

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 18-Chapter Eleven (Ezekiel 11:1-13)

Executive Summary

The primary focus of Ezekiel 11 is the visible departure of the glory of God from the Temple, signaling the end of His presence among the people of Judah prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. This chapter captures a critical moment where the Spirit of God transports Ezekiel to the east gate to witness the corruption of twenty-five influential leaders. These leaders, specifically Jaazaniah and Pelatiah, are indicted for giving evil counsel and minimizing the threat of Babylonian invasion through a distorted metaphor of a "pot and flesh." God's response through Ezekiel corrects their reasoning: while they believe the city walls (the "pot") will protect them (the "flesh"), God declares that the only "flesh" staying in the city are those they have already slain. The leaders themselves will be forcibly removed and judged at the borders of Israel. The vision concludes with the sudden death of Pelatiah, prompting Ezekiel to lament for the survival of the remaining remnant of Israel.

I. The Departure of Divine Glory (Review)

The chapter opens with a vision of the firmament or expanse above the cherubim, which Ezekiel identifies using the Hebrew word *hennē* to focus attention.

- **Vacating the Temple:** The glory of God, which had been visibly present in the nation of Israel, is seen exiting the Temple and leaving through the east gate.
- **The Messiah's Arrival:** The document notes that once the presence of God departed in this manner, it would not return until the future arrival and installation of the Messiah.
- **Spirit-Led Observation:** Ezekiel is "lifted up" by the Holy Spirit and brought to the east gate. This phrasing is consistent with his previous commissions in chapters 3, 8, and 10.

II. The Indictment of the Twenty-Five Leaders

Upon arriving at the east gate, Ezekiel observes twenty-five men. Two are mentioned by name: **Jaazaniah, son of Azzur**, and **Pelatiah, son of Benaiah**.

Definition of Leadership

The text uses the Hebrew word *śār* (שָׂר) to describe these men:

- **Meaning:** Ruler, prince, or chief.
- **Frequency:** This term occurs 421 times in Hebrew Scriptures and three (3) times in Ezekiel.
- **Function:** These individuals held great influence and were likely advisers to the king or figures of high prominence.

The Charge of Evil Counsel

God identifies these men as those who "devise iniquity (*āven*) and give evil advice." Their specific statement—"The time is not near to build houses. This city is the pot, and we are the flesh"—is identified as a core grievance.

Term	Hebrew Word	Meaning
Iniquity	<i>āven</i> (אָוֵן)	Wickedness, trouble, or affliction.
Pot	<i>śîr</i> (סִיר)	A large cauldron or washbasin.
Near	<i>qārôb</i> (קָרֹב)	Referring to location, time, or an event.
We	<i>'anāhnû</i> (אֲנַחְנוּ)	A third-person pronoun used for emphasis.

III. The Metaphor of the Pot and the Flesh

The interpretation of the leaders' statement reveals their "cognitive dissonance" and moral failure.

The Leaders' Perspective (Common Explanation)

The leaders' metaphor is that they viewed the walls of Jerusalem (the "pot") as a protective barrier that would keep them (the "flesh") safe from the invading Babylonian army. By saying "the time is not near to build houses," they were likely acknowledging the looming destruction while falsely claiming safety within the city's current fortifications.

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Alternative Explanation:

It is not only about what the influencers say, but it is about what they **DID NOT** say. They are NOT mentioning the violence that has taken place among the city, and they have NOT mentioned the immorality that is within Israel which is their fault because not only have they not communicated this, but they are participants in it. The leaders were obscuring the blame—on **THEIR ACTIVITY** on the land itself! They knew that destruction was looming over them (“it is not time to build houses”, but they were disguising the reason why it is not time to build houses. This is a prime example of influencers cognitive dissonance (c.f., Jeremiah 32:31-36).

The Divine Correction:

The analysis highlights that the leaders were "obscuring the blame." They ignored the idolatry, violence, and immorality they participated in. God corrects their metaphor:

- **The True "Flesh":** God clarifies that the "flesh" in the pot are the victims the leaders have "slain in this city."
- **Removal from the Pot:** God declares He will personally bring the leaders *out* of the city. They will not find the protection they expect; instead, they will be handed over to "strangers" (foreigners).

IV. The Execution of Judgment

God's judgment is specific and focuses on the leaders' fear of the sword.

1. **Judgment at the Border:** God states He will judge them "to the border of Israel." This indicates that the punishment would not be confined to Jerusalem but would occur outside the traditional boundaries of the land.
2. **Historical Fulfillment (Riblah):** The document connects this prophecy to 2 Kings 25:5–7 and 25:18–21. The Babylonian army captured King Zedekiah and his officials and brought them to the King of Babylon at Riblah (located at the border/wilderness toward Diblah).
 - Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered before his eyes.
 - The chief priest, second priest, and various advisors and officials were struck down and put to death at Riblah.
3. **The Reason for Punishment:** God explicitly states that this judgment occurs because the house of Israel did not walk in His statutes but instead acted in accordance with the "ordinances of the nations" around them.

V. The Lament of Ezekiel

The passage concludes with a dramatic shift from prophecy to immediate physical reality.

The Death of Pelatiah

While Ezekiel is in the middle of prophesying, **Pelatiah son of Benaiah** suddenly dies. As a leader of great influence, his death serves as an immediate sign of the looming judgment.

The Question of the Remnant

Seeing the death of a prominent leader, Ezekiel falls on his face and cries out: "Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete destruction?"

- **Defining "Remnant" (*š'ērîṭ*):** This word refers to those who "remain" or are "left over."
- **Ezekiel's Fear:** Since Jerusalem had already undergone two previous invasions (and subsequent deportations to Babylon), very few people remained in the land. Ezekiel feared that the prevailing idolatry and the severity of God's wrath would lead to the total national erasure of the people.

Historical Context of Deportations

The document provides a timeline of the Babylonian raids that led to this point:

- **609 BC:** King Josiah's rule ends.
- **598 BC:** The first raid and captivity under King Nebuchadnezzar (Deportation of Daniel).
- **597 BC:** The second raid and captivity (Deportation of Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin).
- **576 BC (approx.):** The third and final raid resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem (during the reign of Zedekiah).

Ezekiel, writing from exile in Babylon, gives this message to his fellow exiles concerning the fate of those still residing in Judah and Jerusalem.

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VI. Conclusion

At this point Ezekiel has been bombarded with judgment: The departing of the glory of God from the temple, and the death of important rulers in the nation, as well as the forecoming destruction of the city of Jerusalem this influences Ezekiel to lament and cry greatly asking an honest question—will the rest of Israel that is in the city be fully destroyed?