

The Book of Ezekiel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: Abominations in the Temple; the Glory Departs

Ezekiel 8:1–11:25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson carries heavy doctrinal weight and must be taught with care, because it moves from the most sobering exposure of false worship to one of the brightest gospel promises in the Old Testament. The first aim is to let the temple vision do its work on the conscience. God walks Ezekiel through four escalating abominations, and the teacher must help the student see what each one represents: the image of jealousy that puts a rival in God's own courts; the seventy elders worshipping in the dark, convinced God does not see; the women weeping for a dead pagan god in the house of the living God; and the climactic horror of men turning their backs on the temple to bow to the sun. The point is not merely historical. The text exposes the human heart's relentless drift from the Creator to the creature (Romans 1:25), and it insists that worship is the deepest issue of the soul. The teacher should press home that God sees the secret sins committed even in the name of religion, and that unauthorized, self-styled worship is not a lesser matter but the very thing that drove the glory of God from His house. This connects to the abiding New Testament principle that God will be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24), by the pattern He has revealed and not by the inventions and preferences of men.

The second and weightiest aim is to handle the new covenant promise of 11:19–20 rightly, pointing it forward to its fulfillment in Christ without anachronism. The teacher must be clear about two things at once. First, in Ezekiel's own day this promise spoke to the literal exiles, assuring them that God had not abandoned them, that He Himself would be their sanctuary in the lands of their captivity, and that He would one day gather a renewed people with a new heart who would truly walk in His statutes. Ezekiel and his hearers did not yet possess the full New Testament understanding, and we must not read it back into their lips. Second, Scripture itself tells us where this promise finds its full and final fulfillment: in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. Jeremiah 31:31–34 names the new covenant explicitly, Hebrews 8:8–12 declares that covenant has now come in Christ, and Ezekiel 36:25–27 joins the clean water of cleansing to the gift of a new heart and the indwelling Spirit. The teacher should show that this new heart is not the product of human willpower or a one-time emotional decision, and certainly not a Calvinistic irresistible reshaping of a passive soul, nor an inherited guilt removed by infant rite. It is the gracious work of God in those who come to Him in trusting, obedient faith, who are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of sins, and raised to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The promise of a heart of flesh is the gospel promise, and the teacher must let it shine.

The third aim is spiritual formation, that the student would see himself in this vision and be changed. The departing glory must not be left as an ancient event; it is a warning that God's

presence cannot remain where He is persistently dishonored, and a summons to keep our own hearts as a dwelling fit for Him. The mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and cry over the abominations of the city presses the question of whether the student still grieves over sin or has grown comfortably numb. And the promise of a new heart presses the deepest question of all: has the student received that new heart on God's terms, and is he yielding daily to the Spirit who now dwells in the Christian as in a temple (1 Corinthians 3:16)? The capstone question deliberately asks the student to name one hardness God has exposed and one concrete surrender this week, so that the towering doctrine of the new covenant becomes a real and present obedience, and the glory that departed the old temple is welcomed and kept in the temple of the believer's own heart.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Ezekiel 8 the Spirit carries Ezekiel in a vision to Jerusalem, and God shows him abomination after abomination in the temple, each time saying, you shall see greater abominations (8:6, 8:13, 8:15). What does it teach us about God that He sees and exposes the hidden sins committed in His own house, and why does He insist that Ezekiel look at each one in turn?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The vision is carefully dated: in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as Ezekiel sat in his house with the elders of Judah sitting before him, the hand of the Lord God fell upon him (8:1). This grounds the vision in real history. These are not the prophet's musings but a revelation given on a specific day, while the leaders of the exile community were gathered, perhaps expecting a word of comfort.

Instead, Ezekiel sees a figure of fire and brightness, and the Spirit lifts him up between earth and heaven and brings him in visions of God to Jerusalem (8:2-3). The prophet is transported, in vision, hundreds of miles from Babylon back to the temple. God intends to show the exiles, through Ezekiel, exactly why the unthinkable is coming, why the holy city and its temple will fall.

The first thing he is shown is the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy, set at the gate of the inner court (8:3, 8:5). An idol has been erected in the very entrance to God's house. The name image of jealousy is pointed: God had declared Himself a jealous God who would not share His glory with another (Exodus 20:5), and here His people have planted a rival in His own courtyard.

God's question to Ezekiel sets the pattern for the whole chapter: 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? (8:6). Already God names the consequence: such abominations drive Him far from His sanctuary. The link between the sin and the departing glory is established at the very start.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Note the precise dating; this is real revelation given on a real day, not symbolic fancy, and the elders of Judah are present to receive it.
- Explain that the Spirit transports Ezekiel in vision to Jerusalem so the exiles will understand why judgment must come on the temple.
- Define the image of jealousy against Exodus 20:5; God is a jealous God who will not share His glory, and a rival idol stands in His own courts.
- Highlight God's repeated question, seest thou what they do, as the structuring device that forces the prophet, and us, to look honestly at the sin.
- Establish from 8:6 the central link of the vision: such abominations drive God far from His sanctuary.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God insisted on showing Ezekiel each abomination in turn rather than simply pronouncing judgment?
- What does the name image of jealousy reveal about how God regards rivals for our worship and devotion?
- How does it change your view of hidden sin to know that God carefully sees and exposes what is done even in His own house?

Question 2

Student Question:

The seventy elders worshiped idols in the dark, saying, the LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land (8:12). Where in your own life have you been tempted to sin in secret, quietly assuming that God does not see or no longer cares what you do behind closed doors?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God brings Ezekiel to the door of the court, and there he sees a hole in the wall. He is told to dig, and through the opening he enters a hidden chamber (8:7-9). The detail is significant: this abomination is concealed, practiced behind a wall, out of public view. God exposes what men thought was safely hidden in the dark.

Inside, painted upon the walls round about, are every form of creeping things and abominable beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel (8:10). Before these images stand seventy of the elders of the house of Israel, the very leaders of the people, each with his censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense rising (8:11). The men charged with guarding true worship are leading the people into idolatry.

The most chilling part is what they say to themselves: the LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth (8:12). This is the lie beneath all secret sin, the belief that God is either blind

or absent. They have convinced themselves that they can worship their idols in the dark and God will neither notice nor care. The vision itself refutes them, for God has brought His prophet to watch.

The teacher should draw out the timeless principle. Much sin is committed on the assumption that God does not see, that what is done in private or in the heart escapes His notice. Scripture insists otherwise: all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). The elders' lie is the lie every secret sinner tells himself, and it is always false.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Note that this abomination is hidden behind a wall; God deliberately exposes the sin men thought was safely concealed.
- Stress that the seventy elders, the leaders charged with guarding true worship, are the ones leading idolatry; corruption at the top is especially grievous.
- Identify the lie of 8:12, the LORD seeth us not, as the false assumption beneath all secret sin.
- Refute that lie with the truth that God sees all things (Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139); nothing is hidden from Him.
- Apply the warning that believing God does not see is the inner permission slip we give ourselves for hidden sin.

Discussion Prompts

- What hidden sins do people, and perhaps you, commit on the quiet assumption that God does not see?
- Why is it especially serious when those in positions of spiritual leadership lead others into error?
- How does the truth that God sees everything, even our thoughts, change the way you live in private?

Question 3

Student Question:

The abominations escalate from an image of jealousy, to elders with censers before creatures on the wall, to women weeping for Tammuz, to men bowing eastward to the sun with their backs to the temple (8:3–16). What does this progression, ending with men turning their backs on God to worship the sun in His own house, reveal about the nature and downward pull of idolatry, and how is all worship that turns from the true God toward His creation a turning of the back on Him (compare Romans 1:25)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God tells Ezekiel he will see greater abominations still, and brings him to the door of the gate of the LORD's house toward the north, and there sit women weeping for Tammuz (8:13–14). Tammuz was a Mesopotamian fertility god whose mythical death was mourned with seasonal weeping. Here that pagan grief is being practiced at the very gate of the house of the living God.

The irony is sharp. In the house of the God who is life itself, the source of all that lives, women sit mourning a dead idol, a god who exists only in myth. They weep over nothing while ignoring the One who gives breath to all. This is the absurd inversion that idolatry always produces, devotion lavished on the creature and the imaginary while the Creator is forgotten.

Then God shows the climax: at the door of the temple, between the porch and the altar, about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east (8:16). They stand in the most sacred space, where the priests ministered, and they have literally turned their backs on the LORD to bow to a created thing.

This final abomination captures the essence of all idolatry. To worship the creation is to turn one's back on the Creator. Paul names this exact exchange: men who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:25). The progression of the vision, from a rival image, to hidden idolatry, to mourning a false god, to backs turned in the holy place, traces the relentless downward pull of a heart that will not keep God as God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Explain who Tammuz was and the irony of mourning a dead pagan god at the gate of the living God's house.
- Show that idolatry inverts reality, lavishing devotion on the creature and the imaginary while forgetting the Creator.
- Identify the climactic abomination, backs turned to the temple and faces to the sun, as the essence of all idolatry.
- Connect the sun-worship to Romans 1:25; worshipping the creation is always a turning of the back on the Creator.
- Trace the deliberate escalation across the four abominations to show the downward pull of a heart that will not keep God as God.

Discussion Prompts

- How is all idolatry, ancient or modern, fundamentally a turning of the back on the Creator to worship the creation?
- What created things, good in themselves, are most tempting for you to lavish your highest devotion upon?
- Why do you think God showed the abominations in escalating order, saving the worst for last?

Question 4

Student Question:

These men worshiped the sun, a created thing, with their backs turned to the Creator's house (8:16). In what subtle ways might you be giving your highest devotion to created things, comfort, success, family, or pleasure, while turning your back on the God who made them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter nine opens the response to the abominations. God cries with a loud voice and summons those who have charge over the city, six men with slaughter weapons, and among them one man clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side (9:1-2). The vision turns from the catalogue of sin to the execution of judgment, but it does not begin with the sword.

Before any blow falls, God commands the man with the inkhorn: Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof (9:4). The very first act of judgment is an act of mercy, marking out those who grieve over sin so they will be spared.

Notice carefully who is marked. Not the powerful, not the religiously busy, not those who kept the outward forms, but those who sigh and cry over the abominations. In a city full of people carrying on untroubled, a remnant still grieved over what grieved God. That grief is the mark of a heart that is still alive toward Him, and God knows exactly who they are.

This sealing of the faithful before judgment foreshadows a pattern that runs through Scripture to its end. In Revelation, before the judgments fall, God's servants are sealed in their foreheads, and the plagues are restrained from those who have the seal (Revelation 7:3; 9:4). For the Christian, that sealing is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). God always knows His own and distinguishes them in the day of reckoning.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Note that judgment begins not with the sword but with the marking of the faithful; mercy precedes wrath.
- Stress who is marked: those who sigh and cry over the abominations, the few whose hearts still grieve over sin.
- Distinguish this grieving remnant from the religiously busy who kept outward forms but were untroubled by sin.
- Connect the mark to the sealing of God's servants before judgment in Revelation 7:3 and 9:4.
- Point to the Christian's sealing with the Holy Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14); God knows His own.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it say about a heart that it still sighs and cries over sin while everyone around carries on untroubled?
- Has your conscience grown numb to sins that once grieved you, and how might God restore your tenderness?
- How does it comfort and sober you that God knows exactly who His own are and will distinguish them in judgment?

Question 5

Student Question:

Before the judgment fell, God sent a man clothed in linen to set a mark on the foreheads of all who sigh and cry over the abominations of the city, and these were spared (9:3-6). What does this teach us about God's care to distinguish the faithful from the wicked in judgment, and how does it foreshadow the way God seals and preserves His own people (compare Revelation 7:3; 9:4; Ephesians 1:13-14)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The judgment itself is severe. God tells the slaughter-men to go through the city after the marked man and spare none, beginning at the sanctuary, at the ancient men which were before the house (9:5-6). Judgment begins at the house of God, with the very elders whose idolatry Ezekiel had just witnessed. Those nearest to the holy things, who sinned against the greatest light, are judged first.

This principle, that judgment begins at the sanctuary, is echoed in the New Testament: the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). Greater privilege brings greater responsibility. Those who have known God's truth most clearly and dishonored it most directly bear the heavier accountability.

Ezekiel, watching the slaughter, falls on his face and cries out, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? (9:8). The prophet intercedes, grieved at the scope of the judgment. His response models a heart that does not delight in the destruction of the wicked but pleads for mercy.

God answers that the iniquity is exceedingly great, the land full of blood and the city full of perverseness, and they say, the LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not (9:9). The same lie reappears. Yet God affirms that the marked ones are untouched: the man clothed in linen reports, I have done as thou hast commanded me (9:11). The mercy held; not one who grieved over sin was lost.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Explain that judgment begins at the sanctuary, with the elders; nearness to holy things brings greater accountability.

- Connect this to 1 Peter 4:17, that judgment must begin at the house of God; greater light means greater responsibility.
- Hold up Ezekiel's intercession as the response of a tender heart that pleads for mercy rather than gloating over judgment.
- Note the reappearing lie, the LORD seeth not, as the persistent self-deception that emboldened the people's sin.
- Stress that the marked ones were spared; the man in linen reports the task complete, and God's mercy toward the grieving held firm.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does judgment beginning at the house of God warn those who have known the most truth most clearly?
- How does Ezekiel's grief over the judgment model the way we should feel about the lost rather than gloating?
- What assurance do you find in the fact that not one of the marked, grieving remnant was lost in the judgment?

Question 6

Student Question:

The mark was given to those who grieved over sin while everyone else carried on untroubled. Honestly, has your heart grown numb to sins that should grieve you, and what would it look like for you to recover a tender conscience that mourns what God mourns?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now begins the most sorrowful movement of the vision, the departure of the glory of the LORD. In chapter ten Ezekiel sees again the cherubim and the wheels and the brightness of God's presence. And the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house (10:4). The first step has been taken; the visible presence of God lifts from its place above the ark.

This glory is the same presence that had filled Solomon's temple at its dedication so that the priests could not stand to minister (1 Kings 8:10–11). For centuries it had marked Jerusalem as the place where the living God dwelt among His people. That such glory should now begin to move toward the door is the most ominous sign imaginable.

The departure is deliberately gradual, step by reluctant step. The glory moves from above the cherubim to the threshold of the house (10:4), then the cherubim lift their wings and the glory goes to the door of the east gate of the LORD's house (10:18–19). God does not abandon His house in haste. The slowness of the departure pictures a God grieved to leave, lingering, as if giving every chance to repent.

The teacher should let the weight of this settle. The greatest disaster that could befall Jerusalem was not the Babylonian army but the departure of God. A temple without the presence of God is only a building. The tragedy of these chapters is not first the loss of walls and gold but the loss of the One whose glory made the place holy. So it is in any life or any church: the worst loss is the loss of God's presence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Identify the glory of the LORD as the visible presence of God that had filled Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10–11).
- Stress that the departure is gradual and reluctant; God lingers, grieved to leave, not abandoning His house in haste.
- Trace the steps: from above the cherubim, to the threshold, to the east gate; the movement is deliberate and mournful.
- Make plain that the greatest disaster is not the loss of the building but the departure of God's presence.
- Apply the principle that for any life or church, the worst possible loss is the loss of God's abiding presence.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the departure of God's glory a greater disaster than the loss of the temple's walls and gold?
- What does the slow, reluctant manner of the glory's departure reveal about the heart of God toward His sinning people?
- How might a person or a congregation today lose the presence of God while still keeping the outward forms of religion?

Question 7

Student Question:

To the exiles, who felt cut off from the temple, God promised, I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come (11:16). What does this teach us about where God's true dwelling is found, and how does it correct the idea that God's presence is bound to a particular building or place (compare John 4:21–24; Acts 7:48–50; 1 Corinthians 3:16)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter eleven opens with one more scene of sin before the great promise. The Spirit brings Ezekiel to the east gate, where twenty-five men are gathered, including princes of the people who give wicked counsel (11:1–2). They say, it is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh (11:3). They are confident, secure, certain that judgment is far off.

Their slogan, the city is the caldron and we are the flesh, seems to mean they consider themselves safe and protected inside Jerusalem's walls, like meat preserved in a pot. They have heard the warnings and dismissed them, building houses and making long-range plans as though nothing could touch them. It is the same false security that always accompanies a hardened heart.

God answers through Ezekiel that their confidence is misplaced. The slain they have made fill the city; they are the flesh, but the city will not be their protecting caldron. God will bring them out of it and judge them at the border of Israel (11:7-11). Their false sense of safety will be stripped away, and the very walls they trusted will not shelter them.

As Ezekiel prophesies, one of the men, Pelatiah, dies, and the prophet again falls on his face and cries, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? (11:13). Once more the prophet intercedes, fearing total destruction. It is this anguished question that God answers with the most hopeful words in the whole vision.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Note the false security of the princes, building houses and certain that judgment is not near.
- Explain the caldron-and-flesh slogan as their confidence that the city's walls would protect them like meat in a pot.
- Stress that God strips away false security; the walls they trusted would not shelter them from His judgment.
- Observe Ezekiel's repeated intercession, fearing a full end of the remnant, as the cry that God answers with promise.
- Apply the warning against presuming that judgment is always far off and that our defenses will surely hold.

Discussion Prompts

- What false securities do people build their confidence on today, assuming that judgment or trouble is far off?
- How is the slogan we are the flesh, safe in the caldron, like the ways we tell ourselves we are safe in our sin?
- What does Ezekiel's intercession teach you about praying for mercy even when judgment seems deserved?

Question 8

Student Question:

God promised His scattered people that He Himself would be their sanctuary, even far from Jerusalem. When you have felt distant from the church, from worship, or from familiar spiritual supports, have you learned to find your refuge in God Himself rather than only in a place or a routine?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

To Ezekiel's anguished question God gives a stunning answer aimed at the exiles, the very ones who felt cast off. Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come (11:16). God Himself, not a building, would be their holy place.

This is a profound truth. The exiles were far from the temple, the place they had always associated with God's presence, and they may well have felt that distance from the temple meant distance from God. God corrects that. His presence is not chained to a building of stone in Jerusalem. To His scattered people He Himself would be a sanctuary, a holy place of refuge, wherever they went.

This points forward to the full New Testament revelation. Jesus told the woman at the well that the hour was coming when true worshipers would worship the Father neither on a particular mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth (John 4:21–24). Stephen declared that the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48–50). God's dwelling was never ultimately a building.

Indeed, under the new covenant the dwelling place of God is His people themselves. The church is the temple of God, in which His Spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Peter 2:4–5). What God promised the exiles in shadow, that He Himself would be their sanctuary, is fulfilled in fullness in Christ, in whom God dwells among and within His people in a way no building of stone ever could. Care should be taken to let the exiles' promise stand in its own setting while showing where Scripture says it finds its fullness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Stress that God promised to be a sanctuary to the scattered exiles; His presence is not chained to a building.
- Correct the assumption that distance from the temple meant distance from God; He is the sanctuary of His people wherever they are.
- Connect to John 4:21–24 and Acts 7:48–50, that God is worshiped in spirit and truth and does not dwell in temples made with hands.
- Point to the church as the temple of God indwelt by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19–22) as the fulfillment.
- Take care to honor the promise in its exilic setting while showing where Scripture itself locates its fullness, avoiding anachronism.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean for you that God Himself, not a building or a place, is the true sanctuary of His people?

- When you have felt far from church and familiar spiritual supports, have you learned to find refuge in God Himself?
- How does knowing that the church is now the temple of God shape the way you think about worship and His presence?

Question 9

Student Question:

God promised, I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes (11:19–20). The New Testament reveals that this promise of a new heart and a new spirit is fulfilled in the new covenant sealed by Christ, in those who are born of water and the Spirit and walk in newness of life (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:8–12; Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; 2 Corinthians 5:17). What do these passages teach about how God actually gives a person a new heart, and how is this transformation received not by mere human resolve but by the gracious work of God in those who come to Him in trusting, obedient faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The promise rises to its height in the heart of the new covenant. God says He will gather His people from the countries where they have been scattered, and they will return and take away the detestable things and abominations from the land (11:17–18). Then comes the deepest promise of all, the answer to everything the vision has exposed.

I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (11:19–20). The root problem was never merely outward; it was the stony heart. And God promises to do what no law could do, to give a new heart.

This must be handled with both care and confidence. In Ezekiel's day this promise gave the exiles hope of a renewed people who would truly belong to God and walk in His ways. But Scripture itself reveals its full and final fulfillment in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. Jeremiah names that new covenant, in which God writes His law on the heart (Jeremiah 31:31–34); Hebrews declares it has now come in Christ and made the first covenant old (Hebrews 8:8–13); and Ezekiel 36:25–27 joins the gift of the new heart to cleansing with clean water and the indwelling of God's Spirit.

The teacher must be precise about how this new heart is received. It is not the fruit of human willpower, nor a single emotional decision, nor a Calvinistic reshaping of a passive soul, nor an inherited guilt washed away in infancy. It is the gracious work of God in those who come to Him in trusting, obedient faith, who are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of sins, and raised to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–

4). Such a person is a new creation; old things are passed away, and all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The heart of stone removed, the heart of flesh given, is the very heart of the gospel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Identify the stony heart as the root problem the whole vision exposed, and the new heart as God's answer that no law could give.
- Honor the promise in its exilic setting while showing that Scripture locates its full fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13).
- Join Ezekiel 36:25-27 to this promise: cleansing with clean water, a new heart, and the indwelling Spirit belong together.
- Guard against false views of how the new heart comes: not willpower, not a mere emotional decision, not Calvinistic irresistible grace, not inherited guilt removed by infant rite.
- Teach that the new heart is received by trusting, obedient faith, being born of water and the Spirit, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to newness of life (John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Discussion Prompts

- Why must the answer to a stony heart be something God gives rather than something we manufacture by our own effort?
- How do the New Testament passages show this promise of a new heart fulfilled in the new covenant sealed by Christ?
- Have you received this new heart on God's terms, and how is the Spirit now at work changing you from the inside out?

Question 10

Student Question:

The glory of the LORD departed from the temple because of Israel's persistent sin, yet God promised to be a sanctuary to His people and to give them a new heart. Looking back over this whole vision, name one specific abomination or hardness God has exposed in your own heart, and one concrete way you will yield to Him this week so that His presence, given to us in Christ, may truly dwell in you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the great promise, the vision returns to its solemn close. The cherubim lift up their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel is over them above. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city (11:22-23). The final step of the departure is taken. The presence of God leaves Jerusalem entirely and rests upon the mountain to the east.

This is the somber resolution of the long, reluctant departure that began in chapter ten. The glory has moved from above the ark, to the threshold, to the east gate, and now out of the city altogether to the Mount of Olives. God has left the house that bears His name. The temple still stands, but it is now only a building; its true glory is gone.

Yet even here hope is not absent. The glory rests on the mountain east of the city, not vanishing into nothing, as if waiting, lingering near. And there is a quiet wonder for the Christian reader in where the glory paused, for that same Mount of Olives would centuries later be trodden by the One in whom all the glory of God dwelt bodily (Colossians 2:9), who wept over that city and from that very mountain ascended to the Father. We must not overpress the detail, but the God who departed in grief was already planning to return in grace.

Then the Spirit brings Ezekiel back in vision to the captives in Babylon, and the vision goes up from him (11:24–25). He tells the exiles everything the LORD has shown him. The message is now theirs. They understand why the glory departed, and they have heard the promise that God Himself will be their sanctuary and will one day give them a new heart. The vision ends in the very place it began, with a prophet and his people, and a word from God that is both warning and hope.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Mark the final step of the departure; the glory leaves the city entirely and rests on the mountain to the east.
- Stress the gravity of the moment: the temple still stands but its true glory is gone, leaving only a building.
- Note the lingering hope; the glory rests near rather than vanishing, the God who departs in grief planning to return in grace.
- Handle the Mount of Olives connection with restraint, as a quiet wonder, not an overpressed proof, pointing to Christ in whom God's glory dwelt bodily (Colossians 2:9).
- Observe that the vision returns to the exiles, who now understand both the warning of the departed glory and the promise of a new heart.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the final departure of the glory teach us about the seriousness of persistent, unrepented sin in God's house?
- How does the promise of a new heart, given in the same vision, keep the departing glory from being the last word?
- As you finish this vision, what one hardness has God exposed in your heart, and how will you yield it to Him this week?