

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 15-Chapter Eight (Part Two) (Ezekiel 8:13-9:1-3)

Executive Summary

The following briefing outlines the specific rationale and divine justification for the destruction of Jerusalem as revealed to the prophet Ezekiel. The source context details a series of "greater abominations" taking place within the Temple of the LORD, involving both men and women of the house of Judah. These acts—ranging from the ritual lamentation for the fertility god Tammuz to the prostration of temple leaders toward the sun—represent a flagrant violation of the Mosaic Law and a total abandonment of the covenant. Consequently, the narrative transitions from the observation of sin to the summons of "executioners" of the city. The document highlights the departure of the divine glory from its traditional seat, signaling the commencement of an unavoidable and pitiless judgment.

IV. Detailed Examination of Temple Abominations

The Word of the LORD presents Ezekiel with specific details concerning the "greater abominations" occurring within the sacred precincts of the Temple in Jerusalem. These acts are categorized by their location, the participants, and the nature of the false deities involved.

Ritual Lamentation for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:13–14)

Ezekiel is brought to the entrance of the north gate of the Temple (*YHWH bayit*). There, he witnesses a specific group of people engaged in ritual mourning:

- **Participants:** Women of Israel.
- **Activity:** "Sitting there weeping for Tammuz."
- **Linguistic Context:** The Hebrew word for weeping (*baka*) is written in the *piel* stem, emphasizing a state of intense grief, wailing, and lamentation.
- **Identity of Tammuz:** A false god whose name means "sprout of life." He was considered responsible for physical life, earthly production, and agriculture.
- **Purpose:** These women likely lamented as a duty to appeal to this fertility god in hopes of conceiving children.

Solar Worship in the Inner Court (Ezekiel 8:15–16)

Ezekiel is moved further into the inner court, specifically between the porch and the bronze altar. This location is significant as it is deep within the sacred space.

- **Participants:** Approximately twenty-five men.
- **Symbolic Posture:** These men stood with their **backs to the temple** and their faces toward the east. This posture represents a literal and figurative rejection of the God of Israel.
- **Action:** Prostrating themselves eastward toward the rising sun.
- **The Problem of Shemash:** It is possible these men were worshiping Shemash, the Babylonian "god of light." Shemash was viewed as the overseer of the universe and the god of justice/fairness.
- **Biblical Violation:** This act directly transgressed the commandments found in **Deuteronomy 4:13–19**, which strictly forbade the worship of the "host of heaven" (sun, moon, and stars).

Summary of Abominable Acts by Location

Location	Participants	Nature of Act	Rationale/Context
Outer Court	Priests and People	Sacrificing to false deities	Openly honoring idols among the general population.
Inner Court Wall	Priests	Secret idol worship	Conducted in secret under the belief that the God of Israel did not see.
North Gate Entrance	Women	Weeping for Tammuz	Ritual lamentation to a fertility god for conception.
Inner Court (Porch/Altar)	25 Men	Sun Worship	Turning their backs on the Temple to bow toward the east (Shemash).

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 15-Chapter Eight (Part Two) (Ezekiel 8:13-9:1-3)

V. The Culmination of Sin: Violence and the "Twig"

In Ezekiel 8:17, the LORD rhetorically asks if these abominations are "too light a thing," noting that the house of Judah has not only engaged in spiritual rebellion but has also "filled the land with violence."

- **Provocation:** The cumulative effect of these acts has repeatedly provoked divine anger.
- **The "Twig to the Nose":** Ezekiel records the cryptic practice of "putting the twig (*'z'môrâ*) to their nose."
 - **Definition:** *'z'môrâ* refers to a branch, shoot, or vine.
 - **Context:** This is identified as a specific practice of idol worship, potentially linked to the planting of "delightful plants" for strange gods, as referenced in **Isaiah 17:10**.

III. The Divine Response: Pitiless Wrath

Because of the flagrant nature of the rebellion and the defilement of the sanctuary, the LORD declares a final, irreversible sentence of wrath (Ezekiel 8:18; 9:10).

- **No Pity:** The LORD explicitly states, "My eye will have no pity nor will I spare."
- **Ignored Pleas:** Though the people may "cry in My ears with a loud voice," the LORD will not listen.
- **Justification:** This wrath is framed as a physical punishment necessitated by the tribe of Judah's rebellion against the Law of Moses.

VI. The Summoning of the Executioners

The narrative shifts from observation to the execution of judgment in Ezekiel 9:1-3. The LORD calls out with a loud voice for the "executioners" of the city to draw near.

The Personnel of Destruction

Seven men arrive from the direction of the upper gate facing north and stand beside the bronze altar:

1. **Six Executioners:** Each carries a "destroying weapon" (*'mashêṭ 'k'li*). The Hebrew *'mashêṭ* refers to ruin or destruction, and *'k'li* refers to an instrument or vessel.
2. **The Scribe:** One man among them is "clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins."

Conclusion: Movement of the Divine Glory

A pivotal moment occurs as the executioners arrive: the glory of the God of Israel (His physical presence) moves.

- **Original Position:** Above the cherub within the inner court.
- **New Position:** To the **threshold of the temple**.
- **Significance:** This movement signals the beginning of God's departure from His sanctuary, leaving the city vulnerable to the ruin carried by the six officers.