EZEKIEL

Chapter 11

*Judgment on Israel’s Leaders*

**Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people.  2 The LORD said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city.  3 They say, ‘Will it not soon be time to build houses? This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat.’  4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man.” 5 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: “This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, O house of Israel, but I know what is going through your mind.  6 You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead. 7 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The bodies you have thrown there are the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it.  8 You fear the sword, and the sword is what I will bring against you, declares the Sovereign LORD.  9 I will drive you out of the city and hand you over to foreigners and inflict punishment on you.  10 You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.  11 This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it; I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel.  12 And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you.” 13 Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice, “Ah, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?” 14 The word of the LORD came to me:  15 “Son of man, your brothers—your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel—are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, ‘They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.’**

**11:1** THE SPIRIT – For the first time since 8:3 the Spirit reappears. Since then we have heard nothing about Ezekiel’s own location. Now he is moved to the eastern entrance of the temple compound, the same place to which the Glory had moved in 10:19. (CC)

TWENTY-FIVE MEN – The twenty-five men he sees there are obviously a different group than the sun worshipers of 8:16. Here the men are labeled “leaders of the people,” a term we meet otherwise only in postexilic texts (Neh 11:1; 1 Chr 21:2; 2 Chr 24:23). Here the label probably denotes those who had assumed positions of leadership or influence in the vacuum left when, together with Ezekiel, Jehoiachin and the previous leaders had been deported in 597 b.c. (CC)

*Jaazaniah.* See note on 8:11 – (Not the same person as in 11:1. Ironically, the name means “The Lord hears.”) (CSB)

*Pelatiah.* Means “The Lord delivers.” (CSB)

Among the twenty-five men, Ezekiel recognizes at least two whom he names: Jaazaniah and Pelatiah. Perhaps he had known them before he was deported. This is not the same Jaazaniah mentioned in 8:11 (he has a different father), and Pelatiah resurfaces in 11:13. Otherwise we know nothing of them, but all four of the names mentioned in 11:1 are common ones, especially during the period at the end of the monarchy. The name “Pelatiah” is known from several seal inscriptions of the period. One may suppose that the name was especially prominent at the time because of its meaning, “Yahweh has rescued.” (CC)

**11:2** PLOTTING EVIL – Precisely what these leaders are plotting or doing is difficult to determine, but, at the very least, some malevolent self-sufficiency and possibly an unfounded arrogation of divine promises to themselves are involved. (CC)

**11:3** *soon … time to build houses?* The residents of Jerusalem who were not exiled in 597 b.c. felt smugly secure, thinking that nothing worse would befall them. (CSB)

*cooking pot.* As in ch. 24, Jerusalem is compared to a cooking pot. Those left behind boasted that they were the “meat,” the choice portions—the inference being that the exiles in Babylon were the discarded bones (see v. 15). (CSB)

**11:5** SPIRIT OF THE LORD – Ezek 11:5 contrasts “the Spirit of Yahweh,” who fell upon Ezekiel, with “what arises in your [the Israelites’ sinful] spirit.” Yahweh’s Spirit knows what is in the spirit of a man, and with his Spirit he answers that the way the men are behaving is incompatible with his Spirit and will, expressed in his Word. Their actions prove that their “spirit” is an evil one. Their “spirituality” is their own invention, not a gift of revelation from the true God. Any “spirit” or “spirituality” that contravenes God’s Word is not of God’s Spirit. (CC)

**11:6** CITY…WITH THE DEAD – Yahweh accuses them of filling the city with “the slain.” It is hard to tell to what extent the word is to be taken literally. Similar accusations are made in 19:3 (the princes devour the people) and 22:6 (use of power to shed blood). Elsewhere in biblical literature, during this historical period, Manasseh (2 Ki 21:6) and Jehoiakim (Jer 26:20–24) are specifically accused of such bloodshed. There is no reason to assume that circumstances were any better under Zedekiah, who occupied the throne at the time of Ezekiel’s vision. Religious, political, and social factors may well have converged to create an environment of literal and metaphorical murder, including assassinations. Keil cites Calvin as having given the correct explanation: “Under this form of speech he embraces all kinds of injustice. For we know that all who oppressed the poor, deprived men of their possessions, or shed innocent blood, were regarded as murderers in the sight of God.” (CC)

**11:7** *The bodies you have thrown there are the meat.* The meat, redefined by the prophet, is not those in power in Jerusalem (who will be driven out) but the innocent people they killed. (CSB)

Ezekiel repeats the leaders’ own words from 11:3, but gives the parts of their proverb an application precisely the opposite of their own. Far from being the secure “prime cuts” protected in the pot, they “are in fact butchers who have made stew out of the citizenry.” The words read almost as a condensation of Micah 3:1–3. The pot still stands for Jerusalem (as in 11:3), but directly or indirectly (depending on the text followed; see the second textual note on 11:7), Yahweh will remove the murderous Jerusalemites from the pot. The “slain” are the meat, and the others will be deported after the city has fallen. (CC)

**11:8** The Hebrew text clearly has Yahweh as the subject of the second verb (“I will bring”). As so often in the Bible, God is ultimately the actor, whatever the mediate, earthly means he may use. As with “slain” in 11:6–7, the “sword” here does not necessarily imply death, although that is not excluded. It should be taken to include all the horrors of war. “The officials were living in a fools’ paradise,” thinking that the catastrophe that had overtaken the city in the deportation of 597 b.c. (of which Ezekiel was a part) would never happen to them. But the sword is in Yahweh’s own hand, as it were, poised to bring retribution in essentially the same way they had dealt with the disadvantaged within the city (11:6). (CC)

The progression of the argument here makes use of two words that in other passages occur in the stereotyped phrase “slain by the sword.” In 11:6–7 the first of those words, חָלָל, “slain,” had been featured thrice, and 11:8 and 11:10 feature חֶרֶב, “sword,” thrice. Anyone conversant with Hebrew idiom and the NT will think of our Lord’s rebuke of Peter in Mt 26:52: “All who take up the sword will perish by the sword.” Later, Ezekiel will address very similar words to the survivors of Jerusalem’s fall in 586 b.c. who imagined that the ancient promises of land applied to them: “You stand by your sword. … Those who are in the ruins will fall by the sword” (33:26–27). (CC)

**11:9-11** In an expansive style typical in Ezekiel, Yahweh repeats and develops the point he introduced in 11:7: their proverb about the pot and the meat (11:3) does not apply to them in the way they understood it. He hammers away at the theme of judgment (“judgments” and twice “I will judge you”). In fact, as many commentators have discerned, Yahweh implies a double punishment: not only will the leaders be expelled from the city in which they delight, but once outside the Holy Land, a still more formidable punishment will await them. (CC)

By adding the recognition formula, “then you will know that I am Yahweh,” in 11:10c (repeated in 11:12a), the oracle of judgment simultaneously becomes a divine proof saying. The punishment will publicly prove God’s justice, even though the leaders’ obduracy will have forced him to manifest it in a bitter penalty. They may not repent, but they will be forced, however unwillingly, to confess that he is Lord of all. (CC)

**11:11** *at the borders of Israel.* At Riblah (see 2Ki 25:20–21). (CSB)

**11:12** The present sermon ends with a charge we heard already in 5:6–7: Israel has become like the heathen nations. Particularly in antiquity, acculturation implied repudiation of the Israelite cultus, that is, worship of the true God. In this “Christ versus culture” clash, the pagan culture had already won. It is a battle the church must constantly fight, certainly not less in the culture wars of our present age. (CC)

**11:13** *Ah, Sovereign Lord!* See note on 9:8.

(CSB)

The shock of Pelatiah’s sudden demise leads Ezekiel to forget Yahweh’s earlier promises of sparing a remnant (9:4, 6, 11), and to say, in effect, “You really *are* annihilating all Israelites.” This understands Ezekiel’s words as an exclamation, not a repetition of the question in 9:8 (see the textual notes on 11:13). Indirectly, however, the verse probably implies that Ezekiel is making an intercession, as he had in 9:8, and here his exclamation will be followed by the promise of salvation for the restored remnant (11:16–20). It is also further evidence of Ezekiel’s humanity: he is no sadist delighting in preaching judgment, but simply obeying God’s command, and grieving at the plight of his unbelieving kinsmen, just as St. Paul will grieve while expounding the remnant theme in Romans 9–11. (CC)

**11:14-15** Yahweh draws three concentric circles of those who make up the present Diaspora. First of all, there are Ezekiel’s “brothers,” apparently his immediate family. Second, the men of his “redemption” (see the textual note), whose property he, as God’s proxy, would be obligated to buy back if it were alienated from them. Finally is the “whole house of Israel,” that is, the entire present Diaspora, including the deportees from the northern kingdom of Israel over a century earlier (ca. 722 b.c.), at least as many as had retained their identity as Israelites and their faithfulness to Yahweh. The destruction of Jerusalem would hardly exterminate all of Israel when all of these Israelites in the Diaspora are taken into account. (CC)

The scornful demand (the imperative “remove yourselves”) of those Israelites still left in Jerusalem suggests a sort of propaganda war going on between those who (so far) had escaped exile and those now exiled in Babylon. Those in Jerusalem remained confident that they would never suffer the same fate, while the exiles, on the whole, had not abandoned all hope of returning. The issue, then, was who had title to the land left behind by the exiles. At stake was not only legal inheritance of property, but also theological inheritance of God’s promised grace and life. God’s promises to the patriarchs had centered on the land as the place wherein he would bestow his blessings upon them, and the fulfillment of those promises was the reason why God enabled Joshua’s conquest of Canaan. Essentially the same debate will erupt after Jerusalem finally does fall in 586 b.c., and again Yahweh will have to condemn the Israelites who thought they could sin with impunity and still claim the land as their own (33:23–29). (CC)

In light of today’s individualism, and the tendency to define the church in local and sociological terms, it bears emphasizing that Christ himself is our “land.” Through baptismal incorporation into him, we are heirs of all God’s promises (Gal 3:6–9, 14, 26–29), including those about the land (e.g., Revelation 21–22). Indeed, through his Spirit, he must be received in faith in each individual heart, but no one is a Christian in isolation from Christ’s body, the church. Christ is to be found only where he has promised to be found, that is, in his Word and Sacraments, which are dispensed in his church. Through those, his means of grace, we are already in our “promised land,” although the resolution of the “now/not yet” paradox still awaits us at the return of Christ, when this world shall end, and the new heavens and new earth shall be established, “in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13). (CC)

*Promised Return of Israel*

**16 “Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.’ 17 “Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.’ 18 “They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols.  19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.  20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.  21 But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.” 22 Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.  23 The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it.  24 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me,  25 and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.**

**11:16** *I have been a sanctuary for them.*† A key verse in Ezekiel. Although the exiles had been driven from Jerusalem and its sanctuary (the symbol of God’s presence among his people), God himself became their sanctuary, i.e., he was present among them. Later Christ called himself a temple (see Jn 2:19–21). (CSB)

**11:17** GIVE BACK THE LAND – God’s promise of an inheritance, including the land, still stood: “I will give you the land of Israel.” The judgment of dispersal had been unavoidable, and God even makes himself available as the “sanctuary” (11:16) during that interim, but, unless his promise was to be voided, his people had to be restored to their land. What Ezekiel could not accomplish, even for his own family, Yahweh would do for his people when the full implications of the land prophecies would be revealed in Jesus Christ. (CC)

In this and the next verse there appears to be a clear echoing of the promise given to Moses in Ex 6:6–8. God will bring about a second exodus that will reverse the judgment. As Yahweh again redeems his people, he will “gather” and “assemble” them (Ezek 11:17) after having “removed” and “scattered” them (11:16). This exodus typology will, at least in essence, reappear frequently in later salvation oracles in Ezekiel. The exiles’ release from their wilderness and their repossession of the land will not come by an arrogant claim, such as the Jerusalemites made in 11:15, but by Yahweh freely *giving* them the land by pure grace. (CC)

The succeeding verses make plain that what Ezekiel is predicting is no mere inner-historical reversal of fortunes and reacquisition of lost real estate. As is typical of prophecy, the unknown (the future) is described in terms of the known. (The same principle will apply to NT depictions of heaven and eternal life.) This promise was indeed fulfilled in the return led by Zerubbabel—even if the response of the Israelites at that time was rather underwhelming. But as often in typology, one fulfillment becomes the springboard for another, still greater fulfillment. Hermeneutically, it is not a matter of multiple fulfillments or meanings, but of different aspects or phases of the “one literal sense.” Usually, both continuity and discontinuity attend the various aspects or phases. (CC)

The greater fulfillment of this promise came with the first advent of Christ, who, through his death and resurrection, leads all who believe into his “land”—the church, the body of Christ. Yet even his first advent is not the end of the story. The final fulfillment or consummation will not be realized until his second advent, whereupon God will create the eternal “land,” the new Jerusalem, where there will be no need of a temple, “for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev 21:22). That is the glorious, definitive antitype of the temporary sanctuary of Yahweh’s presence that he promised the exiles in Ezek 11:16. (CC)

**11:18** REMOVE ALL VILE IMAGES – As at the first conquest of Canaan, when the land had been given to Israel because of the flagrant behavior of its former inhabitants (see, e.g., Deut 18:9–13; 20:17–18), so the land had again become polluted by centuries of people doing “loathsome things” (שִׁקּוּצֶ֛יהָ) and “abominations” (תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶ֖יהָ; two of Ezekiel’s favorite words)—this time unfaithful Israelites themselves. In biblical thought, it is not only the people who are defiled by their sin, but the land itself, just as all creation suffered under the curse because of Adam’s fall (Gen 3:17–18), and in the parousia we are promised nothing less than a new creation (cf., e.g., Is 11:6; Rom 8:20–22). God will restore his people to the land, and in gratitude they will purge it of its idolatry and contaminants, and keep it pure. That God’s people then and now often fail in this respect is a reminder that the parousia is not yet, and we live by the daily forgiveness of sin (cf. Romans 6–7). (CC)

**11:19** *undivided heart … new spirit.* Inner spiritual and moral transformation that results in single-minded commitment to the Lord and to his will (see 36:26). (CSB)

This verse is of hermeneutical significance for the entire promise (11:14–21). How pivotal it is for Ezekiel’s entire message is evidenced by the fact that he repeats it almost verbatim in 36:26–27. St. Paul’s language in 2 Cor 3:3 also appears to be derived from it. The horizon is transhistorical, and the accent is on something that only God can do. The real problem was inside the people, a matter of the “heart,” which in biblical usage accents the will and spiritual orientation. Nothing short of a supernatural “heart transplant” and gift of a new “S/spirit” will avail. (CC)

Yahweh’s first promise is “I will give them one heart.” A faith-filled heart that is “sincere,” “undivided,” “single-minded,” or “unanimous” might be more idiomatic English equivalents. Its opposite would be an “insincere,” “duplicitous,” or “whoring heart” (6:9), or a “heart” in which idols have been set up (14:3–7). Some commentators take the “one heart” as a promise of the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms. Although that eschatological prophecy does occur later in Ezekiel (37:15–22), as also in other prophets, that theme seems extrinsic to this context. In the natural, fallen state, each person pursues his own selfish interests; “every one of us has turned to his own way” (Is 53:6). Only God can unite all hearts by the “one thing” that “is needful” (Lk 10:42 KJV cf. Mt 6:21; 22:37). In the infant church, after the “new” gift of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples had “singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46) and “were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). Similar expressions with “heart” that involve unity in faith are in Rom 10:8–10; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 1:22.

Since this transformation does not happen naturally, the “*single/one* heart” is parallel to “a *new* S/spirit” (Ezek 11:19). Theologically, all of this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, but I judge the accent here to be on the new human spirit God will grant. The same Spirit who gave the disciples one “heart” (Acts 4:32) is poured out on all who are baptized into Christ (“you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” Acts 2:38) and renews the human spirit of the baptized believer. The adjective “new” can modify various words in eschatological contexts, for example, “one new man” in Christ (Eph 2:15; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; the “new” Jerusalem and “new” heaven and “new” earth in Revelation 21–22). (CC)

Here in Ezek 11:19 “new” modifies “S/spirit,” in parallelism with “heart” (“spirit” and “heart” are often interchangeable in biblical usage). In the close parallel in 36:26–27, God promises to give the people “a new heart” and “a heart of flesh” after removing their “heart of stone.” There he also promises to bestow “a new S/spirit” that is parallel to God’s Spirit: “I will give you a new heart and put a new S/spirit within you. … I will put my Spirit within you.” In 37:1–14 Yahweh expands on this gift of the Spirit that effects resurrection from the grave (see especially 37:12–14). Here the “new S/spirit” is not just a renewed human will, but the gift of the Holy Spirit, who accomplishes the renewal. The same can be said about the “right S/spirit” and “willing S/spirit” God graciously places in the believer according to David’s petitions in Ps 51:10, 12, in light of the intervening phrase “your Holy Spirit” (Ps 51:11). Then we may speak of a new spirituality, and if we are careful to stress the capital “S” in “Spirit” (referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity), Ezek 11:19 can readily be expounded in concord with the affirmation that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Nicene Creed; cf. Jn 14:6, 26; 15:26; 16:7). (CC)

God will remove the obdurate “heart of stone” and grant in its place a “heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19). In the NT, when “flesh” (σάρξ) is opposed to “S/spirit” (πνεῦμα), “flesh” often denotes the sinful human nature (e.g., Rom 8:1–17; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 5:16–17; 6:8). Here, however, the “heart of flesh” is opposed to one of “stone,” so “flesh” implies a heart that responds in God-given faith to the Holy Spirit’s working through the Word and Sacraments (cf. Is 57:15; 61:1), versus an obdurate, unresponsive “stone” heart (cf. Gen 6:5; the hardened heart of Pharaoh, which was integral to the exodus narrative [e.g., Ex 7:3, 13, 14]; and Is 6:10). English has the native idioms “hardhearted” (cf. Ezek 2:4) and “tenderhearted” (often used as a translation of εὕσπλαγχνοι in Eph 4:32), which might be compared to “heart of stone” and “heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19). (CC)

Except for the eschatological vista here, the basic promise that God grants his people a sincere heart and new S/spirit is not new with Ezekiel. In Moses’ day God poured out his Spirit on the seventy elders (Num 11:16–30; cf. Is 63:11), and the accent on the internal appears in Deut 30:6, where circumcision of the heart is part of the promised blessing upon faithful Israel (contrast those with uncircumcised hearts in Ezek 44:7, 9). Saul’s heart was “turned around” (הָפַךְ) after an encounter with Samuel (1 Sam 10:9). Through Isaiah, God had promised to place his Spirit upon his Suffering Servant (Is 42:1; 61:1) and the seed of Israel (Is 44:3). The parallel with Jer 32:39 is especially close. Ezekiel’s line of thought is the same as Jeremiah’s famous “new covenant/testament” prophecy of Jer 31:31–34. This will become even more obvious in the next verse. (CC)

**11:20** KEEP MY LAWS – This result clause speaks of true, wholehearted obedience, of God-pleasing behavior, which is only possible after the radical change (the new heart and spirit) affected by God’s Spirit. The OT is well aware that mere possession of God’s Torah is not sufficient for salvation, nor is mere external conformity to its stipulations (going through the motions, *ex opere operato*). Here Ezekiel does not use “Torah” (תּוֹרָה), which, in its full sense, is God’s entire instruction or revelation, that is, both Law and Gospel. Instead, God refers to “my statutes” and “my ordinances,” which indeed he gave in the Torah and which encompass what doctrinal theology labels both justification and sanctification. We are still in the OT, which implies historically also those laws that Christ has kept perfectly and that now those who have been baptized into the “new covenant” are no longer bound to follow. The principle of true obedience has not changed but has been “radicalized” (2 Corinthians 3). (CC)

*They will be my people, and I will be their God.* The heart of God’s covenant promise (see Ex 6:7). (CSB)

The “Gospel according to Ezekiel” reaches its climax with what is commonly known as the covenant formula: “They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:20). Even though בְּרִית, “covenant,” is not used here, it is used in similar passages, for example, in 34:25, leading up to the covenant formula in 34:30–31 and in 37:26–27. To get the full impact of the formula, one should perhaps add “truly” (as opposed to “nominally”) or “fully” to both halves of the formula. In a way, it is a restatement of the First Commandment: if it were fully obeyed, no other commandments would be necessary. The good news of the new covenant is that such loyalty is the gift of grace in Christ, who was perfectly obedient to God, his Father, and whose obedience and righteousness are imputed to believers in him. But until the parousia, the “not yet” always coexists. Christians remain both saints and sinners, and as such we cannot and do not “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” So, in the unique structure of Luther’s Small Catechism, the Decalogue functions as condemning Law first, then, in the light of Christ’s fulfillment of it, also as Gospel. (CC)

The covenant formula is usually thought to root in ancient wedding language. This may be evidenced in, for example, Ex 6:7, where it follows the verb לָקַח, “to take” (God says, “I will take you to myself …”), a verb often used for a man taking a wife. It is also supported by the covenant-like passages in the Song of Songs (2:16; 6:3; 7:10). Thus it is to be associated with the nuptial language throughout Scripture, of OT Israel as the wife of Yahweh (e.g., Ezekiel 16 and 23) and the NT church as the bride of Christ (e.g., Rev 19:7; 21:2). Negatively, it also relates to the depiction of idolatry as adultery that provokes Yahweh’s jealousy (again, Ezekiel 16 and 23; also 5:13). (CC)

Whatever its ultimate origin, the covenant formula (with variations in wording) reverberates throughout both Testaments, from Gen 17:7–8 (Abraham) to Rev 21:2–3 (the new Jerusalem as the bride of Christ). In the NT, see also 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 8:10. It will be fully realized in the eternal state, where the redeemed will be singly devoted to God like a virgin bride and God will dwell with his people personally and immediately, as in Eden, without need for mediators (no temple except God and the Lamb, Rev 21:22). (CC)

**11:21** Plainly this verse contrasts the unregenerate heart with one that has been supernaturally recreated. The question is why we are suddenly again plunged into the depths of sin, as it were, after the heights of the Gospel in 11:14–20. It is probably best taken as a reminder that although the promise was sure, and it has now been accomplished in Christ, Ezekiel was still preaching in the time of the “not yet.” It comes at the end of the vision and summarizes the charges laid against the Jerusalemites in chapter 8, so in context it may be understood as directed primarily to Ezekiel’s immediate audience, his fellow exiles. They dare not assume that the promise was automatically theirs because they were exiles. If they did not repent, they too would surely perish. (The rest of the book indicates that few, if any, had repented before Jerusalem fell as recorded in chapter 33.) (CC)

**11:23** *The glory of the Lord went up.* The final eastward movement of the glory (as the Lord left his temple), which stopped above the Mount of Olives (see 9:3; 10:4, 19; see also note on 8:1–11:25). (CSB)

The last scene in the vision of chapters 8–11 represents the fulfillment of all the predictions of impending doom upon the city. Yahweh’s Glory, that is, his “incarnational” presence on earth in the midst of his people, now abandons his earthly “house,” the Holy of Holies in the temple, and also the entire city as well. It is no longer “Zion,” the elect holy city, inviolable because of the divine presence, as Isaiah had preached so forcefully a century earlier. It is now only another human construction, as vulnerable to the invading Babylonians as any other. (CC)

**11:24** See note on 8:3. (CSB)

As in 3:14–15 at the end of the inaugural vision, here too the vision’s end is signaled by the Spirit transporting Ezekiel back to the exiles, that is, out of his trance-like state and back to his natural senses. How long the elders (8:1) had been sitting before him and waiting, we are not told. At least when the vision is over, there is nothing for Ezekiel to do except to relate what he had seen and heard on his journey in the Spirit. We are told nothing about the elders’ reaction or response. We shall meet them again in 14:1. (CC)