

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For November 3:

Ezekiel 7:1-9:11:

In chapter 7 the LORD pronounces judgment upon Judah, again by addressing a physical element of the nation, the land. There are two main messages, the end is here (1-9) and they face the Day of the LORD, which for many of them, will not be the day of blessing as they had expected, but a day of wrath and judgment (10-27). The last half of chapter 7 sounds very much like Amos 8. Again, the ultimate purpose stated in all of this is that Judah would come to know that God is the self-existent, ever-present Lord of the covenant, the one whose love and faithfulness they have spurned, yet whom no one can ignore or oppose without consequence, in other words, He is the LORD (Yahweh), verses 9, 27. This is the same purpose God has in the end to which He is taking history. One way or the other every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11). This will happen either in faith and repentance on the part of those who have been redeemed, or in the hearts of those in rebellion who face judgment.

In chapters 8-9 we come to the first two of a four chapter treatment of a vision of the temple which the LORD gave to Ezekiel in September of 592 B.C. (8:1). Chapter 8 shows great abominations in the temple, symbolizing the uncleanness and sin in Judah's worship, and then chapter 9 shows that idolaters will be killed, beginning with leaders who were responsible for setting the tone of rebellion.

In the vision we must not miss that a man clothed with linen goes before six men with weapons and places a mark (literally the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *taw*, which in the days of Ezekiel was written like an x) on the forehead of all those who grieve over the abominations which have been committed in it (9:4). These are the true believers, the remnant, who fear, trust in, serve, and love the LORD. They will be spared. The rest in the vision are killed by the six men from the north (most likely angels and meant to show that God is behind the actions of Babylon). The point of this vision is that just like with the original Passover (Exodus 12), so now, there will be a great distinction made between those who have trusted in the LORD, have been redeemed, and thus lived a holy and righteous life and those who have persisted in unbelief and rebellion. The vision does not demand that every single unbeliever die in the fall of Jerusalem (we must keep in mind the symbolic nature of the vision), it does demand, however, that every unbeliever will face God's wrath. We should also mention that some Christian interpreters have seen significance in the use of the x mark, that this may have been a foreshadowing of Christ (the first letter of Christ in Greek looks like x) and the cross (which is similar to the x shape).

In Revelation 7:3 John sees true believers marked on their forehead, just as here. Most likely that vision is meant to be connected to this one in Ezekiel 9. Likewise, in 14:9 we read that those who do not know Christ have a mark of the beast on their foreheads. This mark of the beast is most likely a twisting of the mark of believers in Revelation 7:3 and Ezekiel 9:4. In this pattern established in biblical apocalyptic we are not meant to expect

a literal mark, but to understand that the LORD knows who is His and who is not and distinction will be made between the two.

Hebrews 5:1-14:

Chapter 5 takes up the subject of Jesus being a high priest at the end of chapter 4 and elaborates upon it. He is our high priest by divine design and He also is a special high priest, not like those in the line of Aaron, but He is superior.

The chapter ends by telling the readers they should know some of these things by now, yet, they have never moved beyond the basics of the faith. The point is that we are benefited by growing in our knowledge of Christ and how His work in us functions to change, grow, and preserve us. One key point we must not miss is that constant intake of God's Word, growth in the knowledge of Christ, and training from constant practice to distinguish good from evil in doctrine and action all work together to give even greater discernment in our Christian walk. Lack of such growth and practice can and will lead to less discernment. The sense is that those who are in Jesus Christ will grow in their knowledge, practice, and discernment. Is this true of you?

Psalms 105:1-15:

This psalm teaches us that one of the key ways we should worship God (1-4) is to remember the wondrous works He has done. The one who remembers His covenant forever proved He has been faithful to His people throughout the ages (5-15) and, by implication, will continue to do the same with us! Simply-put, we are called to remember God since He has remembered and continues to remember us!

Proverbs 26:28:

Those who do not speak truth, but speak lies (which is contrary to God's will, Leviticus 19:11), bring destruction upon others. Those who know and follow God must be those who speak the truth in love!