

EZEKIEL

Chapter 11

Judgment on Wicked Counselors

The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2 And he said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3 who say, ‘The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the meat.’ 4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O son of man.” 5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, “Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind. 6 You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of it, they are the meat, and this city is the cauldron, but you shall be brought out of the midst of it. 8 You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, declares the Lord GOD. 9 And I will bring you out of the midst of it, and give you into the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you. 10 You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 11 This city shall not be your cauldron, nor shall you be the meat in the midst of it. I will judge you at the border of Israel, 12 and you shall know that I am the LORD. For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you.” 13 And it came to pass, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?”

11:1 *Spirit lifted me.* Mention of God’s Spirit returns (cf 8:3). The Spirit transports the prophet to the east gate of the temple compound, where the cherubim and the glory had gone (cf 1:12–14). (TLSB)

Jaazaniah. of the same person as in 11:1. Ironically, the name means “The LORD hears.” (CSB)

Jaazaniah ... Pelatiah. Ezekiel is shown 25 men, the same number as in 8:16. But this is a different group. There is a Jaazaniah mentioned in 8:11, but he is obviously a different person with a different father. We know nothing further of Jaazaniah or Pelatiah except the latter’s death in 11:13. New people had somehow assumed positions of influence in the vacuum created by the deportation from Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Pelatiah. Means “The LORD delivers.” (CSB)

11:2–12 A private communication from God to Ezekiel about the 25 men (vv 2–4) leads into a public sermon (vv 5–12). (TLSB)

11:2 *device iniquity* – 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 *time is not near... 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)

The leaders smugly say they need not build houses now either because of the imminent Babylonian threat, or because there are plenty of abandoned houses. (TLSB)

cauldron. 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)

we are the meat. They regard themselves as safe within the city; they see no need for God. (TLSB)

11:4 *prophesy against them.* Preach in condemnation. The imperative is repeated for emphasis. (TLSB)

11:5 *Spirit of the LORD.* The Spirit here inspires Ezekiel instead of transporting him, as in v 1. (TLSB)

mind. Lit, “spirit,” but obviously not God’s Spirit. Their “spirituality” is their own invention, not the gift of revelation. (TLSB)

11:6 This indictment implies a ruthless elimination of any opposition by those who considered themselves blessed. (TLSB)

slain. Not limited to murder, but used metaphorically for injustice of various kinds. (TLSB)

11:7 *your slain...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)

The Lord turns the leaders’ boasts in v 3 against them. They are not prime cuts protected by the cauldron, but butchers who have filled it with the meat of their victims (cf Mi 3:1–3). (TLSB)

11:8 God will remove them from the safety of the pot and leave them defenseless against the sword. (TLSB)

11:9 *foreigners.* Babylonians, who are threatening Jerusalem a second time. (TLSB)

execute judgments. Carry out a sentence (cf 5:6–10). (TLSB)

11:10 *at the border.* Implies movement into exile away from the homeland. God implies here, and in the following verses, a double punishment—one at the fall of Jerusalem and a worse one in exile. (TLSB)

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

11:12 Repeats the recognition formula from the end of v 10. They may not repent, but they will be forced, however unwillingly, to acknowledge God’s rule. (TLSB)

not walked ... nor obeyed. The sermon ends with the charge made already in 5:6–7. Israel had become like the heathen nations: her walk, or way of life, was the same as theirs. (TLSB)

rules of the nations. In that culture war, paganism had won. (Consider how Eng “culture” includes Lat *cultus*, i.e., “worship”—of the Lord or of idols.). (TLSB)

I fell down. Because of the shock of Pelatiah’s sudden death while Ezekiel was preaching. (TLSB)

remnant of Israel? Ezekiel receives an extended promise of a restored and regenerate remnant in a new Israel. (TLSB)

11:1–13 Using the metaphor of Jerusalem as a cooking pot with meat inside, God contradicts the inhabitants' arrogant self-assurance that the city walls will protect them. Ezekiel's outcry at Pelatiah's sudden death provides an occasion for the comforting Gospel sermon that follows. God certainly will not make a full end of the remnant of Israel, but will provide salvation. • Lord, through our Savior, who bore our offenses for us on the cross, strengthen us to resist temptation. Grant us refuge in You alone. Amen. (TLSB)

Israel's New Heart and Spirit

14 And the word of the LORD came to me: **15** “Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession.’ **16** Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’ **17** Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ **18** And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. **19** And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **20** that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. **21** But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.” **22** Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. **23** And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city. **24** And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. **25** And I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me.

11:14 A new oracle, a private communication to the prophet. It may answer Ezekiel's despairing outcry in v 13. (TLSB)

11:15 *your brothers, your kinsmen.* Inhabitants of Jerusalem who had escaped the first deportation of the city in 597 BC. (TLSB)

Go far from the LORD. Those not exiled urged the exiles to forget about ever returning to Jerusalem and worshiping the God they had once worshiped there. They argue that their survival in Jerusalem proves that they are the true heirs of the ancient promises. Like the 25 leaders (v 3), they interpret their physical presence in the Holy Land as a guarantee of security. This argument will reappear after the final destruction of the city in 587 BC (cf 33:24). (TLSB)

11:16 God answers that the future lies with those who have “died” in exile, not with those who have escaped with their present lives. He had not abandoned the exiles. (TLSB)

them. The exiles. (TLSB)

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)

The temple sanctuary in Jerusalem was inaccessible and would soon be destroyed, but God was not imprisoned in that place where He caused His name to dwell for a time (cf ch 10). Wherever His name is invoked in true faith, even by only two or three present (Mt 18:20), there is a little church. One day we shall go to our promised land, the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:22). (TLSB)

11:17 *gather ... assemble.* Synonyms; the exiles' return to the land of Israel. The preliminary fulfillment of this promise came after Cyrus's 538 BC decree allowed some Israelites to return and rebuild the temple. But that was only a foretaste of the fulfillment. The promise given to God's people had further implications (cf Rv 7). (TLSB)

11:19–20 “The Holy Scriptures do not credit the human powers of the natural free will with conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their effective beginning and end. They do not credit free will the whole way, half way, or in any way, even in the smallest or most trivial way. They credit conversion solely and completely to the Holy Spirit's divine work, as also the Apology teaches. Reason and free will are able to live an outwardly decent life to a certain extent. But only the Holy Spirit causes a person to be born anew [John 3:5] and to have inwardly another heart, mind, and natural desire. He opens the mind and heart to understand the Scriptures and to listen to the Word” (FC SD II 25–26). (TLSB)

11:19 *one 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)

The heart of the Gospel message of Ezk, repeated almost verbatim in 36:26–27. Ezekiel is speaking of realities that transcend history and which only God can accomplish. St Paul's language in 2Co 3:3 appears to be derived from it. Also, Ezk 11:19–20 parallel Jeremiah's famous new covenant (or testament) prophecy (Jer 31:31–34), often quoted in the NT. What is needed is a supernatural gift, a “heart transplant” that only the Great Physician can accomplish. (TLSB)

one heart. A single-mindedness, or unanimity, in faith. By nature, we pursue our own selfish interests (Is 53:6). (TLSB)

new spirit. Often interchangeable with “heart”; a radically different human attitude, a gift of God's Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

remove the heart of stone. Impenetrable, stubborn. God will replace it with faith created by the Holy Spirit's work through Word and Sacrament. (TLSB)

their flesh. Their bodies. (TLSB)

heart of flesh. Living. The OT does not use “flesh” in the negative sense that the NT does (e.g., “works of the flesh”; see “flesh,” p 1902). (TLSB)

11:20 External change in behavior will naturally accompany the radical internal change. The obedience will not only be to the letter of the law, but to its spirit. (TLSB)

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

The Gospel message, the covenant formula, is repeated many times in both testaments, from Gn 17:7–8 to Rv 21:3. (TLSB)

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 *קָחָהּ*, “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)

11:21 A reminder that they were not in paradise yet. They like us, still daily sin much. (TLSB)

upon their own heads. If they (and we) did not repent, the punishment implicit in their sins would return. (TLSB)

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)

11:22–25 Climax of chs 9–11. The glory finally abandoned Jerusalem and the temple, which no longer had any special promise of divine protection. Jerusalem was as vulnerable as any other city. Cf 9:3. (TLSB)

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). (CSB)

mountain ... on the east. Across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. In 43:1–5, the glory returns by the east gate—to a new temple and a new Jerusalem in a new world. (TLSB)

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 *into Chaldea, to the exiles.* Where Ezekiel had been bodily all along. (TLSB)

went up. Out of his trancelike state and back to his natural senses. (TLSB)

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)

11:25 When the vision is over, Ezekiel tells the elders what he had seen and heard on his journey in the Spirit. Their response is not told. (TLSB)

11:14–25 Ezekiel the prophet is assured that a remnant will be saved. The glory then leaves the city for the Mount of Olives to the east. This is the final judgment upon those who remain in Jerusalem below (cf Gal 4:26). Thanks be to God; He gives us His Word and Spirit, new hearts, and new lives in His promises of mercy. • Lord, through our Baptism, You have brought us out of the exile of our natural bondage to sin. Send Your Spirit upon us that we remain faithful until death and share in the return of the glory on the Last Day. Amen. (TLSB)