

Ezekiel
December 23, 2007
Chapters 8-11, Emphasis 10

I. Sin Has Its Results

In these four chapters, we find a Judah that is guilty of great sin. The sin has become so great that God symbolically and anthropomorphically leaves the temple area where He has “resided” above the Ark of the Covenant. Of course, God is everywhere, even though He can seem to be closer or farther from us at any given time.

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
NIV

II. The Guide

Ezek 8:2-4

2 I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. 3 He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. 4 And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain.

NIV

We have seen “man” used in three ways already: One of the faces of the cherubim, “son of man” referring to Ezekiel, and God appearing as a man at the end of chapter 1. Throughout the rest of the book, we see a “man” acting as Ezekiel’s spiritual guide, including throughout Chapters 40-48. The “man” is usually thought to be an angel, but he does have some aspects of God in his presence; perhaps this is because he is a representative of God. Perhaps, the guide is sometimes is a representation of God (as in this usage), but an angel in others (e.g. man in linen in chapter 9).

Chapter 8 shows the awful sins of Israel, followed by chapter 9, showing the punishment for the sin. We see a huge insult to God and absolute sin in verse 3 (and the sins/insults get worse as we read through these two chapters). The “inner court” would be part of the temple area; for an

idol to be there was extreme sacrilege. The god to whom the idol was dedicated is not identified, although some think that it might be Asterah, a reversal of Josiah's actions: 2 Kings 23:6

He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people.

NIV

The Israelites seem to be willing to worship any god that others worship. Apparently, they thought of gods as insurance policies, wanting to cover all bases. Questions:

-What does it mean for God to be jealous?

-When the going gets tough, why do we seek solutions outside the Lord?

III. The Glory Begins to Move

Ezek 10:1-5

10:1 I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. 2 The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And as I watched, he went in. 3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.

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We see a return of the living creatures of chapter 1, now called cherubim. Linen is generally white and represents righteousness. Coals represent judgment.

In the wilderness, a cloud noted the presence of God, which is the case here. The glory of God as represented in chapters 10 and 11 is sometimes called the *shekinah* glory. *Shekinah* is not used in Scripture, but it is applied by later Jews and by Christians to express the visible divine Presence, especially when resting between the cherubim over the Ark; it means literally "that which dwells." We see this visible presence preparing to be moved by Ezekiel's chariots.

IV. Getting Ezekiel Ready for Service (from last lesson)

Ezek 4:4-8

4 "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. 5 I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel. 6 "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and

bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. 7 Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. 8 I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.

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A full understanding of the 390 and 40 days is not known. There are various theories, relating them to the reign of various kings (where days equal years). The point is that the Israelites have been sinning for a long time and are therefore “ready” for righteous punishment from God.

The change in position probably represents a change in the human status. How God ties up Ezekiel is not fully identified unless we take the words literally. Ezekiel probably had breaks in this routine, perhaps when the people were not watching.

Why would God order Ezekiel to do such acts? What would the deportees think about it when they saw it? The acts were really for their benefit (and for ours).

V. The Glory Departs

Ezek 10:18-19

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. 19 While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

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The glory leaving the temple indicates that nothing can stop the impending doom of Jerusalem. The deportees were hoping that God would work on their behalf. After all, they thought that his *shekinah* glory lived in the temple area. Surely, they thought, God will act for us, but they were wrong. God’s glory departing seals the city’s doom. At the end of chapter 11, we are told that the glory departed to a mountain east of the city, but the mountain is not identified. The *shekinah* glory is not identified as being present in Zerubbabel’s/Herod’s temple. The ancient rabbis thought that the *shekinah* glory would reappear with the Messiah. (NOTE: The glory returns in Ezekiel 43.)

If God removes His presence from you temporarily, what should you do?

VI. The Glory Returns

Ezek 11:18-20

18 "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. 19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

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Verse 18 shows that a believing remnant will return and will no longer worship idols; this would appear to have happened when Ezra and Nehemiah lead some of the deportees back to Jerusalem.

Verses 19 and 20 go beyond this until the coming of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit. A stronger version of this statement will be seen in Ezekiel 36 beginning with verse 26.

VII. Some Questions for These Chapters

1. Where is Ezekiel when the vision begins?
2. What did the elders probably want when they were sitting with Ezekiel?
3. What groups had apostatized in Jerusalem?
4. What attribute did God vindicate by having the Babylonians to invade Judah?
5. What emotion do rival gods stir up in the true God?
6. What agents does God employ to carry out His plans in history and among the nations?
7. What are the six "men," plus the "man in linen," asked to do?
8. Who gets the special mark in chapter 9 and why?
9. What was the visible manifestation of God's presence in the temple?
10. What change must people undergo before they will submit to God and obey His word?
11. What role do the 25 men play in Jerusalem?
12. What does "this city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat," mean?
13. When will the promises of restoration and repatriation be fulfilled in full?
14. Name the times that the Israelites have left Palestine?