
EZEKIEL 8: 1 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, the Lord GOD's hand fell there on me.

Here begins a section of prophecy extending to the twelfth chapter. In this chapter the prophet is carried in vision to Jerusalem, Eze 8:1-4; and there shown the idolatries committed by the rulers of the Jews, even within the temple. In the beginning of this vision, by the noblest stretch of an inspired imagination, idolatry itself is personified, and made an idol; and the image sublimely called, from the provocation it gave God, the Image of Jealousy, Eze 8:5. The prophet then proceeds to describe the three principal superstitions of this unhappy people: the Egyptian, Eze 8:6-12, the Phoenician, Eze 8:13, Eze 8:14, and the Persian, Eze 8:15, Eze 8:16; giving the striking features of each, and concluding with a declaration of the heinousness of their sins in the sight of God, and the consequent greatness of their punishment, Eze 8:17, Eze 8:18.

Verse 1

In the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month - This, according to Abp. Usher, was the sixth year of Ezekiel's captivity. The sixth day of the fifth month of the ecclesiastical year, which answers to August A.M. 3410.

This chapter and the three following contain but one vision, of which I judge it necessary, with Calmet, to give a general idea, that the attention of the reader may not be too much divided.

The prophet, in the visions of God, is carried to Jerusalem, to the northern gate of the temple, which leads by the north side to the court of the priests. There he sees the glory of the Lord in the same manner as he did by the river Chebar. At one side he sees the image of jealousy. Going thence to the court of the people, he sees through an opening in the wall seventy elders of the people, who were worshipping all sorts of beasts and reptiles, which were painted on the wall. Being brought thence to the gate of the door of the house, he saw women weeping for Tammuz or Adonis. As he returned to the court of the priests, between the porch and the altar, he saw twenty-five men with their backs to the sanctuary and their faces towards the east, worshipping the rising sun. This is the substance of the vision contained in the eighth chapter.

About the same time he saw six men come from the higher gate with swords in their hands; and among them, one with an ink-horn. Then the Divine Presence left the cherubim, and took post at the entrance of the temple, and gave orders to the man with the ink-horn to put a mark on the foreheads of those who sighed and prayed because of the abominations of the land; and then commanded the men with the swords to go forward, and slay every person who had not this mark. The prophet, being left alone among the dead, fell on his face, and made intercession for the people. The Lord gives him the reason of his conduct; and the man with the ink-horn returns, and reports to the Lord what was done. These are the general contents of the ninth chapter.

The Lord commands the same person to go in between the wheels of the cherubim, and take his hand full of live coals, and scatter them over the city. He went as commanded, and one of the cherubim gave him the coals; at the same time the glory of the Lord, that had removed to the threshold of the house, now returned, and stood over the cherubim. The cherubim, wheels, wings, etc., are here described as in the first chapter. This is the substance of the tenth chapter.

The prophet then finds himself transported to the east gate of the temple, where he saw twenty-five men, and among them Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people, against whom the Lord commands him to prophesy, and to threaten them with the utmost calamities, because of their crimes. Afterwards God himself speaks, and shows that the Jews who should be left in the land should be driven out because of their iniquities, and that those who had been led captive, and who acknowledged their sins and repented of them, should be restored to their own land. Then the glory of the Lord arose out of the city, and rested for a time on one of the mountains on the east of Jerusalem, and the prophet being carried in vision by the Spirit to Chaldea, lost sight of the chariot of the Divine glory, and began to show to the captivity what the Lord had shown to him. This is the substance of the eleventh chapter.

We may see from all this what induced the Lord to abandon his people, his city, and his temple; the abominations of the people in public and in private. But because those carried away captives with Jeconiah acknowledged their sins, and their hearts turned to the Lord, God informs them that they shall be brought back and restored to a happy state both in temporal and spiritual matters, while the others, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities, should be speedily brought into a state of desolation and ruin. This is the sum and intent of the vision in these four chapters.

EZEKIEL 8: 2 Then I saw, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his waist and downward, fire; and from his waist and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal.

Verse 2

The appearance of fire - See the note on Eze 1:27.

EZEKIEL 8: 3 He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and the sky, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner court that looks toward the north; where there was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.

Verse 3

The image of jealousy - סמל הקנאה *semel hakkinah*. We do not know certainly of what form this image was, nor what god it represented. Some say it was the image of Baal, which was placed in the temple by Manasses; others, that it was the image of Mars; and others, that it was the image of Tammuz or Adonis. Calmet supports this opinion by the following reasons: -

1. The name agrees perfectly with him. He was represented as a beautiful youth, beloved by Venus; at which Mars, her paramour, being incensed and filled with jealousy, sent a large boar against Adonis, which killed him with his tusks. Hence it was the image of him who fell a victim to jealousy.
2. The prophet being returned towards the northern gate, where he had seen the image of jealousy, Eze 8:14, there saw the women lamenting for Tammuz. Now Tammuz, all agree, signifies Adonis; it was that therefore which was called the image of jealousy.

3. The Scripture often gives to the heathen idols names of degradation; as Baal-zebub, god of flies; Baal-zebul; god of dung.

It is likely that it was Adonis who is called The dead, Lev 19:27, Lev 19:28; Deu 14:9, because he was worshipped as one dead. And the women represented as worshipping him were probably adulteresses, and had suffered through the jealousy of their husbands. And this worship of the image of jealousy provoked God to jealousy, to destroy this bad people.

EZEKIEL 8: 4 Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain.

Verse 4

The vision that I saw in the plain - see the note on Eze 3:23 (note); see also Eze 1:3 (note).

EZEKIEL 8: 5 Then he said to me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up my eyes the way toward the north, and see, northward of the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

EZEKIEL 8: 6 He said to me, Son of man, do you see what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel do commit here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? But you shall again see yet other great abominations.

EZEKIEL 8: 7 He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall.

Verse 7

A hole in the wall - This we find was not large enough to see what was doing within; and the prophet is directed to dig, and make it larger, Eze 8:8; and when he had done so and entered, he says: -

EZEKIEL 8: 8 Then he said to me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had dug in the wall, behold, a door.

EZEKIEL 8: 9 He said to me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here.

EZEKIEL 8: 10 So I went in and saw; and see, every form of creeping things, and abominable animals, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed around on the wall.

Verse 10

And saw - every form of creeping things - It is very likely that these images portrayed on the wall were the objects of Egyptian adoration: the ox, the ape, the dog, the crocodile, the ibis, the scarabaeus or beetle, and various other things. It appears that these were privately worshipped by the sanhedrin or great Jewish council, consisting of seventy or seventy-two persons, six chosen out

of every tribe, as representatives of the people. The images were portrayed upon the wall, as we find those ancient idols are on the walls of the tombs of the kings and nobles of Egypt. See the plates to Belzoni's Travels, the Isaic Tomb in the Bodleian Library, and the Egyptian hieroglyphics in general. Virgil speaks of these, Aen. lib. viii.: -

Omnigenumque Deum monstra, et latrator Anubis. "All kinds of gods, monsters, and barking dogs."

EZEKIEL 8: 11 There stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel; and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, every man with his censer in his hand; and the odour of the cloud of incense went up.

Verse 11

Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan - Shaphan was a scribe, or what some call comptroller of the temple, in the days of Josiah; and Jaazaniah his son probably succeeded him in this office. He was at the head of this band of idolaters.

EZEKIEL 8: 12 Then he said to me, Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his rooms of imagery? for they say, the LORD doesn't see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.

EZEKIEL 8: 13 He said also to me, You shall again see yet other great abominations which they do.

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

Verse 14

There sat women weeping for Tammuz - This was Adonis, as we have already seen; and so the Vulgate here translates. My old MS. Bible reads, There saten women, mornynge a mawmete of lecherye that is cleped Adonrdes. He is fabled to have been a beautiful youth beloved by Venus, and killed by a wild boar in Mount Lebanon, whence springs the river Adonis, which was fabled to run blood at his festival in August. The women of Phoenicia, Assyria, and Judea worshipped him as dead, with deep lamentation, wearing priapi and other obscene images all the while, and they prostituted themselves in honor of this idol. Having for some time mourned him as dead, they then supposed him revived and broke out into the most extravagant rejoicings. Of the appearance of the river at this season, Mr. Maundrell thus speaks: "We had the good fortune to see what is the foundation of the opinion which Lucian relates, viz., that this stream at certain seasons of the year, especially about the feast of Adonis, is of a bloody color, proceeding from a kind of sympathy, as the heathens imagined, for the death of Adonis, who was killed by a wild boar in the mountain out of which this stream issues. Something like this we saw actually come to pass, for the water was stained to a surprising redness; and, as we observed in travelling, had stained the sea a great way into a reddish hue." This was no doubt occasioned by a red ochre, over which the river ran with violence at this time of its increase. Milton works all this up in these fine lines: - "Thammuz came next behind,

Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured

The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis, from his native rock,
Ran purple to the sea, suffused with blood
Of Thammuz, yearly wounded. The love tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat:
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led,
His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah."

Par. Lost, b. 1:446.

Tammuz signifies hidden or obscure, and hence the worship of his image was in some secret place.

EZEKIEL 8: 15 Then he said to me, Have you seen this, son of man? You shall again see yet greater abominations than these.

EZEKIEL 8: 16 He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and see, at the door of the LORD's temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs toward the LORD's temple, and their faces toward the east; and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.

Verse 16

Five and twenty men - These most probably represented the twenty-four courses of the priests, with the high priest for the twenty-fifth. This was the Persian worship, as their turning their faces to the east plainly shows they were worshipping the rising sun.

EZEKIEL 8: 17 Then he said to me, Have you seen this, 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 turned again to provoke me to anger: and behold, they put the branch to their nose.

Verse 17

They put the branch to their nose - This is supposed to mean some branch or branches, which they carried in succession in honor of the idol, and with which they covered their faces, or from which they inhaled a pleasant smell, the branches being odoriferous. That the heathens carried branches of trees in their sacred ceremonies is well known to all persons acquainted with classic antiquity; and it is probable that the heathen borrowed those from the use of such branches in the Jewish feast of

tabernacles. There are many strange, and some filthy, interpretations given of this clause; but the former are not worth repeating, and I abominate the latter too much to submit to defile my paper with them. Probably the Brahminic Linga is here intended.

It really seems that at this time the Jews had incorporated every species of idolatry in their impure worship, - Phoenician, Egyptian, and Persian. I might add that some imagine the image of jealousy to be a personification of idolatry itself.

EZEKIEL 8: 18 Therefore will I also deal in wrath; my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.
