

Cuppa Cafe

Daily devotions
from God's Word...



cuppajcafe.org



The Grind

Savor the taste of our previous brew



Since everything in the Bible leads into and prepares the way for what comes after it, refresh yesterday's Brew to let the previous passage get you ready for today's verses. Though you should have already explored the passage, personally with Jesus, here is the heart of what we saw, together.

In the previous passage, verses 1-4, begin an episode that starts in Jerusalem and ends with Ezekiel's return to the exiles, so he can tell them what God has shown him there.

1 This passage begins a four-chapter vision of Jerusalem that God gave to Ezekiel. It starts with Ezekiel's supernatural transport to Jerusalem and ends with his return to the exiles so he can tell them everything God has shown to him. God wants the exiles to know they can't pin any hopes on Jerusalem – the flagship of Judah – because it is corrupt, beyond repair, and must be destroyed. It's unbridled idolatry warrants drastic punishment.

The four chapters look like this:

- A. God takes Ezekiel to Jerusalem in a vision (8:1-4)
- B. Ezekiel sees visions of abominations committed in and near the Temple (8:5-18)
- C. The LORD commands His messengers to destroy the city (9:1-11) Cultic people 8:5-10:7 expose J's corruption and she is judged
- D. The man wearing linen is ordered to destroy the city with fire (10:1-7)
- E. Vision of the cherubim and the wheels, again (10:8-17) Ties to vision in Ch. 1
- F. The LORD'S glory crosses the threshold and hovers over the cherub (10:18-19) He still loves her
- G. Vision of the cherubim, again (10:20-22) Ties to vision in Ch. 1
- H. Vision of 25 wicked counselors near the Temple (11:1-13) Misguided leaders
- I. An oracle of regeneration after exile (11:14-21) Points to Christ and the Gospel
- J. The LORD'S glory vacates the Temple and Ezekiel returns to the exiles (11:22-25) Execution with no hope of parole

It is September 17, 592 BC, fourteen months since the vision God gave Ezekiel at the Chebar River. Instead of referring to King Zedekiah back in Jerusalem, Ezekiel says that this occurs, "**during the sixth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.**" Foreign powers had interfered with the throne of Judah since Pharaoh Necho slew King Josiah in 608 BC. Three months after Josiah's younger son Jehoahaz ascended the throne, Necho appointed his older brother Jehoiakim, King of Judah. Eleven years later, to avenge his rebellion against Babylon, raiders from surrounding nations killed him at the instigation of Nebuchadnezzar. His son Jehoiachin came to power, but was dethroned only 3 months and 10 days later, when Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem and deported him, his family, and 3,000 upper class Jews to Babylon on March 15/16, 597 BC. Nebuchadnezzar appointed his uncle, Zedekiah to take over as King. Daniel 2:21 says that God "controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings." In harmony with his fellow captive, taken into captivity at Jerusalem's first fall in 605 BC, Ezekiel, himself deported to Babylon at its second fall in 597 BC, refuses to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar's authority to decide, who rules Judah. To him and Daniel, Jehoiachin is still Judah's king, though he lives in exile.

You might say that Jehoiachin became king as the result of foreign appointment, too but he was the son of Josiah's firstborn and the legitimate heir to Judah's throne. When Necho appointed his father Jehoiakim, he actually righted the wrong that placed Jehoahaz on the throne. As Jehoiakim's son, he was the next in line to rule Judah. While Zedekiah was also a son of Josiah, he was not Judah's rightful king. Ezekiel honors the line of descent that decided Israel's true monarchs.

That, "[the leaders](#) [or, elders] [of Judah were in my home](#)," means that the exiles had accepted Ezekiel as a true prophet of God. Apparently the exiles kept the social structure from Judah (cf. 2Kings 6:32), and meeting with him in his house implies they were on good terms with him. Since 6:26 states that the people wanted "[a vision from the prophets](#)" and that their, "[the leaders](#)" had "[no counsel](#)" to give them, the leaders were probably there to consult with him about Jerusalem's state and their fate. Their future depended on the future of their beloved homeland. Unless they can return to the city from which they came, they remain trapped in Babylon. Most likely, they were exploring the possibilities with Ezekiel when "[the Sovereign LORD took hold of](#)" him. This is standard language for entering a visionary trance, and by calling the LORD "[Sovereign](#)", Ezekiel defers to Him what the future holds for them. The Eternal One is about to give him answers to their questions.

[Then on September 17, during the sixth year of](#) Next, 14 months after my, Ezekiel's first vision, while

[King Jehoiachin's captivity](#), the rightful king was imprisoned by Nebuchadnezzar in exile

[while the leaders of Judah were in my home](#), during the time that Judah's elders were visiting me, Ezekiel in my house, inquiring about the fate of Jerusalem that determined their destiny

[the Sovereign LORD took hold of me](#). The Supreme Ruler of us all, the Eternal One, Judah's ex, grabbed me Ezekiel

2 Ezekiel describes the same celestial person that he saw in the first vision by the river. Unable to completely capture the way the LORD looked to him at that time, the speechless prophet merely compared Him to "[a figure whose appearance resembled a man](#)." Here, he continues to use vague, visionary language saying that this figure "[appeared to be a man](#)." Like Isaiah 6:1, however, he confirmed that the LORD was "[high above](#)," or exalted, in the loftiest position of everything presented to him. The description pointed forward to the incarnate Son of God, the God man who will return to judge the whole world (cf. Rev. 1:7, 13-16 with 14:14). Reduced to comparisons because the figure outclassed anything in creation, he repeats what he said then: "[from what appeared to be his waist up](#)" the figure on the throne "[looked like gleaming amber](#)," a gem that allowed light to pass through it without giving away its exact appearance. It was "[gleaming](#)," or shining with reflected light, because of the LORD's fiery demeanor. "[From his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with](#) [or, radiating with] [splendor](#)" because of His divine magnificence. As 14 months earlier, the LORD and their fate remains unchanged. He is still invested with fire from head to toe to show His complete readiness to punish and consume the wicked.

I I, Ezekiel

[saw a figure that appeared to be a man](#). Spotted what looked like a human shape

[From what appeared to be his waist down](#), what came across as his lower body

[he looked like a burning flame](#). gave the impression it was on fire

[From the waist up](#) what came across as his upper body

[he looked like gleaming amber](#). gave the impression of a glowing yellow gem

3 Back in Chapter 1, the figure was content to let Ezekiel watch His majesty from a distance. Now, to give Ezekiel an accurate firsthand look at Jerusalem that he will relay to the elders, "[He reached out what seemed to be a hand](#)," in order to transport Ezekiel to the distant city "[and took](#) [Ezekiel] [by the hair](#)." The image emphasizes both Ezekiel's inability to make the trip home and the need to take him there above and beyond the reach of the Babylonians. Once the figure had a firm grip on him, "[the](#) [same] [Spirit](#) [who gave the portable throne-chariot power to move in any direction, 1:20-21] [lifted](#) [Ezekiel] [up into the sky and transported](#) [him] [to Jerusalem](#)," not on a conventional, time-consuming journey (hair could never withstand the strain of a normal voyage around

the Fertile Crescent), but **"in a vision from God."** To make sure that Ezekiel gets an accurate picture, God will show him what he is about to see rather than his imperfect eyes.

Ezekiel ends up at **"the north gate of the inner courtyard of the Temple where there is a large idol"**. According to the IVP Bible Background Commentary: *"Ancient Near Eastern thought, not unlike that familiar from Greek mythology, visualized a mountain height as the dwelling place of deity. There would have been little difference in their minds between the tops of mountains and the heavens. Baal's home was purported in Ugaritic literature to be Mount Zaphon (commonly identified with Mount Casius, Jebel al'Aqra, in Syria, elev. 5807 feet). The Hebrew word zaphon means "north" and is translated here by the NIV "sacred mountain" (see Ps 48:2)." When Lucifer expressed his desire to replace God, he declared: **"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High"** (Isa. 14:13-14). So, erecting an idol at the north gate of the inner courtyard is another way of saying that the rebels had installed a rival in the True God's place to make Mt. Zion like Mt. Zaphon and its home. To make matters worse, the King and the royal family used this entrance to make their way to the inner court for worship. The text implies that Zedekiah frequently passed it on his way to express adoration for the LORD – but did nothing to correct the situation, allowing this "home-wrecker and "co-respondent" in the divorce to stay.*

The Ten Commandments, the terms and conditions of the Sinai Covenant begin with the warning: **"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. "You must not have any other god but me. "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me"** (Ex. 20:1-5). No wonder Ezekiel describes this misplaced idol as one **"that has made the LORD very jealous."** This is the same jealousy that moved the LORD to divorce Israel and implies that despite falling twice – clear warnings of doom to come – Jerusalem has moved a rival god into His house and continues to honor it in His place. Like a cheating wife who drives her husband away, the unfaithful rebels have made it impossible for God to stay.

He reached out what seemed to be a hand The human-like image stretched what looked like fingers toward me

and took me by the hair. So it could grab me by the hair

Then the Spirit lifted me up into the sky After that the same Spirit who made the portable throne-chariot move in Chapter 1 picked me up off the ground into the air

and transported me to Jerusalem in a vision from God. Then, took me to the holy city in a trance to give me a glimpse of what the exiles hoped I, Ezekiel would show them about the future (6:26)

I was taken to the north gate of the inner courtyard of the Temple, He carried me, Ezekiel to the north entrance of the most sacred court of God's house

where there is a large idol that has made the LORD very jealous. A huge statue of a false-god stood there that made the Eternal One feel like a violated husband

4 Captivated by the idol and the brazenness that put it there, Ezekiel is startled by the ongoing presence of the LORD. **"Suddenly, [or, abruptly, he noticed that] the glory of the God of Israel was there."** Despite the disrespect of the rebels, like the contempt of a cheating wife who openly flaunts her lover and infidelity, the full majestic presence, or **"glory of the God of Israel was there."** Though his unfaithful bride had abandoned Him, the LORD had not deserted her. Still occupying the Temple, He remains loyal to His defiant people. To underscore the LORD's unfailing love, Ezekiel compares God's glory to the way it looked to him 14 months earlier, and says: it was **"just as I had seen it before in the valley."** More than a display of courage that He is not intimidated by His rival, the equally intense majesty of the LORD's presence implies that despite her adultery, His love for Israel is as

strong as ever and He remains completely committed to her. They have already rejected Him, but He intends to stay with His people to the bitter end.

Suddenly, Abruptly and unexpectedly, out of nowhere

the glory of the God of Israel was there, the majestic presence of national Israel's Creator was still in the house

just as I had seen it before in the valley exactly, or the same as it was when I first saw it by the Chebar River, so He had not pulled back in any way from His devotion or commitment to His ex-bride



Now Serving **The Brew**

Let us pour you a fresh cup, ground verse-by-verse from today's passage

In today's passage, verses 5-6, So please open your Bibles to Ezekiel Chapter 8, and let me pour you a hot CuppaJesus from today's brew, starting with v.1.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR TODAY

Here are the main items in the text that will lead you to its understanding. P0

Parts	Verse 5	Verse 6
Links	Then, so, and	But, and, even more than
Persons	The LORD 2x, me, Son of man, I (Zeke)	Son of man, you 3x (Zeke), the people of (Rebs), Israel (converted ancestor Jacob)
Places	Toward the north, there, to the north, beside the entrance to the gate, near the (altar)	From (my) Temple
Things	Altar, the idol that	What, the detestable sins 2x, these
Words	Said, look, looked, stood, had made so jealous	Said, do 2x, doing, see 3x, are committing to drive, come, will see

Pay careful attention to every item as you follow today's devotional in your study Bible. We have already grouped them by colors in "Today's Text," so you can follow the writer's flow of thought for yourself. Capture and grasp what he is trying to tell you with matching color pencils to draw lines connecting items to others in the same color-family, and a black pencil to cross-link items from different color-families that still have something to do with one another. Use circles, boxes, triangles, etc. to identify topics and themes (triangles, for instance, might represent the Trinity). Also mark with asterisks, etc., the ones you need to look up later for more information or greater details.

TODAY'S TEXT

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

5 **Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man look toward the north." So I looked, and there to the north, beside the entrance to the gate near the altar, stood the idol that had made the LORD so jealous.**

6 **"Son of man," he said, "do you see what they are doing? Do you see the detestable sins the people of Israel are committing to drive me from my Temple? But come, and you will see even more detestable sins than these!"**

THE EXPANDED BIBLE

⁵ Then he said to me, "Human [I Son of man; 2:1], now look toward the north." So I looked up toward the north, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar was the idol that caused God to be jealous [image of jealousy].

⁶ He said to me, “.Human [†Son of man; 2:1], do you see what they are doing? Do you see how many ·hateful [detestable; abominable] things the ·people [†house] of Israel are doing here that drive me far away from my ·Temple [sanctuary]? But you will see things more ·hateful [detestable; abominable] than these.”

THE SCRIPTURES 1998/2009

“5 And He said to me, “Son of man, please lift your eyes toward the north.” And I lifted my eyes northward, and north of the altar gate I saw this image of jealousy in the entrance.

6 And He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Yisra’el are doing here, driving Me away from My set-apart place? And you are to see still greater abominations.”

THE NET BIBLE

5 He said to me, “Son of man, look up toward the north.” So I looked up toward the north, and I noticed to the north of the altar gate was this statue of jealousy at the entrance.

6 He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the great abominations that the people of Israel are practicing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see greater abominations than these!”

TODAY’S DEVOTIONAL:

5 This passage is the second of a four-chapter vision of Jerusalem that God gave to Ezekiel. It starts with Ezekiel’s supernatural transport to Jerusalem and ends with his return to the exiles so he can tell them everything God has shown to him. God wants the exiles to know they can’t pin any hopes on Jerusalem – the flagship of Judah – because it is corrupt, beyond repair, and must be destroyed. It’s unbridled idolatry warrants drastic punishment.

The four chapters look like this:

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. God takes Ezekiel to Jerusalem in a vision (8:1-4) | |
| B. Ezekiel sees visions of abominations committed in and near the Temple (8:5-18) | 8:5-10:7 expose J’s corruption and she is judged |
| C. The LORD commands His messengers to destroy the city (9:1-11) | Cultic people |
| D. The man wearing linen is ordered to destroy the city with fire (10:1-7) | |
| E. Vision of the cherubim and the wheels, again (10:8-17) | Ties to vision in Ch. 1 |
| F. The LORD’S glory crosses the threshold and hovers over the cherub (10:18-19) | He still loves her |
| G. Vision of the cherubim, again (10:20-22) | Ties to vision in Ch. 1 |
| H. Vision of 25 wicked counselors near the Temple (11:1-13) | Misguided leaders |
| I. An oracle of regeneration after exile (11:14-21) | Points to Christ and the Gospel |
| J. The LORD’S glory vacates the Temple and Ezekiel returns to the exiles (11:22-25) | Execution with no hope of parole |

The second section, verses 5-18 divides into four parts, the abominations committed in and near the Temple:

- Idol Worship (8:5-6)
- Animal Worship (8:7-13)
- Nature Worship (8:14-15)
- Sun Worship (8:16-18)

The LORD now orders Ezekiel to "lift up your eyes" and really look at the image that caught his eye in v.3, to see it as it really is. More than a mere statue, the LORD wanted Ezekiel to grasp the deeper significance of what the idol meant. Manasseh, who reigned from 687-642 BC had erected a wooden image of Asherah, or Ishtar the Canaanite goddess in the LORD’s house (2Kgs. 21:7). Although he later removed it (2Ch. 33:15), that wicked monarch didn’t destroy the statue, symbolizing a refusal to give up idolatry, because his successor Josiah, who reigned from 641-609 BC had it taken out and burned at the brook Kidron (2Kgs. 23:6). Now, someone had recreated the idol, an even worse sin than Manasseh’s refusal to get rid of it. Archaeologist Wm. F. Albright

compared it to other “figured slabs” engraved with pagan cultic and mythological scenes found at Gozan and Carchemish, proof that Jerusalem priests and high-ranking Israelite nobility had merged their beliefs with those of idol-worshippers from Syria and Mesopotamia.

Three times, the verse mentions the word “north” emphasizing its location. The Hebrew word tsaphon translated “north”, refers to the Canaanite belief that its gods lived on a mountain to the north. Placing an idol that offends God at the entrance to the Temple compelled everyone who came in through that gate to see it before they saw the true God, thus calling on them to honor it instead of Him. On the same side of the Temple as the royal palace, it was most honorable of its three gateways. Passing it every time he went to participate in ceremonies dedicated to God, the King symbolically led the people to worship the idol in God’s place. Thus, setting up the idol in that place further symbolized the pagan ideal of a false god installed in the mountainous north, recreating tsaphon right there on Mt. Zion. The LORD refers to it as “near the altar” because sacrifices were made, according to Lev. 1:11, “*on the north side of the altar in the LORD’s presence.*” Situating the idol on the north side of the altar underscores the blasphemy of it all, so that sacrifices were actually made at the feet of a pagan substitute for God.

Then Next, or after that

the LORD said to me, “**Son of man** the Eternal One told me, Ezekiel, Descendant of Adam (but not descendant of Israel and therefore one of the rebels)

look toward the north.” Turn your eyes northward (to the most sacred direction of the temple)

So I looked, Consequently, I, Ezekiel turned my eyes

and there to the north, in that direction,

beside the entrance to the gate near the altar, next to the portal of the entryway close to the place where sacrifices were offered and where the high-priest pleaded with the true God to forgive the people

stood the idol that had made the LORD so jealous was positioned the graven image that Israel preferred to God, that made the Eternal One feel like a cheated-on husband

6 Referring to the threefold blasphemy of recreating pagan tsaphon, blocking the path to God with a pagan alternative, and offering sacrifices at the idol’s feet instead of before the LORD, the Eternal One calls on Ezekiel to “**see what** [the rebels] **are** [really] **doing.**” More than setting up a statue in the Temple, the people had committed “**many** ·**hateful** [or detestable, abominable] **things that drive me far away from my** ·**Temple.**” Like an unfaithful wife who makes it impossible for her husband to stay because she moves her lover into the house to replace him, the Israelites had moved a false substitute for the True God into His holy house in a deliberate effort to get Him to leave. The people who foolishly relied on God’s presence to protect them from enemies swooping down on them from the north, dared to cheat on Him at its most vulnerable point – the north gate – arrogantly and irresponsibly doing exactly what it takes to make Him distance Himself from them. Rather than driving Him away like some helpless spouse, the people disqualify themselves from God’s presence. Stained with centuries of unforgiven sins and thus, too polluted for Him to remain in the Temple, the LORD will voluntarily vacate His house in 11:23 at the end of the vision.

As if these abominations were not enough grounds to justify divorcing them, the LORD invites Ezekiel to “**come, and you will see even more detestable sins than these.**” Building to the climax of the vision in 11:22-25, the LORD repeats this same line twice more, at the climax of the next two passages, in verse 18 after showing Ezekiel their worship of animals, and in verse 15, following evidence they also worshiped nature. A skillful attorney, the LORD adds progressively more disgusting accounts of Israel’s affairs with other lovers to justify ending His marriage to her. All the while, the LORD’s undiminished glory remains in the Temple to symbolize His unfailing love. Instead of deserting Israel and breaking the covenant, the LORD simply cannot stay in the house the people have desecrated for centuries so it is now unfit for Him to live there any longer.



A Tastier Cuppa!

