

# Ezekiel 08 - Ezekiel's Vision; Reasons for the Departure of the Shekinah Glory from the Temple

## I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

- (2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)
  - (A) Imminent judgment (Ezek 4:1—11:25)
    - (c) One vision showing cause of the siege (8:1—11:25)
      - (i) What Ezekiel saw in the Temple (8:1-18)
        - (a) Introduction (8:1-3a)
          - (1) Date (8:1a)
          - (2) Place: Ezekiel's house (8:1b)
          - (3) Ezekiel transported to the Temple (8:2-3a)
        - (b) Sins in the Temple (8:3b-18)
          - (1) Idol of jealousy (8:3b-6)
          - (2) Idolatrous paintings on the walls (8:7-13)
          - (3) Tammuz worship (8:14-15)
          - (4) Sun worship (8:16-18)

## Ezekiel 8

- (c) One vision showing cause of the siege (8:1—11:25)
  - (i) What Ezekiel saw in the Temple (8:1-18)
    - (a) Introduction (8:1-3a)
      - (1) Date (8:1a)
      - (2) Place: Ezekiel's house (8:1b)

1 Now it came about in the **sixth year**, on the fifth day of the **sixth month**, as I was sitting in my house with **the elders of Judah** sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD **fell upon me** there.

1 It came about in the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, as I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell on me there.

1 In the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, I had just sat down in my house, with the elders of Judah seated in front of me. All of a sudden, the hand of the Lord GOD touched me

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.

- This vision is dated 14 months (413 days according to the Hebrew calendar) after Ezekiel's call in 1:1-2
- During this time, Ezekiel received a vision after completing the 430 days of lying on his side. It appears that this vision came to him during the last two weeks of that 430 day period, while he was lying on his left side
- Although he continued to be confined to his bed in Babylon, in the vision he was transported to Jerusalem into the Temple itself
- "...sixth year" - from the captivity of King Jejoiachin, who was deported in 597 BC. The "sixth year" from that date means that the year Ezekiel saw this vision was 592 BC.
- "...sixth month" - *elul*, corresponds with August/September on our calendar
- The fifth day of that month dates this vision as September 17, 592 BC
- "...the elders of Judah" - Ezekiel was surrounded by the leaders who had already been led into captivity
- This demonstrates that the symbolic actions he performed in Ezek 4-5 had garnered the attention they intended, since these leaders came to his home
- So far, his messages had greatly disturbed the exiles, who were optimistically hoping for an imminent return to Jerusalem. Contrary to their expectations, however, Ezekiel continued to prophesy the destruction of the city
- "...fell upon me" - *wattippol*, indicates that the vision came upon Ezekiel quickly and with force

### (3) Ezekiel transported to the Temple (8:2-3a)

2 Then I looked, and behold, something like the appearance of a man; from His waist and downward *there was* the appearance of fire, and from His waist and upward like the appearance of a glow, like gleaming metal.

2 Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward *there was* the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal.

2 and I saw a likeness comparable to the appearance of a man. From his thighs downward there was the appearance of fire, and from his waist upward, there was the appearance of brightness that looked like brass.

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 colour of amber.

- At the same time God's hand fell upon Ezekiel, the Shekinah Glory appeared

- The description of the Shekinah is similar to 1:26-28
- There's no doubt that Ezekiel recognized what he saw as the Shekinah Glory, God's visible manifestation, as this was the third time it had appeared to him (1:26-28; 3:23)

(b) Sins in the Temple (8:3b-18)

(1) Idol of jealousy (8:3b-6)

3 And He extended the form of a hand and took me **by the hair of my head**; and **the Spirit lifted me up** between earth and heaven and brought me **in the visions of God** to Jerusalem, to the **entrance of the north gate of the inner courtyard**, where **the seat of the idol of jealousy**, which provokes to jealousy, was *located*.

3 He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was *located*.

3 The form of a hand reached out and took me by the hair of my head. Then the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and sky, brought me toward Jerusalem, and in visions that came from God took me through the doors of the inner gate that faced north, where an image that provoked God's jealous anger had been erected.

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 that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

- "...by the hair of my head" - this is the only place in Scripture where such a thing is mentioned

— Elijah was carried about by the Spirit (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:1-12,16-18), no other prophet was ever pulled up by the hair

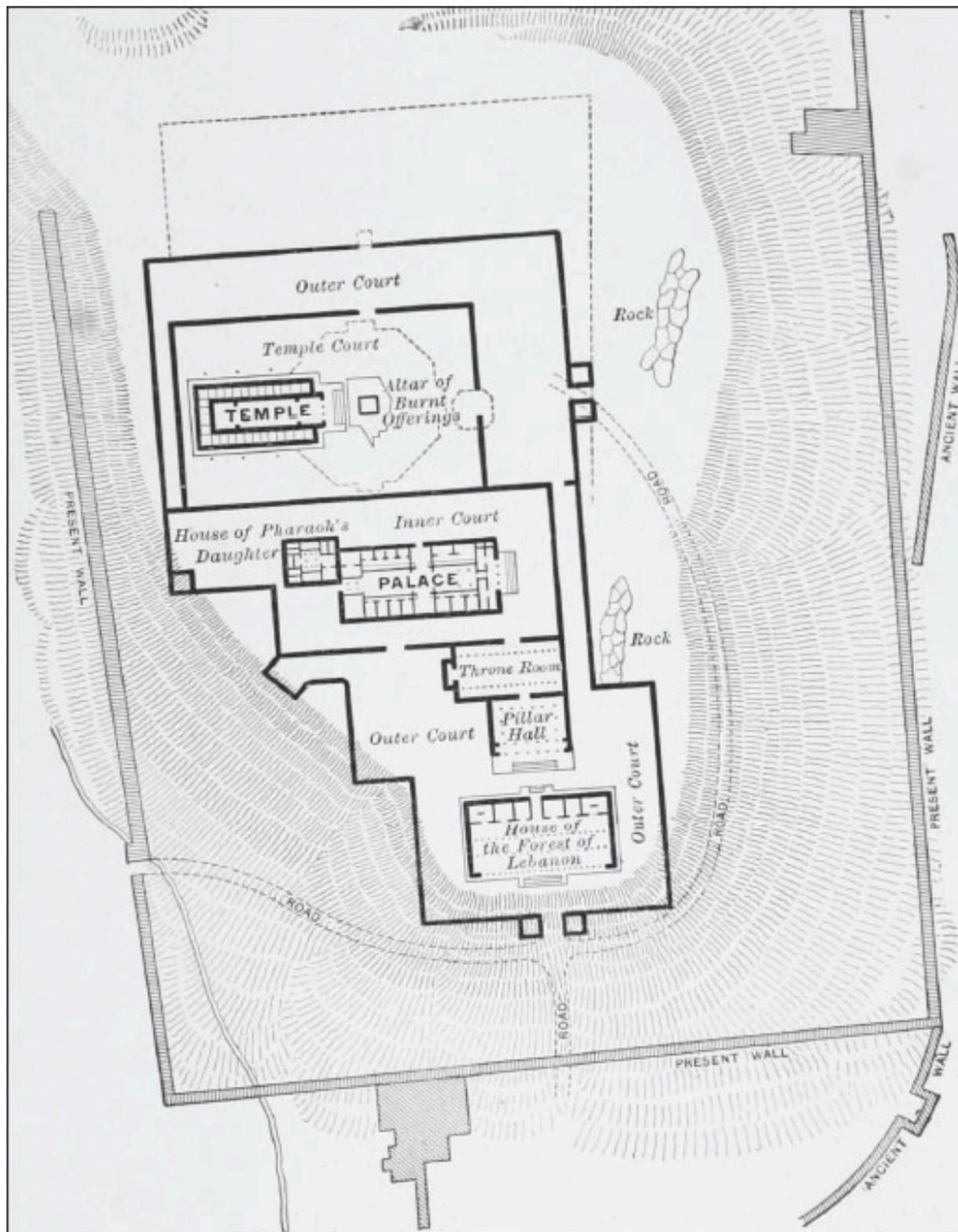
- "...the Spirit lifted me up" - this is an example of the Spirit unveiling something that has not been revealed before: The ministry of "revelation" of the Spirit in relation to Scripture. See also 2 Sam 23:2-3; Ezek 2:2; 11:1,24; Micah 3:8; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:9-10; 2 Peter 1:21. See [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete list of ministries of the Spirit.

- "...in the visions of God" - this shows that Ezekiel is seeing a vision, not literally being transported from Babylon to Jerusalem

- "...entrance of the north gate of the inner courtyard" - in this vision, Ezekiel was dropped off in the Outer Court of the Temple courtyard, standing at the gate that led to the Inner Court through the northern gate

- "...the seat of the idol of jealousy" - refers to the goddess Asherah that various Judean kings, Manasseh being the most significant of them (2 Chr 33:7; 2 Kings 21:7), had erected there

— The One jealous here is God. Time and again, God had warned that Israel's worship of idols would stir His jealousy and wrath (Cf. Deut 29:20,27-28; 2 Kings 22:17)



4 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance which I saw in the plain.

4 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance which I saw in the plain.

4 All of a sudden, the glory of the God of Israel was there! It looked like what I had seen back in the valley.

4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

- Ezekiel confirms that what he is seeing is the Shekinah Glory, the visible manifestation of God

Ezekiel is now presented with a revelation of the abominable practices occurring in Jerusalem. The purpose of unveiling these abominations is to provide the prophet with a clear understanding of the reasons behind the departure of the Shekinah from Israel.

5 Then He said to me, "Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this idol of jealousy at the entrance.

5 Then He said to me, "Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this idol of jealousy at the entrance.

5 Then he told me, "Son of Man, look up toward the north."

So I looked off toward the north. Suddenly, off toward the north, facing the gate that led to the altar, the image that provoked God's jealousy was standing near the entrance.

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 jealousy in the entry.

- God instructed Ezekiel to look toward the north from his present location, which was in front of the gate of the inner court that looks north (v3)

— This gate is called "the gate of the altar" because it is the gate where the animals were brought in for sacrifice (Lev 1:11)

— However, instead of an approved sacrifice at the gate, they had setup a statue of the goddess Asherah, which was a clear challenge to the God of Israel

6 And He said to me, "Son of man, **do you see what they are doing**, the great **abominations** which the **house of Israel** are committing here, **so that I would be far from My sanctuary?** But yet you will see still greater **abominations!**"

6 And He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations."

6 Then the Spirit told me, "Son of Man, don't you see what they're doing? The house of Israel practices awful, detestable things here, so I'm going far away from my sanctuary. But you're about to see things even more detestable than these."

6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

- "...do you see what they are doing" - God instructed Ezekiel to contemplate the abominations that Israel was committing, in the very core of the temple compound

- "...house of Israel" - God refers to all Israel here, even though the northern kingdom had ceased to exist more than a century earlier

— Thus, in this context, the term "Israel" is used as a synonym for Judah

— "...so that I would be far from My sanctuary" - these abominations were provoking YHWH to go far off from His sanctuary; to abandon it

— This is God's first hint to Ezekiel of what he was about to witness: the departure of the Shekinah from the Temple

- "...abominations" [2x] - *to'eva*, used 43x in Ezekiel and 6x in this passage

— It comes from the root that means "to be filthy," "to loathe," or "to abhor"

— It is the highest level or worst kind of abomination, and includes a range of transgressions such as idolatry, the placement and worship of false deities in the Temple, and the consumption of unclean animals.

#### (2) Idolatrous paintings on the walls (8:7-13)

7 Then He brought me to the entrance of the courtyard, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall.

7 Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall.

7 Then the Spirit brought me to the entrance of the court. As I watched, all of a sudden, there was a hole in the wall!

7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

- Ezekiel is now transported by the Spirit in his vision to the entrance of the courtyard, where he saw a hole in the wall

8 And He said to me, "Son of man, now dig through the wall." So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance.

8 He said to me, "Son of man, now dig through the wall." So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance.

8 Then he told me, "Son of Man, dig through the wall!" So I dug into the wall. That's when I uncovered an entrance!

8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

- God instructed Ezekiel to dig away at this hole and enlarge it. As Ezekiel continued to dig, he found a door.

9 Then He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here."

9 And He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here."

9 Then he told me, "Go on through that entrance, so you may see the wicked, detestable things that they're committing here."

9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

- God then told Ezekiel to enter through the door and take a look at the wicked abominations that were going on right within the temple compound

10 So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of crawling things and animals *and* detestable things, with all the **idols** of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around.

10 So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts *and* detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around.

10 So I entered, looked around, and there was every form of crawling thing, loathsome animals, and all kinds of idols from the house of Israel carved all around the wall.

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.

- Ezekiel now describes what he saw after entering through the door:

— Portraits or drawings of all sorts of disgusting crawling creatures and abominable beasts were engraved upon the wall all around. These were likely reliefs of ancient Egyptian deities.

— According to Lev 11:20-24,29-38,41-45, the worship of creeping things was forbidden

— Ezekiel also saw all the idols of the house of Israel displayed in the room

- "...idols" - *gillulim*, refers to "dung pellets"; the noun form occurs 48x in the OT and 39x in Ezekiel. This illustrates Ezekiel's strong disapproval of the idols crafted by his countrymen.

11 And standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with **Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan** standing among them, each man *with* his censer in his hand; and the fragrance of the cloud of incense was rising.

11 Standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising.

11 I saw 70 men from the elders of the house of Israel standing among them, including Shaphan's son Jaazaniah. Each man held a censer in his hand. As the scent of the cloud of incense ascended,

11 And there stood before them 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.

- Ezekiel saw 70 elders of Israel standing in front of the reliefs and idols

— These were Judah's civil authorities who had emerged from the people left in Jerusalem after the second deportation

- "...Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan" - Jaazaniah apparently acted as their leader

— His father was Shaphan, a highly faithful scribe to King Josiah (2 Kings 22:3; Jer 29:3; 36:10; 39:14)

— Shaphan had three sons praised for their faithfulness to Jeremiah. During a time when the entire nation had turned against the prophet, they supported him. However, Jaazaniah, the fourth son, deviated from his father and brothers.

— Here, Jaazaniah is portrayed as the leader of these 70 elders, who were engaged in secretive idol worship on the Temple grounds. Their act of worship was the offering of incense.

— The only time incense was to be burned on the Temple grounds was on the Day of Atonement, when coals from the altar, along with two handfuls of incense, were taken into the Holy of Holies. Apart from that, there was no burning of incense to God, thus what these elders were doing was idolatry.

12 Then He said to me, "Do you see, son of man, what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each man in the rooms of his carved images? For they say, '**The LORD does not see us; the LORD has abandoned the land.**'"

12 Then He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'"

12 the Spirit asked me, "Do you see, Son of Man, what the elders of Israel's house are doing in secret, each in the chamber of his own carved idol? They keep saying, 'God

doesn't see us. The LORD has abandoned the land."

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 seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

- God asked Ezekiel whether he had witnessed the secret activities of the elders, each one in his own chamber of imagery

— It is apparent that Ezekiel had initially observed only one of many rooms where these leaders were worshipping Egyptian deities

- "...The LORD does not see us; the LORD has abandoned the land" - the elders felt that they could get away with their sin because Israel's God had forsaken the land and was unaware of their actions in the dark

— In her decline, Israel had fallen to a lower moral state than any other nation (Cf. Ezek 3; 5:7)

13 And He said to me, "Yet you will see still greater abominations which they are committing!"

13 And He said to me, "Yet you will see still greater abominations which they are committing."

13 Then the Spirit told me, "You're about to see even more detestable practices that they're doing!"

**13** He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

- A repeat of v6...if Ezekiel found the image of jealousy by the northern gate, and the secret worship of Egyptian deities disturbing, God says "you ain't seen nothing yet"

### (3) Tammuz worship (8:14-15)

**14** Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for **Tammuz**.

**14** Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

14 Then he brought me to the entrance of the gate to the LORD's Temple, which faced the north. That's where I saw women seated, weeping for Tammuz.

14 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.

- Ezekiel was now transported by the Spirit in his vision to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house, which is the entrance of the north gate. This was inside the Temple compound.

- The sin that Ezekiel witnesses there was Jewish women committing idolatry by weeping for Tammuz
- "...Tammuz" - the "child" in the Mother-Child Cult, which originated at the Tower of Babel; see note: **Mother-Child Cult** in Gen 11
- There are also, however, other opinions on Tammuz and this worship [see comments from Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in *Commentary on Ezekiel, Part I*]

### **Tammuz**

Tammuz was the miraculously born son of Semiramis the queen wife of Nimrod the first world dictator. He corresponds to the Summerian Dumuzi, the god of spring vegetation. He died at the winter solstice and went down to the netherworld to be resurrected again. There are similarities to that of Egyptian Osiris, the Canaanite Baal, and the Syrian Adonis. These weeping women were celebrating the death of this god; his worship was actually the worship of nature and connected with it were some vile and immoral ceremonies: human sacrifice and sexual union formed part of the various cult rites.

15 And He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Yet you will see still greater abominations than these!"

15 He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Yet you will see still greater abominations than these."

15 Then he asked me, "Do you see this, Son of Man? You're about to see even more detestable practices than these."

**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.

- God again asks Ezekiel if he is seeing what God is showing him (Cf. v6,13)
- The culmination of these abominations is in v16...

#### **(4) Sun worship (8:16-18)**

**16** Then He brought me into the inner courtyard of the LORD'S house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about **twenty-five men** with their backs to the temple of the LORD while their faces were toward the east; and they were **prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun**.

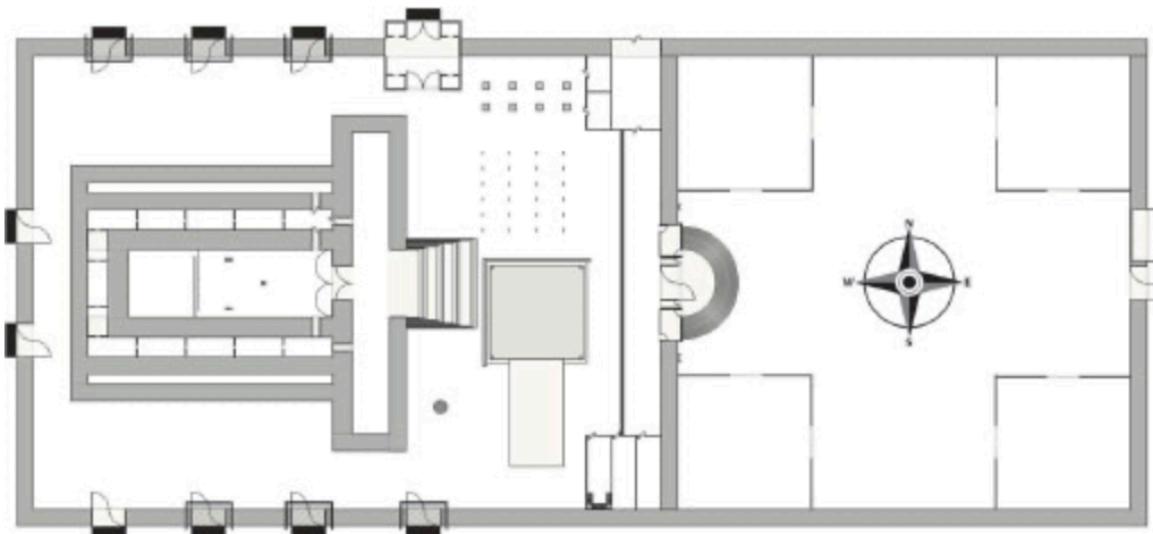
**16** Then He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun.

16 Then he brought me to the inner court of the LORD's Temple. There, at the entrance to the LORD's Temple, between the porch and the altar, were 25 men, with their backs toward

the LORD's Temple and facing the east, prostrating themselves to the sun.

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.

- Ezekiel is transported yet again in his vision, this time to the Temple's inner court
- He was previously in the Inner Court, but he was now led from the north gate (which he had viewed from a position in the Outer Court) into the Inner Court, and over to the east side
- The Inner Court of the Temple was a place restricted only to priests. Since Ezekiel was a priest, he was allowed to enter.
- Ezekiel was positioned between the porch and the altar when he witnessed the next part of his vision
- "...twenty-five men" - this alludes to 24 leaders of the classes of priests ("chief priests," 1 Chr 24:1-19) along with the high priest
- Unlike the previous group of 70 men (v11-12), who likely represented the Jewish laity, these 25 men represented the priesthood
- "...prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun" - they bowed with the backs to the Temple, facing toward the east, in worship of the sun
- These priests were facing away from the place of God's Shekinah Glory, toward the sun, to worship it instead of Him. This was an explicit violation of Deut 4:19.



A distinct feature of the Jewish Temple was its westward orientation, which set it apart from pagan architectural conventions. The layout of the Temple was such that when

standing at its door, looking out into the Inner Court, one faced east, and when entering the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, one would be facing west. Pagan temples, on the other hand, typically faced east due to their worship of the sun.

17 And He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Is it **a trivial thing** for the **house of Judah** to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and provoked Me to anger repeatedly? Yet behold, they are putting the **twig to their nose!**

17 He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and provoked Me repeatedly? For behold, they are putting the twig to their nose.

17 "Do you see this, Son of Man?" he asked me. "Is it an insignificant thing for Judah's house to commit the detestable things that they're doing here? They've filled the land with violence and turned away from me, causing me to become angry again. Look how they're sniffing with their noses!

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, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

- "...a trivial thing" - the people of Judah thought nothing of committing abominations in the very center of YHWH's house

- "...house of Judah" - in v10-14, YHWH explicitly identified this house as "Israel." Now He calls it by its actual name, Judah. This illustrates how the terms "Israel" and "Judah" are used interchangeably throughout the book of Ezekiel

- In addition to idolatry in the very Temple where God dwelt, as the worship of God deteriorated, violence erupted, flooding the entire land of Israel and provoking God to anger

- "...twig to their nose" - likely either an obscene, or at the very least insulting, gesture

18 Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry out in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them."

18 Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them."

18 I'm going to deal with them in rage and anger. I'll show neither pity nor compassion. They'll cry loudly directly in my ears, but I won't listen to them."

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.

- Punishment was well on its way for all that Judah had done. God would deal with His people "in wrath" and the judgment would be without mercy
  - Judah had clearly reached a point of no return...