over to sinful worship, some few yet were zealous for truth.
But not only did they hold the truth, they were also grieved and angered by the sin around them.

9:5 The LORD sent the six angels with weapons of slaughter to kill all the unmarked without mercy.
No matter how pitiful a case might appear, they were to kill them all without pity or sparing.

9:6 The LORD's charge of slaughter was to ignore age or sex – there was to be no leniency shown.
It should be noted that little children, who are also sinners, suffer the same fate as wicked parents.
But the LORD directed these slaughtering angels to strictly avoid any men with the special mark.
And He directed them to begin with the temple worshippers, seventy ancients of Israel (8:7-12).

9:7 The LORD withdrew all the sanctifying mercy of His temple and ordered them to kill within it.
The angels went forth as they were commanded, and they slaughtered in the city of Jerusalem.

9:8 Ezekiel interceded, as a good prophet should, for fear the Lord's fury would utterly slay all Israel.

9:9 The holy God justified His action by pointing out their sins and their scornful attitude toward Him.

9:10 The holy God declared that it was too late, and with unmerciful vengeance He must repay them all.

9:11 Ezekiel is surprised at the return of the angel with ink, who reported completion of his assignment.

The Lesson

A. Most of Israel thought it a light thing to corrupt worship (8:17), but some grieved much over it (9:4).
B. Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel back in Jerusalem, described the Jews lightness also (Jer 5:1-6).
C. The holy God has His holy angels, who are servants to protect or destroy His people. Consider it!
   1. Angels are involved in the affairs of nations and men (Joshua 5:14; Daniel 10:13,20-21; 12:1).
   2. Angels have blinded and frightened men easily (Genesis 19:1-11; I Kings 22:19-23; Matt 28:4).
   3. Angels have slaughtered men easily (II Kings 19:35; I Chronicles 21:14-16; Acts 12:23).
   4. Angels witness even minor activities of our lives (Ecclesiastes 5:6; I Corinthians 11:10).
   5. Angels are used by wise men to give sobriety to charges (I Timothy 5:21).
   6. Angels went forth with slaughter weapons in the church at Corinth (I Cor 11:30).
   7. And angels were going to kill Jezebel and her followers for spiritual adultery (Rev 2:20-23).
D. Since we know the destruction of Jerusalem was by the Chaldeans, we can further understand these six men or the weapons of slaughter in their hands as the princes of the Chaldeans (Jeremiah 39:3).
E. God clearly described three weapons of slaughter as sword, famine, and pestilence (Jer 24:10; 27:8).
F. Sin can reach an aggravated point of judgment, where there is no mercy or room for repentance; as God swore against Israel in the wilderness, here by Ezekiel, and again before 70AD (Pr 29:1). But even in such cases, Caleb, Joshua, Daniel, and many saints survive and prosper!
G. The wrath was so great, even Noah, Daniel, and Job could not save others (Ezekiel 14:14,16,18,20).
H. God sees the righteous (Gen 6:8; 7:1; Rev 2:18-29), and He discriminately saves them (II Peter 2:9).
I. The eyes of the LORD run to and fro in the earth looking for those with perfect hearts (II Chr 16:9).
J. God does hear the sighs and groaning of His people, as He did Israel in Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25).
K. God has a book, where He keeps track of those who think and speak about Him (Malachi 3:16-18).

L. The Lord's eyes are on the righteous with favor and protection (I Pet 3:10-13). Who can harm you?
M. Great men grieve over sin around them, as Phinehas (Num 25:10-13), Elijah (I Kgs 19:9-18), Josiah (II Chr 34:27-28), David (Ps 119:53,136,158; 139:19-24), Isaiah (Is 6:1-7), Jesus (Mark 3:5; John 2:17), Paul (Acts 17:16; II Cor 2:4-9), and even Lot (II Pet 2:7-8).
N. The sighing and grieving is the very opposite of being a friend of the world (Jas 4:4; I John 2:15-17).
O. David, a man marked out by God for blessing like no other, hated evil anywhere (Psalm 101:1-8).
P. Nehemiah is an outstanding example of grieving for sin and doing something about it (Neh 13:7-31).

The Application

A. If you think God is watching from a distance as Deists and modern man, you are fatally wrong!
B. Our New Testament duties are no less serious than the warning to Ezekiel (Heb 10:30-31; 12:28-29).
C. The words, concept, and practice of casual and contemporary worship are an abomination to God.
D. Love for God and His things is cold due to an abounding environment of sinfulness (Matt 24:12).
E. It is seared consciences – cauterized against sighing and crying – that make apostates (I Tim 4:1-3).
F. The perilous times of the last days with carnal Christianity are here (II Tim 3:1-13; II Peter 2:1-22).
G. It is a privilege and duty to stir ourselves up (Job 17:8-9; Isaiah 64:7; Haggai 1:14-15; II Tim 3:4-5).
H. The cure for a dull soul and curtailed spirit is input of the Word of God (Rom 10:17 cp I Cor 15:33).
I. All sighing and crying must be totally for God's glory and truth, not personal loss or sentiment!
J. The glorious Lord Jesus is coming soon with His mighty angels in flaming fire (II Thess 1:7-10).
K. But He also has an inkhorn and marks His people from slaughter (Rev 7:1-3; 9:1-4; 14:1; 22:4).
L. The foundation of God is sure – He knows His people without any loss (II Tim 2:19; Acts 18:10).
M. The blessed God wants a self-denying peculiar people zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-15).
N. Do you esteem all His precepts about all things to be right and hate every false way (Ps 119:128)?
O. What about God's worship is a light thing to you (8:17)? Staying awake during preaching? Watching your choice of television? Reading the Bible daily? Teaching your children? Keeping a godly relationship with your spouse? Praying several times a day? Being early at every assembly? Trembling before the Word of God? Grieving over the guilt on America according to the Scriptures?
P. Are you content with being a conservative carnal Christian? Or are you a sighing and crying zealous lover of God? Neither words nor attendance matter at all in this great distinction of how you crave the worship of God and hate sin in your private life!
Q. What a difference between a grieving David (Ps 31:9-10) and an unprepared Rehoboam (II Chr 12:14) and a lifted up Jehoshaphat (II Chron 17:4-6).
R. You have been given today to examine your heart and prepare it to seek the Lord fully and only.

Conclusion:

1. The time of your sojourning in life should be done in fear, our holy God demands holiness (I Peter 1:13-17).
2. I call God to record that I have warned you and told you, and you alone shall bear your own burden!
3. And I promise to the faithful in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ they shall be delivered (I Thess 1:2-4).

For further study:

1. Sermon outline "Truth Is Fallen": http://www.letgodbetrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Truth_Is_Fallen_in_the_Streets.pdf.
2. Sermon outline "God Hates Compromise": http://www.letgodbetrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Compromise.pdf
3. Sermon outline "Running Scared": http://www.letgodbetrue.com/Sermons/pdf/Running_Scared.PDF
4. Sermon outline "A Pure Heart": http://www.letgodbetrue.com/Sermons/pdf/A_Pure_Heart.pdf
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