

Who Are the Slaughtering Angels of Ezekiel Nine

Slaughter Men, Women and Babies!

The book of Ezekiel describes a terrifying scene:

Eze 9:1-8 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.** (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 brasen altar. (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; 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. (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: (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. 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. (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 imagery is sickening. A man goes through the city looking for those who have been in sorrow concerning the apostasy in Israel. A mark is placed upon their heads that will protect them from the men who follow with slaughter weapons. Those who do not have this mark are cut down and slain. Men, women and babies are all slaughtered without any pity or mercy. None are spared.

For centuries Jehovah had pled with Israel through His prophets for the nation to turn from their idolatry and come back to Him. They refused to listen. Around the year 606 B.C. the Prophet Jeremiah foretold the first of three attacks on Jerusalem.

Jer 25:1-9 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; (2) The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, (3) From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and **I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.** (5) They said, Turn ye again now everyone from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: (6) And **go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them,** and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. (7) Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. (8) Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, (9) **Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.**

Context of Ezekiel Nine

Daniel and his friends were taken in the first sacking of Jerusalem in 606 B.C. But Jerusalem failed to repent

and learn their lesson. They were attacked a second time in 599 B.C., but still they did not repent. Finally in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar completely desolated the city. Uriah Smith gives the following description:

Siege of Jerusalem.--Like one conscious of uttering only well-known truth, he proceeds at once to state a variety of particulars by which his accuracy could be tested. The overthrow of Jerusalem recorded here was predicted by Jeremiah, and was accomplished in 606 B.C.[*] (Jer_25:8-11.) Jeremiah places this captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, Daniel in the third. This seemingly discrepancy is explained by the fact that Nebuchadnezzar set out on his expedition near the close of the third year of Jehoiakim, from which point Daniel reckons. But the king did not accomplish the subjugation of Jerusalem until about the ninth month of the year following, from which year Jeremiah reckons. Jehoiakim, though bound for the purpose of being taken to Babylon, humbled himself and was permitted to remain as ruler in Jerusalem, tributary to the king of Babylon.

This was the first time Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Twice subsequently the city revolted, but was recaptured by the same king, and more severely dealt with each succeeding time. The second overthrow was during the time of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, when all the sacred vessels were either taken or destroyed, and the best of the inhabitants of were led with the king into captivity. The third was under Zedekiah, when the city endured a formidable siege. During its continuance for a year and a half, the inhabitants of the city suffered all the horrors of extreme famine. At length the garrison and the king attempted to escape from the city, but they were captured by the Chaldeans. The sons of the king were slain before his face. His eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Ezekiel that he should be carried to Babylon, and die there, yet he should not see the place. (Eze_12:13.) The city and temple were at this time utterly destroyed, and the entire population of the country, with the exception of a few husbandmen, were carried captive to Babylon, in 586 B.C. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and Revelation*. Commentary on Daniel 1:1-2

It was around 594 B.C., seven years before the third and final destruction, that Ezekiel prophesied his chilling words in Ezekiel 9. It speaks of those who had *charge over the city* who were coming from the *north*. Nebuchadnezzar had charge over the city since 606 B.C. and was to the north of Jerusalem.

Eze 9:1-2 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.** (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;**

What is interesting is that Josephus mentions five generals that besieged Jerusalem during this time.

Now the city was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. They were indeed only generals of the king of Babylon, to whom Nebuchadnezzar committed the care of the siege, for he abode himself in the city of Riblah. The names of these generals who ravaged and subdued Jerusalem, if any one desire to know them, were these: (1) Nergal Sharezer, (2) Samgar Nebo, (3) Rabsaris, (4) Sorsechim, and (5) Rabmag. And when the city was taken about midnight, and the enemy's generals were entered into the temple, and when Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives, and his children, and his captains, and his friends, and with them fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch, and through the desert; and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jericho, and encompassed him about. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* Book 10 chap 8.2

Adam Clarke mentions this in his commentary on Ezekiel 9:1:

By those six men with destroying weapons the Chaldeans are represented, who had received commission to destroy the city; and when the north is mentioned in such cases, Chaldea and the Chaldean armies are generally intended. Adam Clarke Commentary on Ezekiel 9:1

There is some ambiguity as to whether or not there are six men with slaughter weapons, and the man with

the ink horn is additional to this making seven, or if there are five with slaughter weapons, and the writer is the sixth that is among that group. Ellen White mentions five men with slaughter weapons as we will see later, and yet James White mentions six with slaughter weapons. The point is not a major point of contention but something to consider in this study.

The Idolatry of Israel

It is important to point out here that Israel had been seriously involved in idolatry as pointed out in Ezekiel chapter 8 and many other places.

Eze 8:14-16 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. (15) Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. (16) And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, **with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.**

We also note that Israel was worshipping gods that were coming from the east. The whole system of idolatry had developed under Nimrod in the region of Babylon which was geographically to the north east of Israel. When the Babylonian army came to invade Israel it came from the north rather than directly across the desert.

Isa 2:6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, **because they be replenished from the east**, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

The point here is that as Israel worshipped the gods of Babylon; they were then eventually given into the hands of Babylon. In choosing to engage in idolatry Israel was giving homage to Satan, and therefore Satan could demand the right for them to be given to him.

How Idolatry is Punished

The Ten Commandments clearly tell us what happens when we engage in idolatry:

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;**

Israel was involved in idolatry and the text says that the judgment for this is the visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and we see this playing out for Israel in Ezekiel 9. The sin of idolatry of a number of generations ended with that iniquity being visited upon the generation of Daniel and his friends. The importance of the Babylon connection is that it shows that this vision is connected to natural consequences through the immediate fulfilment of this prophecy. We know that the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was not the complete fulfilment of this prophecy, yet it serves to show how this prophecy is fulfilled through human agency as a consequence of Israel's own sins.

The End Time Fulfilment of Ezekiel Nine

While Ezekiel chapter nine received a partial fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem seven years after Ezekiel had this vision, it is evident that the complete fulfilment will be during the last days of earth's history because we see a parallel prophecy in the book of Revelation that speaks of the last days.

Rev 7:1-3 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. (2) And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried

with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, (3) **Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**

You can see the connection of Ezekiel 9 to Rev 7 in Adventist history in statements such as these:

God is calling upon you to choose whether you will keep his commandments and receive his seal, or obey his rival, the beast and receive his mark. He is warning you of the awful consequences of the latter. The great day of his wrath is just before us, and we need a shield in that day. **The destroying angel is about to pass through; the men with the slaughter weapons are about to smite; the four winds are about to be loosed;** and nothing but God's token, mark or seal, will cause the destroyer to pass over us. See Ex. 12, 13; Eze 9; Rev. 7,1-4. R.F Cottrell, RH July 28, 1859.

It may be well, before entering directly upon the investigation ... to show that the terms, "seal," "name," "mark," "sign," and "token," are synonymous - that whatever may be affirmed in truth of one of these, may as truly be affirmed of either of the others. If the reader will take the trouble to examine Webster's Dictionary he will find, among the definitions of the term, seal, the following: "To set or affix a seal, as a mark of authenticity;" "to confirm, to ratify, to establish." Sign, according to the same authority, signifies, "a token," or "a mark." Token is defined, "a sign, mark, memorial, to make known," etc. But Webster is not with us the highest authority on this point. Rev.vii,1-4. "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. **And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.** And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Now by comparing Rev.xiv,1-4, with the above, it will be seen that the same 144,000 are introduced, "having the Father's name written in their foreheads." In Rev.vii, the seal of the living God is placed in their foreheads lest they should be hurt by the judgments there described. **In Eze.ix, the same hurting process is brought to view under a different figure. There six men are represented as drawing near with "slaughter weapons," or "weapons for breaking to pieces" (margin), in their hands; but they are not permitted to do their work of destruction until the "man with a writer's inkhorn by his side" goes through the city and sets "a mark upon the foreheads of all the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."** Then the men with the slaughter weapons receive their commission to slay utterly all except those upon whom is the mark. See verse 6. **The slaying here, we understand to be the same as the "wine of the wrath of God," in Rev.xiv,9.** James White, What is the Mark of the Living God, RH Sep 15, 1863.

The slaying of those who do not have the mark is understood to take place under the Third Angel's Message as the wine of God that is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. Ellen White indicates the following with reference to the men with the slaughter weapons.

Ellen White connects the vision of Ezekiel 9 and the vision of Revelation 7 as follows:

This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision. John also had been a witness of this most startling revelation. TM 445

If these two visions are the same then the men with slaughter weapons are a parallel to the winds of strife that the angels of God release in Revelation 7.

Ezekiel Nine is the General Destruction of the Wicked

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. **They will fall in the general destruction of the wicked, represented by the work of the five men bearing slaughter weapons.** 3T 267

So the work of the five men bearing the slaughter weapons means the general destruction of the wicked. How does this general destruction take place? Note carefully the following statements.

I saw four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and were on their way to accomplish it. Jesus was clothed with priestly garments. He gazed in pity on the remnant, then raised His hands, and with a voice of deep pity cried, "My blood, Father, My blood, My blood, My blood!" Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from God, who sat upon the great white throne, and was shed all about Jesus. Then I saw an angel with a commission from Jesus, swiftly flying to the four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and waving something up and down in his hand, and crying with a loud voice, "Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads." {EW 38.1}

I asked my accompanying angel the meaning of what I heard, and what the four angels were about to do. **He said to me that it was God that restrained the powers, and that He gave His angels charge over things on the earth; that the four angels had power from God to hold the four winds, and that they were about to let them go; but while their hands were loosening, and the four winds were about to blow, the merciful eye of Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not sealed,** and He raised His hands to the Father and pleaded with Him that He had spilled His blood for them. Then another angel was commissioned to fly swiftly to the four angels and bid them hold, until the servants of God were sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads. {EW 38.2}

We see that the angels of God are restraining the forces of evil until the servants of God are sealed. When this work is done and Jesus leaves the sanctuary then the winds are released, and Satan is given full control to plunge the world into one great time of trouble that follows the pattern of the destruction of Jerusalem:

When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. **The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent.** God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. **The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.** {GC 614.1}

The Elements of Nature--Earthquake, Tempest, and Political Strife

Notice what else Ellen White says about this:

The description of the day of God is given through John by the Revelator. The cry of the terror-stricken myriads has fallen upon the ear of John. "The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The apostle himself was awed and overwhelmed.

If such scenes as this are to come, such tremendous judgments on a guilty world, where will be the refuge for God's people? How will they be sheltered until the indignation be overpast? **John sees the elements of nature--earthquake, tempest, and political strife-- represented as being held by four angels. These winds are under control until God gives the word to let them go.** There is the safety of God's church. The angels of God do His bidding, holding back the winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads. The mighty angel is seen ascending from the east (or sunrising). This mightiest of angels has in his hand the seal of the living God, or of Him who alone can give life, who can inscribe upon the foreheads the mark or inscription, to whom shall be granted immortality, eternal life. It is the voice of this highest angel that had authority to command the four angels to keep in check the four winds until this work was performed, and until he should give the summons to let them loose. {TM 444.3}

So the angels that are holding the winds are holding back natural disasters and political strife. Notice how

Ellen White refers to natural disasters and political strife as the *elements of nature*. Both the natural world and the human moral world are listed together.

John beheld four angels standing on the corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. These symbols are illustrative of the troubles that will come upon the earth, but that the angels of God have been mercifully holding back until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads.

Winds and earthquakes and tempests are not capricious outbreaks of unregulated mechanical forces. **All nature is in the fullest sense under the control of physical law. It is the expression of a higher will.** "He holdest the winds in His fists;" "He gathereth the waters in the hollow of His hands;" "He maketh the clouds His chariots;" "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth king forever." Let not human wisdom dethrone and defy the great Sovereign of the universe. "He that made the world, and all things that are therein," He is the sustainer. **All nature is but the working out of the laws which He has made, a manifestation of His sovereign will.**--Ms 10, 1906. {3MR 342.2}

It is a wonderful and grand fact that in the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The seed sown will produce a harvest of its kind. So it is in human nature. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He who sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. If human beings would consider that they are making their own harvest, they would be careful what seed they sow.--Ms 104, 1898. {3MR 342.3}

The natural world is an expression of the higher will of God. The visible creation when operating peacefully and in complete order is an expression of our Father's love and care. When the winds are released the natural world and the nature of man will be given into the hands of the god that the world has chosen. The face of nature and the face of man without the seal of God will reflect the mind of Satan. As man abuses nature and uses the earth for his own indulgence the earth will reflect his own destructive mind and become an instrument of death.

Under the supposed wisdom of men, **nature is placed where she becomes a destructive agency. The good things which were given to man only to bless him are converted into a curse. By the use of wine and liquor men become slaves to appetite.** God does not interpose and work a miracle to convert evil into good; for He has laid all nature under His eternal laws. Let there be no peace to the wicked, He says. Let everything be at war with him. And nature responds, "There shall be none." **If man takes himself in his own hands, to do with himself as he pleases, if he works against God and nature, his indulgences will become to him the instruments of death.** {3MR 344.2}

To explain how nature becomes a destructive agent Ellen White mentions the production of wine. Man takes the natural grape and turns it into a destructive curse. This same principle occurs on a wider scale when the winds are released. The wine of Babylon which makes the world drunk will reap a colossal hangover for the whole world. Yet it is man who creates this outcome through his own indulgence, and this indulgence becomes an instrument of death.

These instruments of death or winds are the parallel of the men with the slaughter weapons in Ezekiel 9. It is the same event being described. Satan fully uses the forces of nature and the political forces to destroy when the angels of God step down from holding back these winds. Notice again in the following passage:

Brethren, how long before you will be ready for the seal of God? Every step you advance upon the path which God forbids, toward your own pleasure and in sin, is a step nearer your destruction. Every act of disobedience to the word of the Lord is exposing you to irreparable loss. Every moment of ease, of self-indulgence, secured by you in neglecting the divine admonitions and call to duty in earnest work for the Master, is placing you under the power and control of the prince of darkness. Your candlestick may at any moment be moved out of its place. Four mighty angels are still holding the four winds of the earth. Terrible destruction is forbidden to come in full. **The accidents by land and by sea; the loss of life,**

steadily increasing, by storm, by tempest, by railroad disaster, by conflagration; the terrible floods, the earthquakes, and the winds will be the stirring up of the nations to one deadly combat, while the angels hold the four winds, forbidding the terrible power of Satan to be exercised in its fury until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. Get ready, get ready, I beseech you, get ready before it shall be forever too late! **The ministers of vengeance will pour all the terrible judgments upon a God-forsaken people.** RH June 7, 1887

We see again that the winds that the angels are holding back are the *terrible power of Satan*. The visions of Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 7 are the same. Therefore the releasing of the winds is the same as the men coming with the slaughter weapons as ministers of vengeance. The judgments fall on a God-forsaken people which means that God has reluctantly withdrawn His presence and allowed Satan full control according to the gods the people have chosen for themselves. The men with the slaughter weapons represent the releasing of the power of Satan.

So we summarise the sequence as follows:

1. The angels of God are holding the winds of strife until the righteous are sealed.
2. Jesus then leaves his work of intercession in the Sanctuary.
3. The restraint upon the wicked is removed as God's Spirit persistently resisted is withdrawn.
4. The release of the winds is the same as the men with slaughter weapons who come and slay all without the mark.
5. The world has no protection from the wicked one because they refuse the seal of God.
6. Satan plunges the world into one final time of trouble, and destroys the earth through earthquake tempest and political strife. Satan and his agents are the ministers of vengeance.
7. The whole world is ruined and it is more terrible than the destruction of Jerusalem.

Let us notice the sequence of events in the destruction of Jerusalem described in Great Controversy:

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. **By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the [36] destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.**

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy.** Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. GC 35,36

The Saviour's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another

fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world [general destruction of the wicked] that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon His law. Dark are the records of human misery that earth has witnessed during its long centuries of crime. The heart sickens, and the mind grows faint in contemplation. Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the future. The records of the past,--the long procession of tumults, [37] conflicts, and revolutions, the "battle of the warrior . . . with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood" (Isaiah 9:5),--**-what are these, in contrast with the terrors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and satanic wrath! The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule.** {GC 36.2}

The King You Choose is the King You Serve

We see the same sequence shown in the destruction of Jerusalem. God was protecting Jerusalem until through persistent resistance His Spirit was withdrawn, and Satan was enabled to take control. This event is then compared to the end of the world. At the crucifixion of Jesus, the leaders of Israel said:

John 19:15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

In choosing Caesar as their *only* king, God then visited this iniquity upon them by letting Caesar have full control of them. Caesar came back 40 years later and destroyed them. And so is proved true the words of Scripture:

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

So the events in Ezekiel nine provide for us an example of the events of the end of the world. The sequence followed is this:

1. The people reject God's commandments and fall into idolatry.
2. God sends a message of warning in mercy to save them from the consequences of their own actions.
3. The people reject the final warning and entrench themselves under the leadership of a false religion and false gods.
4. The second commandment concerning idolatry tells us that the judgments that fall are the visiting of the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. This means the sins of the father that are practiced and expanded by the children will meet with judgments.
5. God's Spirit is withdrawn after persistent rejection and the god of the nation that God's people have chosen is given charge over God's apostate people.
6. Satan is then given full control to destroy those who do not have the mark or seal of God.

We can notice this process of withdrawal and the iniquities of the people being visited upon them in these verses in Ezekiel nine:

The Spirit of God is withdrawn.

Eze 9:3 **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;

The sins of Israel are visited upon them.

Eze 9:10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, **but I will recompense**

their way upon their head.

The word *recompense* is actually the Hebrew word *nathan* which means *to give*. This is saying that God will give to them what they wanted. In giving them what they wanted God visited their way, which is iniquity, upon them. Israel chose a god devised by Satan and so God gives to them the leader they have chosen and lets him have complete control.

The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. GC 36.1

The Command to Slay

But what about the commands that God is giving about slaying men, women and children as follows?

Eze 9:5-8 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: (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. (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. (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?**

These texts invite us to question what we believe about the character of God. Does God command the slaying of young women and little children? The process we have followed should explain clearly how this slaying takes place but let us explore this a little further.

Luke 19:12-27 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. (13) And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. (14) **But his citizens hated him,** and sent a message after him, saying, **We will not have this man to reign over us.** (15) And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (16) Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. (17) And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. (18) And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. (19) And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. (20) And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: (21) For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. (22) And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: (23) Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? (24) And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (25) (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) (26) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. (27) **But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.**

This is the story of the talents as told in the book of Luke. In verse 14 it says that the citizens hated the nobleman. The nobleman represents God in the broader sense and specifically, Christ. What happens to those who hate God?

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that

hate me;

The man who kept the talent in a napkin said that he knew that the nobleman was austere and harsh. This man was projecting his own hatred of the nobleman onto the nobleman through the way he judged him. It is clearly evident from the Bible that the nobleman was not this way at all. What did the nobleman say?

Luke 19:22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.

So the nobleman brought upon the man his own judgment and ways. What is important is the parallel between this story in Luke and the judgment that takes place in Matthew.

Matt 25:24-30 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, **I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown**, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. (29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) **And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

Outer Darkness

The judgment given in Matt 25:30 is parallel to the judgment given in Luke 19:27

Matt 25:30 And **cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 19:27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, **bring hither, and slay them before me.**

Where is the place of outer darkness?

2 Pet 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but **cast** them down to hell, and delivered them into **chains of darkness**, to be reserved unto judgment;

Rev 16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon **the seat of the beast**; and his kingdom was **full of darkness**; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

Jude 1:11-13 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. (12) These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; (13) Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to **whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.**

To be cast into outer darkness means to be reluctantly given into the control of Satan and his angels after determined and stubborn resistance. This is the process by which the enemies of God who hate Him are slain before Him. The Bible tells us how the wicked are slain:

Psa 34:21 **Evil shall slay the wicked**: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

The events of Ezekiel nine is a description of the destruction that comes upon those who have wilfully chosen to worship a false god. In the last days everyone will have either chosen the mark of the beast or the seal of God.

Rev 13:16-17 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: (17) And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Those who choose the mark of the beast are placing themselves under the dominion of the beast, and therefore the beast power will be able to do with them as he wishes. Just as the Jewish leaders chose Caesar as their king and he was given power to come and destroy them forty years later, so in the last days those who resist the God of Scripture and choose the god of Rome – the destroying Trinity God, Rome will be given power to slay them. These events will trigger the descent into the final crisis before the Second Coming. The worship of the beast and his god is a violation of the second command. The second commandment tells us plainly how God will punish those who engage in this idolatry.

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Killing Babies? Really?

It does not say that God will send His angels to personally slay them. It does not say that God Himself will put them to death. The commandment says that He will visit their own iniquity upon them. He will allow them to receive their own way upon their heads.

Sadly, those who believe that God Himself will slaughter the wicked are joining themselves to the man with the one talent in believing that God is an austere person. How is it possible for a Christian to say that it is loving to slay young women and little babies with slaughter weapons? Do they actually believe that God Himself orders His angels or people to cut off the heads of girls and cut little babies to pieces? The thought is utterly repulsive and presents God not only as austere but also barbaric and evil. To believe that God will personally slay idolaters is to call God a liar in regard to what He says in the second commandment. God says He will bring their own iniquity upon them, but many people unwittingly deny what the commandments are saying and state emphatically that God will slay them Himself through His angels.

The Use of Permissive Commands

It is argued that if God commanded it, then He is the one doing it.

Eze 9:4-6 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. (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: (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.

These verses must be read in the context of verse 10:

Eze 9:10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, *but* I will recompense [give] their way upon their head.

These commands are the language of permission. No one in the Universe can act without the permission of God. Satan had to ask permission of God to afflict Job.

Job 1:9-12 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? (10) Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (11) **But put forth thine hand now,** and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (12) **And the LORD said unto Satan,**

Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

The putting forth of God's hand is the giving over into the hands of Satan. We see this same principle in relation to Ahab and Micaiah.

1 Kings 22:20-22 And the LORD said, **Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead?** And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. (21) And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. (22) And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? **And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.**

A spirit comes before God and says that he will put lies in the mouth of all the prophets. God commands him to go forth and do so. Did God command this evil spirit to lie on behalf of God? Did not God rather allow this evil spirit to do as he wished, and in giving His permission the angel received his command?

Satan had wanted to destroy Jerusalem for centuries before the time of Daniel. Finally Satan is given the permission to destroy the city, and it is presented in the words of the command of the King of Heaven. This same principle applies in the time of Saul.

1 Sam 16:23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Did God command an evil spirit to harass Saul, or did God allow this evil spirit to do this?

Psa 78:49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them.

Did God command evil angels to destroy the Egyptians in the plagues or did He give permission to do this? The word *sending* in this verse also can mean *to release*. God released or gave permission to Satan and his angels to do their work of destruction.

In conclusion we see the following:

1. The punishment given in Ezekiel is for the sin of idolatry.
2. The second commandment tells us that idolatry is punished by visiting the iniquity of sinners upon their heads. This is clearly stated in Ezekiel 9:10.
3. A partial fulfilment of Ezekiel 9 occurred in 586 B.C. when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem completely. This event indicates the truth that the judgment of God was indeed a visiting of their own iniquity upon their heads.
4. The Spirit of Prophecy states clearly that the men with the five slaughter weapons represent the general destruction of the wicked. 3T 267
5. The general destruction of the wicked is expressed by Ellen White as an event that takes place in the same manner as the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
6. The destruction of Jerusalem is clearly spoken of in terms of being handed over to Satan's control. GC 35, 36
7. When Jesus leaves the Sanctuary in heaven all the righteous will have been sealed. The angels who hold the four winds will release them, and Satan will be given full control of those who chose to receive the mark of the beast. It is then that the general destruction of the wicked will unfold. GC 614

Through this understanding we see the love, wisdom and justice of God. The wicked are punished, and

indeed, they are slain. Yet this process is fulfilled according to the commandments of God and His revelation of His character.

Exo 34:5-7 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. (6) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (7) Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.