

Ezekiel 11

- One of the first things anyone learns about God is His omnipresence
 - We're taught from an early age that God is Spirit and He is everywhere at all times
 - And so when we hear that the glory of God dwelled among men in the tabernacle or temple, it sounds a bit confusing
 - Isn't He already there?
 - And if so, what exactly is different about the glory of God dwelling with men?
 - Well, we've been exploring these questions over the past several weeks as we learn how the glory of the Lord departs His temple in Ezekiel's day
 - The visions Ezekiel has received in Chapters 8-11 explain coming events in Jerusalem from a spiritual perspective
 - In Chapter 8 we saw Ezekiel predicting the end of the city through a 14-month long street performance
 - In Chapter 9 we learned that the Lord decreed the death of all ungodly in the city, and the glory of God begins to leave the temple
 - In Chapter 10 the city itself is destroyed by God's judgment and the glory of God moves from the doorway to the temple, to the east gate of the temple
 - Along this path, we're asking the question what all this means?
 - Why does God's glory move in this way?
 - Why is the Lord explaining His glory's departure in such detail and why does it move so slowly?
 - Perhaps we should ask why does God's glory dwell among men at all?
- Today in Chapter 11 we see the final installment in this particular prophecy given to Ezekiel
 - Today the glory of God makes one final stop on its way out and Ezekiel learns the Lord's plan to return in a future day

[Ezek. 11:1](#) Moreover, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the Lord's house which faced eastward. And behold, there were twenty-five men at the entrance of the gate, and among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people.

[Ezek. 11:2](#) He said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city,

[Ezek. 11:3](#) who say, 'The time is not near to build houses. This city is the pot and we are the flesh.'

[Ezek. 11:4](#) "Therefore, prophesy against them, son of man, prophesy!"

[Ezek. 11:5](#) Then the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the Lord, "So you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts.

[Ezek. 11:6](#) "You have multiplied your slain in this city, filling its streets with them."

[Ezek. 11:7](#) 'Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of the city are the flesh and this city is the pot; but I will bring you out of it.

[Ezek. 11:8](#) "You have feared a sword; so I will bring a sword upon you," the Lord God declares.

[Ezek. 11:9](#) "And I will bring you out of the midst of the city and deliver you into the hands of strangers and execute judgments against you.

[Ezek. 11:10](#) "You will fall by the sword. I will judge you to the border of Israel; so you shall know that I am the Lord.

[Ezek. 11:11](#) "This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be flesh in the midst of it, but I will judge you to the border of Israel.

[Ezek. 11:12](#) "Thus you will know that I am the Lord; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you."""

- Once again, this chapter is a continuation of our scene – as the word "moreover" indicates
 - So we're moving away from the moment that the cherubim land by the temple to escort the glory of God out of the building
 - The glory of God found no sanctuary in the Holy of Holies, since the priests that serve Him were worshipping the sun instead
 - And the glory found no sanctuary in the court because the leaders were worshipping Egyptian gods in its walls
 - And therefore the glory of God now hovers above the east gate leading out of the court of the temple to the city

- The Spirit now transports Ezekiel in his vision to that gate to see yet another scene
 - Outside the gate stood another group of 25 men
 - This group is different than those we saw earlier in Chapter 8
 - That earlier group were priests serving in the temple, but these men are described as leaders of the people
 - It would be natural to see civic leaders gathered in a city gate, since this is where administrative business was conducted
- Among these men are two who Ezekiel recognizes and names
 - Nothing is known about them except their names
 - The name Jaazaniah means God Hears
 - And the name Pelatiah means God Delivers
 - These names prove ironically prophetic in light of the circumstances
- The Lord says these men are supposed to dispense godly advice to the residents of the city, but instead they devise sin and give evil advice
 - The Lord gives Ezekiel two examples of their evil
 - First, they advise the people not to build houses saying the city is the pot and we are the flesh
 - To understand this statement, we have to know something that the people had been told by one of Ezekiel's contemporaries; Jeremiah
 - Remember, Ezekiel is prophesying in Babylon to the exiles taken during the earlier campaigns
 - But Jeremiah is in the city speaking to the remaining residents
 - By this point, Jeremiah and the rest of the city had witnessed many of their brothers and sisters hauled off by the Babylonians into captivity
 - Twice before the city had been attacked and twice before the Babylonians had succeeded in defeating the city
 - So the Lord spoke through Jeremiah to the people remaining in the city that they were to be next

- Jeremiah told the people that they should submit to the Babylonians and not fight back because they were God's instrument of judgment

Jer. 21:8 "You shall also say to this people, 'Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.

Jer. 21:9 "He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty.

Jer. 21:10 "For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good," declares the Lord. "It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire."

- The people were to allow the Babylonians to take them
- And if they submitted to this outcome, they would have their own life as their reward for obeying the Lord
- Furthermore, Jeremiah told the people that they were to make a life in Babylon because they were going to be there a while

Jer. 29:4 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,

Jer. 29:5 'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.

Jer. 29:6 'Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.

Jer. 29:7 'Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'

- Notice in Jer. 29:5 the prophet said specifically to Jerusalem to set their minds on building houses in Babylon and living in them
- This would not be a short term exile; they're going to be there for a while, so make the best of it
- And to reassure them, the Lord said He would provide for their welfare while they were there
- Now look back at Ezekiel 11:3
 - In v.3 the elders tell the people that the time is NOT near to build houses

- They are mocking Jeremiah's prophecy
- They are saying the prophet was wrong, a third exile is not coming and they need not be concerned about building homes in Babylon
- Instead, they lie to the people a second time saying they are like flesh in a pot
 - The word pot means a cauldron or basin that you use to cook food over a fire
 - So the leaders are saying to the residents, live inside the protection of the city of Jerusalem so they need not fear the Babylonian army
 - In the same way that meat in a pot isn't touched by the fire outside the pot, so the people in the city won't be harmed either
- More than likely, these men were basing their confidence in the fact that the glory of God was dwelling in the temple
 - They mistakenly believed that the glory of God would dwell in its place forever
 - And that as long as it did, no army could take the city
 - Such were the lies these men told themselves and the people
- So far, we've seen a corrupt high priest, corrupted priesthood, corrupt elders and now corrupt civic leaders
 - So it's no wonder that the city is accepting and even celebrating such abominations
 - It would be easy for us to scoff at this generation of Israel asking how they could have been so foolish
 - But when everyone who leads you has moved in the same evil direction, it's almost impossible for the people not to follow
 - This is why God is strict about the type of men and women He calls as leaders over His people
 - Israel was poorly served by their leaders, including the kings who were mostly often evil themselves

- And when the head of the snake is diseased, then the whole will be as well
- We cannot tolerate sinful, ungodly leaders over us, because if you show me your leaders, I will show you your future
- Israel's leaders have produced a very bleak future for the people
- The Lord goes on to correct the lies of these leaders in vs.4-12
 - The Lord begins saying I know your thoughts
 - He means He knows the intentions of their hearts
 - God's power to know our hearts is symbolized in the cherubim having eyes all around
 - He knows these men weren't seeking to advise the people in truth and godliness
 - Instead, they were seeking to manipulate the situation to maintain their position of power
 - But because they contradict the word of the Lord and promote evil in the people, many more will die, the Lord says
 - He says these men multiply the dead in the city
 - They didn't literally kill the people, but their advice will lead to more loss of life as the people fight against the Babylonians
 - If the people had heeded Jeremiah's word, they could have saved their lives
 - In v.11 the Lord mocks them by using their own statement about pot and flesh
 - He says the flesh in that pot will be the slain in the city
 - Rather than being preserved, they will perish
 - And moreover, you're not going to stay in the pot (the city)
 - Instead, they will find themselves crossing the border of Israel as they are taken into Babylon
 - So not only is the city not a sanctuary for them, but neither will the land of Israel be their home

- As the people crossed Israel's border at Riblah, Nebuchadnezzar met the exiles and executed Israel's civic leaders by the sword
- Two of those men executed were Jaazaniah and Pelatiah
 - Remember their names? God Hears and God Delivers
 - Even as these men claimed God didn't hear, God did in fact hear them
 - And therefore, He delivered a just response to their sin
- The message was clear...if Jerusalem could not be a sanctuary for the Lord, then He would not allow it to be a sanctuary for His people
 - If they will not live by His precepts, then they will not live at all
 - And they will not live in the light of His presence
 - Israel learned this lesson in a visceral way, watching their city destroyed and the families dragged into a foreign land
 - But the principle is no less true for us even if we never see such disasters personally
 - We have opportunity to live in peace and in the light of the presence of the Lord so long as we give attention to His precepts
 - Or we can heed evil counsel or follow the lusts of our heart and experience the darkness that follows
 - Nothing escapes the notice of the Lord and He always has the perfect response to expose our heart's intent and correct our ways
- Next, the Lord gives Ezekiel a vision confirming the outcome for these two men

Ezek. 11:13 Now it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, "Alas, Lord God! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?"

Ezek. 11:14 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

Ezek. 11:15 "Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Go far from the Lord; this land has been given us as a possession.'

- Ezekiel sees one of these two men, Pelatiah, drop dead at the city gate

- Remember, we've said that these visions aren't depicting the literal manner by which these events will take place
 - Instead, they explain the purpose behind these outcomes
 - In real life, Pelatiah doesn't drop dead at the gate; he dies at Riblah
 - But this vision explains why his death is necessary
- Seeing the man die causes Ezekiel to ask the Lord the same question he asked in the prior chapter: are you putting an end to all Israel?
 - He asks is the Lord putting the remnant of Israel to a complete end?
 - The word "remnant" causes some confusion here because normally that word refers to the believing element within the nation
 - But clearly Pelatiah is not a believing Jew, since he is principally responsible for the evil among the people
- By the context of the passage, we must interpret the word remnant here to mean the remaining population of Israel living within the city
 - So Ezekiel is distraught at the prospect of seeing all remaining Jews in the land extinguished
 - Like any Jew, Ezekiel would have been aghast at the idea that there could be an Israel and Jerusalem with no Jews
 - And yet that is exactly what the Lord plans, at least for a time
- Notice the Lord's response to the prophet in vs.15-16
 - He tells Ezekiel that those who remain in the city are those who have been saying that exiles deserved to to be taken
 - They told their brothers and sisters like Ezekiel to "go far from the Lord" because we have been given the land as a possession
 - They feel as though these exiles deserved to be taken away from the presence of the Lord
 - While they assume they remain behind because the Lord has awarded the city to them instead

- Once again, the presence of the Lord in the city seems to be the thing these people are hanging their hat on for security
 - And for that reason the glory of God will leave the city and so will they
 - Their offenses could only be rectified by taking such drastic action
- But then comes a glimmer of hope, the first reason for hope we've yet seen in the book of Ezekiel
 - This next passage introduces one of the most important themes of the book, a theme that will be developed in much greater detail in coming chapters
 - For now, let's consider what the Lord says in connection to His glory and its departure

Ezek. 11:16 "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone."'"

Ezek. 11:17 "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God, "I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."'"

Ezek. 11:18 "When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

Ezek. 11:19 "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

Ezek. 11:20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

Ezek. 11:21 "But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads," declares the Lord God.

- The Lord begins to speak from a future point of view, looking back on the events in this vision
 - He says in v.16 though I removed My people from the city and scattered them far away among the nations of the world, nevertheless He would remain a sanctuary for them
 - He's describing the way the Lord intends to protect His people while they are in exile

- Ezekiel has been concerned that the Lord's harsh actions would lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people
- And certainly, without the Lord's grace they most certainly would have disappeared
- Anthropologically speaking, it would have been impossible for such a small people group to maintain a distinct identity over the many centuries they spent outside their lands
- Yet they have done exactly that, survived intact
- The Lord says He will be their sanctuary during these times of exile
 - They will turn to him in their afflictions and He will hear them
 - They will seek to keep the covenant in ways their evil ancestors wouldn't, and by doing so their identity will be preserved among the nation
- Ironically, the people didn't find their sanctuary in the Lord when He dwelled among them in their city in peace
 - Yet now while in exile and under persecution, His people will seek Him earnestly
 - And this exile will be for a "little" while the Lord says in v.16
- We know that the people were in exile in Babylon for 70 years, and certainly that is only a little while in terms of history
 - But when we look at what the Lord promises to do for Israel at the end of this time, we find He's talking about a different time altogether
 - Notice in v.17 the end of this "little while" will result in Israel returning to her land and to possessing it again
 - Not just part of the land, but the Lord says they will possess "THE land of Israel"
 - The Lord means the entire land He promised to Israel, to Jacob
 - The exiles that returned from Babylon never realized this promise
 - Furthermore, the Lord says the Israel that returns to the land will once and forever put away their idols

- As we mentioned in a previous week, the nation of Israel never returns to systematic idolatry after the Babylonian exile
- But this promise goes far beyond mere external religious practices
- Notice in vs.19-20 the Lord says all Israel will receive a “new heart” at this time
 - They will lose the hard heart of stone that didn’t know Him and didn’t obey His word
 - And in its place, the Lord will give them a heart of flesh, meaning a soft heart capable to hearing His voice and responding in obedience
 - As a result, the entire nation of Israel will walk in keeping with the Law of God and they shall all be God’s people
- These are dramatic promises and they can only be understood in the context of Israel receiving the Kingdom
 - Under no under circumstances will we find Israel possessing all her land in peace
 - Under no other circumstances do we find the people of Israel united by the same heart of faith
 - Under no other circumstances could we find even one person – much less *all* the people – keeping the commandments of God
- So the Lord is telling Ezekiel worry not, the people of Israel are in good hands; the Lord’s hands
 - On the other hand, the hands of Israel’s leaders are not good
 - Far from it...they are the ones leading the people astray
 - So the Lord says in v.21 that these will perish, because He will bring the consequences of their conduct back upon them
- This is the full, 360° view of God’s relationship with His people
 - They are bound to Him by covenant, so He will not walk away from them
 - But neither can He overlook their sins against Him

- Especially when the covenant itself warns the people of the consequences
- But He also promised their father Abraham that He would bring blessing to his descendants
 - And the Lord is faithful to that promise
 - The Kingdom will arrive one day and on that day Israel will receive what they have been promised
 - But as the Lord reveals here, they will need to be regathered and they will need to receive a faithful heart first
- So I ask which is the more remarkable thing that God does?
 - That He would bring punishment against a people that worshiped idols and committed the worst perversions
 - Or that He would bring glory and honor and blessing to that very same people?
 - It seems to be that God was only doing what should be done when He brought judgment
 - But we should be amazed at His grace when He promises to bring redemption as well
- Which brings us back to the story of the departure of the Lord's glory

Ezek. 11:22 Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

Ezek. 11:23 The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.

Ezek. 11:24 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me.

Ezek. 11:25 Then I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had shown me.

- Once again the movement of the Lord's glory is initiated by the supernatural escort of cherubim upholding the glory of God
 - It moves from the east gate in the midst of the city to a point overlooking the city from a high point to the east of Jerusalem

- Just as the Lord told Ezekiel, the leaders wouldn't be safe in the city depending on the glory of the Lord to protect them
- The Lord's glory won't inhabit the temple or its court nor even the city itself
- The Shechinah glory was leaving the city for a very long time
- Its next destination is a mountain to the east of the city
 - That particular pinnacle was one of several hills that surrounded Mt Moriah, the hill on which the temple is built
 - It had no particular name in Ezekiel's day
 - But later it will be called the Mt of Olives
- This is the final stopping point for the Shechinah glory before it departed Israel altogether
 - Scripture never tells us how long the Lord's glory remained here before departing earth altogether
 - Clearly it departed at some point, since we don't see it now
 - Perhaps it remained long enough to witness the destruction of the city as a testimony against the people
- The rabbis who reflect on this passage teach that the glory remained on the Mt of Olives for 3.5 years
 - This detail brings us back to our discussion of the picture of Christ, revealed in these movements of the glory of God
 - As we read last week from John 1, the coming of the Messiah meant the arrival of the light of God's Shechinah glory in greater form
 - Paul told us in Colossians 1 that Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God
 - That glory came to Israel for 3.5 years before it departed the earth for a time
 - And when Jesus left the earth, He too ascended from the Mt of Olives

- And that detail draws a clear connection between the movements of the glory here and the glory of Jesus Christ
- When Jesus ascended, the disciples who witnessed His departure were told this

Acts 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Acts 1:10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

Acts 1:11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

- The angels declared that the glory of God would return from Heaven in the same way as He departed
- Well, we know how Jesus departed and we also know how the glory of God departed in an earlier time
- So how should we expect the Lord to return in His glory in the Kingdom to come?
 - First, we know He will arrive in Jerusalem on the Mt of Olives; the place of His departure
 - Zechariah describes the Lord’s return this way

Zech. 14:3 Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

Zech. 14:4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

- Near the very end of the seven-year Tribulation on earth, the Lord returns to the city and place where He departed
- The glory of God will once more return to the city to dwell among men
- And following His arrival, the glory of the Lord in the Person of Christ will retrace His steps with which he departed the city in Ezekiel’s day

- Later in this book when Ezekiel is shown a vision of the new temple of the Kingdom, he witnesses the Lord's return to His temple

Ezek. 43:1 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east;

Ezek. 43:2 and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

Ezek. 43:3 And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.

Ezek. 43:4 And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east.

- Just as the glory left through the east gate so will it one day return through the east gate
- This east gate is very different to the one of the past or even the one present in the wall today
- So as the glory left through the east gate so it will return in Christ
 - Finally, the Lord will retrace His steps in the court and into the temple itself

Ezek. 43:5 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Ezek. 43:6 Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

Ezek. 43:7 He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die,

Ezek. 43:8 by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger.

Ezek. 43:9 "Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.

- We'll revisit these passages in a day to come, so for now it's enough to understand the picture here
- The manner of the Lord's departure from the temple pictures the manner of the Lord's Second coming
- And why is this picture important?
- It's the silver lining in the otherwise dark cloud hanging over Israel
- That even in the midst of these dark times for Israel – times of judgment, death and exile – there is reason for hope
 - The Lord has not forsaken His people
 - This pictures confirms that even as Israel must experience God's wrath of God, they will also know His mercy and redemption one day
 - One day the Lord will regather them from exile
 - One day He will dwell among them again
 - One day He will give all Israel a heart to know and follow Him
 - One day the Lord in His kindness and mercy will restore Israel to glory
 - In that day, the Lord blesses His people beyond all measure and certainly beyond what they deserve
 - And we, like them, will be blessed to be included in that day
 - By the Lord's gracious choice, He has placed His glory in us promising us the same future
 - A day when we will have soft hearts that know and obey Him
 - A day when we too will dwell with God in glory by our faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior of all men