

Ezekiel - the Corrupted Temple

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Ezekiel is taken in vision from Babylonia to Jerusalem. God shows him a series of abominations, idolatry, in the Temple. The purpose is to identify the source of the nation's problems: corruption of "**thought leaders**". In Israel "thought leaders" were the priests, prophets, and elders. The problem is the same today: "thought leaders" are educators, entertainers, politicians, the super-rich. **Satan, then and now, utterly corrupted the "thought leaders"** bringing corruption to the people (Ez8:6,17, 10:8-19). The word for "**abominations**" in Hebrew is תּוֹעֲבָה – to'evah, willful sin, choosing a lifestyle of sin, idolatry and all that stems from it, "the unpardonable sin". **The exit of the presence of YHWH from the Temple is the most important element of the vision.** Ezekiel is being shown what is happening in the "spirit" world. In the "physical" world, Jeremiah was labouring with the death throes of the nation

Approaching the Temple: The month is Elul, late summer 592BC, about 13 months (390 days) has passed, the time of the symbolic actions – Ezekiel was becoming recognized. **Ezekiel is taken in Spirit, in a vision, to Jerusalem, by YHWH** (Ez8:1-4). **The vision is more or less indistinguishable from reality** (2Cr12:1b-3, Is6:1b-2a,4-7, Ez3:1-3).

The Glory of the God of Israel: The word for "glory" is כָּבוֹד – kavod, it indicates the presence of God (Ex40:34-35, 1Kg8:6,10-11, Hg2:3,7b, MI3:1b, Ezra 6:16-18). Ezekiel was familiar with the *kavod* from previous visions (Ez1:26-27,28bα). **In the Temple, Ezekiel is immediately confronted by abominations, idolatry** (Ez8:5-6). **The purpose of the vision is YHWH's exit from the nation.** The corruption of the people, the abominations, is the reason he must exit. **When the time is right, God always acts.**

Corruption of the Elders of Israel: "**Elders**" are the aristocracy, appointed officials, civic leaders (Ez8:7-13). The images "of creeping things and loathsome beasts" sounds like Egyptian deities. Note "**doing in the dark**" the corruptions of today's "thought leaders" are coming out into the open. The worship with "censers" recalls Korah's rebellion (Nm16:16a,17a,21).

Corruption of the People and Priests: Women at the Temple Gate practice Tammuz worship (Ez8:14-15). "Tammuz" is the Sumerian deity "Dumuzi". The "twenty-five" men had to be "priests" to be in the "inner court" near the alter (Ez8:16-18).

I Will Act in Wrath: "The executioners" are angelic beings – this still a vision, but God is revealing what he is planning (Ez9:1-2, see Jr22:7). The presence of God now starts to move (Ez9:3a). The "man with the writing case" is to "mark" certain individuals (Ez9:3b-4). The other six are to proceed with the slaughter (Ez9:5-7). Only those "marked" are to be spared. "**The man with the writing case**" is an angelic being – **he is clothed in "linen", so he is a "priestly" figure** (Ex39:27-29). Those listed for death identify "non-combatants" and "the helpless" (people who might be spared) **indicating the extent of corruption.** "**Begin at my sanctuary**" - the Priests and Levites had been given the responsibility to teach the people the Way of God, they were most culpable, they would die first.

What is the "Mark"? The Hebrew is: תָּ - taw, the last consonant of the Hebrew alphabet: in Ezekiel's time it was written like a modern X – Ezekiel does not record that he saw what the mark looked like on anyone (not part of the vision). Cain was "marked" for identity (Gn4:15b). The Hebrew word is אוֹת - 'oth, a more common word for "sign": it is used for the redemption of firstborn and for the Sabbath (Ex13:15bβ-16, 31:13). In the New Testament, the verb σφραγίζω - sphragizō is used for "sealing" or "marking"; the related feminine noun σφραγίς - sphragis is used for a "mark" or a "sign" (Rv7:2-3). Christians bear a "seal" from God (2Tm 2:15a,19a), which is the Holy Spirit (2Cr1:21-22, Eph 1:13-14a). Clearly **the "marking" by the "man with the writing case" was to identify either "true worshippers" or those who were being called to be "true worshippers"** – but the vision does NOT extend to actually showing anyone as "marked" (Ez9:11). The point is that **when the time comes, God will protect those he chooses to protect.**

Ezekiel's Despair: In this brief snippet, we get a glimpse of Ezekiel's personality, as he despairs the final destruction (Ez9:8-10). **YHWH commands the "man clothed in linen" to burn the city** (Ez10:1-2,6-7).

The Departure of the kavod: The Presence of God is gone from the Temple (Ez10:3-4,18-19). The Presence of God is gone from Jerusalem (Ez11:1,22-23). **God is through with the Temple, with Jerusalem, and with Israel.** This is the "spiritual" reality – soon to be played out in "physical" reality.

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

