

Dr. Leslie Allen, Ezekiel, Lecture 5, Vision of God's Glory Leaving the Defiled Temple, Hope, Ezekiel 8:1-11:25

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This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 5, Vision of God's Glory Leaving the Defiled Temple, Eventual Hope. Ezekiel 8:1-11:25.

So far, we have covered the first part of the book of Ezekiel, chapters one through seven. Now we are beginning the second part, which begins with chapter eight and goes on as far as chapter 19. Chapters eight through 11 that we are concerned with this time are dominated by the vision of God's glory, leaving the defiled temple.

We shall move on to an account of symbolic actions in chapter 12, and then on to oracles of judgment in chapters 13 through 19. As you recall, this was the same pattern of components as we had in the first part. So, there's quite a logic so far, in the way the book is set up.

More will have to be said about the structuring as we go along, but those are the bare bones. Like chapter one, it begins with a date. Now, we have the standard chronological format that we shall find in the rest of the book.

In chapter one, it had to be put in with an editorial hand, because Ezekiel simply referred to his 30th year. But back then, in chapter one, it was July 593. And now we have moved on to September 592.

So just over a year later, this beginning of the second part is dated. And this, of course, is a careful documentation that this was a genuine prophetic experience by setting the date down. It shows it's genuine and authenticates what is being said.

Chapters 8 through 11 are a consistent whole in that they have a frame. And the frame is the first three verses, the visionary experience of verses 1 to 3 of chapter 8. That's the beginning of the vision. And then when we come to the end of chapter 11, verses 24 to 25, we shall have mention of the end of the vision.

The vision that he has in chapter two is very much like what we read in chapter one. This supernatural figure, and obviously God. I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being.

Below what appeared to be its loins, it was fire. And above the loins, it was like the appearance of brightness with gleaming amber. And so there is the same figure appearing to him there.

But before that, we have to mention the human setting. I was sitting in my house in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, with the elders of Judah sitting before me. And they'd obviously come to consult him.

And he is regarded as a figure of some authority. And one gets the impression that these elders were responsible for the labor camp. And it was a self-governing labor camp, and they were taking charge of it.

And they have come, obviously, to hear a message from Ezekiel. But the hand of the Lord fell upon me there. We get this strong verb: fell.

Wham! Oh, here's a vision or an important message coming along. And so it is. And so, we're introduced to the divine figure in the vision.

And it stretched out a form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head, lifted him up, and then a spirit took over, and lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem. Now, in Chapter 1, we had a physical levitation. No, it was in Chapter 3, at the end of that first vision.

We had this levitation, and physically, Jeremiah was transported back to the labor camp. I don't know how far it was away. But this seems to be different.

He falls into a trance, and it's a visionary experience that he feels he's being lifted up. But all the while, he's sitting there in his chair. And there he still is, at the end of Chapter 11, when he comes out of the trance.

So, this is a different type of levitation. He feels it is a trance experience. Verse 4 is a very important verse.

He's brought to a place near the temple. And in verse 3, let me say that there are a series of visionary scenes. There are four visionary scenes.

And there's this movement from one to the other. First of all, it is in 3 to 6, then 7 through 13, then 14 and 15, and lastly, 16 and 17. And so this is the first scene that he's shown in the temple area.

It's difficult. There's this careful delineation of this movement along and eventually down into the inner court of the temple. And it's not terribly easy to see where that movement starts and how it progresses.

But most probably, we're to see initially Ezekiel being brought into a court just inside the city wall, just inside the north gate of the city wall. And then he moves on through another gate in the palace complex wall. And there is another vision.

He moves further through the gate of the outer court of the temple. Lastly, he moves into the temple area itself. And so, a sequence of events.

And in each case, he's shown a terrible sight. It would have been terrible to Ezekiel, and it's certainly terrible to God that there's worship going on. But it's pagan worship, which shouldn't be happening.

It starts with worship outside the temple area in that court between the city wall and the palace complex wall. We have to ask a basic question about these scenes. Is it a Skype experience? Is it a live experience that Ezekiel, in his trance, is taken to Jerusalem? It's like a television being switched on, and he moves from place to place and sees what's going on.

Is that what's happening? Or alternatively, is he being shown a video which is being made up of different scenes, different things happening at different times. And they're brought together in a video and then Ezekiel is shown this video. And the latter suggestion seems to be true because one of these visions is of women engaging in mourning rites for the god Tammuz, a Babylonian god.

It was especially a woman's religion, the worship of Tammuz. He died every year and was taken down to the underworld, and women would engage in mourning festivities. But this happened in a particular month, which for us is the middle of June to the middle of July.

And so, this wasn't in September. In fact, this was another time, and this is another month. And so, these seem to be separate videos, different video scenes, and not live broadcasts that he sees all at one time, which is actually going on in real life.

So, there's a lot of explaining to do where this first vision is concerned. And he's shown in verse 4 this image of jealousy which provokes the jealousy. And obviously it's a pagan image, an image of a pagan god.

And it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be. It's outside the temple grounds, it's true. But they shouldn't be worshipping this pagan idol.

And rightly, there's this jealousy that this should not be so. There should be worship only of the one God of Israel, Yahweh. Verse 4 makes an important point.

The glory of the God of Israel was there like the vision I'd seen in the valley. Well, that was the chapter 1 vision. And that was the mobile throne with gods sitting on the throne and the living creatures supporting the platform on which the throne was.

And there is this glory of the God of Israel. And so this is an important first step because we shall see that God's presence in the temple is going to leave the temple,

and God's presence is to move over to the mobile throne. Gradually, as these chapters go on, we shall see this movement, step by step, in different stages, portrayed in a very dramatic way.

And then, before that, you remember when we were discussing chapter 1, we talked of God's presence in terms of a very complex doctrine. God can be present in different places in different forms. And so, in this chapter, there are two presences of God.

There's the presence of God in the temple, in the Holy of Holies, above the Ark, enthroned above the cherubim, as we're often told. The real presence there. But now we've got this other presence, which is called the glory, this mobile presence.

And so, there's this double presence. And there's very much this belief that God can be present in different places to different degrees. And so, he's present in two forms here in this chapter.

That's important because that double presence is going to become a single presence, and God's presence in the temple is soon to be gone. We come to the second scene in chapter 7, verse 7. Well, at the end of the first scene, verse 6, God draws attention to this image of jealousy.

Mortal, do you see what they're doing? The great abominations that the house of Israel is committing here to drive me far from my sanctuary. This is enough to drive me out of the temple. And so that's a warning that that is actually going to happen.

Yet you will see still greater abominations. That keyword from earlier chapters, especially chapter 5, is taken up here. Here, in a religious sense, something that was religiously very wrong.

But then we move on to the next scene of the four. And there's a hole in the wall. And there's a room beside the next gateway.

Ezekiel could look through this hole and see something going on. And God tells him to enlarge the wall and climb through and get a better look and see what's actually going on. And here is this greater abomination.

And there were the walls of this room. And there were pictures on it—all kinds of creeping things and loathsome animals representing gods presumably.

And all the idols of the house of Israel. And there were these terrible pictures. And before them were 70 of the elders of the house of Israel.

Ezekiel recognizes one of them as a Nair, son of Shaphan, whom he knew when he was living in Jerusalem. He's one of the elders who are obviously worshipping these images of pagan deities.

Each had his censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense ascended. Now, to use the censer and to burn the incense was a priestly task. But here were lay people engaging in it as part of their pagan worship.

And once again, God's shock is brought out in this exclamatory question in verse 12. O mortal, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark? Each in his house of images. Apparently, there were various cubicles in this room.

And each of the elders was in their cubicle looking at a certain set of pictures on the wall and engaging in their private devotions. But he said, well, there's more to come and worse to come.

You will see still greater abominations that they are committing, he says in verse 13. So that's an introduction to the third scene in 14 and 15. And there are these women sitting near the north gate of the outer court of the temple.

And they're worshipping Tammuz, this Babylonian god. And as I said, this was a form of worship that women especially engaged in. And in June and July, they bemoaned the annual death of this god.

And he's going down to the underworld. But this is being worshipped in Judah by Judean women. And this is a terrible thing.

But there's worse still to come. And we come to the last visionary scene in this series in verses 16 and 17. And this is in the inner court of the temple itself.

And there were 25 men standing between the porch of the temple and the altar of burnt offerings. And they had their backs to the temple, which was pretty sacrilegious because that was where God was. Part of the presence of God.

And they were worshipping the sun. They were worshipping the sun god. And it was presumably dawn.

They were facing east, worshipping the rising sun and prostrating themselves. This is a terrible thing. It's an insult to God because they're turning their backs on God, who is behind them in the temple itself.

They're facing east. And the temple is on the west side of that inner temple court. And God draws attention to this in verse 17.

And he's saying, have you seen this, O mortal? And there's this shocked exclamation from God. And it says, see, they're putting the branch to their nose. We don't know what that means.

It may have been a right of allegiance to the sun god. But we don't actually know. Therefore, I will act in wrath.

What we have in 17 is really an accusation. And God's sayings up to now have been accusations in describing the terrible things that are going on. But now, it moves on to the second part of an oracle of judgment.

So, the punishment that will come. And the two parts of accusation and punishment are linked as often in Old Testament prophecy with that linked word, therefore. Therefore, the only consequence must be I will act in wrath.

My eye will not spare nor will I have pity. No more chances for them. This is terrible.

The worst has to happen. Though they cry in my hearing with a loud voice, no, no, please spare us. I will not listen to them.

Now, we move on to chapter 9. And something separate is happening now. And actually, it's the outworking of the punishment in the oracle of judgment. And God cries out in verse 1. He cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, Draw near you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.

And there's irony there. We've just had the thought of perhaps those worshippers crying out in a loud voice, asking to be spared. But over against them, it's God's loud voice that predominates.

Ha ha, no. They've had their last chance, and destruction is about to happen. And we have these, what we might call destroying angels.

These six men with their weapons for slaughter. But then, I'm not sure if it was... Yes, it was six. And then there was another one.

There was another angel, a man clothed in linen with a writing case at his side. It was a scribe. It was an angelic scribe.

And we think, well, what's he doing there? And we shall find out. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar, that altar of burnt offering. And so there we are.

That's the preparation for the next scene. And eventually they're going to do their separate pieces of work. The six angels doing their destruction and then the other one doing, as yet, we know not what.

We come to verse three with another mention of that mobile throne. No, it's not a mention of the mobile throne. We've got to be very careful because we get this word glory, and we're obviously talking about the presence of God.

But which presence is it? Is it the temple presence, or is it the mobile presence? And if we look carefully, it's the temple presence now called the glory of the God of Israel that has gone up from the cherub, the cherub structure on which it rested, to the threshold of the house. It came out of the Holy of Holies, and it came out to the porch of the temple. And there was this glorious manifestation of the God of Israel.

But this is ominous. It's always back there in that dark room in the Holy of Holies. But now it's resplendent, and Ezekiel can see it on the porch of the temple.

So, this is the first stage of moving out from the Holy of Holies. Meanwhile, we go back to this other scene and are told what the role of that heavenly scribe is. The Lord called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing case at his side, and he's told to go through the city and put a mark with his pen and ink on the foreheads of certain people, and they're going to be spared.

They're going to be spared. Not everybody is going to be destroyed. And they're described, these survivors, as those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.

And so, you get this stark contrast between the few who are to be spared and presumably the rest who are to be destroyed, who are committing abominations. And then there's a command to the six destroying angels, who are called to do their grisly work. And there's quite a close link between chapter 9 and 8.18. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity.

Well, that's picked up. That's to be the attitude of the destroyers. And then in various... There's also mentioned in 8.18 of the wrath of God.

And that's picked up in verse 8, as you pour out your wrath on Jerusalem. And so, there's this outworking. 8.18 sets out the agenda and chapter 9 is the fulfillment of that agenda.

And so, the house is to be defiled. There is to be slaughter, and the corpses are to be put into the temple area and into the temple itself, defiling it so that it can no longer be used for worship. And God, as God does this, and as they give this order, and as they do their work, while they were killing and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out, here in verse 8, Our Lord God, will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath on Jerusalem? We don't often find Ezekiel with a voice of his own, but here we do.

We had it once before, and this is the second time. But he's really fulfilling a prophetic role, the role that the classical prophets generally had unless they were told not to, as in the case of Jeremiah. The classical prophets had two tasks.

One was to proclaim God's word of destruction to their audiences, but the other was a secret work, a hidden work of intercession. Oh, please, God, please spare them. Don't make it too bad for them.

Oh God, give them another chance. And the classic case of that, of course, is in the book of Amos, in chapter 7, verses 2 and 5. And there's a vision that Amos has of the destruction of the land and people. And Amos said, Oh Lord God, forgive, I beg you.

How can Jacob stand? He is so small. And the Lord relented. I'll give them another chance. And then in verse 5, there's another vision of destruction, of what is likely to happen.

And Amos intercedes again and says the same thing again. And the Lord relented, that intercession, that prophetic prayer, the power of prayer. And God says, All right, I'll give them another chance.

This shall not be. And so, we move on, but we come to chapter 8 and verse 2, where the Lord says, The end has come upon my people Israel. I will never again pass them by.

I'm not going to relent anymore. They've had their chances. They've used up their opportunities to repent and they haven't done it.

And so there it is. And so here is Ezekiel engaging in this intercessory ministry. And we shall see another example of Ezekiel doing that later on.

But in verse 9, there's this explanation as to why the punishment has to happen. The guilt is exceedingly great. The land is full of bloodshed.

The city is full of perversity. So, there were not only religious sins, but also moral and social sins that were committed by the people. And the people had a justification.

They said, The Lord has forsaken the land and the Lord doesn't see. The Lord's left us. He's abandoned us.

He's given us over to the enemy and he's gone. Well, that wasn't quite right, but in a sense it was, because it was almost a prophecy of what was going to happen. But they had this view of the disappearance of God from their scene.

It doesn't matter what we do. He doesn't see us. He's not going to punish us anymore.

He can't see it. So, it's all right. And so as for me, my eye shall not spare, nor will I have pity.

And that's another echo of 8.18. And so, the agenda is being fulfilled step by step. And then in verse 11, the man reports back and says, I've done my job. I've put my mark on the heads of those who are to be spared.

I've done as you commanded me. And there's this contrast between the obedient scribe and the disobedient people of God that we've just been hearing about. But it's really a preface.

This last verse is really a preface to chapter 10, because the scribe is going to be doing something else. I've got something else for you to do, God virtually says. But first, in chapter 10, we come to verse 1. I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim, that firmament that platform scaled down to a throne platform, and there appeared something above them, something like a sapphire in form resembling a throne.

And it's a reminder that there was that other presence of God there, not just the temple presence appearing on the porch of the temple now, having left the Holy of Holies, but in the court, in the courtyard, in the inner courtyard, there was this mobile throne with the other presence of God in a theophany. But that's a reminder, a little reminder of where the text is going to be moving on to because these two presences are going to coalesce and become one, only on the mobile throne, eventually. But we move back to the new task that the scribe has, but in verse 2, hitherto, when he's been mentioned, he's had his writing case at his side with his pen and ink in, but he doesn't have that now.

He said to the man clothed in linen, and so he's not a scribe. He's got another job to do. I've got something I want you to do which isn't scribal at all. You don't need your pen for this one.

Go within the millwork underneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city. Do you remember in chapter 1 when we had that vision underneath the platform and in between those living creatures? There was fire, fire, a fire of judgment in this theophany of judgment.

And this is, we're reminded of this again, it comes in again. It's within the millwork underneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals because he's a

supernatural being; he can do that without burning his hands and scattering them over the city.

And so that fire of judgment is actually going to be dropped upon the city. We notice that the living creatures of chapter 1 are now called cherubim. All through chapter 10, we shall find this new word for them.

They're not living creatures who are humanoid; they're cherubim who have animal bodies with human faces. But why that change of title? It links up with those cherubim, those statues, those images in the Holy of Holies, and those gold images that supported the invisible throne of God in the Holy of Holies. But now, the presence of God is to move eventually from one set of cherubim to the other set of cherubim.

And so, there's this link, these statues of God's courtiers. They're described, their title is now given to these living creatures under the mobile throne. In verse 3, the cherubim are standing on the south side of the house.

those abominations that had been taking part were all on the north side, coming in through the north gate and going through another north gate and then through the north gate of the temple and so on. And that was where those abominations were happening. But this mobile throne was situated far away on the south side of the temple, on the other side, as far as it could get away within the temple area from those abominations.

And at this point, a cloud filled the inner court. I was going to refer you where that fire was concerned to a psalm, Psalm 18, where we have a theophany there. Psalm 18, in verse 8, as God came down, smoke went up from his nostrils, devouring fire from his mouth, glowing coals flamed forth from him.

And this was the fire of judgment that God was going to use against the king's enemies. And God rides on a cherub there. So, already that mobility of God coming from heaven to earth, back in Psalm 18, in verse 10, is riding on a cherub.

And so, there's a sort of a reminiscence of a passage like that. But what I want to refer to you is this appearance of glory; the glory of the Lord rose up from the cherub, the cherub structure, to the threshold of the house. And we're taken back to what we were told back in 9:3, that there's this glory of God in his temple presence, moving out from the cherub structure to the threshold of the house.

And the temple itself was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the Lord. And this should remind us of the dedication of Solomon's temple. Solomon's temple was built, and it was an empty shell, but then

God came in, and he revealed himself, not only by that presence in the darkness of the Holy of Holies but with a glorious manifestation of theophany.

And the cloud filled the temple. And we're told that in 1 Kings 8, verses 10 to 11. A cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priest could not stand to minister because of the cloud.

For the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. And here's this sad irony. The glory that appeared at the beginning of the use of Solomon's temple now reappears at the end, when it's going to leave the temple.

And so, a terrible reminiscence of the beginning of worship, and now the end of worship has to take place. And a similar bright theophany, this visibility of this temple presence, which otherwise would be invisible in the Holy of Holies. But in verse 6, the man is reminded to do his work, and it's described how he did it.

From verse 8 onwards, or verse 9, we have a long passage where we have a description of the cherubim and the wheels. But then in 15, we come back to narrative once more. And the cherubim, now it's the cherubim of the mobile throne.

They prepare to set off. God has moved that Holy of Holies temple presence has become merged with that mobile throne presence. And the mobile throne is going to move up, move on and up.

The cherubim rose up, and there was an identification with the living creatures of chapter 1. It's the same scene over again. In verse 15, these were the living creatures that I saw by the river Kibbar. And when the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them.

And the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth. And so, we have the wheels going along the ground for a while, and then the wings are flapping, and up the chariot throne goes. And the spirit of the living creatures was in them, making the wheels and the living creatures mobile.

And what's happening, we're told in verse 18, the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim. This is the actual movement. The presence, temple presence, merges with the theophany presence in verse 18.

And then off they go, off they go. And it goes up. And it goes along, first of all, along the ground.

And it's going along to the gate of the inner court of the temple, which had been about 50 yards from where the mobile throne was before. And so, on they go. It's going east.

In verse 20, once again, there is an identification with the living creatures and the four faces, and they're moving on. And so, the temple presence is merged with the mobile throne presence, and it's in the temple no more. Now, this narrative is continued in 11:22.

The cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. And the glory of the Lord ascended from the middle of the city and stopped on the mountain east of the city. And Ezekiel has this last look.

That's his last view. There he sees the mobile throne over against the eastern horizon, which is the massive Mount of Olives, and its mobile throne is on its way back to heaven. It's certainly the presence of God is in the temple no more.

And so that's the ending of this vision. But, meanwhile, we return to the narrative of worship going on in the temple area. Except in this case, it's not worship, but it's immoral activity in the temple area.

And this is a continuation of those four scenes that we had before. There were 25 men, and Ezekiel recognized two of them. There was Jaazaniah, seemingly another Jaazaniah, because he had a different father, and Pelletiah, officials of the people.

And they seem to be Jerusalem elders. And Ezekiel remembered two of them from his pre-exilic days. And what were they doing? Well, God says, mortal, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city.

They're members of the city council, and they're up to no good. And what are they doing? They say the time is not yet, and they are not near to building houses. This city is the pot, and we're the meat.

And what seems to have been happening was that, under the guise of legislation, property was being seized in the city. Houses were being seized from their owners. And the city officials were taking them over.

And the owners were being killed. And it reminds us of a scene in northern Israel, back in Ahab's time, where Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard next door. And Jezebel said I can arrange that for you, my dear.

And she had him accused of treason. And so the vineyard became crown property, and King Ahab took it over. And so, there's similar use of wrong legislation here.

And this is a terrible thing. And they use this metaphor, this city is the pot and we're the meat. There's only room for us here.

There's no room for those house owners. We'll get them killed. We're the people who take over their houses.

And so we don't need to build our own houses. We can just take over other people's. And so terrible things happening in the city council.

And there it is. And this is happening on temple property, this council meeting. And so there is this accusation from God, in verse 5 and verse 6 and so on.

You killed many in this city and filled its streets with the slain to take over their property. And so it picks up that metaphor in verse 7. The slain whom you've placed within the city are the meat. And this city is the pot.

But you shall be taken out of it. And the reuse of this metaphor means that these counselors don't belong in the city. It really belonged to those good citizens who had their property taken away.

They were the meat in the cooking pot. But the counselors had no room in the cooking pot. They had to be taken out and given over into the hands of foreigners, verse 9, who will execute judgments upon you.

You shall fall by the sword. And this seems to be, this vision is rather different from the other visions. The other visions were not live scenes, they were like sort of video scenes that Ezekiel was seeing.

But in this case, it's a live scene. And he's seeing something that's actually happening at that time. And there he is, prophesying this judgment from God.

And in verse 13, while I was prophesying, Pelitia, the son of Benaiah, died. He dropped dead, just like that.

And it wasn't handed over to the foreign authorities and killed by them. He just died on the spot. At that point, Ezekiel makes another plea for intercession.

The prophetic task of intercession he makes his own. I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, Oh Lord God, will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel? This is the start of the complete end of the people of God. And he's terribly worried.

Finally, we come to a new message in verses 14 through 21. As I say, 22 through 24 will end those visions, those series of visions. But meanwhile, we have another message from God in verse 14 onwards.

And we have to think carefully about this message. Do you remember, we've seen that interspersed among messages of judgment, there's a looking forward to the period beyond 587 that Ezekiel will major in the second half of the book? And it seems very much that verses 14 through 21 belong to this series of messages that relate not to the pre-587 period but to the post-587 period.

And in verse 15, God mentions a problem to Ezekiel. And it's talking about conditions after the exile when, yes, those in exile by now, it's after 587. And so, there's been this general deportation.

But there were people who were living on in Judah after 587. And interestingly enough, they feature in the book of Lamentations. It's about the people who stay back in the land.

But here, there's a very negative assessment of those people. They've gone, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said they've gone far from the Lord. To us this land is given for a possession.

They're the wicked, the exiles, and they're the wicked people. God's taken them away. And we're left.

We're the good people. We're the good people. And so, we still have the land as a possession from God.

But they went far from the Lord. And so, they've gone far into exile. And we shall find later on that there's this point of view, that there's this hostile attitude between these two groups.

And those left in the land blame the others for being exiled because of their own sins. But they exempt themselves from that punishment. And so now there comes a message of encouragement to the exiles through Ezekiel.

Therefore, say, and say to the 587 exiles who've augmented the 597 exiles. Therefore say, though I remove them far away among the nations. 587 exile is in the past now.

And though I scattered them among the countries. Yet I've been a sanctuary to them for a little while. Or to some extent in the countries where they've gone.

God's presence is still a reality for the exiles. And it's been like a sanctuary just as God used to be present in that temple.

God is a sort of temple for the exiles. And he still has a presence with them. Remember, the presence can take different forms.

And God could say to Joshua, I will be with you, helping you in your task. And so God is with those exiles. His presence is with them as a sort of sanctuary.

And we don't know how to translate it. For a little while, new RSV text or margin to some extent. Is it a small but real element of presence? Or is it a temporary presence before there's a full presence again back in the land? We're not quite sure.

But anyway, affirming God's presence is with the exiles. And this, of course, is very much a feature of Ezekiel's post-587 ministry. And his oracles of salvation.

And so there comes a promise that there's going to be a return from exile. In verse 17, I will gather you from the peoples, and I will give you the land of Israel. And when they come there, they will remove from it all the detestable things and all its abominations.

I will give them one heart or perhaps a new heart. There are two readings. And put a new spirit within them.

I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh so that they may follow my statutes. This will come again in its proper place as it were.

In chapter 36 and in verses 26 and 27. A new heart I will give you. A new spirit I will put within you.

I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. This is the promise for the future.

And here it's put back. Just as the watchman metaphor for Ezekiel in 33 was put back also into chapter 3. So, the promise of 36 to the 587 exiles is put back here also in chapter 11. And so there's this anticipation here.

A message directly to that whole group of exiles. But there's a warning. There's a sting in the tail.

Do you notice verse 21? But as for those whose heart goes out after their detestable things and their abominations. These are the exiles. While they're still in the land.

While they're still in exile and even when they go back to the land. I will bring their deeds upon their own head, says the Lord God. Remember we've been speaking about two types of judgment.

Judgment with a capital J. That radical judgment involved in the fall of Jerusalem in 587. And then judgment with a small j. On a lesser scale but very real. Well, this is that smaller judgment here.

And Ezekiel generally mixed challenge with his assurance. When he gave them promises very often he said there are provisos that go with them. Very much a characteristic of Ezekiel's ministry as we've already seen.

So, good things to come but watch it. There's an obligation resting upon you to live up to these promises. Before they come and when they come.

And then finally we go back to the original scene of those visions. That Ezekiel had in his trance. And he has his last look of the mobile throne on the Mount of Olives.

High up above Jerusalem. And then he says in the end of verse 24. Then the vision I'd seen left me, and I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had shown me.

He comes out of his trance. And there the elders still sitting beside him. It may have to the elders it may have been a few seconds.

It's true dreams isn't it? You can go through a whole lot of experiences. And you wake up and look at the clock, and you've only been dozing for a few minutes. And so there I've got to tell you about all these visions that I've been having.

And so, he tells them. But this is the trance experience that Ezekiel has been going through. But that main vision was a graphic dramatic illustration.

That Jerusalem is left unprotected. God is gone. The old shibboleths of Zion theology.

God is in the midst of the city, and it shall not be moved. God is its refuge and strength. That used to be so.

But now it's no longer so. And so, it has to face destruction. Israel's God has left the temple.

And his traditional presence there was no longer true. And he handed it over to the enemies of Israel. To be his agents in punishment of their wicked ways.

Religious abominations and social and moral abominations. No room left for God. And eventually, no room was left for the people of God in Jerusalem.

Next time we should be studying from chapter 12. Moving from 12:1 down to 14:11. Verse 1 through chapter 11, verse 25.

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 5, Vision of God's Glory Leaving the Defiled Temple, Eventual Hope. Ezekiel 8:1-11:25.