

House of Wisdom

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Ezekiel - Part II A - Second Vision

Introduction: Ezekiel likely was influenced heavily by the prophet Jeremiah, who was still prophesying in Judah while Ezekiel was appointed a watchman to those in captivity. Both refer to Judah and Israel as separate nations. Considering the timing of their writings, the ten of the tribes of Israel that had split off, leaving Judah and Benjamin, have already been taken over by Assyria and no longer exist as an independent nation (cf Jer 3:8-10). Because of Divine intervention, a remnant of Judah and Benjamin was preserved through the Babylonian captivity. Judah was being judged for her sins, as was Israel, and yet, there was encouragement for the captives, and hope for future restoration. This hope of future restoration was for both Israel and Judah, and they would be united: Jeremiah 3:12, 18: 12. *Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. ... 18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.* (Also see Eze 37:16-24) Ezekiel's writings apply to the Jew, and also to the last generation church as a type.

The temple layout: When dealing with directions, it is helpful to imagine a picture of the geography and locations of nations in reference to Israel. Particularly, in this vision, a general picture of the third temple is needed, which can be obtained from modern maps. The arrangement of the outer area of the temple was like a large rectangle oriented north and south, and the main entrance was a double gate on the south side, which led into to the court of the Gentiles. A gate on the north side of this court was called the sheep gate. Inside this large area were the smaller courts for Jewish women and men, and then the inner court of the temple, where the altar of burnt offering was located. These areas were arranged in a rectangle oriented east and west, with the gates on the east side. (It would be helpful to draw a diagram to which can be referred during your study).

Fourth through sixth month: Ezekiel 8:1: *And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.* Proverbs 21:1: *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will.* - for those willing to change. The first vision given Ezekiel was in the fourth month (Eze 1:1) of the year; and the second vision, 14 months later, was given in the sixth month. The timing of these months have spiritual significance, in that the fourth through the sixth months of the Jewish year are between the feasts of Pentecost and the Day of Trumpets, which is the first of the seventh month. Considering the feasts as spiritual types today, what do the three months between feasts represent?

When the Jews were released from captivity, they had to rebuild Jerusalem, a type of what everyone must do spiritually. Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, gained leave and is appointed Governor of Judea for the task of making Jerusalem a refuge for the remnant. His focus is repairing the wall. Nehemiah 6:15: *So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul (6th month), in fifty and two days.* There are fifty days between Passover and Pentecost - $5 \times 10 + 2$ - God's grace (5) combined with His word (10) brings unity (2), i.e. we make peace with God (Rom 5:1). This time period is also referred to as *the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest* (Ex 34:22).

In Symbolic language, Ezekiel describes the three month period which represents a spiritual time of wall building, laying stone upon stone. The breaches in our spiritual walls have been caused by our iniquity (Isa 30:12-13) By building a wall of concepts (stones - Rev 21:12; Eph 2:20-22), which is our salvation (Isa 60:18), we are brought to trust God (sin nature inactivated), and we are protected from false teachings (old man, old way of thinking & believing) of man. One key to help understand this is in the wave offerings, which were not to be offered until Israel entered the promised land (Lev 23:10): Leviticus 23:10-11,17: *10. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your (barley) harvest (no harvest in the wilderness) unto the priest: 11. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Fifty days later, at Pentecost, was the next wave offering: 17. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first fruits unto the Lord. From raw grain to baked bread indicates a change in a person's life, spiritual progression. Harvest is the spiritual time during which a group of people are prepared to sound the trumpets (give the gospel of God's love). *These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb - the 144,000 (cf Rev 14:1-5).**

A person entering their spiritual Pentecost is receiving the outpouring of the Father's spirit. To receive the Father's spirit is to receive His understanding, by means of the faith of Christ. Romans 5:1: *Therefore being [rendered righteous] by (Christ's - Gal 2:16) faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:* Figuratively, an individual's offering speaks of a change in attitude and understanding, but with leaven. Why two loaves? What is the leaven?

Two loaves: The raw grain for the first wave offering represents the purity and innocence of the believer when he decides to leave wilderness thinking. Intuitively, I knew something was not right in the church to which I belonged. When I decided to move on, I did not know that I was spiritually ignorant. It took years to get to the point that I can offer the second wave offering. The two loaves represent our understanding of Christ's life experiences as the Son of God and the Son of man but, with leaven. Offerings with leaven cannot be offered as a burnt offering (Lev 2:11; Ex 29:23-25), indicating that the leaven here is a negative symbol.

Leaven: Leaven is a symbol for hypocrisy in doctrines. Luke 12:1: *... he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* Matthew 16:12: *Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* When applied to a professed follower of Christ, hypocrisy is acting or speaking under a false pretense. When I left my church, I continued to study. My actions, however, were with false pretenses because I was acting on error of doctrines handed down by religious traditions. Everyone begins this way. It is not until we learn to listen to the voice of the Spirit that Christ can begin to correct us doctrinally and heal us emotionally. (This is salvation) The three months between Pentecost and the Day of Trumpets is that time when one comes to see their own experience in the seven churches and Jesus can open the sealed book (Rev ch 1-6), which is the self of each of us based on accumulated knowledge and experiences. It is a time when we come to know the fulness of the Father in Christ, and a clear purpose for the cross, and how it reveals the nature of God and man - THIS is a wall building time.

The God of Israel: Ezekiel 8:2, 4: 2. *Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber. 4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.* Ezekiel refers back to his first vision (3:22-23; 1:25-28), which is similar to John's vision (Rev 1:13-15). It is important to understand who is the God of Israel seen in the vision. John 1:18: *No man hath seen*

God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Exodus 24:9-10: 9. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10. And they saw the God of Israel:... The God of Israel in the Old Testament can be none other than Christ, the Son of the living God. This understanding will be important when we get to chapter nine.

The temple in Jerusalem: Ezekiel 8:3, 5: 3. *And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate, [the one facing north]; where was the seat of an image of [the] jealousy. [Hebrew] A symbol can represent something outward or inward. If outward, it is a type; if inward it applies to the heart as spiritual understanding. The Jew's temple in Jerusalem was the center of worship, but the actual temple is the heart (1 Cor 3:16-17), the center of worship for an individual and the central influence of their thinking. So, keep in mind that we are considering the heart of man and its spiritual condition, which is the temple that God desires to be filled with His glory (ideas, opinions, judgments). The physical temple indicated here, is the one to be built after the remnant are released by King Cyrus, the one to which the Messiah would eventually come: Haggai 2:6-7: 6. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.* Jesus came to this temple, and is coming in spirit to the temple of our hearts today.*

Image of the jealousy: We are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16), and a gate/door is a symbol for an entry into the heart. We have seven gates through which the adversary can enter - eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth. Ezekiel is brought in vision to the south gate. There is a "seat, or dwelling place" of jealousy (or, envy) in the entry. The word "jealousy" is derived from the Hebrew root *qana*'⁽⁷⁰⁶⁵⁾ meaning "to be zealous." While still in the world, and before coming to Christ, I was zealous for my work, and very often put my job and work relationships ahead of my family. Without realizing it, my job became an idol. All too often in our zealous pursuits, we put worldly things ahead of God, and they become idols. Proverbs 17:19: *He loves transgression that loves strife: and he that exalts his gate seeks destruction* - i.e. exalt the gate - lift up eyes, etc in pride. Here is the positive: Psalms 118:19-20: 19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: 20. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.* Let us enter into the city (mind) of God.

Directions: Ezekiel 8:5: 5. *Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of [the] jealousy in the entry. [Hebrew] North is derived from a Hebrew root meaning "to make dark," which gives the noun a meaning of dark, unknown. The Hebrew root for East means "to project self," making East a picture of self. South is used often to refer to Egypt, a symbol for worldly thoughts. Ezekiel is gazing from the south, a worldly way of thinking, toward the north, spiritual darkness and confusion, and he is shown an "image of jealousy" at the gate of the altar. The first gate is the surface stuff we can easily see, but this second gate is getting into the depth of the heart. Ezekiel 8:6: *And he said to me, Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations.* (RSV)*

Ezekiel 8:7-10: 7. *And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole (breach) in the wall. 8. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had dug in the wall, behold a door. 9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.* In verse five, he was gazing at the gate, now he is brought to the gate, and told to examine what is on the wall which encompasses the temple and brass altar. The beasts and creeping things

are the imagery, things representing unclean spiritual thoughts harbored in religious zealotry. These are ungodly thoughts that we have received and harbored because, either we do not know any better, or we do not know how to get rid of them. The wall consists of the concepts we considered to be our salvation; it surrounds the city (mind-set) and the gate is the entrance into it. This is a condition of the hearts of people being described.

Seventy elders: Ezekiel 8:11-12: *11. And there stood before them (the idols, unclean beasts) seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord sees us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth. A chamber is another symbol for the mind/heart: Proverbs 24:4: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* The 70 Elders are in reference to the leaders established by Moses to help govern and minister to the people (Num 11:14:17). While outwardly, the 70 represent leaders of the church, inwardly they are your foremost thoughts received from those who have influenced you, and which cause you to offer false incense, a symbol of prayer (Rev 8:4). I can remember praying for a wife. However, I did not have the patience to wait on the Lord, so nothing has worked out in that regard. James 4:1-3: *1. From whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* Many times I have felt depressed and forsaken, yet, intellectually, I know the Lord has not forsaken me.

Worship of Tammuz: Ezekiel 8:13-14: *13. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.* In this temple, the north gate is where the sacrifices were killed. Just west of this gate is Golgotha, the hill of the skull where Jesus was crucified, and near there the tomb in which he was buried. Like the men, instead of weeping for their sins, they wept for the idol. According to the heathen legend, this lover of Venus (Istar, a goddess from where we get the name Easter) and most beautiful youth, is said to have been slain in our month of June. In the 2nd day of their 4th month rebellious Jews kept an annual festival in his honor, at which he is lamented by the women as though he were dead, and then afterwards celebrated in songs as having come to life again. These rites are tied to sun worship. When this myth is understood, it can be seen as a type of the modern Christian's incorrect understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus, his resurrection being celebrated on Easter, a Pagan holiday adapted to Christian worship.

Twenty-five priests: Ezekiel 8:15-16: *15. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.* David organized the sons of Aaron into 24 orders under Aaron (1 Chr 24:1-2, 19). Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, performed one of these orders (Lk 1:5-9). Each time the abomination is greater than the one before, and goes from the common man all the way to the high priest. Outwardly, these men are types today of church pastors and theologians. This is a greater abomination because they lead the whole church astray. Inwardly, they represent your old man which has not yet been put to death, and you are your own high priest. Notice Revelation 4:4: *Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.* (RSV) The 24 elders here (6X4 = earthly man), represent your old man as being dead, indicating that man is no longer your high priest because now, Jesus is your high Priest, and you are not serving under man, but under Christ. Thus we have only 24 elders wearing golden crowns (having Christ's faith) and clothed in white (having Christ's righteousness).

These men are standing between the brass altar and the temple with their backs to the temple and facing east (self), and worshipping the sun (own understanding of God). Ezekiel 11:1-3: *1. Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looks eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: 3. Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.* In modern language the 25 men are saying: Build your house in this city - the way I believe. Do not leave our understanding of God (old Jerusalem - Gal 4:25-26), we have the truth and the correct understanding of Messiah (Mark 13:5-6).

Ezekiel 8:17-18: *17. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence (or, injustice, falsehood, wrong), and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.* The result of the Lord being provoked to anger/wrath is that He turns away from those who refuse to listen (Rom 1:18-32). The branch to their nose is proverbial, for “they turn up the nose in scorn,” expressing their insolent security in what they believe and are doing. Today the literal lands are filled with violence, as an outward picture the corrupt spiritual minds. When God begins to reveal the truth to all who are seeking and attempting to live it, their eyes will be opened to see their own abominations. You could say, that a church is a mind-set, as the direction of the church will be as the majority thinks. The decline in morality today is not due to corrupt politicians, rather the corrupt politicians are a result of corrupt churches and its leaders. Keep in mind though, salvation is not by groups, but individually. Therefore, every person is responsible to make an effort to seek to know God’s will for themselves, and to apply His instructions to the heart. Verse 18 is seen to be fulfilled in chapter nine, which will be discussed in the next part of the study.

Some conclusions: The Apostles understood present truth from the allegories and parables of the Old Testament and the symbols contained in them. No less today, it requires spiritual eyes and ears to hear the voice of the spirit as it impresses the heart. Jesus told His disciples: Matthew 13:16-17: *16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* Why did those in the past not see them? Because it was not for their time (1 Pet 1:9-12)!

I, like every other Christian, have read the Bible thinking that because I accepted Jesus I was under grace and had the faith of Christ already. Nothing could be further from the truth and more deceptive than for a person to believe that they are immediately, upon accepting Jesus as their Savior, cleansed by His blood (1 Jn 1:7) or born again (Jn 3:3), when they do not even understand how to be cleansed. I know, because I have been there.

Ezekiel’s visions are giving, allegorically and in symbolic language, details of the condition of men’s hearts. Take the 70 elders plus the 25 priest, put them and all the abominations in your own heart. God is attempting to correct our way of thinking and show us how to overcome sin in our personal lives. He is building a spiritual wall around a spiritual city - new Jerusalem, the mind-set of Christ, no matter the level of understanding we begin with: *I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.* (Hos 11:4) Amen.