

Ezekiel 8 – Abominations That Bring Desolation

By Holly Effiom

When we began this study of Ezekiel, we prefaced our study by reading the last few chapters of 2 Kings to focus our understanding on the kings of Judah and the temple in Jerusalem, and the events that led up to the captivity of the children of Israel.

Having completed Ezekiel 7, we will read Jeremiah 7 to hear God's own words at the time of the 2 Kings events. Jeremiah was preaching inside Jerusalem; Ezekiel, outside Jerusalem. Jeremiah preached to the children of Israel; Ezekiel, the multitude.

VV1-4

When is this vision taking place? How long over the first vision?
Where is Ezekiel? Is he in Jerusalem?
Who is with Ezekiel? Are these also captives?
What did Ezekiel see? Is it the same person he had seen before?
What did this person do to Ezekiel?
Did this person seem angry?
Where was Ezekiel taken? Specifically.
What is an "... image of jealousy..."?
Who was there in Jerusalem?

VV5-6

What does the glory of God direct Ezekiel to do?
What does Ezekiel see when he looks northward?
Where exactly is Ezekiel standing? How do you know?
What do we remember about the history of Jerusalem? Gen 14:18; 2 Sam 7
What does God ask Ezekiel?
What did the abominations cause God to do?
Had this ever happened before? Ex 33:7; Num 14:27-38
Was this the end of the "tour" for Ezekiel?
And, what did God promise about what he would see next?

VV7-13

Where is Ezekiel next taken?
What does Ezekiel see?
What does God direct Ezekiel to do?
So, was this room easily accessible and out in the open?
Did God tell Ezekiel to shield his eyes from the upcoming sight?
Can God look upon sin?
What did Ezekiel see?
How many men does Ezekiel see? Who are these men to the people of Israel? Why are they numbered? Num 11:14-30
Why did their altars need to be placed in the temple, and not in their own homes?
What are they holding? Why is this significant? Ex 18; Lev 27:28
Is it their words that say God is blind to what they are doing, or is it shown by their actions? What is being said explicitly or through their actions?
Does God promise things will get better the more Ezekiel looks?
Is this section of scripture describing Israel or the end-time nation?

Ezekiel 8 – Abominations That Bring Desolation

By Holly Effiom

LESSON: So, what are we seeing through Ezekiel’s description? We understand that some kind of statue or image was set up at the very entrance of this temple that is *supposedly* honoring the God of Israel, but then God directs us to look at the corruption lying beneath, in the leadership. The mention of seventy of the ancients hearkens back to Numbers 11, which is an operationalization of Jethro’s (Moses’ father-in-law) suggestion (Ex 18) and informs us that all the leadership in Israel was corrupt at that point.

Since chapter 7’s delineation between “thee”, “thy” and “them” and “theirs” – the “multitude” versus the singular “Israel” – we now have to try to consider if God is speaking of Israel or the final end-time nation. The numbering of the elders of this section reminded me of something Moses had said in Deuteronomy 32:8-9. “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” And, we know that the number of the children of Israel who first entered Egypt was 70, according to the Gen 46:27. I believe that the number of the elders being provided in this section of scripture is intentional and significant – to draw our eyes and mind back to the sons of Adam, as opposed to the children of Israel.

So, is the mention of censers a hint as to whom is under discussion? For the life of me, I could not find the scripture in which “censers” were made, when studying the tools of the temple. I recalled the altar of incense and the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16, in which Korah a priest, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Reuben (the first born among the children of Israel), sought to usurp leadership from Moses. God was very specific about Aaron collecting the censers that were left behind by the rebels and repurposing them. Num 16:36-40. And, I was reminded of God’s attitude toward devoted things in Lev 27:28.

Censers, for the children of Israel, are instruments devoted to the service of God. I believe the message of the censers in this section of scripture informs us that the leaders were using their “tools”, devoted to the service of God, to serve some other god. Comparing the chapter 7 “ornament” to the end-time nation – in which God did have a presence – the leadership will be using its creativity, effort, and talent in service to some *other* god.

VV14-15

Where was Ezekiel taken next?

Which way was it facing? North, northward, are repeated multiple times within this chapter 8. Why?

It makes me think of Isa 14:13; Ps 48:2.

What does Ezekiel see?

What does it mean for the women to be crying for Tammuz?

Why does God call out the activities of women in particular in this section?

Does God promise better things for Ezekiel to see?

LESSON: I googled Tammuz and discovered information on the rites from the pagan Babylonian religion https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hebrew_Roots/Neglected_Commandments/Idolatry/Easter. It was fascinating, but truly brought home the depths of the idolatry the children of Israel had been practicing, to have brought it into the temple. But also, it makes me understand that women being caught up in the sin meant that their children wouldn’t have a chance to learn what is right. So, not only is the current generation corrupted, but the corruption will reach future generations.

VV16-18

What does Ezekiel next see?

Where are the young men located?

Ezekiel 8 – Abominations That Bring Desolation

By Holly Effiom

Is there significance in the mention of their number – 25, is it related to the 24 courses of service that David established in the temple? What about the fact that they're young?

Is there significance in the direction their backs were pointed? What about the direction of their faces? What were the young men doing?

Considering the steps to judgment outlined in Ezekiel 7, what step is Jerusalem at, according to V17?

What will be God's response, according to V18?

LESSON: The children of Israel's actions pushed God out His sanctuary, and He therefore left it. I always think of "Ichabod" from 1 Sam 4:21 – "... the glory is departed from Israel..." whenever I read this section of scripture.

First Sam 4:21 describes the failure of Eli, the priest in Israel, to govern his sons – Hophni and Phinehas – and the result was Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas all dying and the ark of the covenant being captured by the Philistines and placed in the house of Dagon [which provides one of the funniest stories in the Bible, if you get a chance to read it! 1 Sam 5]. At that time, the wife of Phinehas went into labor, upon hearing of the deaths of the priest, her husband, *and* that the ark of the covenant had been taken! She named her child *I-chabod*.

We know that the children of Israel had gone through their "day" – pride, violence, and idolatry – that resulted in the 70-year judgment (desolations) of Israel.

Chapter 8 of Ezekiel shows us that the image of jealousy (a symbol of idolatry) in the entrance of the temple, the abomination – which is actually a culmination of a multitude of abominations during Jerusalem's time –and it will be the same with the "abomination of desolation" at the end time.