

# EZEKIEL

## *Cry Me a River*

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,  
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion  
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 10:1-22

Topic

After 400yrs dwelling among His people, the glory of the LORD  
departs the Temple.

Title

***"Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Of The Leaving Of The Lord"***

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### ***Where were you when the world stopped turnin'?***

Most of us recognize that as the title & the opening lyric of the Alan Jackson song. He wrote it in reaction to the terror attacks on 9/11/2001. Have you noticed that when we talk about it, we always preface our comments by giving a short account of where we were when we heard the news?

### **September 17<sup>th</sup>, 592BC is a date all Israelites ought to remember.**

It is the probable date on which the glory of God exited His Temple in Jerusalem. To say it was a monumental day in Jewish history should top the list of the greatest understatements of all time.

The LORD dwelt among His people in the Holy of Holies, using the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat as a throne. The glory of God departs the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the Temple (10:4). It then moves from the Temple to the east gate of the Temple (10:18-19). Finally, it departs entirely from the city, pausing on the Mount of Olives (11:23).

## **Then glory was gone...and has not returned.**

I've used a quote from A.W. Tozer too many times, but it's so good. He challenges us, *"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the Church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference."*

Would **we** know the difference? The way I asked the question assumes that God the Holy Spirit has not *already* withdrawn.

God's Temple departure gives us opportunity to examine the State of the Church. I'll organize my comments around two questions: **#1 Can You See God's Withdrawing?**, and **#2 Can You Stop God's Withdrawing?**

### **#1 - Can You See God's Withdrawing? (v1-17)**

When Solomon dedicated the Temple we read, "And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy *place*, that the cloud [Shekinah] filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (First Kings 8:10-11).

Fast forward 400yrs. His people spiritually & physically have turned their backs to Him. They placed abominable idols in the Temple. Like Snagglepuss, God would "exit stage north."

It's hard for us to understand the scope of the LORD's departure. This was easily one of the 'darkest' (pun intended) days in the history of Israel.

Not just Israel. Her task was to reveal the glory of God to all nations. What happens to Israel affects all human history profoundly.

Ezk 10:1 And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the Cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

We saw this conveyance in the first chapter. We call it God's Throne Chariot. It involves four supernatural beings, identified as Cherubim, supporting a platform upon which is a Throne for God.

Ufologists excitedly see the Throne Chariot as a spaceship piloted by alien astronauts. Among their arguments is that a 6<sup>th</sup> century observer would have a difficult time describing spaceships.

*They're listening to way too much Coast to Coast AM Radio in the middle of the night.*

Look at verse eighteen: "As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, "Wheel." When God uses symbols & signs, He usually defines them within a few verses. In this case, there is no symbolism. "Wheels" are defined as "wheels." It counters any suggestion that he was describing *chariots of the gods*. This was the chariot **of God** - the God of the Bible.

Are UFO's (and USO's) 'real'? *Of course!* But what are they? Everything about the UFO phenomena, including abductions, can be explained by fallen angels prepping humans for a great deception.

Ezk 10:2 Then He spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, "Go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hands with coals of fire from among the Cherubim, and scatter *them* over the city." And he went in as I watched.

Scattering the hot coals represents God's judgment falling upon the city. It was a necessary, holy judgement. It couldn't happen while the glory of the LORD was in the Cherubim.

Ezk 10:3 Now the Cherubim were standing on the south side of the Temple when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court.

Ezk 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the Cherub, *and paused* over the threshold of the Temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory.

Ezk 10:5 And the sound of the wings of the Cherubim was heard *even* in the outer court, like the voice of Almighty God when He speaks.

Scholars are split over whether or not Jews in the Temple and the surrounding area could see these phenomena. In verse five we're told it was "heard even in the outer court." If it was "heard" it implies *there were people who heard it*.

Jerusalem is situated on a hill. The people in areas surrounding the city could have seen the radiance coming from the hilltop.

It would have been beautiful, but terrifying. Shekinah stayed put in the Holy of Holies.

Ezk 10:6 Then it happened, when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the Cherubim," that he went in and stood beside the wheels.

Ezk 10:7 And the Cherub stretched out his hand from among the Cherubim to the fire that was among the Cherubim, and took *some of it* and put *it* into the hands of the *man* clothed with linen, who took *it* and went out.

Ezk 10:8 The Cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.

This is an incredibly detailed description. True, it is hard to depict, and if you search for images they are mostly too weird. Ezekiel was not confused. He knew what he was seeing.

Ezk 10:9 And when I looked, there were four wheels by the Cherubim, one wheel by one cherub and another wheel by each other cherub; the wheels appeared to *have* the color of a beryl stone.

Ezk 10:10 As for their appearance, all four looked alike - as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

Ezk 10:11 When they went, they went toward *any of* their four directions; they did not turn aside when they went, but followed in the direction the head was facing. They did not turn aside when they went.

Ezk 10:12 And their whole body, with their back, their hands, their wings, and the wheels that the four had, *were* full of eyes all around.

Ezk 10:13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, "Wheel."

I can almost hear someone asking Ezekiel what the wheels represent, and him answering, "They were wheels."

Ezk 10:14 Each one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, the second face the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

In chapter one the Cherubim had faces of lion, eagle, man & ox. Here the ox is replaced by "the face of a Cherub." The simple answer is that the face of a Cherub looks like the face of a bull or an ox. Cherubs are not little baby angels with wings.

Ezk 10:15 And the Cherubim were lifted up. This was the living creature I saw by the River Chebar.

Ezk 10:16 When the Cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the Cherubim lifted their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also did not turn from beside them.

Ezk 10:17 When *the Cherubim* stood still, *the wheels* stood still, and when *one* was lifted up, *the other* lifted itself up, for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

It sounds like they had on the new \$400,000.00 helmets our courageous F35 pilots have.

Remembering back to 9-11, can you imagine a scenario where you saw the planes crashing into the World Trade Center and then went about your business as if nothing monumental had occurred?

The Jerusalem Jews kept committing their abominations as if nothing of any real significance had occurred.

Unlike OT Israel, every NT believer receives the *permanent* indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. He doesn't come & go.

What **can** happen is this:

- A believer who begins in the Spirit can try to live the Christian life in his or her own energy. The apostle Paul put it this way, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).
- A Church that begins in the Spirit can, according to Jesus, leave their first love for Him. If it persists, the Lord says He will withdraw that Church's "lampstand." Intellect will begin to overwhelm intimacy. Thus it becomes works-oriented rather than grace-sufficient. D.L. Moody said, "The Bible was not given for our information, but for our transformation."

You can **see** this shift. The Tozer quote has a second part: "If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

- Paul saw it in Galatia.
- Jesus saw it in Ephesus.

One of the great questions we hear every presidential election is, "Are you better off today than you were 4yrs ago?"

We can ask, "Am I farther along spiritually today than when I first was saved?" Or, "Is my life characterized by my plans for it or God's?"

## #2 - Can You Stop God's Withdrawing? (v18-22)

There is something quite important to notice in God's withdrawal. The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary says,

*Successive steps are marked in His departure; so slowly and **reluctantly** does the merciful God leave His house. First, He goes up from the Cherub, whereupon He was, to the Threshold of the Temple (9:3); then He elevates His throne above the Threshold of the house (10:1); leaving the Cherubim 'on the right side of the house' (10:3). Then He mounts up and sits on the throne (10:4); He and the Cherubim, after standing for a time at the door of the east gate (10:18-19), where was the exit to the lower court of the people - leave the house altogether (11:2-3), not to return until Ezekiel 43:2.*

Reluctant to leave, the LORD made significant pauses during His departure. He loved (and loves) Israel with an everlasting love. He desired their repentance. He made a spectacular exit, pausing. They paid it no mind. The pauses could have, as we say, "given them pause," to repent.

We need to establish that this idea of our human disobedience causing pauses along the redemption timeline is Scriptural.

- God hit 'pause' for Abram. He was told to go to Bethel. He went, but on account of a famine, he headed to Egypt. It was a thirteen year pause until he got back to where he once belonged.
- God hit 'pause' for the Exodus generation. The Hebrews who Exodus-ed balked at the border of the Promised Land. Their refusal to go in stalled the Jews for a period of 40yrs.

In the NT, the apostle Peter has a rather unusual approach to the passage of divine time and it involves at least one very long pause.

- He first reminds us that what we consider to be a long time is a mere day with the Lord (Second Peter 3:8).
- Next he tells us that, although the Lord could come at any time, His longsuffering with sinners waits giving them opportunities to repent and be saved.
- While He is waiting, we are told we can "hasten," meaning *speed-up*, His return.

Ezk 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the Temple and stood over the Cherubim.

Ezk 10:19 And the Cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels *were* beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel *was* above them.

After 400 years of being among His people, Shekinah was gone.

Ezk 10:20 This *is* the living creature I saw under the God of Israel by the River Chebar, and I knew they *were* Cherubim.

Ezk 10:21 Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings.

Ezk 10:22 And the likeness of their faces *was* the same as the faces which I had seen by the River Chebar, their appearance and their persons. They each went straight forward.

Here is a quote from *Chariots of the Gods* by Erich von Däniken: *"The time has come for us to admit our insignificance by making discoveries in the infinite unexplored cosmos. Only then shall we realize that we are nothing but ants in the vast state of the universe."*

I prefer what David said: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all *things* under his feet..." (Psalm 8:3-6).

The glory of God returned briefly when Jesus came. The apostle John said, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

Jesus came preaching that the Kingdom of God on earth was at hand. It was; unfortunately the Jews hard-passed on Jesus being their King.

**Their rejection marked the beginning of God's longest pause.**

Paul describes the pause in the last chapter of the Book of Acts, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (28:28).<sup>1</sup>

Paul goes on to explain that God is using the salvation of Gentiles in the Church Age to make the nation of Israel jealous. In the end, with clarity and all Heaven's authority, Paul said, "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26).

He means ethnic Jews, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob.

**We are living in the longest historic pause - The Church Age.**

Let's live continuing in the Spirit and rekindling our first love.

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<sup>1</sup> *Make a mental note that Paul mentioned three distinct groups - Ethnic Jews... Gentiles... the Church*