

## Chapter 11

**Date:** The 5<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 3,169 (based on the Hebrew Calendar),  
or Sunday, August 13, 592 BC

**Historical Setting:** The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captive's in the exile community of Tel-abib just outside the capital city of Babylonia, Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar reigns during the entire time period of this chapter. King Zedekiah rules Jerusalem as a "Puppet" King under King Nebuchadnezzar's control. Jerusalem is forced to pay tribute to the Babylonians, which by 588 BC, Zedekiah stopped paying. The events of this chapter occur just prior to, or during, the time period in which Zedekiah made this bold decision. This caused great anger on the part of the Babylonians, most especially King Nebuchadnezzar. King Zedekiah and most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were stiff-necked, prideful, and even outright wicked. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

**Preview:** The prophet Ezekiel is involved in a spiritual vision, which began in chapter eight of the Book of Ezekiel. This chapter begins with Ezekiel being brought in the spirit to the east gate of Solomon's Temple. There he stands amongst twenty-five of the leaders of Israel. Two of the leaders are mentioned specifically by the prophet's heavenly tour guide, whom we suppose to be the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord explains to Ezekiel the wicked actions and attitudes that the leaders of Israel possessed. The Lord commands the prophet to cry repentance to the leaders of Israel in his vision. As he does so, one of the leaders dies before him. This bothered Ezekiel and caused him to plead with the Lord on behalf of the Israelites. The Lord explained to the prophet that amidst the destruction of Israel, there would also be many that shall be scattered over the earth. Furthermore, there shall come a day when the

Lord will gather Israel back together again. The vision ends and Ezekiel's spirit is returned to Babylon where he sat in his home among the exiles. The chapter closes with Ezekiel relating all that he saw and heard in the vision contained in chapters eight through eleven to his Hebrew brothers in Babylon.



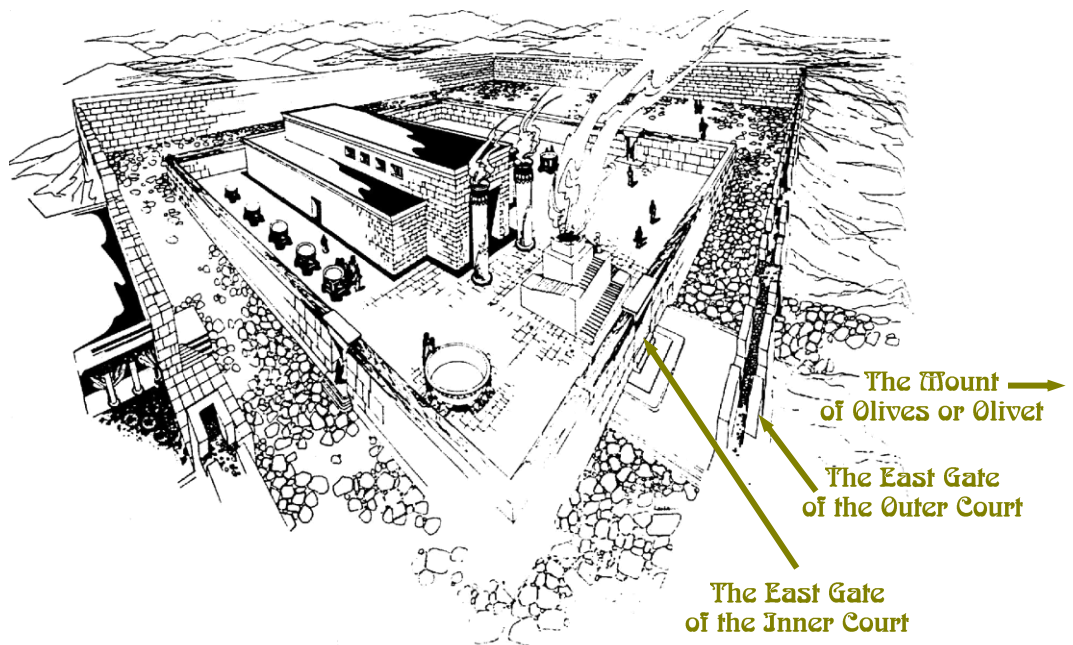
**Verse 1:** **“Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD’S house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.”**

Chapter eleven is a continuation of a vision Ezekiel received in Babylonia. The vision started in chapter eight and will conclude at the close of this chapter. The first phrase of this verse might be an indication that even though the vision is continuing, the scene might be changing. The term "*the spirit lifted me up*" is typically used at the start of a vision or a revelation. Though Ezekiel was right in the middle of the vision, chapter eleven might simply be another act in the same play, so to speak. Commentary on this phrase (*the spirit lifted me up*) is found in chapter eight, so repetition is not necessary.

At the close of chapter ten, Ezekiel states that "*every one*" gathered at the east gate of the temple court to watch the Lord and the four creatures ascend to heaven. The assumption is that Ezekiel was one of them. In this verse, one might conclude that Ezekiel watched the events in chapter ten from a distance. This assumption is made by the fact that the spirit lifted him up and took him to the east gate. The other assumption might be that chapter eleven is a new scene altogether. Based on the conclusion of this chapter, the first is probably correct.

The prophet Ezekiel finds himself, in the spirit, standing at the east gate of the temple court looking towards the east. This would direct Ezekiel's vision to the famed Mount of Olives or Olivet. This mount has significant meaning to Israel's, as well as humanity's, future. It was at the foot of this mount that the Lord and Savior would atone for the sins of the world in the garden of Gethsemane. It was upon the Mount of Olives that the Savior would ascend from His friends for the last time after His resurrection. It will also be upon this Mount that the Savior's feet will touch at His Second Coming.

## Solomon's Temple and Complex



In chapter ten, the prophet described the group standing at the gate as "every one"; this verse defines the group as being twenty-five men. The twenty-five men are further defined as being princes of the people. The term "prince", when used in the Old Testament typically represents leaders. In the Book of Kings, we read of the princes of the provinces (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 20:14) who were probably local governors or magistrates. Evidently, the twenty-five men represent the political leaders of Israel. Were there twenty-five governmental leaders in Israel at that time? The answer is unclear. There is however some interesting symbolism associated with the number twenty-five. The number twenty-five is the number five squared. The number five represents worldliness or that which is of the world. The square represents completeness and totality. The twenty-five men, in fact, might not literally represent twenty-five individuals. It might represent the worldly leaders of Israel in their completeness.

Among the men present at the gate were two men mentioned specifically. The two men were leaders in Israel by the names of Jaazaniah and Pelatiah. It might be recalled that Jaazaniah was mentioned in chapter eight of Ezekiel's Book. As Ezekiel saw the governing counsel of Jews, the renowned Sanhedrin, he saw one among them named Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Chapter eight



records the acts of the Sanhedrin, which included Hypocrisy, idol worship, and all manner of sin (Ezekiel 8:11-12). Interestingly enough, Jaazaniah was the only name mentioned from among the men. The Jaazaniah spoken of in chapter eleven appears to be another Jaazaniah. The Jaazaniah of chapter eleven is the son of Azur. Might these two men be the same man? Given the accuracy of translation in the Bible there is obviously a chance that they are. Given the fact that the current Bible labels them as separate men, our commentary will address them as such. The second man mentioned in chapter eleven was Pelatiah the son of Benaiah.

The name Jaazaniah means, "*whom Jehovah hears*". It is unclear as to the details of Jaazaniah's life or personality. Jaazaniah's father's name was Azur or Azzur, meaning "*he that assists*" or "*helper*". There appears to be no information available regarding Jaazaniah's father other than his name. Subsequently, Jaazaniah is almost as much of a mystery as his father. Jaazaniah's associate was a man named Pelatiah. The name Pelatiah means "*delivered by Jehovah*". Again, we have no other information regarding this man other than the name of his father. Pelatiah's father was a man named Benaiah. The name Benaiah means "*Jehovah has built*" or "*made by the Lord*". When searching the scriptures, the name Benaiah should not be confused with the Benaiah of Solomon's, David's, or Ezra's era. The Benaiah of Ezekiel's vision doesn't appear to be related to any other Benaiah in the Old Testament. The four names mentioned in this verse in chapter eleven of Ezekiel's Book have one thing in common; we know very little about them. We do know through Ezekiel's comment that they were governmental officials. They were leaders of the people of Israel.

**Verse 2-3:** **“Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.”**

Here we find the Lord is once again talking to the prophet. It should be recalled that for a long period, most of chapter ten, the Lord was not heard from. We assumed it was He that ascended with the cherubim to heaven. We know that according to Ezekiel's own words, the glory of God ascended to heaven. Since the scene appears to have changed in verse one of chapter eleven it is possible that the Lord has reappeared on the scene. It is also plausible that the Lord never left Ezekiel's side but the two of them watched the vision together much as present day people watch a movie. Whatever the case may be, the interpretation of the chapters is probably unchanged.

The Lord addresses Ezekiel in this verse in the same fashion as he has throughout the Book of Ezekiel, the son of man. It is by this title that we assume it is the Lord addressing Ezekiel. The Lord takes time to explain to Ezekiel who the twenty-five men are. He states they are those that "devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in" the city of Jerusalem.

The Lord explains to Ezekiel that even though He has sent prophets to warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem of their fate if they continued in wickedness, the leaders of the city counseled in opposition. They told the citizens of Jerusalem that they had nothing to fear. They should continue about their businesses, expand the city, and go on as if all was well. This verse might ring a familiar bell in the mind of the Book of Mormon scholar. In the Book of Mormon we read, "*Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God--he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 28:7-8). The attitude of the Israelites was nailed on the head by Nephi. Even though this passage speaks of the last days, the prophet was close in describing the people that Ezekiel had just left behind. Since Nephi links our day with the Israelites of Ezekiel's days, we should pay close attention to the outcome of their lives. The attitude displayed here resulted in destruction both physically and spiritually. It is now our choice to accept this attitude and live with the consequences or rid ourselves of it and accept the Lord's blessings.

The message of the wicked leaders of Jerusalem is conveyed symbolically by the Lord when he says, "*this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh*". This is how the Israelites viewed their city. They compared it to a caldron. A caldron (or cauldron) is a vessel for boiling flesh, for either ceremonial or domestic purposes. The American Heritage Dictionary defines as caldron as follows.



**Caldron** also cauldron *n.* **1.** A large vessel, such as a kettle or vat, used for boiling **2.** A state or situation of great distress or unrest felt to resemble a boiling kettle or vat. *Latin calidus meaning warm*

The term caldron is typically associated with witches; however, that is not the case here. A caldron was a very normal and typical

cooking vessel in ancient Israel. The term is used several times in the Old Testament. In Samuel we read that as the Israelites came before the priest to offer sacrifice they would strike their fleshhook on "the pan, or kettle, or **caldron**, or pot..." (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:14). In Chronicles we read that "the other holy offerings sod they in pots, and in **caldrons**, and in pans, and divided them speedily among all the people" (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 35:13). To the Israelites, a caldron with flesh in it might have meant something more than just a meal. This verse could very well be referencing the ordinance of sacrifice. The sacrifice symbolized the repentance and forgiveness of Israel. It made them clean before the Lord. It is possible that this statement was yet another misguided attitude adopted by the Israelites. They felt that the city of Jerusalem was the caldron; a holy vessel of the Lord. They also felt they were the flesh; the sacrifice or offering to the Lord. This would imply they felt that despite all of their actions, they were favored and clean before deity.

Another angle on this phrase might be that the caldron represented the strength and protection of Jerusalem, while the flesh represents man. One symbolic use of the word "flesh" is that of mortality and human life in this world. Because Jerusalem was built on a mount with some substantial valleys on its sides it was a natural stronghold. In addition, the Israelites had built a complex of city walls that made the city almost impossible to conquer. This is comparable to a caldron, which was made of heavy metal forged to withstand extreme abuse. Under this protection, Israel had become the melting pot of the Middle East. The dictionary defines a melting pot as follows.

**Melting Pot** *n.* **1.** A container in which a substance is melted **2.** A place where immigrants of different cultures or races form an integrate society.

The Israelites, despite the counsels of God, had allowed the immigration of all walks of life. They not only allowed other cultures to live among them, but they adopted their ways. They truly became a melting pot, taking many societies and molding them into one. The main problem with this is the fact that the society of God became lost in the process.

The Israelites obviously didn't see anything wrong with these actions. They felt the security of their city and the profitability of growth. Their leaders counseled them to ignore the Lord's prophets and build houses expanding their community.

**Verse 4:** "Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man."

After seeing all of the sins of Israel, standing among their leaders, and hearing the words and attitudes of Israel's leaders, the Lord commands Ezekiel to prophesy against them. In other words, Ezekiel was commanded to reveal the judgements of God that were to come against them for their decisions. This task was to be performed while in the vision.

**Verse 5:** **“And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak: Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.”**

There is a subtle yet powerful message contained in this verse. It opens by saying the spirit of the Lord fell upon Ezekiel. Ezekiel was just commanded to prophesy on behalf of the Lord. Note that once commanded, he did not do so according to his own words. The Holy Ghost came to him and directed his words. As we perform work in the name of our Father we should wait for, invite, and pray for the direction of the Holy Ghost. Without this guidance our words are little more than our own, and likewise they lack the power to penetrate the hearts of man.

The prophet was guided by the Spirit of God to tell the leaders of Israel that their thoughts cannot be hidden from the Lord. Despite their continued effort to carry out the tasks of the Temple, their sins could not be hid. The prophet Alma, while contending with a man named Zeezrom who sought to destroy the church of God, taught, *“For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence”* (Alma 12:14). This is the same message that Ezekiel was to speak to the leaders of Israel.

**Verse 6:** **“Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.”**

We know that murder and acts of violence were on the rise in Jerusalem, but this scripture leads us to the mental image of bodies lying amongst the streets. Though it should not be surprising the Hebrews were taken to murder, there is probably more to the meaning of this verse. We know from the Book of Mormon record that the Hebrews were willing to stop at nothing to get worldly gain. One might recall the story of Laban who sought to kill Nephi and his brothers that he might obtain their wealth. It could be theorized however that the

slain in the streets that the leaders are said to have multiplied were spiritually dead as well as physically. The term street might be a symbolic term used to represent Jerusalem as a dwelling place. The leaders of Israel had supported greed, selfishness, and immorality. They also supported cultic human sacrifices and murder of those that opposed their beliefs and lifestyles. Despite the gross number of offenses associated with these sins, there were far more casualties in the deaths they brought about spiritually among the people.

**Verse 7:** **“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.”**

The Lord takes the phrase that was used to symbolize Israel's attitudes and turns it against them. Just a couple of verses ago, the Lord said the Israelites felt they were the flesh and the city was the caldron. It was stated the flesh might represent the holy sacrificial offering to the Lord, which cleansed Israel. Here the Lord clarifies that they were not the flesh, but rather those they had slain were the flesh. This would make the offering unclean, unworthy, and an abomination before the Lord. As a result, the Lord was going to remove the Israelites from the city.



The city of Jerusalem was strong, but without the strength of the Lord the Jews were left without their true strength. The Lord released His anger by empowering the Babylonians. *“And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:19). The caldron was truly destroyed. Those that survived the attack were taken captive into Babylon. The flesh was taken out of the midst of the caldron.

**Verse 8:** **“Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD.”**

The Israelites were more than familiar with war and invasion. They had experienced the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Philistines, and many other civilizations in war. With years of threatening neighbors, the Israelites had developed somewhat of a paranoia. They feared attack and invasion. The Lord uses the symbol of the sword to represent war,





invasion, and death. In answer to Israel's sins, the Lord is giving Israel that which they fear most. The sword will be sent to Israel in the form of the Babylonians.



The Book of Chronicles says that the Lord "*brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:17).

**Verse 9:** "And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgements among you."

The Book of Chronicles records that the Israelites "*that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:20). This is the prophet's message of this verse. The Israelites that survived the Babylonian invasion were brought out of Jerusalem. They were delivered into the hands of stranger or foreigners. These strangers were more than just the Babylonians. After Babylon fell, the Jews were scattered between many nations. A study of post Babylonian Jewish captivity acts as a testimony of the judgements the Lord issued on Jerusalem. The Jews would experience hardships wherever they were driven. They found judgement by the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Germans, Arabs, and many other cultures.

**Verse 10:** "Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the LORD."



The Israelites, no matter where they ended up, suffered the fate of the sword. Again, the sword represents destruction, war, affliction, suffering, and invasion. The Israelites would live lives of tribulation. They were a marked people having been judged by the Lord. They would face a future of opposition without their greatest defense, the God of Israel. This was a position to which the Israelites were not necessarily accustomed. In times past, the tribulations they underwent was always short lived. It took just a humble people calling upon their God for relief to come. This time however, the judgement was much larger.



The grand verdict against the Jews was said to have been passed in the borders of Israel. What were the borders of Israel during Ezekiel's time? Literally, they were the national borders of the Kingdom of Judah. The capital of the Kingdom of Judah was Jerusalem. It's borders stretched from the Dead Sea to the east to the city of Gerar in the West and from the city of Mizpah in the north to the Egyptian Desert in the south. The verdict however was issued for the most part in Jerusalem. The Lord's prophets had warned and pleaded with the Jews in their capital city. Upon rejecting the prophets, the Israelites condemned themselves. They basically rejected all of the mercy the court, so to speak, had to offer. The Lord's judgement came upon the Israelites in the form of the Babylonians invading their own borders.



**Verse 11:** **"This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but J will judge you in the border of Jsrael:"**

In response to the attitude of the Jews, conveyed by the Lord earlier in the chapter, the Lord states the city won't be their caldron. It would not act as their protection, or their supplication before the Lord. It's walls would not stand invincible, nor would it's borders sustain the punishments of a fierce Babylonian army. The Israelites were of the opinion that they were the flesh in the protective caldron. They felt they were the symbolic sacred offering of the Lord. As such, they felt they were beyond the judgement, destruction, or reproach. Even so, the Lord states they shall be removed from the city or their protective status. The Israelites will even witness their protective caldron crumble around them and their judgement will occur on ground they called sacred and safe.



**Verse 12:** **"And ye shall know that J am the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgements, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you."**

A message is conveyed in verse twelve that has been repeated several times in the Book of Ezekiel by the Lord. One of the major purposes with the Lord's judgements was to make it perfectly clear to the Israelites who the Lord was.

The Israelites were a confused and misguided people. Their leaders taught them to stray from the commands of God by following the customs and religions of other cultures. A heathen is one who has no belief in the God of Israel. The Israelites chose to follow the idolatrous way of their heathen neighbors. Just to show how devoted the Israelites were, they couldn't even be faithful to the heathens. In chapter five of Ezekiel's Book we read, *"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgements, neither have done according to the judgements of the nations that are round about you"* (Ezekiel 5:7).

**Verse 13:** **"And it came to pass, when J prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell J down upon my face, and**

**cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"**

After the Holy Ghost had given Ezekiel direction as to the words he should speak, he fulfilled the commandment of the Lord and prophesied against the leaders of Israel. It should be kept in mind that this episode is taking place within Ezekiel's vision. In his vision, Ezekiel condemned the Israelite leaders as directed. As he did so, one of the leaders mentioned in verse one dies. This has some symbolic significance. It is a representation of the power of the Lord's word. With the Lord's words, mountains can be moved, nations can rise, and life can be ended. Ezekiel saw first hand the power of the Lord's word. As he uttered the words of the Lord he brought about the death of Pelatiah.

This verse goes on to show Ezekiel's sensitivity. Despite the wicked things the Lord had shown him, he was deeply bothered by Pelatiah's death. Though his death represented the death of thousands of wicked Israelites, the prophet fell upon his knees and pleaded with the Lord for leniency. He asked the Lord a question. The same question he had posed to the Lord at least once before. Ezekiel was concerned that the Lord would fully extinguish His people.

**Verse 14-15: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession."**

The episode of this chapter is quite interesting. The vision appears to be interactive between the leaders of Israel and Ezekiel, while at the same time the Lord is able to converse with Ezekiel as if the scene was stopped or at least the other characters in the scene were not able to see and hear the discussion between the Lord and His prophet.

In response to the question posed to the Lord by Ezekiel, "*Wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?*", the Lord responds by saying that the "*men of thy kindred*" were also part of Israel's wicked attitude. The Septuagint and Syriac record the phrase "*men of thy kindred*" as "*thy fellow exiles*". A remnant of Israel had already been preserved by the Lord. This remnant however was far from worthy of the Lord's blessing. They had preached and taught in Israel that God was not needed. The land which the Lord had given them was no longer a sacred trust, but rather a possession in which they felt they owed nothing to the Lord.

The rest of the answer to Ezekiel's questions lies in the verses hereafter.

**Verse 16:** **"Therefore say. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."**

As a consolation, the Lord tells Ezekiel to preach to the exiles that because of their sins He will displace them among the heathen or idolatrous nations of the earth. This truly came to pass as the Lord scattered them throughout present day Europe, Russia, the Middle East, The far East, and Africa. The House of Israel was even scattered as far as the America's. It might have been disputed that this fate was almost equal to death given most of the Jews experienced tremendous and extreme hardships amongst their new nations. They became a despised and loathed people in many societies.

The consoling part of the Lord's answer to Ezekiel comes at the end of this verse. Despite His judgement, the Lord promises to be to the Israelites as a little sanctuary wherever they are driven. This is significant! The Israelites viewed the Temple of Solomon as the one and only sanctuary of the Lord God on earth. They came to the temple as the only place on the face of the earth where they might commune with Him. Since *"all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:14), the Lord brought about the destruction of the Temple. Without this edifice, or even access to it, the children of Israel felt their pipeline to God was severed. In verse sixteen, the Lord promises He will be there for them. In other words, if they humble themselves, and come unto the Lord, their prayers would be heard and the sacred relationship between Israel and God would once again exist.

**Verse 17:** **"Therefore say. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."**

In further answering Ezekiel's question to the Lord from verse thirteen, the Lord give the Israelites a promise. Their judgement will not last forever. The Lord promises to gather His children from among the heathen countries to which He had scattered them. In this verse, the Lord states He will gather them from the people. The word *"people"* is the translation for a Hebrew word that should more appropriately read, *"peoples of nations"*. Furthermore, He will gather them home to Israel

where they shall once again possess their Promised Land. It might be recalled that in 1948 AD Israel was again established as a state, and the gathering commenced. We are privileged to live in the age of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

**Verse 18:** **“And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.”**

This verse probably was not as clear to the people that Ezekiel prophesied to as it is to us. As Israel once again became a nation, they began to drive out the other cultures that had deeply rooted themselves and their ways into Jerusalem. Our day has seen wars and bloodshed as Israel has had conflict with Arabs, Muslims, Palestinians and many other cultures. They are in the process, whether they are aware of this or not, of fulfilling the prophesy of this verse. They are removing the abomination and detestable things. This is not to say that Arabs or any other people are detestable, but their ways are in the sight of the Lord.

**Verse 19:** **“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:”**

As the Lord brings to pass the gathering of Israel, Jerusalem and the nation of Israel will start the process of purification. They will again turn their desires to their forgotten God. As they do this, the Lord will begin to perform miracles within them. In this verse, the Lord uses the symbol of the heart to convey His message. The heart symbolizes the center of emotion and feeling. It is the heart that represents our ability to repent, feel remorse, and love. The Lord equates the Israelites with a stony heart. The term stone symbolizes hardness, immovability, and lifelessness. In the Bible, a stone heart is equated with death. In Samuel we read, *“... it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone” (1 Samuel 25:37)*. The Israelites were beyond feeling God's spirit. They were spiritually dead, with each man following the path that he felt would bring him the most joy.



The Lord promises that in our day, His spirit will again work upon the Israelites. He says in this verse that He will give them one heart. This is significant if you take into account the scripture that reads, *“if ye are not one, yea are not mine (Doctrine and Covenants*

38:27)". Having one heart would mean they had one purpose, one thought, one desire, and one God. The Lord explains He will do this by putting a new spirit in the Israelites. Does this mean they will literally get a new spirit? No. It is a symbol of putting away habits and ways of the past and adopting the ways of the Lord. This is significant for us since we know that "*...the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to **the desire of their hearts***" (*Doctrine and Covenants 137:9*). If our hearts are spiritually dead our judgements will be harsh. This would be symbolically represented by a stone heart. If our hearts are full of the spirit of God, and we have as our only desire to follow Him, our judgement will be eternal increase. This would be symbolically represented by a heart of flesh; alive and beating.



**Verse 20:** **"That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."**

It is interesting that once we have one heart, and a new spirit is in us (the spirit of God), then we can live the laws of God. Reversing this thought, if we are not one in heart and we don't have the spirit of God in us, it becomes impossible to keep the commandments of God. It is also interesting that until we do all these things, we cannot be His people nor will He be our God. It all goes back to the scripture, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (*John 14:15*).

**Verse 21:** **"But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD."**

What of those that refuse, even to the bitter end, to follow God's commands? This verse leaves little question as to their fate. This whole concept should not have surprised the Israelites. They had been taught this concept from at least the days of Moses. Moses recorded, "*But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all*

*that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me...*" (Deuteronomy 28:15-20). In fact, those in Israel were to experience this first hand. In the Book of Chronicles we read, *"And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:15-16). Such will also be our fate if we heed not the words of the prophets.

This verse ends the dialog between the prophet Ezekiel and the Lord contained in the vision recorded in chapters eight through eleven in the Book of Ezekiel.

**Verse 22:** **"Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above."**

Again, we find that this portion of Ezekiel's vision has the ability to transfer between scenes. In chapter ten, Ezekiel witnesses the four Cherubim rise into heaven. In this verse, in chapter eleven, we find ourselves in the same setting, almost as if Ezekiel went back in his vision or relived that portion of the vision. The cherubim, who are a special designation of angels, lifted up their wings. Their wings symbolize their ability to move and act. With this ability they rose, with their glorified bodies represented by the wheels, into the sky above the east gate. Ezekiel and the twenty-five leaders of Israel stood at the gate and witnessed that the glory of God was above them. This glory is most probably a symbolic term for the Savior, Jesus Christ. Again, what is occurring here is Israel is losing the presence of their God.



**Verse 23:** **"And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city."**

The presence of God, represented by the word "glory", went up from the midst of the city. This representation shows the separation between Israel and their God. As the glory of God left Jerusalem, it

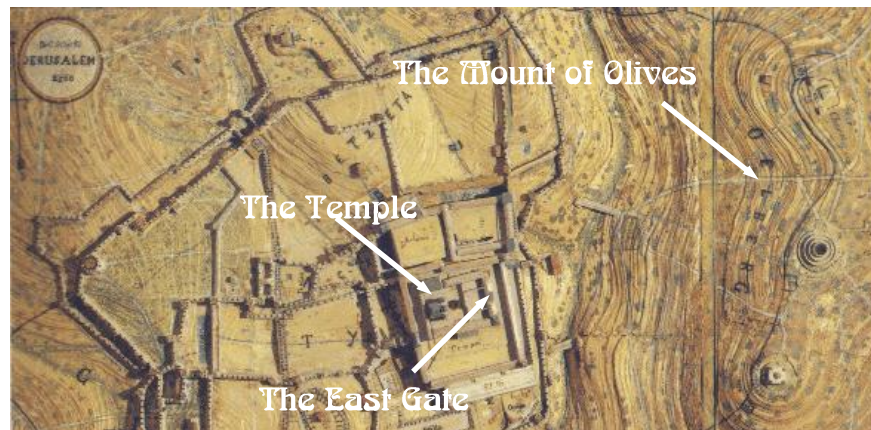


went eastward until it came to a mountain. When it came to this mountain it stood upon it. There are several interesting points with this passage. If we assume the glory spoken of is indeed Jesus Christ, then it is even more interesting to know that the mountain to the east of the Temple in Jerusalem is none other than the Mount of Olives. It is upon this very mount that Zechariah prophesied the Savior would return at His Second Coming. The prophet wrote, *"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south"* (Zechariah 14:4). Later in the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel is allowed to see the Temple in Jerusalem of the last days. The prophet observes the same images, which were associated with this vision, will return to the temple in similar fashion from when the Savior left. He records,



*"Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me"* (Ezekiel 43:1-6).

### A Portion of Jerusalem around the Time of Christ



**Verse 24-25:** “Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had showed me.”

After seeing and observing all the things recorded in chapters eight through eleven, the spirit of God returns Ezekiel to his home in Babylonia (which is often referred to as Chaldea). It should be recalled that this vision started while the prophet sat at home amongst the elders of Israel, or those leaders among the Israelites who were with Ezekiel in captivity. It is speculated they were gathered around the prophet in anticipation of hearing the words of God. This might have been anticipated due to the fact that he probably just finished the 430 days of lying on his side, eating rationed food, not speaking, and having his head and beard shaved. All of the elements from Ezekiel's heavenly directed skit must have puzzled the exiles. They obviously felt the spirit testify that the man named Ezekiel was indeed a prophet of God, but probably did not fully understand the meaning of the skit. This vision served as an interpretation of the symbolic act, which Ezekiel carried out among them. It is an interesting point to note that God never presents symbols or messages to us that he does not interpret for us. It often takes effort on our part in searching for the interpretation, but he will not leave us to our own interpretations. The leaders of the Israelite exiles were obviously searching for the answers to God's message. After being returned, in spirit, to his home, the prophet Ezekiel says the vision went up from him. In other words, it stopped. He then fulfilled his duty as a prophet and told the exiles all that he saw. Unfortunately, we do not have record of their reaction to his message. One can imagine the many different emotions that were probably displayed by the exiles; grief, sorrow, anger, remorse, regret, and so on.



**Chapter  
Summary:**

Chapter eleven serves as the end to a spiritual experience that Ezekiel started in chapter eight. The prophet starts chapter eleven by standing at the east gate of the temple in Jerusalem. He is there in spirit and not in body. He is standing amongst the leaders of Israel, who number twenty-five. The Lord explains to Ezekiel the sins that the leaders have committed and commands him to prophesy against them. Ezekiel does this in his vision. He listens to the whisperings of the spirit and speaks out against the twenty-five men as directed. As he does so, one of the men dies right before his eyes. The prophet feels the great power of God contained in the words he uttered. The prophet drops to his knees and pleads with the Lord not to totally destroy all of Israel. The Lord promises to save a portion of Israel, which he says he will scatter amongst the world. While they are scattered, the Lord will sanctify them and prepare them to be gathered in the distant future. The Lord promised that one-day Israel will be a nation again, and would once again worship him with pure hearts having one purpose in Him.

After being taught from on high, Ezekiel was returned home and the vision was closed. After the close of the vision, he shares his sacred experience with the exiled leaders of Israel that are gathered in his home.



