

THE RETURN OF GLORY

Text: Ezek. 43:2

Sometimes the reality of loss can bring us to the brink, the very precipice of deep truth, but then fail to deliver us the meaning, the view we had so thought it would yield is withheld... because in that moment we are too afraid of what it will tell us about ourselves, our culture, and our world. And so all the great events of human history are filled with undiscovered meaning, reserved for the unread volumes of a life's work penned by some obscure scholar who dared to make it his business to hurt, and then dared to record his saga. But there are some who dare to look. So in order for the truth to be accessed one must learn to ask the central questions to begin the process of peeling back the husk in order to get at the depth of the issue. Because the culture at large will never be able to make sense of most events beyond that of a surface answer, they instead will use the loss as a catalyst for hiding themselves from the reality they say they want to understand. In its place they are easily satisfied with the numbing of the pain, and choose rather to embrace the ill-guided cynicism ignorance loves to stroke, and the sympathy it brings, never daring to peer into that pain to its true source. And so I want you to hear in the quote I have selected as an introduction an attempt to look at the loss of something and then dare to ask, "Why?" Because self-awareness has a high cost associated with it, as its knowledge is itself a loss, but a gaining of understanding far beyond the well-traveled road.

"I visited Dachau in the early 1950's as an indigent, self-righteous Jew, having a fervent hatred for the Germans. It was still in very much the same condition as during the war years, so there was something of the grim reality of whipping posts and electric barbed wire. It was a horror. The stench of death was still there. I saw the stark reality of the graves of the victims, and there were bones and ashes yet remaining in the ovens. Refugees were still living in the camp. I remember putting my hand on the smokestack to somehow bring home the reality of it. Something blew in me. I could no longer go on with the naïve view of "good guys" and "bad guys." I was being exposed to the grit of a reality beyond my conceptual ability to consider it. Up to that moment, I had been convinced that I had understood the Holocaust because I was always deeply concerned about it. But now, I had touched the horror that eclipsed those naïve categories. For me, thereafter, it was all "bad guys" – and I was one of them." Art Katz, 1998, *The Holocaust Where was God*.

You see the name of this message is the Return of Glory, and it comes straight out of the text of Ezk. 43:2, but the question the very title immediately plunges us into is what? Why did the glory have to leave? Because such great loss must demand that we look at that which is most painful, and then dare to put our own hand on the smokestack, and peer deep into the silent ashes of the charred victims and sift through it, looking for meaning. And to do that, we need that deep gust of Spirit wind to free us to touch the weight of that horror so that we can find in them the hope of Ezekiel's returning glory. And so I'd like to begin by asking you to come back with me as we are going to have to travel through the Old Testament searching the ashes of a recorded Jewish history looking for answers about the hope of the return of glory.

Ezekiel has a message that spans some 20 years, and that in perhaps some of the worst possible conditions a priestly prophet could find himself. It is delivered under the most horrifying of circumstances, because he was at the end of God's longsuffering with the southern kingdom of Judah. His people were in the dreadful place of **no more mercy**... And as a captive carried away in the second wave of deportation to the gentile world's most concentrated power center of the day, the foreign land of Babylon, he felt the fear that can only come to those who have seen the cruel hand of invasion and captivity, and the subsequent long streaming march of once strong men as they trudge into exile. But his stay in Babylon was going to be a circuitous journey of visions and encounters with the living God that would take him to the depths of despair, and the heights of human emotion. For he sees things in visions and visitations that only a select few men will ever see this side of heaven. Imagine having the very heavens opened as a great rift in the dimensions of heaven and earth tears wide into your peering eyes presenting you with a view of an approaching chariot of raging flaming fire streaking across the distant expanse. Its advance is like and the whirling and churning of massive variegated storm clouds and the crash of thunder and beams of radiant amber colored light stretch out in lightening like flashes.

This is the God who calls you to your post of prophetic ministry. Then imagine that same visitation of heavenly messengers appearing yet again as they disclose to you the conduct of the people left in Israel. So what was it that this cherub driven messenger came to reveal? Why this Divine visitation? What was so important that Ezekiel must be summoned to these many encounters? In chapter 8 of Ezekiel's prophecy he is allowed to touch the smokestack as it were and sift the ashes... Because,

1. **In the house of God...** Ezekiel sees the "idol of jealousy" or idol that provokes to jealousy. A possible reference to the statue of Asherah set up by Manasseh on the north side of the sanctuary next to the altar. This was a wooden idol promoting the sensual Canaanite goddess of fertility.
2. **In the House of God...** Ezekiel sees the 70 leaders of Israel secretly meeting under the cover of darkness worshipping the painted images of animals and all manner of detestable idols in a smoky, hazy incense filled room by the entrance to the inner sanctuary court. These leaders were possibly worshipping Egyptian idols, as they had lost faith in God because Judah had been overthrown in yet another recent defeat.
3. **In the house of God...** Ezekiel sees a group of women, possibly temple prostitutes sitting by the North gate weeping for the idol god Tammuz, thus bringing Syro-Mesopotamian syncretism and its fertility cult practices into the Temple.
4. **In the house of God...** Ezekiel sees directly in front of the doors of the inner sanctuary between the altar and the porch, a group of 25 men worshipping the sun thus turning their back on the One and only true God.

Now this is not a people who have no concept of the living God. This is the chosen Hebrew people committing these atrocious acts of idolatry. And look at the great cost they incur as they are unable to distinguish between the hand of judgment and correction, and the turning away of God from them in mercy-less righteous anger. One is redemptive in calling you to correction, the other is devoid of compassion and is divine retribution. And yet they could not see either one as a valid issue as the view they embraced says, "God has abandoned us, maybe He's not here, or He's not enough... let's seek out other gods to help us..." As if there was no history to back up the right perspective. Can you since the bitter taste of the rejection as it announces these idolatries? Ezek. 8:6 *"Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far from My Sanctuary?"* The fact that they need not leave the Temple mount to find the greatest and most offensive sins of these deceived worshipers shows that the heart is able to be so deceived by false hope and dead faith in that it believes its quest can be answered in the outer court and not in the holiest of holies. It's willing to look for fulfillment and deliverance in the usurping place of demons, clamoring for recognition as they sit in the place of God, rather than the worship that seeks inward humility and an acknowledgement of sin and invites treaty through the understanding of sacrifice. The fact that these of all the peoples of the earth have turned to idols is a deception almost beyond interpretation. It's one thing if you were a pagan nation with no background to draw from, no experience that you could place yourself in remembrance of... no Book of the Law to use as your guide and rule of conscience. But this is not the case, this is an attempt to seek righteousness in that which is made of the elements of earth, wood and stone, but fueled by the experience and animation of fallen spirits. Idolatry is just an outward step in the elevation of yourself over that which you believe is not satisfying to your soul. And so the experience of the false community breeds the contempt for the singularity of devotion to ONE. Because the heart once given to the worship of idols can no longer see clearly to find the worship of truth as it is not just hidden from them but rather, hides from them. Because it should not escape our notice that the Glory brothers and sisters **had not yet departed from this Temple**, this sacred and holy place and the people still couldn't find the God of their covenant, though He was but steps away from them. And He made no attempt to visit His presence upon them in an outward sign, but instead spoke to them from a distant voice of offended prophecy... rather He left them to themselves, as they clearly did not know Him or His Word. Which again begs the historical review.

These were the descendants of the herald of righteousness, the builder of the Ark of God as Noah and his family alone were saved by mercies redeeming and sparing hand.

These are the descendants of those who came out of Egypt with the strong arm of deliverance as Pharaoh was humbled by the stripping use of God ordered natural assaults.

These were the descendants of freed slaves come through the wilderness wandering, and who under Joshua's leadership had witnessed the systematic conquest of the Promised Land as the usurping Canaanite nations began to be purged in covenant obedience.

These were the descendants of the children of freed slaves who witnessed the preventing of the sundials path as its shadow halted when the Creator God of all time and space, the very God of Israel stood up for that lands conquest, and the Solar system recoiled in submission.

These were the descendants of David and Solomon who brought the fledgling kingdom of Israel to the very zenith of its golden age. These were **those descendants'** brothers and sisters... they had the truth written in the Pentateuch, they had the covenants of promise, and they had the stalwart men of immeasurable historical stature as witnesses and guides. **And yet... look, look** at the wickedness those same descendants were committing in the very house of their God. As the contemporary of Ezekiel, the Prophet Jeremiah said, *"My people have changed their Glory... (Capital G), for what does not profit. Be astonished O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate," says the Lord. For My people have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*" What is an idol but a broken hope for the thirsty soul's desire for fulfillment? They forsook their Glory, not realizing that the cost, was that their Glory had forsaken them to the place of **no more mercy**... And so Ezekiel sees in chapter 10:4 *"Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the Temple."* Their encroachment on His sacred ground with false forms of idolatrous worship and practice was to be the bases for Gods rejection of them as stewards of His Temple. Thus the administration of judgment by God was to be the catalyst that would remove Him from the mercy seat. The withdrawing glory was a signal of God's exhausted graces and patience.

Something was about to be unleashed that was to signal the first step of the removal of the precious glory that had inhabited the holiest place on earth... **Something was about** to happen in Jerusalem that was to leave it devoid of that abiding residing presence of divine recognition for the next 400 plus years, until that glory returned in veiled humanity and entered the Temple as the babe of promise to the aged priest Simeon. But that's for another time, and another discussion. For now in Ezekiel's vision, the mercy was being removed. God was to have pitiless judgment on the very people that that God was in covenant with. You see it's dangerous to covenant with a God who keeps it, and expects the same from you!

*"Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand." And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" And they went out and killed in the city. So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left alone; and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?" Then He said to me, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!' **And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.**" (Ezekiel 9:1-11)*

When Gods mercy's are forgotten and taken for granted, when His wise council is spurned, when His wisdom is not sought in humility... His course of action is to slay the wicked, and rebuild with the remnant. And so I must ask you brothers and sisters; where was God? Answer: He was the One dealing out the death and suffering. Because His glory is going to be seen as the pre-incarnate person of His Son. And to not worship and serve Him is the great grounds for **no more mercy**! O how fearful to be in that dreadful place of pitiless judgment... listen brothers and sisters. *"Therefore, as*

*I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; **My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.** One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.'* (Ezekiel 5:11–12).

And so connect the dots, and think with me. Where was God in all the Scriptures... that's the begged question?

Where was God in the flood, when all but 8 souls were killed? Gen. 6:7 says it was from His hand that judgment was to come. *"So the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air..."* He was pouring out the judgment in righteous anger!

Where was God when Job's children were being destroyed by the torrent of satanic wrath, and all that he had was being stolen by the greedy? It was God who was testing his heart for obedience under great duress.

Where was God when Joseph was pleading for his life and begging for the hand of mercy? When he watched the flower of His youth pass in the languishing of a jail cell, as night after night and year after year he was a living the life of a slave? *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant for good..."*

Where was God when the mighty and cruel Assyrian invasion of Judah's harlot sister was taking place, as the hate filled soldiers were rapping, robbing and pillaging and killing young and old? He was in the mouth of the Prophets warning the people to return to Him and break up their fallow ground.

And then the greatest of all... Where was God when His holy harmless and undefiled Son was being mercilessly beaten and mocked and scourged and scorned?

Where was God when the only innocent man was arrested on unjust charges?

Where was God when he was denied by His closest friends?

Where was God when He was rejected by His own interpreters of the Law?

Where was God when the garrison of soldiers beat Him and scourged Him beyond human recognition?

Where was God when the King of Glory was crowned with the thorns of scorn?

Where was God when the cruel nails pierced sinless flesh?

Where was God when the lifeless body of the Lamb of God was hanging suspended between Heaven and Hell?

Where was God when the guilty thief needed the nail pierced hand of grace's gentle touch to lift him to paradise?

Where was God when the wicked priests asked a sign as he hung in obedience to their Law?

Where was God when the final words were uttered, **"IT IS FINISHED!"**

Hear me sweet brothers, hear me... Never ever lose hope!

Because... He was the offended One bringing the retribution... and **He was** the Holy One being satisfied...

He was the One who turned away... And **He was** the One who dared not open His mouth.

He was the One who demanded nothing less than the Law's perfect conformity... as **He was** the One being perfectly obedient to the will of the Father...

He was the One who had begotten the Son for the salvation of men... and **He was** the One paying for those men by His own death!

He was the One who ordained the cross, and **He was** there hanging for six hours in anguish,

He was the One who knew we would need proof of His death, so **He was** there being pierced in the side,

He was the One who had Him taken down before Passover, so **He was** there wrapped in spices and bound in death's final dress,

He was the One who knew we needed 3 days to prove that death further, and **He was** there laying lifeless in a cold garden's tomb,

He was there in death's dark resolve for three days and nights, **He was** there brothers and sisters... **He Was Right There...**

But... it doesn't stop right there! Because my Bible says **He was** also right there when Power from on high filled that lifeless Body! **He was right there** when the streaming torrent of eternal life bounced the stone away! **He was there**

when Mary's tear filled eyes sought but one more visit to the Saviors bleeding side. **He was** there appearing to the troubled disciples veiled from physical recognition as He revealed Himself out of the preaching of Scripture. **He was** there as His hopeless disciples sat in numbed disbelief, until He manifest His resurrection body and spoke the word of calming peace. **He was** there when the disciples gazed steadfastly into heaven, as He was received up until the fulfillment of all things had been completed. **He was** there with the final revelation to John on the rock heap of Patmos declaring the glory that He was to manifest in the final return as the sweet person of Glory! **He was there... He was always right there.** So don't try and tell me God is not easily touched with the feelings of our infirmities... He designed them! He went through them, and far more than we could ever imagine, as Christ bore the full wrath of the Father. Those designs of God have great purpose and depth of meaning if we can only dare to look at the source of the pain.

You see what Art had witnessed at Dachau with his hand touching the smokestack and his eyes staring into the ashes was the realization that he was a sinner... his true identity. And that wind that blew into him, showed him that he deserved that kind of death. It erased the naïve concept of him being a, "good guy." He deserved to be in the place of **no more mercy.** Therefore he saw in himself the truth of his depravity and what offended holiness must do in retribution because of his life of disobedience. And so he dared to ask, "Where was God"? Because to not find God is to spend an eternity in unending ashes and departed glory as you are finally separated from Him, and will abide under the wrath you justly deserve. Now that's a hard truth to come to, but I only comes in the question, where was God? And I think that question is a great place to start. And that is a great and deep question... but it's only one half of the question that needs to be asked. **The central question** that stands on its shoulders is this question. **Can you worship a God like that? Can you worship** a God who is just and will bring individuals, communities, and nations into the winepress of His wrath, even your own kinsmen and family? Because we have an aversion in our day to the truth of this kind of God! We want the warm fuzzy blow up Jesus doll that we can manipulate in our minds to ease our consciences... One that is all love. Can you bring yourself to stand against the tide of latté sipping, limp wristed, man pleasing preachers and their ill-informed congregations and dare to say with Job; *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him!"* and *"Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"* You see what Job knew that his own wife and most modern Christians can never find out in a 100 lifetimes is this. **Satan is answered in the deep conflict of the souls covenant bonds.** The cry of the saved human heart for help from God is an appeal for the life of the covenant to satisfy the affliction by the supply of grace and mercy promised in that relationship. , It says please God give me one more day, one more hour, and one more moment to prove your mercy... I only know of One that can grant that. It sounds like this for Paul in 2 Cor. 4:8-11, *"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifest in our mortal flesh."*

Now with that in mind let's go back to Ezekiel's vision of the withdrawing glory.

"Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them." (Ezekiel 10:18–19)

We can scarcely see this sight with dry eyes... as the sadness of heart fills the prophet, it's that partial dying Paul just spoke of. These Cherubim mounted up and taxied to the famous eastern gate. This was the Messiah gate, the one through whom He would come in triumphant victory... but those memories are hidden from us now, and they are clocked in silence as this is the shameful reverse. These steeds of transport stand in regal splendor adorned with the elevated Glory astride their platform. As if to say Gods peace is far beyond our touch. His mind is set, the die is cast and He pauses here for our considerations sake but shows no pity to those defying Him in open idolatrous rebellion. He looks across the way through the gate to the place of His return in glory, then as He is now with this exception, this is a

view of hopes departure, meant to sadden the souls of the righteousness and make them long for the loss of that supreme presence now in absence.

“So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.” (Ezekiel 11:22–23)

This departing of glory was to make the way for the Babylonian invasion, as its removal of heavenly light allowed the rushing in of the darkness that blacken the hearts of those left to themselves and dimmed the gold of this once beautiful city. Can there be anything worse than praying in an empty Godless Temple? How the Prophet Ezekiel must have felt as the lifted wings of the quartet of Cherubim set their stance and thrust their wings downward as if to protect the presence of God from the tainted stones of the once sacred site. From now on all the cultic practices, even the ones done in the name of God, would be baseless and empty. The object of their worship no longer was to dwell with them, thus a type of death was being inserted into the place of worship by the departure of this person of Glory. This last look at what was the only hope for salvation and repentance had lifted and lighted across the Kidron valley, but not before the glory paused on top of the mountain, as if to give pause to the disheartened Ezekiel. **Perhaps** the pause was a prophecy in and of itself as it prefigured the way back, and the way it would return? **Perhaps** it was a moment to be captured so that its viewing could be recorded and then longed for and cried out for, as its absence was felt even by those in Exile. **Perhaps** the exalted enthroned One who sat comfortably upon the crystal base was giving a clue as to the significance of that garden of Gethsemane, as He would return their in agony preparing for the cross and its cursed shadow, death. All I know is that its paused moment is there for us to take pause. Because the glory that was to return to this place was to be in a Temple that was the seed of the woman come to crush the seed of the Satan serpent! But for now it had departed and the absence of it was the essence of death. Imagine the darkness that began to creep into the souls of men as they sensed a change in the political landscape. Then the invading streams of rugged soldiers setting up camps and embankments circling the city leaving no room for escape, much the same way as it must have been for those feeling the pit pat of rain as the door on the ark was closed and the helpless outsiders were left to suffer under the rising swell of pitiless wrath. **“Ichabod...” the glory was departed.**

Death is a deep thing brothers and sister... It's not as the old cliché says, “Death is just a part of living...” Listen carefully to what I'm about to say, because in this quote by Gordon Spykman, that I found late one night as I was searching for ways to express this difficult subject; I think you can see the problem that has been the plague of all of life.

He writes... “For the Time being, however, death remains a living enigma. It is our archenemy. It stalks our path as an alien intruder. It does not really belong here. That is the riddle of our existence – The relentless grip of death in the midst of divinely preserved life.” Gordon Spykman, Reformation Dogmatics.

This death, the relentless stalker, is at its core the very essence of departed Glory. It's the deep riddle of our passage today, as we seek to understand its return, because its absence brings to light the central effect... futility of worshipping in the place of emptiness, and that in the darkened mind, not knowing it. Death is now working in us and all around us, “...cursed is the ground for your sake...” was God's judgement in the garden. And Paul the Apostle puts it this way in Rom. 8:20-21 “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And so departed glory is the “bondage of corruption” and God was the one who willingly subjected the creation to it unwillingly. Our first parents felt this birth pain groan type of experience with the incurring of the curse, as it became the landscape of the rest of their natural life. Ezekiel's chronicling of the departure of this Person of glory is to be pictured in the same way.

But then the question for us is, what is glory? You see Glory is to be understood in the right way. The New International Dictionary of Theology states it like this. "...it does **not** mean God in His essential nature, but the luminous manifestation of His person, His glorious revelation of Himself." Because the curse is its contrast, the absence of the light of God. That absence or removal is a willful interjection of His offended displeasure demanded by His righteousness. Thus the opposite is the concept of glory, the apt description of the fullness of **His embodied person**. This glory is always pictured for us in Scripture as something connected to the brightness or **image of God**. Listen as Moses asked to see this person of Glory in Exodus 33:18–23. *"And he said, "Please, **show me Your glory.**" Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see **My face**; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, **while My glory passes by**, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with **My hand** while I pass by. Then I will take away **My hand**, and **you shall see My back**; but My face shall not be seen.""* And again John puts it this way in 1:14, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**"* And the writer of Hebrews thus defines it even more clearly when he portrays the Christ in 1:3, *"...who **being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...**"* This Person of glory seen by Ezekiel is not then a chariot driven amorphous form, it's not **just** a description of His collective attributes but rather a **singular statement of His image**. As you and I are not to simply view God in truncated sections of His attributes by themselves, i.e., Love, Justice, Omnipresence, etc., but rather, just as a circle is in perfect sync with itself thus creating an **image of One**. The glory that Adam and Eve shared as the custodians of Eden was lost when they disobeyed, thus incurring the great **death** of the spirit, and the **darkness** of the soul, and **decay** of the body. As they were not just rejecting the command of God, but the image and person of God found in the **Word of the command**. The righteousness that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden was none other than the clothing work of the presence of God, which was immediately lost when the sin of treason was sought in the establishment of its own strength of presence and person apart from Gods glory or person. The immediate removal of such a glory is to be interpreted by us as the recoil of holiness at the presence of the alien intruder sin, thus built into it was the consequence for disobedience... death, which is separation. So close to Adam and Eve was the glory of God's covering presence that it functioned as an outward garment, but was not an indwelling Spirit. And so when they disobeyed, Adam and Eve didn't have to wait for the Lord to curse them to feel the absence of His glory departed. They had their, *"...eyes opened..."* and they saw the immediate lack of covering, as the knowledge of evil, and the removal of the presence of the departed glory, had already thus been cursed by God in the command to not eat of the tree of Law and was thus in effect departed. Evils new knowledge was **the experience** of that absence. **Its effect** was instantaneous, a death or departing from life is a functioning separation or the realized departure of glory and covering presence. **Deaths relentless separating grip is the new abiding absence of the loss of the glory of God for Ezekiel's people back in the land.** And so in detailed visions Ezekiel saw this played out yet again in vivid description as the departure of God from His garden palace of tabernacle with His covenant people was making its withdrawal. The Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin had not learned from their northern sister Israel's removal... to the place **of no more mercy**, but instead they had embraced more death in idolatry and practice as death was working in them to bring a greater depth of absence. They were satisfied with the beggarly elements being the objects of worship rather than the abiding Glory of His person. And so in the act of departing, the Person of His glory is leaving them to the wrath incurred by the abiding sin they would not forsake, as they sought to establish themselves apart from Him, and this all the while the prophet Ezekiel warned them many times over to repent and turn to God. And I submit to you that this is the same situation that the modern state finds itself in today... They are willing to abide with syncretism in worship and land division, in order to establish their own glory by strength of arms through treaties of pretended peace. And so yet again, in our own day the invitation is extended for the wrath of God to bring judgment.

But in Ezekiel's day, Southern Judah couldn't learn from Israel's removal, as departed Glory leaves you in a deceptive place... you can't see your own sins, but you can still see the sins of others.

You see says the remaining proud blinded Judah...

I've got a sister who lives up north, and she never really could quite listen, her ten tribes they struck a deal, got a new king, and some calves that really glisten.

They banded themselves together, drew a line to stake their claim, they said, "you're not with us!", and then set out to spread their fame...

From Dan to Bethel and on every high hill in-between, they spread their legs and drank their dregs, killed each other, King after King after King.

But we in the south, we're not like that, Judah and Benjamin with just a pinch of syncretism. Sure and idol here and there, but we still worship let's be fair, I don't think God will really notice.

But in the north, wow! They had priests from every class of people. They even invited the Baal's and Asherah's to their feasts, but refused to call it evil.

And their kings and queens were so supportive, paid the tab, and kept the wine flowing... but the problem with being blinded is that you don't know where you're going...

But we in the south, we're not like that, Judah and Benjamin with just a pinch of syncretism. Sure and idol here and there, but we still worship let's be fair, I don't think God will really notice.

They even burned their infants in the fire, hoping their new gods would give them crops and favor, but we in the south tried to warn them time after time, that God would shave them with a hired razor.

And then came the caldron from the mighty north, and like the wind, my sister she was gone. And the cruelty with which it all happened should have schooled me... but instead it was a just a collective yawn.

But we in the south, we're not like that, Judah and Benjamin with just a pinch of syncretism. Sure and idol here and there, but we still worship let's be fair, I don't think God will really notice.

And some prophets say we might be leaving, I here Babylon is nice this time of year. But surely with all these gods abounding, it's not Jerusalem that those armies will be surrounding, so surely were secure.

We're just coming and we're just going, in and out of the promise land, from Abraham to today, don't ask me why it's just the way, it's just something that we do. We've built the pyramids in Egypt, crossed the great rivers in the northeast, been divided at least a few more times... And traveled Europe in a rush but hey, at least...

Now we're settled back in the land, and our new slogan is, "Never Again!" Because this time we have real power. And that's not just our numbers ya know, because this time we've got planes and bombs, a nice army and walls, that will help us to keep it so. And now that we're finally settled and secure, we want a little more religion... a new Temple would be nice, as our old ones have been destroyed twice, because we aim to put God back on the throne.

Yes we know, there's a bit of a problem with a little golden dome, but this is really our land, and what we say really goes. So assemble the priests, and make ready the fiery altar, let's set the foundation stone and start sacrifices tomorrow.

Because we in the new Israel, we're not like that, Sure we'd set His temple next to theirs, it's just a pinch of syncretism. Sure and idol here and there, but we still worship let's be fair, I don't think God will really notice.

Do you see the horror of the place the modern day newly formed state of Israel finds herself in in just 68 short years since its inception? She is still blinded by the rejection of the Messiah Jesus and living under, and living out, the long hard trans-historical blindness that was imposed upon her in the Words of her rejected Messiah 2000 years ago... *"You will see Me no more, till you say..."* (Mt. 23:37-39). This blindness has and will continue to cause her to trust in human ability instead of Gods providence and thus when **we fast forward to the end of times** as is mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39, that blindness is still in effect and running its course. But let us consider **the 2 necessary means that have to be in place** to put her there. **Israel has to come to the place** of thinking God is ok with building His temple next to that of Muslim pagan houses of worship and schools of satanic indoctrination... **hear me**, and that because she is able in her own military and technological power to secure its existence. **Israel has to come to the place** of thinking that it's ok to build the new 3rd Temple on land that has been divided, and its sovereign control can be trusted to be regulated, apportioned and protected by others who already oppose her right to even exist. And so the departed glory of God could never return and inhabit a sacred piece of ground with that of pagan idols for close courtyard neighbors, and be controlled by others other than the covenant custodians. The mountain of the Lords house is to be established on top of the mountain, **not presented** as an option among many competing faiths. And so the doom of this coming third Temple is already set, the very placement of it next to pagan houses of worship **is the relentless grip of death that cannot be jettisoned**, as the Temple Mount is already corrupted, no matter the placement of it. The establishment of the soon coming new 3rd Temple will invite the wrath of the coming AC as he, *"...opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that He sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."* (2 Thess. 2:4). With the removal of the great Serpent Satan from the place of restraining usurpation, a place in the heavens, (Rev. 12:7-10) upon his removal he will seek out the holiest place on earth for the position of his **own throne**. It is this act of defiance coupled with a ploy to rally the misguided followers of Allah to take up the great holy war in an attempt to destroy the world's remaining Jewish populations, and take back the land and its most holy site. But when all these evil plans of the AC fail, and we near the final days of the end of the Great Tribulation, the advancing armies of AC are gathered and the final march to overrun the land of Israel is underway, the threat of nuclear war is being realized. The rest of the opposing armies of the earth are gathering as well according to the final verses of Daniel 11 as they prepare to rid the world of the leadership of the AC. This great battle is the final Gog Magog/Armageddon of Ezekiel 39, and Rev. 16. Hear how Zephaniah 3:8 records it. *"My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy."* The problem for the AC and his pawns is the covenant... **God is in covenant** with the final surviving vestige of Jewish flesh clinging to life in the Goshen of Dan. 11:41, in Edom, Moab and Ammon... the desert caverns of the Petra region. The divine security apparatus of Israel, the Rev. 11 Two Witnesses have been dead for a short while, just days, and are being paraded in death through the celebratory regions of AC. If Ac armies advance into Israel now, it will be unopposed, the remaining remnant will be over-run, and the land lost and under the control of Satan in human flesh... **AND THEN ALL Heaven breaks loose!** For the hope filled Ezekiel has gospel news pouring from his lifted pen and says...

"Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east.

From this vantage point we are transported into the view of the Eastern gate, overlooking the Kidron valley to the Mount of Olives. Part of that area today is a grave yard... which is all the more providential as the view of Ezekiel was to be that of **returning glory and bursting graves! Hear me sweet brothers!** My Infallible, Inerrant, Inspired, Authoritative Word of Almighty God declares with certain unfailing promise that, *"Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley..."* And Paul under Divine inspiration picked up that vision of Zechariah and says. *"...the Lord Himself will descend from*

heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God!" This brothers is the shout of eternities covenant voice of hope pouring forth resurrection life and emptying the graves of the corporate Lazarus, dead but, righteous for the vindication of the person of Glories long awaited revelation and return! Jesus Messiah, Son of God stands forth in regal dress and refulgent shafts of amber colored beams of luminous glory... And **He cries out!** And Death and the Grave are sent recoiling and reeling backward as the command from on high screams the loudest cry for freedom and deliverance, and death is swallowed up in total life! Halleluiah! Rocketing from those bursting tombs of bondage in resurrected glory will be the first man Adam, and his righteous son Abel. His replacement Seth, and the preacher of righteousness Noah, the sojourner Abraham, and his promise child Isaac. The wrestler called Jacob, and the dreamer called Joseph, and his brothers of affliction. There's gonna be the giant man Moses, whose shadow stretched out of the slavery of Egypt and across the wilderness to the land flowing with milk and honey. I see beside him in glory the great conquer Joshua and the outnumbered Gideon. The strong man Sampson, and the seer's in three, Samuel, Elijah and the double apportioned Elisha. There rises the great lover king David, and his wise son Solomon. The passionate Josiah, and the prayerful Hezekiah. The weeping Jeremiah and the ever faithful Daniel. The highly favored Mary, and the aged Elizabeth, the forerunner John and the closest friends of Jesus - Peter, James and John the beloved, and all the rest of His holy Apostles. And also on the fly, the one born out of due time, the great Apostle Paul. And a countless community of just men made perfect, all splendidly bathed in luminous blaze... But wait, this is just the beginning... there's gonna be a woman from a midday well, and a believing centurion whose son was raised from death's cursed grip, a widow from Nain with a son by her side, a Ruler named Jairus and a daughter dearly loved. I see a staunch flow of blood in a woman of great faith. There springs a twice dead Lazarus with sisters Martha and Mary, alongside a blind Bartimaeus, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, and aged prayer warrior named Anna. A Gadarene demoniac turned evangel of truth, and a thankful leper who returned to worship. A young raised girl named Tabitha, and a nameless man once healed of a withered hand on the Sabbath. And going up in majestic garb or glory is the daughter of Abraham lo, bound these eighteen long years. I see a nameless blind man whose sight was restored, by the pool Siloam. I see adorned in eternal life's new dress, a woman caught in adultery and another named Magdalene. I see the once unbelieving brothers of our Lord Himself all bursting forth in glorious bodies of luminous unsheathed glory. But wait sweet brothers, wait for the rest... the trail yet extends as I see a mighty army great and vast, full and wide of faithful men who preached truth at all costs now regally dressed in Christ's eternal rich robes. And behind them are multitudes of faithful servants, a gentile mass from every tribe tongue and nation... immeasurable in their wake. Spanning the ages and streaming in glorious light are the army of white hot faithful martyrs in their rich robes of never fading splendor... **But don't stop there! For my Bible says, "...that we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air... and thus we shall always be with the Lord."** I'm gonna see you sweet ones... free from the bondage of death's cruel grip!.... I can see Phil running as a child, and Mark leaping for eternal joy... I can see Marline as she adorns in ageless beauty... I can see Ed free from his wheelchair, running alongside the angels of glory! I can see Reggie uttering forth declarations of glory with an abandoned freedom gifted him by his resurrection dress... And I see Fred in the reunion of saints, and grandchildren once lost. I will see **all of us, full and refulgent...** bathed in the stream of ever increasing Joy, **free forever from the curse of sin and the power of Satan!...** Just drink that in for a moment.

Then says Ezekiel... *"Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east..."* This sentence starting with the simple announcement, *"afterward"* raises an important issue within itself, as it signals the place of separation... this is truly holy ground. The old Jerusalem and its defiled 3rd Temple have been destroyed in the great earthquake we just heard Zechariah tell us of. This new restructuring of the 70 mile plateau that stretches from *"...the plain of Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem..."* has set the platform for the New Ezekiel Temple. It's now holy ground because it houses that which is supremely valuable, God's choice and God's glory will once again reside here in the person of God's as Messiah, the Lord Jesus is here. And says Ezekiel, *"His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone*

with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. The sight of this returning Person of glory sends Ezekiel into brokenness and he bows low. That same effect is witnessed by John on Patmos in Rev. 1 and he said, *“Behold He is coming with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, **and they also who pierced Him.**”* To find yourself looking up to heaven as the sky is beaming with glory unimaginable and seeing that its Jesus whom you have resisted... even as His Christian servants have laid down their life in your service for the last three and a half years as they sought to swallow the wrath the AC was bringing against you... is to fall on your face in deep repentance and application of salvation. I like what L. E. Cooper says, “Such deep and widespread revival would be driven by Yahweh’s gift of a new heart and a new spirit. The heart was considered the center of human reason and volition, what leads someone to reject one path and choose another. The new heart would be “undivided” lit. “One heart.” Israel had attempted to follow both the Lord and idols an ill-considered, aimless course that leads nowhere but to destruction. Henceforth they would follow only the Lord in singlehearted devotion, loving and serving him with all their heart, obeying him completely and unconditionally. Ezekiel (Vol. 17, p. 143).

Then says Ezekiel, *“And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. **This is the return of Glory... to inhabit your sacred land, to inhabit your sacred Temple, to inhabit your chosen people, and to rule from your exalted throne and there is no loss of the earthly kingdom nor will any idol again spoil the land.**”* The return of glory means that their no longer must be punishment imposed upon the nation of Israel as they will live for God with the whole heart. The curse of blindness is lifted... the division of the kingdom is removed.

The separation of God from His people has always been the great curse that gave way to the division. It’s the loss of His person, His presence and His fellowship that has been the greatest cost. But that has ended now and the nation will again rejoice as He is with them ruling the nations with the rod of iron.

But it doesn’t stop there. The people of Israel are not the only recipients of this great returned person of Messiah glory alone... Far from it! But they will be the custodians of the abiding person and ministry to the Messiah of glory in His Temple. They will be the kingdom of priests that lead the many in those pagan nations out of death’s dark grip and into salvation to become a kingdom of priests within their own lands. Think of their ministry... Think of the help that was needed after the last world war, all of Europe destroyed... no economy, cities devastated, travel diminished. Now think of the help that will be needed in the nations after years of Satanic rule through AC and the vast destruction of his armies and the final battle of Armageddon. The people of Japan were burned, diseased, and reeling after the atomic bombs were dropped at the wars end. What of nuclear detonation at Armageddon? Blood flowing to the bridals in the valley of Megiddo. Food tainted by the fallout and bitter waters... parched earth, thus famine. Birds gathering to feast on the flesh of armies slain. Here is the return of glory... think back brothers to the first advent, when Jesus went through towns and villages raising the dead, healing all manner of disease and providing food to the masses. Shall we expect anything less from the returning king and His nation of priests? The Ezekiel Temple is lined on three sides with places to eat and drink. This is one of the main reasons the nations stream to the land of Israel... it is a realized land flowing with milk and honey after all.

They will be a unified division of tribes under one banner, all in the land, functioning together as a model for the nations. One in which unity and righteous government will be established as the word of “the Lord goes forth from Jerusalem.” Teaching them to lay aside the hate in their heart and taking up the covenant of peace. Israel will bury the dead and burn the weapons for 7 years and at its end, the land will be holy once again as both death and its instruments will be covered up by the earth’s anticipation of final renewal and cleansing as for 1000 years the Sabbath rest will be

realized in a just and equitable rule. Now I would be negligent if I didn't mention one of the most serious aspects of the return of glory... The binding of Satan and his minions for the duration of the 1000 years. The removal of Satan has so many effects that its almost too difficult to discuss. I'll only pick a few and address them, quickly.

Physical sickness will be diminished, as longevity of life is extended because the curse on the earth and human life will be restructured as the chief architect of deaths power will be removed and Jesus healing presence will be present.

The outward expressions of sin and depravity will be far more subdued and diminished in the heart of mankind as the conscience will not be incited to do evil by any type of demonic influence.

There will be no demon possession, vexation, oppression, or harassment of any kind as all of the fallen host will be incarcerated. Thus babies and small children will grow up vastly different that all those before them. They will have a maturing process that will be free from the vices of Satan's death traps. What are the effects of diminished evil and a world reeling from carnage? Holy fear, manifested in a great desire for abiding peace and healing on every level, both individual and social. No more will *"Satan come immediately to take away the Word which was sown in your heart."* It will find a place to lodge and be given fair consideration. Now think forward a bit. It will be necessary to test this faithfulness on Israel's part and so Satan is released at the time of the end to muster a rebellion so as to show that the covenant is thus vindicated in that Israel is immovable, unshakable and totally protected from any form of disunity, from within or without and that they have become the true caretakers of the garden of God and cannot be removed from the land.

Finally brothers, the person of Christ and the effect He brings will be almost immeasurable. A functioning kingdom of priests will attend the preached word to the nations. Thus Jesus' limitless influence on the exposition of the scriptures will set every hearers heart on its own Emmaus road inflamed passionate response. His unbounded wisdom will correct the abuses of longstanding distinction among countries, governments and individuals. His unlimited influence on children and their development will raise a new generation unable to wage war or manufacture its destructive craft. All resources which were used for warfare will be redirected toward the building of societies founded on an awakened reality of true social welfare, and the sigh and groan of the earth will rejoice in this new liberty.

Lets pray