

Ezekiel Chapter 10

God's Glory Departs From The Temple – Verses 1-8

1 I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of lapis lazuli above the vault 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. 6 When the LORD commanded the man in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went out. 8 (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like human hands.)

10:1 Chapters 8–11 depict God's glory departing from the temple. In 8:3-4, God's glory was over the northern gate. Then it moved to the entrance (9:3), then the south end of the temple (10:3-4), the eastern gate (10:18-19; 11:1), and finally the mountain east of the temple (11:23), probably the Mount of Olives. Because of the nation's sins, God's glory had departed first from the Temple and then from Jerusalem.

10:2 God's perfect holiness demands judgment for sin. The cherubim are mighty angelic beings. The burning coals scattered over the city represent the purging of sin. For Jerusalem, this meant the destruction of all the people who blatantly sinned and refused to repent. Shortly after this prophecy, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem by fire (2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chronicles 36:19).

10:6-8 The *angel (the man with the good clothes) did what the *Lord told him to do. He went in between the wheels and he stood by one of them. A *cherub reached into the fire. The *cherubim had hands like human hands. This *cherub took coals in his hand from the fire that was among them. He put these coals of fire into the hands of the *angel. Ezekiel does not tell here about the *angel's next action. But God had told the *angel to pour the coals of fire over the city. Fire destroyed Jerusalem in the year 586 *BC (2 Kings 25:9).

The cherubim and God's glory leave the city – Verses 9-22

9 I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim; the wheels sparkled like topaz. 10 As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel intersecting a wheel. 11 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the wheels did not turn about as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went. 12 Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels. 13 I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels." 14 Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the

second the face of a human being, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15 Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. 16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. 17 When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them. 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 of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. 20 These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like human hands. 22 Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead.

10:9-11 Ezekiel describes again the wheels and the *cherubim. These were the same as he saw by the River Chebar (see chapter 1). The wheels moved as the *cherubim moved. The *cherubim moved as the Spirit of God moved. The wheels did not turn. They went forward as the *cherubim led them. Each wheel seemed to have a wheel inside a wheel. That is, each wheel had another wheel across its centre. The *cherubim went in any direction but they did not turn their bodies.

10:18 God's glory departed from the temple and was never completely present again until Christ himself visited it in New Testament times. God's holiness required that he leave the temple because the people had so defiled it. God had to completely destroy what people had perverted in order for true worship to be revived. We must commit ourselves, our families, our churches, and our nation to follow God faithfully so that we never have to experience God's abandoning us.

10:18-22 The *glory of God left the *temple. It had come out of the most holy place already. It had come to the door. Now it moved away from the door to stand above the *cherubim. The *cherubim, their wheels and the *throne moved. They stopped about 50 yards away at the east gate. As they went the *glory of God went above them. God had left his *temple. God had warned *Israel that he would do so. This is what God told Moses in Deuteronomy 31:17.

The *glory of God had been present at the *temple for about 4 centuries. You can read how the *glory of God entered the *temple in 1 Kings 8:6-11. But now Ezekiel watched as God's *glory left the *temple. And because God's *glory left, his special protection for Jerusalem ended. Now nothing prevented the punishment of the people in the city. These things were happening because their lives were so evil.

Ezekiel Chapter 11

God's Sure Judgment on Jerusalem – Verses 1-13

1 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. 2 The LORD said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city. 3 They say, 'Haven't our houses been recently

rebuilt? This city is a pot, and we are the meat in it.’ 4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man.” 5 Then the Spirit of the LORD came on me, and he told me to say: “This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, you leaders in Israel, but I know what is going through your mind. 6 You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead. 7 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The bodies you have thrown there are the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it. 8 You fear the sword, and the sword is what I will bring against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. 9 I will drive you out of the city and deliver you into the hands of foreigners and inflict punishment on you. 10 You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. 11 This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it; I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. 12 And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you.” 13 Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell face down and cried out in a loud voice, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?”

11:1-4 God had abandoned his altar and temple (chapters 9–11); here his judgment was complete as his glory stopped above the mountain east of the city (11:23). The city gate was where merchants and politicians conducted business, so the 25 men may have represented the nation’s rulers. Because of their leadership positions, they were responsible for leading the people astray. They had wrongly said that they were secure from another attack by the Babylonians. “This city is a pot, and we are the meat in it” means they believed that they were the elite, the influential, the ones who would be protected from all harm. Without God, however, our situation is always precarious.

11:5 God knew everything about the Israelites, even their thoughts. He also knows everything about us, even the sins we try to hide. Instead of worrying about people noticing how we look or what we do, we should care about what God thinks, for he sees everything. Trying to hide our thoughts and actions from God is futile. “Secret” sins are never secret from God. The only effective way to deal with sin is to confess it and ask God to help us overcome it.

11:12 From the time they entered the Promised Land, the Israelites were warned not to copy the customs and religious practices of other nations. Disobeying this command and following pagan customs instead of God’s laws always got them into trouble. Today, believers are still tempted to conform to the ways of the world. But we must get our standards of right and wrong from God, not from the popular trends of society.

The Promise of Israel’s Return – Verses 14-24

14 The word of the LORD came to me: 15 “Son of man, the people of Jerusalem have said of your fellow exiles and all the other Israelites, ‘They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.’ 16 “Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.’ 17 “Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where

you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.’ 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. 21 But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.” 22 Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. 23 The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. 24 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia[a] in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, 25 and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

11:14-21 God promised the exiles in Babylonia that he would continue to be with them even though they were not in Jerusalem. This was a major concern to the Jews because they believed that God was present primarily in the temple. But God assured them that he would continue to be their God regardless of where they were. In the midst of Ezekiel’s burning message of judgment stands a cool oasis—God’s promise to restore the faithful few to their homeland. God’s arms are now open to receive those who will repent of their sins.

11:15-21 God’s messages through Ezekiel are full of irony. Here God says that the Jews in captivity are the faithful ones, and those in Jerusalem are the sinful and wicked ones. This was the opposite of the people’s perception. Appearances can be deceiving. God will evaluate your life by your faith and obedience, not by your apparent earthly success. Furthermore, we should not judge others by outward appearances.

11:16 God was a sanctuary for the righteous remnant. Idolatrous people, even though they worshiped in the Jerusalem temple (11:15), would find no true sanctuary; but the faithful exiles, though they were far from home, would be protected by God. Likewise, our external circumstances do not truly indicate our standing with God. Those who appear safe and secure may be far from him, while those going through difficult times may be safely under God’s spiritual protection. We can depend on God to keep us safe if we pledge ourselves to his care.

11:18-19 “Undivided heart” indicates a unanimous singleness of purpose. No longer will God’s people seek many gods; they will be content with God. Their stony, stubborn hearts will be radically transplanted with tender, responsive hearts (see Jeremiah 32:39; Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26). This new life can only be the work of the Holy Spirit. It is God’s work, but we must recognize and turn from our sin. When we do, God will give us new motives, new guidelines, and new purpose. Have you received your new heart?

11:23 God’s glory left Jerusalem and stood above a mountain on the east side of the city—almost certainly the Mount of Olives. Ezekiel 43:1-4 implies that God will return the same way he left, when he comes back to earth to set up his perfect kingdom.