

Chapter 9

Date: **The 5th of Elul, 3,169** (based on the Hebrew Calendar),
or **Sunday, August 13, 592 BC**

Historical Setting: The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captives in the exile community of Tel-abib just outside the capital city of Babylonia, Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar reigns during the entire time period of this chapter. King Zedekiah rules Jerusalem as a “Puppet” King under King Nebuchadnezzar’s control. Jerusalem is forced to pay tribute to the Babylonians, which by 588 BC, Zedekiah stopped paying. The events of this chapter occur just prior to, or during, the time period in which Zedekiah made this bold decision. This caused great anger on the part of the Babylonians, most especially King Nebuchadnezzar. King Zedekiah and most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were stiff-necked, prideful, and even outright wicked. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

Preview: Chapter nine is a continuation of the vision Ezekiel began to receive in chapter eight. The prophet Ezekiel sees the Lord call six destroying angels to lay Jerusalem in waste. One angel is sent forth to identify any of the inhabitants who are repentant. The other angels are sent forth to destroy the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem, sparing only those identified as repentant. Ezekiel watches as his countrymen are slaughtered; the sight of which causes him great sorrow. In his sorrow, he pleads with the Lord to spare the lives of the Hebrews. The Lord declares that none could be spared, as the consequence to Israel’s actions and decisions not to repent. Finally, the angel that identified the repentant reports back that all is done. The vision does not conclude at the close of the chapter, but rather continues in chapter ten.



Verse 1: “**He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.**”

This verse, and for that matter all of chapter nine, is a direct continuation of chapter eight. It is the continuation of a vision that Ezekiel received in his home while in the presence of the elders of Israel. Being a continuation, the "*he*" in this verse refers to the heavenly being who appeared to Ezekiel in chapter eight. The heavenly tour guide, whom we suppose to be Jesus Christ, finished showing Ezekiel the abominable acts of Idolatry in Jerusalem (recorded in chapter eight) and now proceeds to cry.

The verse says that the Lord cried into Ezekiel's ears with a loud voice. The term cry usually brings to mind ideas of sorrow and grief. In our society it is associated with babies, death, and mourning; however, the term cry is often used biblically under the context of other modern words. The term cry, in the bible, often substitutes for words such as preach (cry repentance), pray (cry unto the Lord), and command (cry unto the army). In verse one of this chapter, the Lord is more appropriately issuing a command.

The Lord issues His command into Ezekiel's ears with a loud voice. This does not mean that He screamed into the prophet's ears. The ears represent hearing and understanding, indicating that Ezekiel heard and understood the Lord's command. The voice in which the Lord commanded was said to have been a "*loud*" voice. This terminology is often used when referring to the commands of God. The term loud is equated with terms like mighty and powerful. The voice often represents the outward expression of one's self. It symbolizes one's true self. It also symbolizes the ability and strength of the person with whom it is associated. In this passage, the voice references the fact that through the word of God all things are made possible. The symbolism associated with the passage indicated the magnitude of the message that the words of the Lord contained.

The Lord issued a great decree that would have serious ramifications on the inhabitants of Jerusalem as well as the Hebrew Nation. He calls forth six men who have charge over the city. We presume (based on verse four of this chapter) that the city spoken of is the City of David, Jerusalem. The six men, however, are not as easy to identify. Many scholars call them executioners. Others view them as symbols of wickedness. There are three theories that merit consideration at this time as to the identity of these six men. First, the six men could represent six of the seven archangels spoken of by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation. The second theory is that the men spoken of could be the Babylonians and the number six is used only figuratively. Finally, it could be suggested that both theories are

true. That is to say that the angels of heaven orchestrated and influenced the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, bringing to pass the designs of heaven.

The first theory assumes that the Lord is calling upon the angels of heaven to assist in His work. This part of the theory is fairly easy to accept. One basic problem with this theory is that Ezekiel almost always refers to angels as cherubim. Even so, the connection



is made with reference to the archangels of heaven. What is an archangel? According to Webster's Dictionary an archangel is an angel, or servant of God, of high ranking.

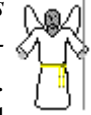
The apocryphal writing of the lost book of Enoch says, "These are the names of the angels who watch. **Uriel**, one of the holy angels, who presides over clamour and terror.



Raphael, one of the holy angels, who presides over spirits of men. **Raguel**, one of the holy angels, who inflicts punishment on the world and the luminaries. **Michael**, one of the holy angels, who, presiding over human virtue,



commands the nations. **Sarakiel**, one of the holy angels, who presides over the spirits of the children of men that transgress. **Gabriel**, one of the holy angels, who presides over Iksat, over paradise, and over cherubim" (Enoch 20:1-



7). This questionable book of scripture names six archangels. Interestingly enough, three of them are named and identified



in the standard works. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are all spoken of in accepted scripture. Michael is known to be Father Adam and Gabriel is known to be Noah. Raphael is not specifically identified; however, Bruce R. McConkie

says that Raphael is most probably Enoch (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 618). The three unidentified angels can be assumed as the Lords' anointed from different periods of the earth's history. It is interesting to note that the archangels are also the angels that will blow the trumps in the last days.



Gabriel	Michael	Raphael	Uriel	Raguel	Sarakiel	Jehovah?
Noah	Adam	Enoch?	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Jesus Christ?

Who could the other archangels be? We have no scriptural knowledge of their identities. Based on the identities that we do know, we might speculate that the others are individuals like Moroni, Joseph Smith, Elijah, Peter, or other such men. One thought on this is that each archangel represents a righteous servant of God from each of the

dispensations of time. Corresponding to the seven angels are seven, 1,000 year periods of time that make up the temporal existence of mankind here on earth. Michael, who is Adam, would represent the first dispensation of time. Raphael, who we suppose to be Enoch, would represent the second dispensation. While, Gabriel, who is Noah, would represent the third dispensation. From this point the theory remains unproven; however, the possibility exists. One last note, notice that the seventh angel is not mentioned even by his heavenly name. The seventh angel, in keeping with the stated theory, would be the angel from the seventh and last dispensation. This dispensation is the millennial period. It is the period when the Lord Jesus Christ will preside here on earth. One might conclude that the seventh angel is indeed Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The men, or proposed archangels, are said to have been given charge over the city. This would indicate that they have responsibility and power over the inhabitants thereof. Interestingly, the archangels spoken of by John the Beloved were given charge over mankind in the last days. In his accounting, we read that they were told to blow the seven trumps and pour out the contents of seven vials (better translated as bowls) upon mankind. Both of these symbolic acts represented the wrath of God. Each trump and vial represented destruction of men here upon the earth. This would be right in line with the duties that the six men would perform against Jerusalem.

The Seven Archangels

Spoken of by St. John the Beloved



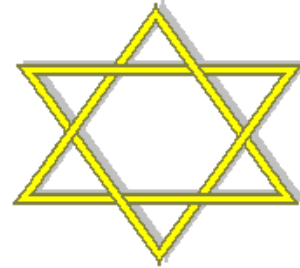
The archangels with the Trumps



The archangels with the Vials (Bowls)

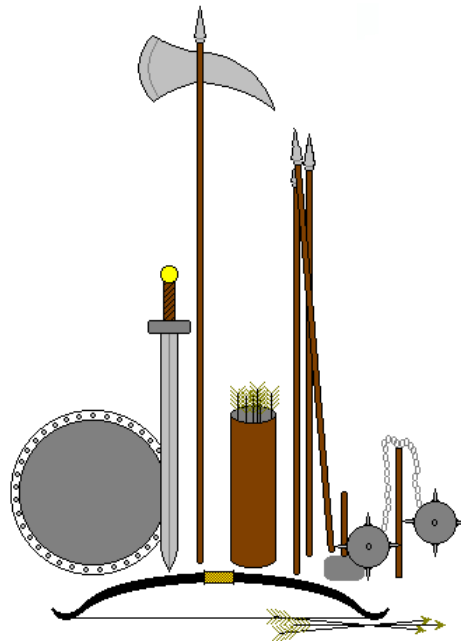
In the second theory, the six men spoken of are far from heavenly servants. It is theorized that the six men represent the Babylonians. The term man can be used figuratively to represent mortality, carnality, and the world. The Babylonians could definitely be defined by such terminology. We know that it was the Babylonians that brought about the great destruction of Jerusalem in 587 bc, but they surely marched on Jerusalem with more than six men. In fact, the Babylonians marched with thousands of men. How then could we

explain the use of the number six in conjunction with this theory? The number six could also have been used figuratively. As a symbol, the number six represents completeness, totality, and fulfillment. It is thought that the symbol derived its meaning from the fact that the earth was created in six days, and that the earth's celestial existence will be that of six dispensations. The number six also has a special relationship to Israel. The symbol of Israel is a six-pointed star known by many as the Star of David. Applying the number six to the theory that the six men represent the Babylonians has a fairly good connection. The Babylonians totally and utterly destroyed Jerusalem. They also marched with all of their forces against the nation of Israel. Consequently, the number six is an appropriate symbol.



The final theory, as odd as it first might sound, is that the first and second theories are both right. That is, the archangels acting under the direction and influence of heaven brought about the awful destruction of Jerusalem and used the Babylonians as their tools. Often time, the Lord uses the wicked to bring about His own designs. They are unwittingly tools in His hands. We know that the Babylonians were a key instrument in dealing the Lord's wrath out upon Jerusalem.

The six men, whether they be angels or the Babylonians, were to have destroying weapons in their hands. Obviously, if the men were representations for the archangels, the destroying weapons would be figurative symbols. Weapons are used symbolically to represent power, dominion, protection, and destruction. Since the weapons that these men wielded were destroying weapons, that narrows down the symbolic definition. They were obviously sent to bring about destruction. If the men spoken of were Babylonians, we know through history that they besieged Jerusalem with all manner of weapons of the time.



The weapons were to be in the hands of the men. This symbolizes the fact that they were ready to be used. There was to be no hesitation to the Lord's commands.

Verse 2: “And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.”

The six men that were called forth by the Lord are said to have come forth from the higher gate, which was located toward the north. Though the passage does not clarify what the reference point is for this chapter, it is generally accepted that the prophet is making reference to the city of Jerusalem. Accepting this as true, the gate spoken of is still not easy to identify. One major problem with identifying locations in and around Jerusalem during Ezekiel's time is that the Babylonians pretty much leveled the city beyond recognition in 587 BC, and there were no surviving blueprints or descriptions that can adequately piece together the city. The Bible record is probably the best source we have for attempting to describe Jerusalem in the early 500's BC; however, the accuracy of its descriptions leave a lot open for debate. The higher gate is thought to be one of several possible locations. Many feel that it is the same gate that Ezekiel passed through in the beginning of this vision in chapter eight (Ezekiel 8:14), while others feel it is a different gate altogether.

Jerusalem was a city of many gates. In referencing Jerusalem prior to the siege, the Bible speaks of many gates and walls. Some of the best information we have regarding Jerusalem prior to its destruction is the rebuilding period during Nehemiah's time. Several of Jerusalem's gates are listed below.

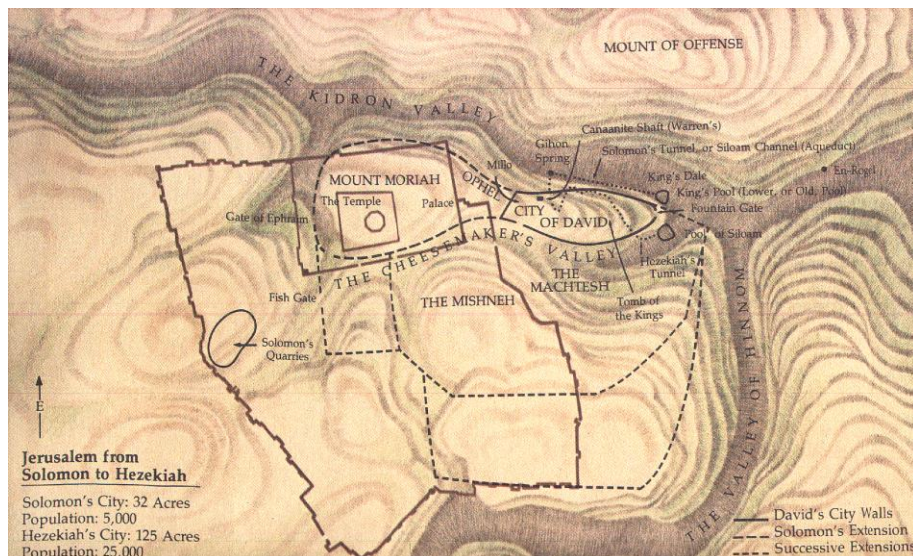
Gates of Jerusalem	Source
The middle gate	Jeremiah 39:3
The new gate	Jeremiah 36:10
The dung gate	Nehemiah 3:14
The old gate	Nehemiah 3:6
The gate of the fountain	Nehemiah 3:15
The water gate	Nehemiah 3:26
The horse gate	Nehemiah 3:28
The east gate	Nehemiah 3:29
The sheep gate	Nehemiah 3:32
The prison gate	Nehemiah 12:39
The King's gate	Esther 2:19
Benjamin's gate	Zechariah 14:10
Ephraim's gate	2 nd Kings 14:13
The corner gate	2 nd Kings 14:13
The valley gate	2 nd Chronicles 26:9
The fish gate	2 nd Chronicles 33:14
The high gate of the Lord's House	2 nd Chronicles 27:3

The term "**higher gate**" probably makes reference to the fact that Jerusalem was built on a hill. The higher gate probably meant that it was at a higher elevation, relative to the other gates in Jerusalem. In searching the scriptures for other locations that speak of the high or higher gate, there are several passages that might have application. In speaking of King Jotham, the Book of Kings records "...*He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD*" (2nd Kings 15:35). Likewise, the Book of Chronicles records that Jotham "*built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much*" (2nd Chronicles 27:3). These passages indicate that the higher gate of the Lord's house was not constructed by Solomon or David, but later in time. It also poses the question, were there two high gates; a high gate, and a high gate of the Lord's House? The answer to this question is unknown. We can deduce from topographical maps that the higher elevations in Jerusalem would have been to the North.

When Jeremiah was imprisoned, the Bible records that the Hebrews "*put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD*" (Jeremiah 20:2). This passage has led some scholars to suppose that the high gate spoken of by Ezekiel in this chapter is the high gate of Benjamin. Yet, there are others that suppose the high gate spoken of by Ezekiel is in fact the sheep gate spoken of by the prophet Nehemiah during the reconstruction of Jerusalem after the destruction. The logic behind this theory is the fact that the sheep gate is a higher elevation than the other gates and Ezekiel specifically mentioned that the higher gate was toward the north. An attempt at approximating a few gates and a general layout of Jerusalem prior to the Babylonian siege is given below.

Jerusalem in the 600's BC

Represented by the dotted lines



The "*six men*" entered through the higher gate and held slaughter weapons in their hands as previously discussed. At this point, one of the six men is pointed out as different. He is described by Ezekiel as being clothed in fine linen. Fine linen was a symbol among the Hebrews as far back as the days of Moses. Aaron was commanded to clothe the priests of Israel in fine linen for them to act in their office. The Book of Exodus records the following.

*"...And thou shalt embroider the **coat of fine linen**, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework. And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office (Exodus 28:29-41)."*

Linen is the material used for the clothing of priests and angels. Linen was typically woven from the flax plant and produced a remarkably smooth and fine fabric. Fine linen was commonly associated with the rich and the well to do in ancient Israel. Linen was also brilliant white in color. The flax was bleached of all impure color before being spun. Such was a symbol of purity, cleanliness, and righteousness. Such was the attire of God the Father and Jesus Christ when they appeared to the boy Joseph. Similarly, the angel Moroni was clothed in fine linen when he appeared to Joseph on several occasions. We are not told what the attire of the other five men in this verse was, but one among the six was attired in this sacred symbolic cloth.

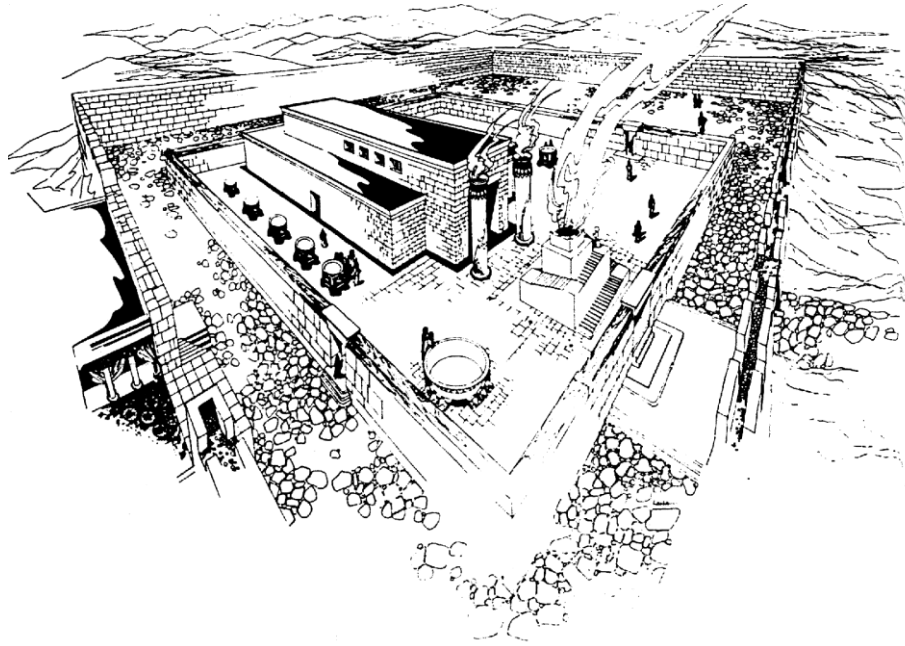
Another point of distinction with the linen clothed man was the fact that he had a "*writer's inkhorn*" by his side. An inkhorn might be better worded as an "inkwell". An inkwell is basically a vessel that contains ink for the purpose of writing. Most societies of the era were not accustomed to writing with ink; however, the Egyptians commonly wrote with ink and paper. The Israelites quite possibly became familiar with the practice due to the great influence the Egyptians had had over them in the years prior to Ezekiel's time. The symbolism behind an inkwell is obscure. Its meaning might lie in the things associated with it. Ink most often symbolizes the blood of the martyrs. The well symbolizes the fact that God has not forgotten the lives of those that have given their lives for his sake. The inkwell could also be making reference to writing in the book of life. The book of life symbolizes judgement, justice, and recompense. Either symbol, used in conjunction with the inkhorn or inkwell, could find good application here.

Upon entering the higher gate, the six men are reported to have stood beside the brazen altar. The brazen altar is another term used for the great altar of sacrifice. It is at this altar that the Israelites would offer sacrifices to the God of Heaven. It was fashioned after the portable altar of sacrifice that the Lord instructed Moses to build in the desert. The Book of Exodus describes the altar that Moses was commanded to build as follows.

"And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basins, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it. (Exodus 27:1-8)."

As Solomon constructed the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, he also built a great altar for sacrifice. The Jewish historian known as Josephus wrote that Solomon *"also made a brazen altar, whose length was twenty cubits, and its breadth the same, and its height ten, for the burnt offering"* (*Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, page 175, chapter 3, verse 7*). The altar was covered with precious metal and consequently became known as the brazen altar. When Solomon had completed the construction of the Lord's Temple and the associated structures; he gathered the nation together for its dedication. The king offered a long and beautiful dedicatory prayer. *"When Solomon had said this and had cast himself upon the ground, and worshipped a long time, he rose up and brought sacrifices to the altar...there came a fire running out of the air, and rushed with violence upon the altar, in the sight of all, and caught hold of and consumed the sacrifice (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, page 177, chapter 4, verse 4)."* The altar became a symbol of God's acceptance of Israel as His people.

A Depiction of Solomon's Temple with the surrounding Courts and Structures



It was before the great altar of sacrifice, that Israel would offer petition to their God. The altar represented the link of communication and blessing that the children of Israel had with the God of Heaven. It was to that very same altar that the six men reported to the Savior.

Verse 3: “And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side;”

This verse starts with a sentence that is of major significance. Unless one understands the history of the Israelites, the meaning of the passage is of little consequence. To understand its meaning, a reader must go back to the days of Moses on Mount Sinai. As the children of Israel sat before the mount they witnessed the Lord's glory. The Old Testament records the following.

"And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:16-18)."

Upon the mount Moses received the Ten Commandments, and conversed with the Lord. The Lord appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush, and Moses conversed with him as a man would with another man. After receiving instruction from the Lord, the prophet was instructed to build a portable vessel to house the tablets that contained the Lord's words. This vessel became known as the Ark of the Covenant.



The Ark of the Covenant was adorned with two beautiful angels or cherubim on the lid. Along with the Ark, the Lord instructed Moses and the children of Israel to build a portable Temple or Tabernacle. This would allow the Israelites to worship their God despite their nomadic lifestyle. In obedience to the Lord's commands, they built the tabernacle. Upon its completion, the Lord showed the children of Israel His pleasure and acceptance of the Tabernacle. He did this by showing His presence. The Book of Exodus records,



"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Exodus 40:34-38).



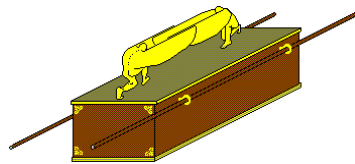
The same cloud that accompanied the children of Israel in the desert was present in the Temple of Solomon. This cloud was typically associated with the Ark of the Covenant. It is thought to have rested above the two cherubim in the Holy of Holies. It is this cloud that

represents the glory and presence of God. After the construction of Solomon's Temple we read, "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (1st Kings 8:10-11). Without this cloud, or the symbolic representation of the glory and presence of deity, the Temple was little more than a stone structure. The presence of God made the house a holy and sacred edifice.

In verse three of the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, we find that the glory of the Lord was removed from between the cherubim. It is supposed that the cloud stood between or above the large cherubim that stood in the Holy of Holies in the Temple or between the two cherubim on the lid of the Ark. This verse indicates that the cloud was taken from the Temple. It might also be theorized that not only was the cloud removed, but the Ark of the Covenant was also removed. Many theorize that the two were connected. Their symbolism was closely related.



The fate of the Ark of the Covenant is a mystery to mankind to this very day. Though many claim to know it's whereabouts i.e. Ethiopia, a cave under the dome of the rock, or other such locations, the



actual whereabouts are unknown. This verse in Ezekiel might give us a clue as to the fate of the ark. The Ark of the Covenant stood between the two large Cherubim in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The Lord might easily have been talking of the Ark as well as the Cloud that rested there in verse three. This is significant because the Ark not only symbolized the Israelites relationship with God and His presence among them, but it symbolized invincibility in battle. As long as the Israelites marched with the Ark they could not be defeated. The removal of the Ark would symbolize their fall.



**Picture of the Israelites
Marching on the Stronghold
City of Jericho with the Ark
of the Covenant**

Tying in the symbolism between the Ark and Cloud with the presence of Deity, the verse says, "***the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house***". The 'he' spoken of we assume to be our heavenly guide that appeared to Ezekiel in the beginning of chapter eight, namely Jesus Christ. This subtle transition shows the literal meaning behind the symbolism of the cloud and the presence of Deity. The removal of such was the loss of Israel's strength. It removed that which made them who they were.

The Lord is said to have been to the threshold of the house. The word threshold is translated from the Hebrew word "***miphthan***" meaning beam or corbel. "*A corbel is a bracket of stone, wood, or other building material, projected from the face of a wall and generally used to support a cornice or an arch (American Heritage Dictionary).*" Due to this fact, some scholars place the threshold between the porch and the nave (central part of the main hall) of the Temple. This would mean that the spirit of the Lord had filled the whole house.

Verse 4: **"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."**

The Lord commanded the angel or man clothed in linen and with a writer's inkhorn to go into the midst of Jerusalem. That is, he was to go throughout the entire city. As he went through Jerusalem he was to place a mark on the forehead of those that "***sigh and that cry for all the abomination that be done in the midst thereof***".

In the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Beloved which he received on the island of Patmos in the approximate year of 96 AD, the apostle saw the great destruction of mankind in the last days. He saw four destroying angels that will come forth to destroy all who did not have the seal of God in their forehead. We learn that the angel from the east will command that the powers of destruction be stayed from the earth for a period of time. It should be stayed until, "*We have sealed the servants of the living God in their foreheads*" (Doctrine and Covenants 77:9). The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "*Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing blessings upon their heads, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenants of their father and mother*" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 321). When speaking of the sealing in the

forehead, the Lord is referring to the covenant made in the Holy temple of God. It is there that we covenant with God, and he with us, binding or sealing both parties. The choice of John's words is interesting. The reason he chose to refer to the sealing power of the temple as being sealed in the forehead has to do with the culture of the time. It was common for the ancient cultures to mark insignias in their foreheads that would symbolize their God. For example, the followers of Zeus marked lightning bolts on their foreheads. This showed their allegiance to their God. Though the living God does not ask that we literally mark inscriptions in our forehead, he does ask that we devote our allegiance to him. The ancient society would understand the sealing in the forehead as a symbol of devotion.

Ezekiel is taught similarly by the Lord; He teaches that the repentant will receive a symbolic mark in their forehead. The mark is said to be better translated as the Hebrew letter "*taw*".

**The Hebrew Letter
"taw" around 600 BC**

"X"

**The Hebrew Letter
"taw" around 1 BC**

"ה"

The ancient letter "*taw*" is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Some suggest that it is connected with the symbolism behind the square since it is comprised of four, 90° angles. Each angle makes a square. The sum of the squares makes up a total of 360° degrees, the same as a circle. The circle has neither beginning nor end and is therefore another symbol for wholeness and perfection. Given this relationship, the square also carries the symbol of perfection. Many suggest that the square represents completeness here on earth, while the circle represents perfection in a heavenly sphere. There is also a theory that the square "□" symbolizes the Law of Moses or the letter of the Law, while the circle "O" symbolizes the Law of Christ or the spirit of the Law.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem who received the mark were not necessarily like those that John foresaw. They did not have to have the sealing ordinances of the temple to receive the mark; however, the same commitment to God needed to occupy their souls. Those that were remorseful and repentant over the sins of Jerusalem qualified for the symbolic mark. The mark represented the fact that they had accepted the spirit of God into their hearts and had rejected the world. Lehi and his family obviously received the marks in their foreheads.

The mark was strictly a symbolic representation for those that were willing to follow the Lord. Those that were repentant and willing to partake of the covenants that Father Abraham had made with the Lord.

Verse 5: “And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:”

The others spoken of represent the five men, that is the six men spoken of in verse two minus the man with the inkhorn. To those five men the Lord commanded that they go into the city and "smite" the inhabitants thereof. The term smite, used biblically, means to hit, inflict physical punishment, and death. The Lord further instructed the five that they were not to show pity nor pass over any individual. This is the same phrase the Lord has repeated to Ezekiel several times heretofore.

Verse 6: “Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.”

The instruction from the Lord to the five men continues here from verse five. The Lord further instructs the men that they are to slay both the young and old, young women, children, and mothers. There was to be no consideration taken to age, gender, or other such categories that might leave cause for pity. The Lord obviously does not look upon sin with the least amount of tolerance. It doesn't matter who you are, sin is still sin.

There is, however, a clause in this whole act. Those that were marked in the forehead in verse four were to be passed over by the five executioners. The message should be plain and simple to us. The only way to escape God's wrath is by obedience to His laws. Those that were obedient, and were repentant were spared.

Another interesting point to this act is the fact that the Lord was quite specific as to where the judgement should start. Who deserved judgement more than anyone in Jerusalem? Probably those that defiled that which was most sacred. Sure enough the Lord instructs the five destroyers to start at His Temple. They started with the men called the ancient men. As previously discussed, the ancient men are the elders of Israel. They were

Solomon's



Temple

those that worshipped Idols in and around the temple. They were those men that Ezekiel saw in chapter eight.

Verse 7: **“And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.”**

The Lord, giving further direction to the five destroying men or angels standing before Him at the Temple of Solomon, tells them to defile the house. There were several ways that the house of the Lord could be defiled. First of all, the house could not be entered into by one that was not qualified to do so. Only a righteous priest in Israel could enter the House of the Lord. A gentile, sinner, or one from a tribe of Israel that was not given the blessing of the priesthood could not enter. We know that as the Babylonians broke through the walls of Jerusalem at the end of the long siege, they entered the Lord's Temple. This would definitely be considered a defiling of the Lord's house.

In even further instruction, the Lord tells the five men to fill the courts with the slain. As the siege of Jerusalem came to a close, and as the Babylonians breached the outer walls of the city, the inhabitants fled to the protection of the courts of the Temple, which also had walls of stone surrounding them. As these walls were breached the Israelites were slain in great numbers, filling the sacred courts of the temple with dead bodies. The dead Israelites literally laid before the false Gods that they had erected and worshipped before the Temple. It was then that the Babylonians defiled the Temple. They stripped it of all that was valuable. The items of value were taken back to Babylonia for various uses. Some sacred vessels of the Temple were even used in pagan idol worshipping. Even the two great columns before the Temple, Boaz and Jachin were melted down into raw brass for use in Babylonia. It is even suggested by some that the Ark of the Covenant was taken into Babylon, and scraped for its precious metals and wood.

The entire act performed upon Jerusalem is similar in many ways to one that the Lord issued on Egypt on behalf of the Israelites hundreds of years prior. The Book of Exodus recounts the story as follows.

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two

side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead (Exodus 12:21-30)."

The Israelites were required to make their own mark on their foreheads, so to speak. As a sign of their faith and belief, they were required to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on their doorposts. The destroying angel saw the mark and passed their houses over.

The slaughter in Jerusalem was exceedingly great. In the Book of Psalms, we read of the poetic writings of a broken people. The psalmist records, *"They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless"* (Psalm 94:5-6).

Verse 8: **"And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?"**

The verse starts with the phrase *"it came to pass"* indicating a passage of time. Ezekiel might well have waited a period of time watching the great slaughter take place. The verse indicates that he waited while they, the five men, slayed them, the inhabitants of Jerusalem. How long Ezekiel watched is unclear. It should be

remembered that the people, that Ezekiel was watching as they violently lost their lives, were Ezekiel's people, his friends, his family, and his countrymen. As he viewed this, and found that he was the only one left, he collapsed. He figuratively fell on his face, probably meaning that he knelt down. The term "*only one left*" should be considered relative. We know that there were a few that survived; however, compared with the thousands that died they were small in number. In a kneeling position he cried. This cry is probably a tear shedding cry, rather than a command or forceful dialog. As he cried, he pleaded with the Lord asking Him not to destroy the entire House of Israel in His wrath.

Verse 9: **“Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.”**

Surely, the Lord was heart broken at the task He had to perform. Furthermore, it is not too much to presume that He understood and felt the pain that Ezekiel had in his heart for the children of Israel. In what could easily be taken as a cold and misunderstanding reply, the Lord tells Ezekiel that basically the Israelites, both the House of Judah and the House of Israel had committed great and grievous sins. So great was their iniquity that His wrath could not be spared.

The Lord said that the House of Israel had filled the land with blood. Blood represents atonement, sin, wickedness, mortality, and death. The Israelites had committed murders of all kinds, even child sacrifices to pagan gods. Even Laban in the Book of Mormon didn't think twice about taking the lives of Lehi's sons for their family's riches. This was the attitude that the Israelites had developed. Furthermore, they had filled the city with perverseness. Perverseness is a form of the word perverse; meaning to direct away from that, which is right or good (American Heritage Dictionary). They had truly turned away from all of God's commands.

Making all of their sins even worse was the attitude that the children of Israel had developed. They had developed a belief that the Lord, God, had forsaken the earth. In other words, He had turned His back on the earth, giving up on it and its inhabitants. With this belief, that they had embraced, they believed that any transgression they committed could be hidden from the Lord. The great prophet and writer Isaiah wrote of the Israelites and said,

*"For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said,
None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath*

perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know” (Isaiah 47:10-11).

Verse 10: “**And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.”**

This verse is a reiteration of Ezekiel 7:4, Ezekiel 7:9, and Ezekiel 8:18. It is obviously a message that the Lord wants to make sure is heard and remembered. For further commentary on this verse see the commentary on one of the other verses mentioned.

Verse 11: “**And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.”**

The chapter comes to an end with the return of the sixth angel, the man clothed in linen, returning to the Savior. He reported the matter, or the results of the mission upon which they had been sent, saying, “*I have done as thou hast commanded me*”. This verse has a couple of messages intertwined in it.

First, the Lord God was responsible for the action taken against Israel. It was He who was in charge. Some might blame the Babylonians, economical reasons, or even other factors for Jerusalem’s demise; however, the fact is the Lord was most definitely issuing the fury Jerusalem felt.

The other message contained herein has to do with priesthood authority. Notice that the angel was given a specific responsibility. He was then dismissed to perform the task. After he had completed the task he returned and reported to the Lord. This is a beautiful example of priesthood in action. As good stewards, we must accept our assignments, no matter how dismal they might appear, and after completing them faithfully, report to our priesthood leader. In a larger scope, we should consider this life a mission. Some day we will be required to stand before the Lord and report. Hopefully, when that day comes we will be able to answer as the faithful angel did, “*I have done as thou hast commanded me*”.



**Chapter
Summary:**

Though there are not themes or titles given to scripture, if one were given to this chapter, a quote from Apostle Neal A. Maxwell might have been appropriate. The Apostle once said, *"There are no immunities from the consequences of our actions"* (*The Neal A. Maxwell Quotebook, Neal A. Maxwell, page 64*). Ancient Israel had made certain choices that were contrary to their God. Despite warnings and patience on the part of the Lord, they stood by their choices and refused to conform to the Lord's Law. This chapter is a visionary representation to the prophet Ezekiel of the fate that awaited the inhabitants of Jerusalem some five years before it actually took place.

The chapter starts as a continuation of a vision started in chapter eight. Ezekiel is brought to Jerusalem where he saw the many gruesome sins committed there. In chapter nine, Ezekiel is standing in what appears to be the inner court of the Temple of Solomon with the Savior. The Savior calls forth six men who are armed with all manner of weapons. The men enter the inner court and stand before the Lord beside the altar of sacrifice. One man who is dressed in fine linen and armed with an inkwell at his side, is told to go throughout Jerusalem and mark an "x" on the forehead of anyone who is repentant. After this occurs, the remaining five men are sent forth into Jerusalem to kill any man who does not have the mark on his forehead. Ezekiel stands and watches as the angels start at the Temple and work their way throughout all of Jerusalem. Thousands are slaughtered before the prophet's eyes. Finally, finding himself the only one left, he breaks down and pleads with the Lord to spare some of Jerusalem. The Lord's answer was pure and simple. Though it was worded quite differently, the gist of the message was, *"There are no immunities from the consequences of our actions"* (*The Neal A. Maxwell Quotebook, Neal A. Maxwell, page 64*). At the close of the chapter, the sixth angel reports back to the Lord saying that they had done as commanded.

