

THE SEAL OF GOD

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In spite of Israel's ongoing rebellion against God, His love for them never wavered. Ezekiel 9 deals with the sealing work. It has its parallels in Revelation 7, 14, 17, and 18. The seal of God has been applied to His people in every generation. "He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them [the watchers who] that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." (Eze. 9:1). God has special watchers. We read about them in Daniel 4. The watcher and the holy ones superintended what was taking place in Babylon of old. There were watchers and holy ones in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that brought the word to the eternal One that the people in those cities were now beyond repentance. So in Ezekiel 9 there are watchers and holy ones who have charge over the city.

And as the prophet looked "six men came from the way of the higher gate" (Eze. 9:2). Three of them have destroying weapons in their hands. The three of them have company. We find these six watchers and holy ones depicted in Revelation 14. Verse 6 there's a first angel. Verse eight there's a second angel. Verse 9 there's a third angel. Verse 14 there's a fourth angel. Verse 16 a fifth angel; and verse 18 a sixth angel. In Rev. 14:18 the sixth angel comes from the altar. He brings in the signal, "Thrust in the sickle and reap." The sickle is the instrument that cuts down the harvest. It cuts the tares. The angels who are the reapers bind the tares into bundles for burning. It cuts the wheat and the angels who are the reapers bind them to be taken into the garner of God. So the six men come with the destroying weapons in their hands.

These swords might be likened to the word of God. The Word of God is a two-edged sword. It cuts both ways. It will carve away for the believer to the very throne of God. It will destroy the unbeliever. The same sun that ripens the good sheaves withers the tares. The same message that transforms the righteous condemns the wicked.

And these "six men came from the way of the higher gate" (Eze. 9:2). They are part of the sanctuary of God. They come from the north where God's throne is situated. God issues forth His judgment from the north. "Every man a slaughter weapon in his hand" (Eze. 9:2). "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." This one man, we see, is the sixth angel of Revelation 14.

"And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house" (Eze. 9:3). This glory of God is the hero of the book. It's a symbol of Jesus Christ and His work of salvation. Man sins. The glory of God slowly departs. We watch this glory until He finally leaves. In Eze. 11:23, "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city." This is on the east side, the Mount of Olives. From the mountain on the east side, the glory departed. From Eze. 12 to the end, the glory of God is absent. Troubles, distress, warnings, problems, result.

And then as the temple is measured and the sanctuary is studied and the pattern is considered, the glory of God returns. It fills the house. It fills the hearts of His people. It fills the restored city; and marks the place where God dwells.

A very moving poem by Israel Abraham in his book *Festivals Studies*:

When the Shekinah from that erring throng alas withdrew
Yet tarried in the track as one who lingered in the threshold long and
looked back

Then step by step in that reluctant flight,
It approached the shadow of the city wall
And lingered yet upon the mountain height
and hoped recall

Behold, thou comest as the dawn of day, Shekinah
Changes to a lonely night

O, Thou, who art a lamp unto the way, who art a light.

But, alas, Israel failed to recall the Shekinah that waited on the mountain beyond the city wall, hoping; and then finally, departed.

The judgments of God, the final close of probation; the sealing work; the mark of the beast; all pointed up in Ezekiel 9. And at the same time, verse 3, "glory of the God of Israel" was there on "the threshold of the house." The glory, the Shekinah on the threshold all point to Jesus Christ.

"And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side" (Eze. 9:3). "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” (Eze. 9:4). This is the sealing work.

As we look from Ezekiel through the Book of Revelation chapters 7 and 14, etc., we get a picture of what God is seeking to do. Particularly in Revelation 14, three angels are dispatched. Lifted up in heaven so that all can behold. Flying to indicate the speed with which their work is to be accomplished. A loud voice proclaiming their message, indicating that all should hear. Calling them to worship Jehovah. To turn away from Babylon. Guaranteeing its fall. To refuse to accept the mark of conformity with the beast. To be among those persons who keep the commandments of God through the faith of Jesus—righteousness, faith of Jesus. The third angel’s message is righteousness by faith in verity.

When we see those three angels in Revelation 14, we get a picture of God’s last words, His last deeds, His last message of entreaty and warning to the world. None need fail to understand. God must be worshiped. None need mistake the future. Babylon is fallen, is fallen and the reason given. On the one side, those who accept the commandments of men receive the mark of the beast. On the other side, those who have the commandments of God receive the faith of Jesus. The picture is clear. The message of salvation is being proclaimed. The everlasting gospel is sounding into all the world. But those who reject will be destroyed.

Revelation 14:1-5 describe those who accept. They have the Father’s name, His character, embedded in their foreheads. Their hands are marked with the likeness of the divine. Their lips are untouched by guile. Their relationships to the church is not conformity. Their relationship to Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom is with the immaculate dedication of a virgin. On their tongues there is no jealousy, no guile, no evil of any kind. They are without fault before the throne of God.

If Revelation 14:1-5 depict those who will receive the seal of God, Ezekiel 8 describes those who will be condemned and destroyed. Now those who receive the seal of God are described, in chapter 9, as sighing and crying for all the abominations that is done in the land. Here is a picture of their emotional revulsion against the evils of the land. The women, in Ezekiel 8:14, weeped for Tammuz. Their emotional involvement is for the sex symbol. The righteous weep because of the abominations that are done in the land.

In Ezekiel chapter 8 he writes about those abominations. The church contains, as the world contains, enough abomination to set God's people weeping between the porch and the altar. That was the place where the fountain for sin of uncleanness was opened. So now the ancients brought their image of jealousy.

Now what is this mark that is to be set upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry? The mark of God, like the mark of the beast, is a sign and symbol of authority. The seal of God, the seal of the beast, is a symbol of his authority. When a document was sealed when the king placed his mark or his sign upon that document or edict, now had the full authority of the person who had drawn it up.

The seal of God is the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Any of the other nine commandments might have been made by any god. The god Vishnu could say, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. The god Cali could say, You must not bow down to any other image. You must not take the name of Cali in vain. Many cultures have said, Honor thy father and thy mother. Most societies agree that killing, adultery, lying, are not worthy of a good citizen. Those who advanced philosophically realize that the ethic of true, clear thinking, must be without envy and jealousy.

But when we come to the fourth commandment, only the Creator could thus legislate. Only He who made the earth in six days and made the Sabbath on the seventh, could demand that His creatures keep the Sabbath. So the seal contains the name of God. Jehovah is title. He made heaven and earth. He is the Creator. The seal of His jurisdiction—heaven and earth.

I think I could go to a city in Europe and take in the dark watches of the night some city ordinance found in a park. This park shall be open from 8 o'clock in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon. This park will allow dogs only when controlled by a leash. This park prohibits all camping overnight, etc. Signed by the local authority. I could bring that and put it up in Yosemite, but it would be useless. Because the man who made those regulations in England has no authority in the United States.

So for a seal, for a law, for an edict to be binding you must have the name, the position, the seal of jurisdiction of the man who is making it—God, Creator, universe, Eternal—declares that the seventh day Sabbath shall be observed. So the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the memorial of creation and the sign of the Creator. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to

observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested.” Ex. 31:16, 17. “Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Eze. 12:12. “And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” Eze. 12:20.

And so God has jurisdiction over us on two counts: He made us and He remade us. He created us. He recreated us. He brought us from nothing in the beginning. He redeems us from the pit in the end. And as our Creator, Lord and Saviour, He is Lord also of the Sabbath day. He has given to us the Sabbath law, as a sign, the seal, the mark of divine authority.

Now the Sabbath or the seal represents that attitude that the true disciple finally develops when he settles into the truth of God and accepts the will of God without question, without reservation. He has so yielded himself that he being infused by the Spirit of God thinks God’s thoughts after Him and when He carries out his own will, he is doing the will of God in following his own impulses. Identification has become complete. So the sealing is the settling into the truth via the acceptance of pure Sabbath observance and worship of the Creator and the Redeemer.

In realizing how God’s creation is being marred by the abominations that are being done in the land, those who are judged worthy of being sealed are also described as sighing and crying. They feel very deeply. They become emotional and what Satan is doing to the perfect creation of God; about what Satan is doing to the church of God. How his woes are ravaging it: tearing it to pieces. How those who are gardeners are allowing weeds to grow up in it. Sigh and cry. They long for a better state of affairs. They are emotionally revolted against conditions in the world. And God sees fit, because of their surrender to Him, their identification with His program; their longing for the establishment of His kingdom; that they are safe to seal to mark in the foreheads. The forehead is the seat of the intelligence. In the center of their being they have the mark, the seal of God.

“And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him [the sealing angel] through the city, and smite” (Eze. 9:5). The judgment follows the sealing. “Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 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" (Eze. 9:5, 6). You will notice that old and young, maids, little children, and women, are mentioned; but the marked is applied upon men. This has led Bible students to feel that the 144,000 who are sealed are men. This may seem strange sounding in our age. But in the enumeration of Scripture: the feeding of the four thousand, the feeding of the five thousand; the numbering of Israel; only heads of families were counted. So it is very likely that God is thus enumerating here in the Scriptures.

Let's look at the idea of smiting. God says, Do not pity. Do not spare. We in our human frailty are tempted to think, This is very cruel. Why does God not pity? Why does God refuse to spare? Why were the foolish virgins excluded, although they banged on the door? Why was Esau refused the birthright, though he sought it earnestly with tears? Why?

When God judges, he sets the mark on man's personal decision. Probation will close when the divine foresight, prescience discerns, that given a billion years, not another human being, even those unborn, would accept Him. As I have looked at this truth through the Bible, I have come to the conclusion that God registers man's decision. He doesn't make it. He doesn't crystallize it. He doesn't force it. He gives man all the opportunities that man needs. And when he has made the decision, God registers that.

Take, for example, the story of King Saul and David. Look into the chronology of it. How far along Saul's reign was David first anointed? For how many years did David have to wait for the death of Saul. For that reason he is seen to be very meritorious. He was the next king. He could see Saul leading Israel to ruin. Yet he was not going to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. He was going to wait for God's good time to bring Saul to his end.

When God sees that no longer will a single Amalekite will accept Him, He commissioned Saul to exterminate that people.

We see years later in the third chapter of Esther the last mentioned Amalekite, Haman, the Agagite, a descendant of the king of the Amalekites. Haman was still plotting the genocide of the Hebrew people.

When God sees probation closed, man has closed it. God merely notes that man has come to the point where he will never accept Him. If he were given a billion years and a million opportunities, he will

never change his mind. At that point the register is complete. He that is filthy stays filthy. He which is righteous, stays righteous.

And so when the Lord says, Go after and spare not, He has seen that all opportunities have been accepted or rejected. And so they begin with the ancients of the house. "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. 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?" (Eze. 9:7, 8).

"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. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head. 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." Eze. 9:

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done." Rev. 16:17. The work of judgment, of justice, of sealing, of marking, has been complete.

The picture we have here in chapter 9 of Ezekiel in the application of the seal or the mark of God in contrast with the seal or the mark of the beast, points up that a time is coming when the irrevocable decisions for eternity have been made. Today we look to that time. We are in the sealing process. Today, God is calling upon His church to settle into the truth. Every member must take the time to think through the message of God. He must then decide. There is a crazy feeling in the world today that the sign of great-mindedness is having an open mind.

For the ignorant and the young, for certain areas, that may be good. But the older we get the more we should close our minds. As I have said, so many times, when I was thinking about a wife, I can search the field, but once he has gone to the altar with the woman of his choice and said, I will; he has got a closed mind. The moment he keeps an open mind about women, he destroys his marriage.

Search the annals of literature and find the church of God. When you have found it close your mind to it. Find the Saviour. Find the Word of God. Find the plan of salvation. Find prayer in your life. And

then, close it. Settle into it. Decide. As Paul said, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Ezekiel 9 focuses on the point of cosmic persuasion. All are decided. Soon that point will be reached. And the question that every Christian must daily ask himself, Towards what direction are the moment-by-moment decisions I am making, leading me?

Ezekiel 9

In Ezekiel 10 the prophet is given a vision of part of the vision he had been given in chapter 1. He sees the sapphire firmament upon which the throne of God rests, supported on the head of the cherubim. This is a view of the central authority directing the play and interplay of human events. The cosmic purposes are thoroughly moving to their consummation, but not without the superintendency of the throne; not without the guidance of the cherubim; not without focus upon the sapphire stone of the Lord God.

“And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.” Eze. 10:2. And he went and did so.

“Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.” Eze. 10:3. These coals of fire play a role in other visions. In Isaiah 6, for example, the prophet saw the cherubim and seraphim. He saw the throne high and lifted up. He caught a distant view of the likeness of the being on the throne. He heard the angelic choirs sing to the trinity: holy, holy, holy, to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. He realized that the divine plan needed human helpers. He heard the heavenly voice saying, Who will be for us. And in his timidity Isaiah said, I am ready to go. But I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips and the Lord said, I can cleanse. And so the coals of fire are applied to the lips of the young Isaiah purging them of earthliness; making them burn and glow with celestial glory.

Now these coals of fire are scattered over the city. Will they bring about a purification? Will they alight upon the dross and burn them away? Will they heat the fine metals of gold and silver and make them irradiated with the likeness of the divine countenance looking at them?

Meantime the cherubim stand at the right side of the house and the cloud fills the inner court. But we see from Israel's history that all the divine overtures are rejected. Heavenly cleansing is refused. The

shrouding radiance of the Shekinah is despised. And the glory of the Lord leaves the cherubs and stands over the threshold of the house as is loath to depart; waiting to be recalled.

“Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory.” Eze. 10:4. This indicates the presence of God. He has not left His people. He is not far away. He is there in their midst. The court is full of the brightness of the glory of God. What more can God do? As in ancient times He had come in and filled the curtain, courts and areas of the earthly tabernacle. As He had come centuries before and filled the Temple of Solomon the people had built for Him; so now in this heavenly vision He is seen as infusing, irradiating, and illuminating the inner recesses of the temple, but meeting indifference, He is ready to depart.

“And the sound of the cherubims’ wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.” Eze. 10:5. The sound of the wings was like the voice of El Shaddai when he speaks. These heavenly representatives when they are doing, in the meantime, the work that the redeemed will ultimately be doing, witnessing for God; speak with the voice of El Shaddai—the voice of the Almighty.

As we study the names of God we discover that this name brings to us a revelation of the motherhood of deity. *Shad* is a Hebrew word for a mother’s breast. El Shaddai is the mighty breasted one upon whose bosom the lonely and the fatherless and the widow might find solace and comfort. From whose breasts the babes in the faith might drink the milk of the word.

El Shaddai is a revelation of the word of God from whom we get comfort and sustenance. And the voice of God sounds through His messengers—through His minions—speaking.

“And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.” Eze. 10:6. Now the wheels, we have noticed, as symbols of the play and interplay of human events. They are full of eyes. They are directed by the nail-pierced hands. They are under the guidance of heavenly leaders.

“And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took

thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.” Eze. 10:7. Now this man clothed with linen according to Eze. 9:2 is connected with the altar. He has the writer’s inkhorn. He is the scribe. On the altar he sees the gift that Jesus has made on Calvary. With his writer’s inkhorn he records the detailed scenes of rejection of those for whom Christ died.

The coals of fire representing the divine presence of God who is a consuming fire; that purify by burning off the dross; and make incandescent those who under his power, touch it. These coals of fire are to be conveyed to the city to warm and melt and purge and illuminate.

“And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man’s hand under their wings.” Eze. 10:8. Always the form of a man’s hand. The divine fingers guide as the divine fingers created. The divine fingers recreate. They mold as the potter. They heal as the divine physician laying His hands upon the sick. They point the way of life as the finger is stretched under the ministry of the Spirit they bring heaven’s will within the understanding of man.

“And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the color of a beryl stone.” Eze. 10:9. This stone is green. It points out the concept of faith that brings hope.

These wheels, the intermeshing of human events, is green in color—full of hope. The prophet might be tempted to think that the play and interplay of events between God’s people and Babylon will bring nothing but catastrophe. What he is bidden to consider that they contain hope.

“And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.” Eze. 10:10. 9:50