

Ezekiel 10-11 “The Glory Departs”
Psalm 119:153-160
Matthew 23:29-24:14

August 1, 2010

Children, do you know the story of Ichabod?

Well, Ichabod was the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest.

In the days of Eli, the priest, the Israelites were losing their battle against the Philistines,
and the elders of Israel asked “why has the LORD defeated us today?”
They decided that reason was because God was not with them.

Well, if God isn't with you, what should you do?

Well, why don't we go get him, and bring him here.

Why don't you go get Phinehas and his brother Hophni,
and have them bring the presence of the LORD with them.

Yup.

That's what they did.

They went and brought the ark of the covenant from Shiloh
with the idea that since the glory of the LORD is enthroned upon the ark,
therefore if they brought the ark to the battle,
the glory of the LORD would go before them into battle.

They thought they had a good idea.

And the Philistines thought so too –
they were trembling in their boots,
because they had heard about the God of Israel,
and how he had overthrown the Egyptians,
and conquered the Canaanites.

But the Philistines fought back,
and (surprise, surprise!) the Philistines defeated the Israelites, and captured the ark.

They killed Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli –
and when word of the capture of the ark came to Eli, he fell over and died.
And Phinehas' wife gave birth that same day,
and as she died in childbirth, she named her son Ichabod.

And that's the story of Ichabod.

Oh, wait,

what does Ichabod mean?

I-chavod: “no glory”

She named him I-chavod because she said “the glory has departed from Israel,
for the ark of God has been captured.” (1 Sam 4:22)

The glory of the LORD departed from Israel
because Israel thought that God would defend them,
regardless of whether they loved and served him.

Psalm 119 reminds us of the proper attitude we should have toward God!

Psalm 119:153-160
Matthew 23:29-24:14

Introduction: The Temple and the Church's Mission

What did you see this week?

As you watched your friends and colleagues –
did you see the idolatry in the rebellious house of Israel?
Did you learn anything about their “room of pictures”?
What are the pictures that motivate them?
Where do they put their hope and their trust?

But of course, as we saw last week,
if you are going to dig through the wall (as Ezekiel did),
then you need first to see the glorious vision of Christ.

Because outward appearance can be deceptive.

If you had gone to Jerusalem in 592 BC,
you probably would not have seen anything of what Ezekiel saw in chapter 8.
According to Jeremiah (who lived in Jerusalem)
the idolatry in the city was not “obvious.”
What Ezekiel sees in his vision is what is *really* going on –
not what you might see on the surface.

Do not judge by outward appearances.

If you lived in 592 BC – you would see the once-proud elders of Jerusalem in exile,
now laboring as farm-hands in the fields of Babylon,
and you would see those in Jerusalem taking over the houses and lands of the exiles.

Who controls the future of Jerusalem?

And today, who controls the future of the church?

It is easy to become discouraged at the fragmentation and division in the church.
It is easy to look at those in power and give up hope.

As we sang from Psalm 73 earlier –
we can sometimes think that all our faithfulness is pointless,
because the unfaithful prosper.

Other times, we may think that God is blessing someone just because they succeed.

But God sometimes allows wickedness and folly to prosper.

God sometimes gives material prosperity and numerical power to those who reject him
as a means of demonstrating that his power is made perfect in weakness.

The poor, the despised, the rejected, and the cast-offs,
are the ones that God most often blesses and uses for the glory of his kingdom!

And remember also that it was only when the Psalmist went into God's temple
that he discerned the end of the wicked.

The same thing happens to Ezekiel.
When Ezekiel comes into the temple of the LORD,
then he sees how fools fall in a moment.

Last time, in Ezekiel 8-9, we saw that Ezekiel only sees idolatry for what it is,
when he *first* saw the vision of the glory of God.

Remember this –
because you will only make sense of your world –
you will only see the idolatry around you (and in you) –
when you see clearly the vision of our Lord Jesus Christ!
Today, we conclude Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 8-11,
as we see the glory of the LORD depart from the temple.

I would like for us to begin by turning to Jeremiah 7,
which was Jeremiah's proclamation about the temple:
*7:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and
proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter
these gates to worship the Lord.*

In other words, Jeremiah had stood precisely where Ezekiel will stand in his vision.
And Jeremiah had said to Jerusalem:

*3 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let
you dwell in this place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord,
the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'*
*5 "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with
another, 6 if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent
blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you
dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.*
*8 "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery,
swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and
then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are
delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?*

Notice that Jeremiah seems to suggest that the Baal-worship –
the worship of foreign gods – was happening outside the temple.
But Ezekiel sees it inside the temple.
Why?
(because Ezekiel sees what is *really* happening – not just the outward ritual)

And so the LORD says through Jeremiah:

11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?

Does that sound familiar?

Jesus will say this when he cleanses the temple.

Jesus will say that the temple in his day
is no different from the temple in Jeremiah's day.

And Jeremiah continues,

by connecting the coming exile with Shiloh – with Ichabod:

Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord. 12 Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. 13 And now, because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, 14 therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Do you understand how important the coming of Christ is?

Shiloh was destroyed because of Israel's sin.

The first temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of Judah's sin.

The second temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of the Jews' sin.

We need a temple – we need a Jerusalem – that will not be cast out of God's sight!

And that is what Jesus Christ has established in the heavenly Zion –
the heavenly Jerusalem that is our mother.

He is the temple – he is the place where earth and heaven meet.

And we who are united to him became living stones in this living temple,
we are joined to him in his holy priesthood,
to offer living sacrifices to God.

And here in Ezekiel 10 we begin to see this heavenly glory revealed:

1. The Glory of the LORD Comes in Judgment on Jerusalem (10:1-8)

10:1 Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne. 2 And he said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." And he went in before my eyes.

Last time we saw the man with the writing case

marking those who mourn over the idolatry in Jerusalem.

The same one who inscribed the mark of preservation

now joins the ranks of the agents of destruction –
and his weapon is the fire of God himself.

And as Ezekiel watches,

“with his ears already filled with the sound of the slaughter going on in the city,
he hears the voice of the occupant of the throne again,
giving further instructions to *the man clothed in linen*.

Now Ezekiel further discovers the purpose for the fiery, flaming heart of the throne chariot;
it is to provide fire for the final destruction of the city after the killing of the inhabitants.”

The fire that God poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah –
the fire of God’s wrath that he hurls upon his enemies –
is the fire that God will now scatter upon his own people – his own city.

We saw last time that Ezekiel moves from the northern court of the temple,
towards the Holy of Holies.

This whole central part of the vision takes place at the entrance of the temple.

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house, when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 And the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord. 5 And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.

In other words, the glory of the LORD is precisely where it is supposed to be –
filling the house of the LORD.

But just as the presence of the LORD did not bring victory to Israel
when they took the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines,
so also the presence of the LORD *here* does not result in “good news” for Israel.

6 And when he commanded the man clothed in linen, “Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim,” he went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 And a cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between the cherubim, and took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings.

The fire of God’s wrath and judgment –
the fire of destruction will now be scattered over the city.

As Peter tells us:

“for it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God –
and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome
for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (4:17)

2. The Glory of the LORD Ascends to the Entrance of the East Gate (10:9-22)

Then in verses 9-14 we hear another description of the cherubim.

9 And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub, and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling beryl. 10 And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness, as if a wheel were within a wheel. 11 When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went, but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without turning as they went. 12 And their whole body, their rims, and their spokes, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around—the wheels that the four of them had. 13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing “the whirling wheels.” 14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Why does Ezekiel go into detail *again*?

Why not just say – “just like I saw before”?

By giving this detail, it emphasizes the centrality and importance of cherubic charioteers.

There are a few slight differences from the vision in chapter 1,
which tells us either that their appearance changes,
or else that Ezekiel notices the same things
but tries to describe them differently.

Most curious is the reference in v22 that their faces were the same as chapter 1 –
even though v14 says that their four faces were:

1) of a cherub, 2) of a human, 3) of a lion, and 4) of an eagle;

while in 1:10 we were told that the four faces were:

1) of a lion, 2) of an ox, 3) of an eagle, and 4) of a man.

(So does this mean that a cherub’s face is like an ox’s face?

Or does it mean that these cherubim are hard to describe?!

I would tend to go with the latter view!)

The glory-chariot has come to the temple to take the glory of the LORD away.

15 And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal. 16 And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them. And when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them.

17 When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

And in verses 18-19, the glory of the LORD moves to the entrance
of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and then pauses.

The LORD will leave his holy temple –
but you can almost sense his reluctance.

The LORD is *slow* to anger – abounding in steadfast love!

18 Then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. 19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my

eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the Lord, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.

20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the Chebar canal; and I knew that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the likeness of human hands. 22 And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the Chebar canal. Each one of them went straight forward.

3. The Spirit of the LORD and the Coming Judgment against Jerusalem (11:1-13)

But before the glory of the LORD departs,
the Spirit of God has something to say to Jerusalem.
Notice the importance of the Spirit of the LORD in chapter 11.
Ezekiel is properly called the prophet of the Holy Spirit,
because he talks more about the Spirit of God
than any other prophet.

Read:

11:1 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the Lord, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

Last time we heard of Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan.
This would appear to be a different Jaazaniah.

2 And he said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3 who say, 'The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the meat.' 4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man."

Jaazaniah and Pelatiah gave false hope.

We must always beware of giving people false hope!
The message of Jaazaniah and Pelatiah was wicked,
"because it led the people into complacent optimism
when they should have been engaging in deep repentance
and radical change of heart and life....

To reassure the unrepentant is to share in their wickedness." (Wright, 121)

Please hear this!

People like to think, "I'm not that bad"
"the situation isn't that bad"

The wages of sin is death!

There *is no hope* of escaping God's judgment apart from believing in his Son, Jesus Christ.

But what is the meaning of their proverb?

'The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the meat.'

Apparently they thought of themselves as the choice meat that would be saved –
and the exiles as the offal – the leftovers who will be thrown away.

And in response, against watch the Spirit (Read):

5 And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the Lord: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind. 6 You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of it, they are the meat, and this city is the cauldron, but you shall be brought out of the midst of it. 8 You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, declares the Lord God. 9 And I will bring you out of the midst of it, and give you into the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you. 10 You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord. 11 This city shall not be your cauldron, nor shall you be the meat in the midst of it. 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 obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you."

You are nothing special –
you are not the choice meat –
you will not possess the city.

In fact, you are just as bad as the pagan nations around you!

And so the Spirit says that he will give up Jerusalem to foreigners (v9)

and the judgments that once fell on Egypt will now fall on Jerusalem (v10)

13 And it came to pass, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, "Ah, Lord God! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"

Ezekiel cries out to the LORD, asking for mercy for the remnant.

Ezekiel stands in a long line of such intercessions going back to Abraham
(and Sodom and Gomorrah will come in explicitly in chapter 16)

Why do we intercede with God for the nations?

Not especially because of them – but for *your name's sake*.

We are concerned for God's purposes in history

Remember who the Lord GOD is:

The LORD, the LORD, merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love...
visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children
to the third and fourth generation, but showing mercy to thousands...

You see here the wrath and curse of God.

You see here the justice and judgment of God.

But consider, if this is the power of his wrath –

and his love is a thousand times as great –
then think about the power of his love,
which is revealed in the incarnation and the cross
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you realize how awful sin is?

Sin is so terrible – it is so horrific –
that it brings our gracious and merciful God
to the extreme point of nearly annihilating his own people.

This “speaks more loudly than anything else could
of the horrific, detestable and intolerable nature of human sin,
and the moral necessity of its being finally and justly punished.” (Wright, 119)

And that final punishment comes at the cross, where we hear God’s justice:

“I will not pity or spare”
but this time proclaimed against his beloved Son!

If all you do is look at what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah in isolation from the rest of history
or what God did to Jerusalem in isolation from the cross,
then I can understand why someone might think that God is a monster.

But when you realize that God is demonstrating how intolerable sin is –
so that he might prepare the way for his own Son to take its penalty upon himself –
then, at the very least, you must marvel at the astounding love of God for sinners.

4. The Spirit of the LORD and the New Exodus (11:14-21)

Finally in verse 14 we begin to understand Ezekiel’s message.

This is not really a message for Jerusalem in Jerusalem.

This is a message for Jerusalem in Babylon – for the exiles,
who have heard that their former friends have abandoned them.

*14 And the word of the Lord came to me: 15 “Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers,
your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of
Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the Lord; to us this land is given for a possession.’*

In other words,
you have been exiled for your sin – so stay away from us!

But God gives comfort to the exiles:

*16 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far off among the nations,
and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a
while in the countries where they have gone.’*

Remember where Ezekiel first saw the vision of the glory of the LORD?

In Babylon.

And quickly glance down at 11:24 –
 where does the Spirit of God go –
 with Ezekiel back to Chaldea – *to the exiles* –
 and more importantly,
 when does the vision “go up”?
 from the temple?
No.

 After Ezekiel returns to Babylon.

In other words,
 the glory of the LORD is with the exiles in Babylon.
The presence of God is no longer with Jerusalem in Jerusalem.
The presence of God is with Jerusalem in Babylon.

And God promises that the future of Israel depends upon the exiles:

17 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’

And what is more, the restoration of Israel’s worship will come from the exiles:

18 And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations.

And if that is not enough, the Lord promises

19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord God.”

Yes, right now we are in the middle of the warnings –
 judgment is coming upon Jerusalem!

But our God is merciful and gracious,
 and even in the moment of his departure from Jerusalem,
 he promises that he *will* make all things right.

Israel’s problem is that they have a heart of stone.
We need a new heart.
We need a new Spirit –
 and when God himself gives us one heart and a new spirit,
 then we walk in his statutes and keep his rules.

We need the Spirit of the LORD to fall upon us!

Conclusion: Jerusalem in Babylon (11:22-25)

22 Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. 23 And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city.

Finally, the glory of the LORD departs from the city.
But it cannot leave just yet.

This is more important than you may realize.
The mountain on the east side of the city is the Mount of Olives

Go back to Matthew 24.
Jesus laments over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-24:3
Then he prophesies the coming destruction of the temple,
and then he goes to the Mount of Olives

Do you remember who Jesus is?
The glory of the LORD was God's presence with his people.
Who is Jesus?
Emmanuel!
God with us.

In Matthew 23-24
the glory of the LORD himself departs from the temple
and sat down on the mountain that is on the east side of the city
"leaving behind a magnificent but doomed structure."

24 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25 And I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had shown me.

So carried by the Spirit,
Ezekiel finally returns to the exiles and relates all that the LORD had shown him.

But remember that the exiles are the elders of Judah.
Back in 8:1 we were told that this whole vision takes place
with the elders of Judah sitting before the prophet.
And they had been involved in precisely the same things that Ezekiel had seen.
Some of them, no doubt, had participated in the Asherah worship
in the days of Manasseh.
Others had spent hours in their "room of pictures"
trusting in other gods – other powers – to save them.
Now what would they do?
Would they repent?
Or would they continue in their rebellion?

These elders of Judah need a new heart – a new Spirit.
And the good news is that the glory of the LORD has come to Babylon.
God himself is with us.

What does it mean to be Jerusalem in Babylon?

It means to deal with sin!

If the Holy Spirit is showing *you* your sin –
if, in the light of the glory of the face of Jesus Christ,
you are seeing your own sin revealed,
then you must repent.

“Sin is sin
and when it is exposed we are left with only two mutually exclusive alternatives –
repentance or hardening.

‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’” (Wright, 126)

What does it mean to be Jerusalem in Babylon?

I’m going to read to you from 2 Corinthians 3, starting in verse 4.

Paul is talking about Moses and Christ.

If you only hear the Moses and Christ references,
then you will miss the point of this passage.

Because Paul does not leap over the intervening centuries.

When you listen to Paul talking about the glory of the LORD
shining in the face of Moses,
you need to think of the long history of the glory of the LORD.

The glory of the LORD that Israel saw in the face of Moses,
was the same glory of the LORD that filled the tabernacle –
and was carried away by the Philistines from Shiloh.

It was the same glory of the LORD that filled the temple –
and departed, leaving the city open to attack.

So as you listen to Paul’s comments on the glory of the LORD –
please hear this in the light of Ezekiel’s comments about the departing glory:

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.

11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

4:1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.