

Ezekiel 11:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

Analysis

After announcing restoration promises, Ezekiel sees the conclusion of the glory's departure: 'Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.' This describes the cherubim and wheels ready for departure, with God's glory positioned above them. The throne-chariot of God prepares to leave the temple entirely.

The phrase 'glory of the God of Israel' emphasizes both divine majesty and covenant relationship. Even in judging Israel, Yahweh remains 'God of Israel'—the covenant continues despite discipline. The glory positioned 'over them above' indicates God's transcendence—He remains sovereign and holy, separate from the defilement below. The departure isn't abandonment of covenant but necessary response to maintain holiness while disciplining unfaithfulness.

From a Reformed perspective, God's glory departing illustrates the doctrine of holiness—God cannot indefinitely dwell where sin persists unrepented. Yet even in departure, He remains Israel's God, working through judgment toward restoration. This demonstrates that God's covenant love includes discipline (Hebrews 12:6). True love doesn't tolerate destructive behavior but corrects it, even through painful means.

Historical Context

The glory's departure reversed its arrival at the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and temple dedication (1 Kings 8:10-11). What came with such fanfare and celebration now leaves in judgment. This dramatic reversal would shock any Israelite familiar with their sacred history. The presence that defined Israel's identity and provided protection was withdrawing due to persistent covenant violation.

Ezekiel watches this departure in vision around 592 BC; the actual temple destruction occurred in 586 BC. The vision precedes fulfillment by about six years, providing warning opportunity for repentance. That repentance didn't come, and Nebuchadnezzar's armies destroyed the temple, burning it completely (2 Kings 25:8-9). The glory had already departed, leaving only a building which God then allowed to be demolished.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's departure warning before judgment demonstrates His patience and desire for repentance?
2. What does the reversal of glorious arrival and departing judgment teach about human responsibility in maintaining God's blessing?
3. In what ways might God's glory be departing from contemporary churches, and what warning signs precede such departure?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּשֶׁא 1 כְּרוּבִים וְעַמְתָּם וּבְאֹפֶה יְמֵן וְעַמְתָּם כְּנַפְיָה מִן אֶת
lift up Then did the cherubims H853 their wings and the wheels beside
H5375 H3742 H212 H5980

וְכֹבֵד אֱלֹהִי שְׁבָא לְעַלְיָה מִן שְׁבָא לְעַלְיָה מִן
them and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above
H3519 H430 H3478 H5921 H4605

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 10:19 (Glory): And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

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