

THE SLAUGHTER OF EZEKIEL 9:

Text for Consideration: Ezekiel 9:1–11

¹Then 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.” ²And 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.

³Now 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; 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.”

⁴To 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. ⁵Utterly 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.

⁷Then 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. ⁸So 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?”

⁹Then 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!’” ¹⁰And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.”

¹¹Just then, the man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn at his side, reported back and said, “I have done as You commanded me.”

BACKGROUND:

In Ezekiel 9:1–11, Ezekiel the prophet witnesses the execution of the idolaters observed in chapter 8. According to Chapter 9, “Yahweh Himself orders the massacre as punishment for their sin” and “Only a small remnant who disapproved of the idolatry survives.”

This prophecy “graphically depicts Yahweh’s role in the destruction that comes upon Judah. (Faith life study notes). The prophecy’s primary application is to the “Babylonian conquest of Judah, although parallels with the visions of Revelation 7:15,16 indicate analogies with certain final events;” and “Those events will follow the close of probation.” (George W Reid Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; 4/01/93) page 2)

Ellen G. White, in a message of rebuke to those in the church who would excuse wrongdoing among the professed people of God, and who murmur against those who reprove sin, says: “Unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, they will never receive the mark of God’s sealing approval.” 3 T 267

They will fall in the general destruction of the wicked, represented by the work of the five men bearing slaughter weapons. Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those ‘that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the church.

WHEN WILL THE SLAUGHTER BE EXECUTED

The question that comes is “when will this slaughter take place?” The quick answer is that it will occur after the close of probation, and in the general destruction of the wicked during the falling of the seven last plagues and at the second advent of Christ in glory. “Our

own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons. Already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues shall be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, then it will be forever too late to repent and find shelter. No atoning blood will then wash away the stains of sin." {5T 212.4}

The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." {5T 212.3}

Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion. {Day-Star, March 14, 1846; p 243.4} Mar 243.4}.

Ellen G White's statement in the book Testimonies to Ministers, p. 431-432, leans more on the fact that the slaughter will take place during the the seven last plagues after the close of probation for all mankind. The language used in Testimonies to Ministers, p. 431-432 is the same as that used in Revelation 16 in relation to the seven last plagues. Ellen G White states "go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" (p.432); "And when their task is done, when the last vial of God's wrath is poured out, they return and lay their emptied vials at the feet of the Lord. (p.432); "after these things... I heard as it were the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." they sing the song of Moses and the song of the lamb (p.432). All these statement echoers Revelation 16 more than Ezekiel 9; as such it is justifiable to conclude that the slaughter will take place during the period of the seven last plagues.

The equipment carried by Angels in Ezekiel 9 included "battle-ax" and "writer's inkhorn"; while in Revelation 16 John mentions angels with "vials of the wrath". The punishment meted out on the unfaithful servants clearly falls on them during the last plagues. The language used in Testimonies to Ministers, p. 431-432 attests to this fact. To teach that the unfaithful are slaughtered before close of probation and more so by human beings is unbiblical. It is also unbiblical to further advance the idea that the establishment of the stone kingdom has several phases (intermediate phase and the final/consummated phase). The unfaithful servants will be punished during the seven last plagues and those that will survive the plagues will be killed at the Second Advent.

Those that will survive the seven last plagues will be killed by the glory of Christ at the second advent. Those that would have survived the plagues will be destroyed at the second advent. At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth-consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the city of God and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants." -Great Controversy, p. 655-657

WHAT IS THE MARK?

One of these six men has a writer's inkhorn by his side (Ezek.9:2-4). The Lord commissioned him to go through the midst of the city (the church) and set a mark (or seal) upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in Jerusalem. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that this mark is not a mark that human eyes can see. "What is the seal of the living God, which is placed in the foreheads of His people? It is a mark (that) angels, but not human eyes, can read; for the destroying angel must see this mark of redemption (Letter 126, 1898).

" . . . it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved." 4 Bible Commentary 1161, E.G. White.

Those who would have the seal of God in their foreheads must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. This is what distinguishes them from the disloyal, who have accepted a man-made institution in the place of the true Sabbath. The observance of God's rest day is the mark of distinction between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not (MS 27, 1899). {7BC 970.2}

WHO SHALL RECEIVE THE MARK?

"The angel with the writer's ink horn is to place a mark upon the foreheads of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel follows this angel (Letter 12, 1886).

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. {5T 214.2}

The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." {5T 212.3}

DANGERS TO AVOID

We need to avoid labeling the church as fallen. It is very easy for one to fall into the temptation of policing others and condemning them for every little error they make after reading strong statements about the slaughter. It is very easy to fall into the temptation of using these statements as a whip to flog others at the slightest error made. It is also easy for one to fall into the temptation of labelling the whole body of believers as fallen. We need to be balanced. We need to take up the role of a brother's keeper with a humble spirit. "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Co 10:12). In view of some that had fallen into the temptation of condemning the church and other church members or leaders, Ellen G White gave wise counsel. The counsels were applicable to those of her time and they are still relevant today.

Ellen G White states that "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out--the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place." (2 Selected Messages p. 380.)

"The Captain of our salvation leads His people on step by step, purifying and fitting them for translation, and leaving in the rear those who are disposed to draw off from the body, who are not willing to be led, and are satisfied with their own righteousness. 'If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.' No greater delusion can deceive the human mind than that which leads men to indulge a self-confident spirit, to believe that they are right and in the light, when they are drawing away from God's people, and their cherished light is darkness."—Testimonies for the Church 1:333. SDACBB

In spite of this counsel some went ahead and severed their relations with the church on claims that the church had fallen. "Many and varied movements have arisen that have resulted in detaching from the Seventh-day Adventist Church groups of people who, for some reason, have become dissatisfied either with the doctrines or the practices of the church. SDACBB 1.2. (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

There are others who left the church because a brother or sister still ate meat, some because a brother or sister still accepts medical advice and conventional medicines, others left because of a misunderstanding over the issue of military involvement; others left because they had dissatisfaction about church programs like camp meeting, the Sabbath school quarterly Guide (claiming that it's a human invention), and some because the church could not accept their erroneous ideas. Yet some remain in the church but continue to sow seeds of discontentment and dissatisfaction about church doctrines and practice.

An observation is made by D.E. Robinson about such individuals and movements when he states that "Without exception these movements have been feeble, and in most cases short-lived. The organized body, however, has continued to increase in strength. This disparity in numbers and power is said by those drawing away from the body to be in harmony with the divine program, each dissenting company believing itself to be that "little flock" that is to enter the kingdom. The teaching of the leaders of these offshoots—"reform movements," as they sometimes call themselves—is thus set forth by Mrs. E. G. White in an article written in 1863 entitled, "The Cause in the East," published in Testimonies for the Church 1:417, 418:" (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

"There are little companies continually arising who believe that God is only with the very few, the very scattered, and their influence is to tear down and scatter that which God's servants build up. Restless minds who want to be seeing and believing something new continually are constantly rising, some in one place and some in another, all doing a special work for the enemy, yet claiming to have the truth. They stand separate from the people whom God is leading out and prospering, and through whom He is to do His great work. They are continually expressing their fears that the body of Sabbath keepers are becoming like the world, but there are scarcely two of these whose views are in harmony. They are scattered and confused, and yet deceive themselves so much as to think that God is especially with them."—Testimonies for the Church 1:417.

In contrast to the vagaries of these deceived souls, God's purpose for a strong, united people, through whom He will finish His work in the earth, is set forth in the same connection: SDACBB 1.4 "God is bringing out a people, and preparing them to stand as one, united, to speak the same things, and thus carry out the prayer of Christ for His disciples: 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me' (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

D.E. Robinson further observes that "Most of these movements, however, in more recent times have claimed to be in harmony with the Testimonies. Their speakers and writers have freely quoted such portions as they could use in condemning their former brethren, and in upholding themselves in any differences they may have with the church." (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

One of these movements arose in 1893. A pamphlet entitled "The Loud Cry" was circulated widely among Seventh-day Adventists, in which the position was taken that the church had so completely apostatized that she had become Babylon, and that all of God's true people should heed the call to come out of her. It was asserted that from those who thus came out of Babylon, God's "remnant church" would be made up. As evidence of the alleged corruption of the church, the strongest reproofs found in the Testimonies for individuals and for the church in general, were compiled, isolated from any words of hope or courage, and interspersed with the comments of the writer of the tract. SDACBB 2.1 (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

Ellen G White made a response to the assertions of that movement and she states that "Those who have published the 'Loud Cry' tract have not consulted me upon the subject.

They have quoted largely from my writings, and put their own construction upon them. They claim to have a special message from God, to pronounce the Seventh-day Adventist Church Babylon, proclaim her fall, and call the people of God to come out of her, and try to make the testimonies substantiate their theory....

“How could they...proclaim that the loud cry was that the commandment-keeping people were Babylon? Satan was saying that same thing to Christ when Joshua stood before the angel. Satan was declaring his sins to be so great that he should not be restrained from destroying him. The words of Christ are applicable to these brethren, and to all who advance similar sentiments. “‘And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’” — *The Review and Herald*, November 8, 1953. (Ms 21, 1893.)

Talking about the messages of these deviant brothers and movements, Ellen G White states that “It is such messages as these men have borne that divide the church, and put us to shame before the enemies of truth, and in such messages is plainly revealed the specious working of the great deceiver, who would hinder the church from attaining unto perfection in unity.” — Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 56.

Ellen G White then went to affirm her loyalty to Seventh-day Adventist church and condemned the deviant movements. “There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren. Is it possible that men will arise from among us, who speak perverse things, and give voice to the very sentiments that Satan would have disseminated in the world in regard to those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus?” — Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 50, 51.

“To claim that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon is to make the same claim as does Satan, who is an accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before God night and day. By this misusing of the Testimonies souls are placed in perplexity because they cannot understand the relation of the Testimonies to such a position as is taken by those in error; for God intended that the Testimonies should always have a setting in the framework of truth.” — Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 42, 43.

Again, looking into the future and probably to our time, Ellen G White states that “Such messages will come, and it will be claimed for them that they are sent of God, but the claim will be false; for they are not filled with light, but with darkness. There will be messages of accusation against the people of God, similar to the work done by Satan in accusing God’s people, and these messages will be sounding at the very time when God is saying to His people, ‘Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.’” — Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 41, 42.

D.E. Robson also observes that we do find today people claiming that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon. Moreover, these people attempt to prove their position by quoting freely from messages of reproof and counsel, the misuse of which in the early nineties called forth the articles from which the foregoing quotations are made. The doctrine that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has now become Babylon, is being taught and published at the present time, and is being urged upon our church members. SDACBB 3.6. And “By a leader in one of these “reform” movements the charge is seriously made that “the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the present time is beyond hope of purification, either through the means of the shaking or otherwise.” SDACBB 4.1 (D. E. Robinson Ellen G. White Estate March, 1962, 1996)

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY NOW?

It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. It is now that we must awake and make determined effort for symmetry of character. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." We are in a most trying position, waiting, watching for our Lord's appearing. The world is in darkness. "But ye, brethren," says Paul, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." It is ever God's purpose to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and rest out of weariness for the waiting, longing soul. {5T 215.4}

I am much distressed because there is such manifest neglect in the home in the matter of training the children and the youth. Even in professedly Christian homes, where fathers and mothers would be supposed to be diligent students of the Scriptures, in order that they might know every specification and restriction in the word of God, there is manifest neglect of following the instruction of the word, and of bringing up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Professedly Christian parents fail to practice piety at home. How can fathers and mothers represent Christ's character in the home life when they are content to reach a cheap, low standard? The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character. {RH, May 21, 1895 par. 5}

CONCLUSION

1. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE UNFAITHFUL WILL BE EXECUTED DURING THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

2. Those that will survive the seven last plagues will be killed by the glory of Christ at the second advent.

3. We must avoid the danger of labeling the church as fallen, because "There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren. Is it possible that men will arise from among us, who speak perverse things, and give voice to the very sentiments that Satan would have disseminated in the world in regard to those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus?"—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 50, 51.

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