

Israel's Restoration Declared

Ezekiel 11

Ezekiel 11:1-12: *"Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the East Gate of the Lord's house, which faces eastward; and there at the door of the gate were twenty-five men, among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. ² And He said to me: "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city, ³ who say, 'The time is not near to build houses; this city is the caldron, and we are the meat.' ⁴ Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man!"*

⁵ Then the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! Thus says the Lord: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind. ⁶ You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the slain." ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Your slain whom you have laid in its midst, they are the meat, and this city is the caldron; but I shall bring you out of the midst of it. ⁸ You have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you," says the Lord God. ⁹ "And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and execute judgments on you. ¹⁰ You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. ¹¹ This city shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the meat in its midst. I will judge you at the border of Israel. ¹² And you shall know that I am the Lord; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you.""

Background Notes

Ezekiel 8, 9, 10, and 11 constitute a four-part vision that God gave to Ezekiel about the coming judgment of Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. In this vision, Ezekiel was transported to Jerusalem where he was shown the idolatry and wickedness that was going on in the Temple area. Remember, at this time Ezekiel and many other Jewish captives were living in Babylon, but the Babylonians armies had not yet destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

However, because of Judah's sin and their unwillingness to repent, it was only a matter of time before the axe of judgment would fall. In this vision, Ezekiel saw not only the idolatry and wickedness of the people and priests, but the execution of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as well.

Chapter 11 reveals the final portion of Ezekiel's four-part vision. In verses 1-12 Ezekiel saw that the leaders of Judah were giving wicked counsel to the people. This counsel would also come under the judgment of God.

Doctrinal Points

1. God is opposed to the wicked counsel of the ungodly.

In this last part of his vision, the 25 men that Ezekiel saw by the east gate of the Temple area (v1) were not the same 25 men who were worshipping the sun in Ezekiel 8:16. There the 25 men were priests, but the 25 men in chapter 11 were civic leaders. These men were giving wicked counsel to the people of Jerusalem. The gate area was the traditional area for the elders of the city to meet and discuss important matters.

In verse 3, were the leaders saying that it *was* the right time to build houses, or were they saying that it *was not* the right time to build houses? If they were saying that it **was** the time to build houses, this showed they didn't believe that Jerusalem would be conquered. If they were saying it was **not** the time to build houses, they may have been referring to the letter sent by the prophet Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29). He told them to build houses there in Babylon, because Jerusalem would be conquered, and they would be captives in Babylon for some time.

In either case, these civil leaders were giving counsel that directly contradicted and opposed what God had declared. Judah and Jerusalem **would** be conquered because of their sinful ways. Furthermore, these civil leaders were telling the people that they were "as safe in Jerusalem as meat is safe in a caldron" (v3). The meat inside the caldron may get hot, but it is protected from the fire. "No!" said the Lord through Ezekiel's vision and prophecy. "If there are any 'choice cuts of meat' that are protected in the caldron, you people are not those choice cuts! They are the righteous men that you have murdered because they spoke the truth. You wicked leaders have misled the people with your wicked counsel, and you will be taken out of your so-called 'safe caldron' and killed. The sword will follow you all the way to the border of Israel when you are dragged away as captives to a foreign land. Then you will know that God meant what He said."

God is opposed to the wicked counsel of the ungodly, then and today. Think of the wicked counsel that is being promoted today by ungodly people. Think of the youth of our nation who are being led astray by many varieties of wicked counsel. God holds counselors accountable for their hidden agendas and ungodly counsel. God is opposed to the wicked counsel of the ungodly.

2. God is preserving a remnant in Israel.

Ezekiel 11:13-21: *"Now it happened, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, "Ah, Lord God! Will You make a complete end of the remnant of Israel?"*

¹⁴ *Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,* ¹⁵ *"Son of man, your brethren, your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, are those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the Lord; this land has been given to us as a possession.'* ¹⁶ *Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little*

sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.”¹⁷ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”¹⁸ And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there.¹⁹ Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.²¹ But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord God.”

There’s good news in verses 13-21! The first mention of the future restoration of Israel in the book of Ezekiel is found here. This good news came after the death of Pelatiah, one of the leaders who gave wicked counsel, when Ezekiel began to fear that all of Israel would be wiped out. God assured him that a remnant would be preserved - but the remnant would not be from Jerusalem.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem were wrongly convinced that God was preserving them and saving the Land for them, and they assumed that the captives in Babylon were the ones who had been forsaken by God. No, said the Lord. The remnant of Israel will be preserved from among the captives wherever they are scattered. *“Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone” (v16).*

God promised that He would gather this remnant back to the land of Israel in the future, and He would give them a new spirit and a new heart. This prophecy was not fulfilled when Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity - and this prophecy is not to be applied to the Church today. The Church is not the “New Israel,” as is sometime taught. This prophecy will yet be fulfilled when a spiritual awakening takes place in the nation of Israel. Israel is already back in their Land, but the spiritual awakening is yet to come. Verse 21 indicates that not all the Jewish people who return to the Land will become believers, but many will. God is preserving a remnant in Israel.

3. God is reluctant to remove His presence.

Ezekiel 11: 22-25: *“So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them.²³ And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.*

²⁴ Then the Spirit took me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to those in captivity. And the vision that I had seen went up from me.²⁵ So I spoke to those in captivity of all the things the Lord had shown me.”

In verses 24-25, the vision was over. The Spirit transported Ezekiel back to Babylon, where he shared what he had seen in the vision.

In chapter 9 Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord leave the Holy of Holies of the Temple and move to the threshold of the Temple. In chapter 10 he saw the glory of the Lord move from the threshold of the Temple to the east gate of the Temple area. In chapter 11 he saw the glory of the Lord move out of the city and hover over the Mount of Olives – the mountain on the east side of the city.

The fact that the glory of the Lord left Jerusalem in stages is a strong indication that **God is reluctant to remove His presence**. There's a rabbinic tradition that says that the Shekinah glory lingered over the Mount of Olives for three and a half years, but this information is not found in Scripture. So we don't know how long the glory of the Lord actually tarried over the Mount of Olives, but eventually the glory of the Lord was gone.

In Ezekiel 43, in a prophecy of the future, the glory of the Lord will return to Israel and to the future millennial Temple. In the future, the glory of the Lord will return, but Ezekiel 11 tells how the glory of the Lord departed. God is longsuffering and patient, because He is unwilling for anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). God is reluctant to remove His presence. However, He will not stay where He's not wanted.

This certainly has an application for believers today. God wants to have fellowship with us, His children. He loves to be in the midst of His people, but God cannot have fellowship with us if we ignore Him, or if we're not willing to have Him as part of our lives. But *even then*, because He loves us, God is reluctant to remove His presence!

Practical Application

Remember - God can read your mind.

Look at what the Lord said through Ezekiel to the leaders of Jerusalem: *"I know the things that come into your mind"* (v5). The leaders who were giving evil counsel thought that God did not know their thoughts, but they were wrong. God is omniscient – He knows everything! Many people today think the way those leaders of Jerusalem thought. They may not deny that there's a God, but they don't believe that God knows their thoughts. But they're wrong! God **can** read minds - and He can read **your** mind.

Other people can't read your mind. Angels can't read your mind. Satan can read your actions, but he can't read your mind. But God can read your mind. He knows your every thought. And God tells us that it's very important to bring **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ** (2 Corinthians 10:5).

How is your thought life? Do you make your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ? Remember - God can read your mind!