

**Ezek. 8:1** And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.

“sat” = continue, remain

The timing here would seem to tie in directly to the time referenced in 1:1-2.

Ezek. 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Ezek. 1:2 In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity,

It would seem that this vision comes 14 months after Ezekiel’s first vision. This time he is in his home and the elders of Judah are seated in front of him. Why are they there? I would assume because Ezekiel is recognized as God’s prophet, and they want to hear from God. Using 30 days per month, 14 months would equal 420 days. Ezekiel would still be lying on his right side at the time he received this vision (cf 4:5-6). It would seem that the prophet has at least gotten the people’s attention.

As I continued reading to see where this vision ended, it continues on through the next three chapters. It kind of makes you wonder what was going through the minds of the elders when Ezekiel zones out. (1/07) Maybe the time involved for Ezekiel is comparable to “Narnia” time and they didn’t really think anything at all. It also makes you wonder how Ezekiel endured the time. What went through his mind as he patiently endured the silence.

The important thing to note is that Ezekiel always recognized when God was going to speak to him.

**Ezek. 8:2** Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

This description matches exactly the description given in 1:27-28 that Ezekiel identified as “the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Any reference to God’s image or likeness to a person would seem to be a reference to Jesus, here preincarnate, since He is later identified in scripture as the “express image” of God.

Heb. 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Heb. 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Heb. 1:3 Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person....

**Ezek. 8:3** And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

Ezekiel's hair would have had plenty of time to grow back by now. In this vision Ezekiel saw the hand of God reach down to lift him up by the hair of the head. There was obviously no pain involved. He knew that he was experiencing a vision. In that vision the Spirit of God transported his spirit to Jerusalem to an inner gate on the north side of the temple. As I read through the next few verses, it would seem that Ezekiel sees an idol standing in this area that has provoked God's jealousy. We have already established that God is a jealous God regarding His character, and the temple and Jerusalem were publicly associated with the name of God (cf chapter 5). (1/07) It just dawned on me that these experiences in the spirit would have helped to pass the time.

**Ezek. 8:4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.**

Ezekiel recognized the Lord's presence at the temple because he had seen it before. He is clear that it is the God of Israel communicating with him, the very same Being that commissioned him as a prophet and watchman for his people. There is only one God.

**Ezek. 8:5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.**

The Lord directs Ezekiel's gaze toward this "image" that was standing in the entry of the gate leading to the altar. The fact that it provoked God to jealousy indicates that it is there in direct opposition to Him. Everything in the temple was to be made according to God's instructions and positioned specifically according to His instructions. This image is obviously something that takes the focus off God and directs worship away from Him.

How many things are in our lives that vie for that position? How many do we allow to fall into that category?

**Ezek. 8:6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.**

The Lord is establishing Ezekiel as a witness to the abominations (disgusting, immoral things) that the people of Israel are practicing in the house that was built to honor Him, a place where He could establish His presence among them. He seems to be seeking confirmation from Ezekiel—"Isn't this just cause for My choosing to leave this place? As if this is not enough, just wait; there's worse."

**Ezek. 8:7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.**

**Ezek. 8:8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.**

The Lord now takes Ezekiel to the inner court where he sees a hole in the wall. He is instructed to dig in the wall. When he does, he discovers a door.

Ezekiel always obeys immediately. His response to God in the spirit is the same as his response in the flesh—he obeys immediately.

**Ezek. 8:9** And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

**Ezek. 8:10** So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

The room into which Ezekiel enters has walls decorated with unclean creatures and animals and things associated with the idols that the people had chosen to worship instead of God. This room is dedicated to the creatures of earth and the creations of men. The Creator has been left out.

**Ezek. 8:11** And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

In this room are 70 elders of the people, one of whom is named specifically—Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan. These men are not identified as priests, yet they are in an area of the temple in which only priests are authorized to be. We know that Moses established a hierarchy of 70 leaders to help him in judging the people, and this tradition probably carried on to become the ruling body identified as the Sanhedrin in Jesus' time. It would seem that Jaazaniah is the leader of this group. He is leading them in worship of these creatures and idols.

People need direction. When they reject the authority of God and His direction, they automatically seek to fill that position with someone and/or something else. Because we are of our father, the devil, there are always willing leaders strong in pride willing to step into that vacancy. It's sad to recognize how weak and willing we are to accept a lie over the truth, to follow men and reject God.

**John 8:43** Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word.

**John 8:44** Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

**Ezek. 8:12** Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

God is adding to the evidence as He establishes Ezekiel as His witness. The leaders of Israel think their actions are hidden. They think that God is unaware of their activities.

“every man” – It is significant that though they have a leader, each man is accountable for his own actions.

“in the chambers of his imagery” – The Hebrew for *imagery* has a reference to the imagination. That seems to make good sense here because Ezekiel sees the men

in a room together, but it is clear that each individual is participating in his own heart and mind.

This is very thought provoking. I'm not sure how many of us are aware of God's knowledge of our whole being—including our thoughts.

Gen. 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Psa. 94:11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We Christians in particular focus on outward appearances, but how much do we work on the inner chambers of our minds? Most of my communion with the Lord each day is done with my thoughts. As I reflect on earlier years, I realize now that I was much too occupied with outward appearances. I spent very little time in comparison maintaining my inner person. I discovered far too late the value of maintaining that constant heart/thought connection and awareness.

**Ezek. 8:13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.**

**Ezek. 8:14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.**

Still the Lord has more evidence to show Ezekiel regarding the wicked practices of the people. He takes Ezekiel to the northern gate of the temple to show him a group of women weeping for Tammuz. The NIV Commentary had a good explanation of what was happening.

"Tammuz, later linked to Adonis and Aphrodite by name, was a god of fertility and rain, similar to Hadad and Baal. In the seasonal mythological cycle, he died early in the fall when vegetation withered. His revival, by the wailing of Ishtar, was marked by the buds of spring and the fertility of the land. Such renewal was encouraged and celebrated by licentious fertility festivals.

The date of this vision was in the months of August/September, when this god Tammuz "died." At the time of this vision, the land of Palestine would have been parched from the summer sun, and the women would have been lamenting Tammuz's death. They perhaps were also following the ritual of Ishtar, wailing for the revival of Tammuz."

**Ezek. 8:15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.**

**Ezek. 8:16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of**

**the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.**

The accumulation of evidence against the people continues. The Lord now takes Ezekiel to the inner court of the temple, the area designated for priests only. At the entrance to the temple proper, between the porch and the altar, Ezekiel sees 25 men with their backs to the temple facing east in worship of the sun.

JFB concludes that the 25 men represent the leaders of the 24 groups of priests along with the high priest. This would make sense although their specific identification is not addressed. I think it is logical to conclude that the men (both these and the 70 mentioned previously) would be recognized as the leaders of the people.

**Ezek. 8:17** Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. The Lord again addresses Ezekiel. He is basically saying, "Can you believe what you are seeing? Do they think that these are minor transgressions? Their leadership has filled the land with violence and provoked me to anger." The word for *anger* is reference to grief and rage.

We used to hear much from the pulpit about causes and results of God's anger / wrath; but even that has become a subject more often avoided than not. How often have we heard messages that reference how we can grieve God or cause Him sorrow? The messages on His anger were meant to scare people into being saved and living obediently. Messages of how we can grieve God should be a greater motivation to the child of God regarding living obediently and avoiding actions that would cause such grief. He has shown us such an abundance of grace and mercy and love and compassion, that we should be far more focused on guarding against causing Him sorrow than we are in indulging self.

"put the branch to their nose" – Seems to be a reference to their ritual of sun worship. According to JFB they "held up a branch or bundle of tamarisk (called *barsom*) to their nose at daybreak, while singing hymns to the rising sun."

**Ezek. 8:18** Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

The actions of the people have finally caused the Lord to declare judgment against them. The time for repentance has passed. His judgment is sure and will be implemented without mercy.

This is a consistent truth in scripture. God is the determining authority as to how long the window of opportunity for faith and repentance remain open for individuals as well as nations. We have no right to question that judgment. The fact that we are given that opportunity is an act of God's mercy. The fact that He

provides for our deliverance is an act of His grace. When we choose to reject Him and His provision, we surely deserve His judgment.