

Ezekiel Chapter 8

Ezekiel 8:1 "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, [as] I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me."

The sixth month is about the same time as our September. This begins a new vision. Notice, that the hand of God touches Ezekiel. This is a year and one month after the first vision that Ezekiel had at Chebar. Ezekiel is in his home when this latest vision comes. The elders of Judah, possibly, were some of the few who still believed Ezekiel. The war had worsened, and so had the idolatry. The false prophets were promising the fall of Babylon soon. The people would rather hear their news, than to listen to Ezekiel, and realize this is to cause them to repent.

Chapters 8-11 are a unit, though the subject matter may be divided. These chapters constitute a vision that the prophet had while transported by the Spirit of God from Babylon to Jerusalem (verse 3). The first thing Ezekiel witnessed was the presence of loathsome, idolatrous figures and detestable pagan practices within the temple confines itself, "the wicked abominations" (verse 9).

Ezekiel 8:2 "Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber."

The color of "amber" is the color of bronze, and symbolizes judgment. The fire indicates the presence of God.

Thus, Daniel saw the Glory of God (as he did in chapter 1 verses 26-28).

Ezekiel 8:3 "And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where [was] the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy."

This powerful hand of God has reached down and miraculously snatched Ezekiel (perhaps in the spirit), into the heavens, directly above the earth. This vision causes Ezekiel to see inside the inner gate that looks to the north. The word that "seat" was translated from indicates numbers of people.

God's presence was in the temple in the smoke and fire. "Image", here, is speaking of likeness. God is looking here at this false god sitting on His throne. This stirred up the jealousy of Almighty God. God's name is Jealous.

Exodus 34:14 "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name [is] Jealous, [is] a jealous God:"

The north, many times, is speaking of the direction of God. This is showing Ezekiel the reason for God bringing judgment against the people and on the temple.

The visions are not a description of deeds done in the past in Israel, but a survey of Israel's current condition, as they existed at that very time.

Ezekiel 8:4 "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel [was] there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain."

"The Glory of the God": God was also there in glory, but was ignored while the people worshipped the idol (verse 6).

This vision is of the presence of God in the temple, before its destruction. God is showing Ezekiel the reason for His departure from the temple, and the destruction of the temple. He had every reason to destroy these people. They were His wife, and they had played the harlot, by worshipping false gods.

Ezekiel 8:5 "Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry."

God had not abandoned the people. His presence had been in the temple. They had abandoned God, as we will see in the next few verses.

Ezekiel 8:6 "He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? [even] the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, [and] thou shalt see greater abominations."

"That I should go far off from my sanctuary": Sin would expel the people from their land and God from His sanctuary.

They had made idols of silver, and gold, and wood. Some of them had been in the sanctuary itself, in the very presence of God. They were constantly a reminder to God of their unfaithfulness. This lack of faith in God has driven God away from His sanctuary, where He met with His people. His anger has risen up in His face.

Ezekiel 8:7 "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall."

This was a gate that led to the outer court and to the rooms of the priests and their families. The 70 members of the Sanhedrin lived here, also.

Ezekiel 8:8 "Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door."

It appears that this was a hidden area in the wall of the rooms. There seemed to be a secret door.

This indicates the clandestine secrecy of these idolaters, practicing their cult in hiding.

Ezekiel 8:9 "And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here."

This was not in the main part of the temple, but was in the places where they stayed near the temple. This screams out warnings to all who minister the Word of God, to make sure their private lives are holy, as well as their public lives.

In the private lives of the priests and the high priest, they were worshipping false gods. "Abominations" are revolting sins in the sight of God.

Ezekiel 8:10 "So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about."

The temple's walls are ugly with graffiti featuring creatures linked with Egyptian animal cults and other idols. Leaders of Israel, who should be worshipping the God of the temple, are offering incense to them.

The people of God have undoubtedly picked up the culture of the heathen nations around them.

Ezekiel 8:11 "And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up."

The ancient men, who had been so dedicated to God in the past, are now seen burning incense to these false gods.

Obviously, these elders are not the Sanhedrin, since it was not formed until after the restoration from Babylon, though the pattern had been suggested much earlier. These men were appointed to guard against idolatry!

Jaazaniah was the leader of the 70. If he was the son of the Shaphan who read God's Word to Josiah (2 kings 22:8-11), we have some idea of the depth of sin to which the leaders had fallen. He is not to be confused with the man (in chapter 11:1), who had a different father.

Ezekiel 8:12 "Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth."

These 70 thought because they were doing this in the privacy of their own quarters, that God would not know what they were doing. They are blaming God with forsaking the earth, when they have forsaken God. They have been unfaithful to God.

Ezekiel 8:13 "He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, [and] thou shalt see greater abominations that they do."

This is bad enough to cause the wrath of God to descend upon them, but now God says there are even worse things going on.

Ezekiel 8:14 "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."

Yet a greater abomination than the secret cult was Israel's engaging in the Babylonian worship of Tammuz or Dumuzi, beloved of Ishtar, the god of spring vegetation. Vegetation burned in the summer, died in the winter, and came to life in the spring.

The women mourned over the god's demise in July and longed for his revival. The fourth month of the Hebrew calendar still bears the name Tammuz. With the worship of this idol were connected the basest immoralities.

Weeping for Tammuz was an act of worship intended to bring him back from the netherworld. Thus, these women were worshipping this Assyrian deity.

Ezekiel 8:15 "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."

It is almost impossible to believe there could be anything worse than this, but there is. God is bringing Ezekiel's attention to all the sins, to show why He destroyed them. God was justified in His judgment, but He wants Ezekiel to understand that He was justified.

Ezekiel 8:16 "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."

The 25 were worshipping the false sun god which is as old as history itself. The Son of God, Jesus, is the Light of the world. The worship of the sun is counterfeit of worship to the true God. The sun is nothing in and of itself. It is just a container for the light. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.

These twenty-five were representative of the 24 priests and the High Priest, which would make up the 25. One thing that makes this believable is because they were in the most sacred inner court where only priests could go. This was the crowning insult to God.

Ezekiel 8:17 "Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen [this], O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose."

The "putting of the branch to their nose" was part of the ritualistic worship of the false sun god. It's exact meaning is uncertain, but it seems to have been some act of contempt toward God.

The worst part of all of this is the fact that God had trusted them with His law. He had actually dwelt with His people. His presence had been in the Holy of Holies in the temple. Violence and the worship of a false god go together. It appears they have deliberately tried to anger God. God wants Ezekiel to understand why He has judged these people harshly.

Ezekiel 8:18 "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, [yet] will I not hear them."

They had brazenly denounced their love for God with their worship of these false gods. Israel was His loving wife. She had gone away to the love of false gods. She had committed spiritual adultery. She had not only done this terrible thing, but had brazenly done it in full view of God. God will now punish her in full view of the world around her.

He will take justifiable vengeance upon her, with no pity. They may cry out to God, but He will not listen. It is too late.

Ezekiel Chapter 8 Questions

1. Where was Ezekiel, when this Word of the LORD came to him?
2. Who was with him?
3. The sixth month is about the same as our _____.
4. What does God's hand do for Ezekiel?
5. How much later is this vision than the vision in Chebar?
6. What was the likeness that Ezekiel saw?
7. What does the color of "amber" symbolize?
8. The "fire" indicates what?
9. What did this powerful hand of God do to Ezekiel?
10. This vision causes Ezekiel to look into where?
11. What does "seat", in verse 3, indicate?
12. "Image" is speaking of _____.
13. What stirred up the jealousy of Almighty God.

14. What is this vision showing Ezekiel?
15. The vision, in verse 4, is of what?
16. Why would God go far off from His sanctuary?
17. They had made idols of what?
18. Where were these idols?
19. They constantly reminded God of their _____.
20. Where is verse 7 speaking of?
21. What warning should modern ministers receive from this?
22. When Ezekiel went in this hidden door, what did he see?
23. Who were these 70 men?
24. Who led them?
25. What terrible thing are they doing?
26. Who were the women weeping for?
27. Who was he?
28. What kind of worship was this?
29. Why is God bringing Ezekiel's attention to their sins?
30. Who were the twenty-five men, probably?
31. Who were they worshipping?
32. Why does the author believe these are priests?
33. Who is the Light of the world?
34. What is the sun?
35. What did the "putting the branch to their nose" show?
36. What was the worst thing of all about these priests worshipping this false god?
37. How had they brazenly denounced their love for God?
38. God will take _____ vengeance upon her.