

Ezekiel 8:1 – 14:23

At this point in history, Judah was facing the judgment of God. Although they pretended to serve God, their heart really belonged to idols. God was angry with His people for their disobedience. When God gave them the land of Canaan He told them that if they served Him He would bless them, but if they abandoned Him He would curse them. He warned them that if they disobeyed He would evict them from the land and they would go into exile.

God raised up the prophet Ezekiel to warn the people that God's judgment was coming. He had already sent prophet after prophet to warn them, but they refused to hear. The time of warning was almost over; exile was just around the corner.

When Idols Multiply: Ezekiel 8:1-9:11

Ezekiel 8:1: “And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.”

The leaders of Judah came to talk to the prophet Ezekiel, but God wasn't interested in hearing what they had to say. Instead God had a message for them. He had a serious problem with the way the elders were living their lives. They were hypocrites, and God was about to expose them for who they really were.

Ezekiel 8:2: “Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.”

God used His power to show Ezekiel a vision of Jerusalem – a city that was full of idols. The people there were not worshiping God with a pure heart, for they had erected an idol – the “image of jealousy”. The very first commandment God gave Israel was to have no other gods before Him, and yet the people had disobeyed and turned away from Him. They thought they could still nominally offer sacrifices in the Temple while serving other gods as well. God rebuked their behavior as a great

abomination and warned them that their offenses were driving Him away from the Temple. Israel was about to lose the presence of God.

Ezekiel 8:10: “So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

11 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.”

God revealed to Ezekiel the utter hypocrisy of the elders who were sitting in front of him. In public these men claimed to serve God, but in private they had erected idols in their homes and were serving them. Their public service to God was just a front; in reality they were idolaters, and their hearts were far from God. They thought that God couldn't see through their hypocrisy, and that they could fool both the people of the land and God Himself. However, they were wrong. God saw what they were doing in private in their homes, and God was not amused. No one can hide their sin from God.

Ezekiel 8:17: “Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O 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 returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.”

God told Ezekiel that because of their disobedience – because of the way they were serving false gods and had abandoned Him – that He was going to pour out His judgment upon them. He warned them that His eye would not spare them and He would not have pity on them. They were about to receive the full consequences of their rebellion against God. When the day of judgment came, they would cry out to God for mercy but He would not hear them. By then it would be too late.

Ezekiel 9:4: “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.”

Here God shows Ezekiel a preview of the judgment that is coming. Before God sent judgment

upon the land, He had the people who feared God marked. Those who served God, who were appalled at the wickedness that was around them, received a protective mark so that they would be spared in the judgment. God then ordered that everyone else be killed without mercy or pity. Those who served God alone would be spared, but everyone else would die – and judgment would start in God's sanctuary.

God warned the people long ago that there would be serious consequences to idolatry. Although the people took God lightly and ignored His warnings, that did not change what was about to happen. God promised there would be consequences, and there were consequences. God promised to remove them from the land if they disobeyed, and that was what He was going to do. God always keeps His promises.

There are some people who believe that God is some sort of harmless figure who would never harm anyone and who only exist to make all our dreams come true. As we can see, that is not the case. God is a very serious God. Although He will have mercy on all those who repent and who come to Him for forgiveness, He will pour out His judgment upon the rebellious. There are eternal consequences to rejecting the mercy of God and serving other gods.

When God Leaves: Ezekiel 10:1-11:25

Ezekiel 10:4: “Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. . .

18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

19 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.”

What we see in this chapter is that the glory of God was leaving the Temple. In the Old Testament, God commanded Israel to build a tabernacle. That was where the nation brought their sacrifices and offerings, which were offered by the priests. Later Solomon built a Temple and the offerings were made there.

The Temple was a special building because God manifested His glory there. Once a year the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in order to make atonement for the sins of the nation. When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he stepped into a room that was filled with the presence of God and lit by the glory of God.

The Temple was literally the house of God. That is where people approached God for forgiveness. That is where they inquired of God to seek guidance. That is where they offered their fellowship and praise offerings. The Temple was the center of their relationship with God. In order for there to be a sacrificial system at all, they had to have a Temple and the Temple had to have God's presence in it.

However, the idolatry of the people had offended God. He was angry with them for their hypocrisy. God had warned them time and again to repent, but they refused. Since they were worshipping Him falsely, God decided to leave. In this passage we see God leaving the Temple. He would no longer reside in it. He removed His glory from it, leaving it as an empty house. The people might still come and offer sacrifices, but God would no longer be there to receive them. God had no

interest in the hypocritical sacrifices of people whose hearts belonged to another god.

This act of leaving the Temple effectively put an end to the sacrificial system until the next Temple was built. God really had abandoned the nation, and no longer had any respect for their offerings. He would not receive them again until after the period of exile was over.

Ezekiel 11:1: “Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:

3 Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.”

Here God condemned the leaders of the people. Even though God had sent prophets, warning the nation that judgment was near, the princes were telling the people otherwise. They said that judgment was not near at all. They urged people to build houses, because nothing bad was about to happen. They compared the city to a choice bowl of meat, claiming that God loved the city and was going to protect it.

In other words, the princes were lying to the people. They were urging them to ignore the warnings of the prophets and to continue living their lives as normal. They were urging people not to repent, not to take God seriously, and not to change their ways. They were giving wicked counsel, and the Lord was angry about it.

Ezekiel 11:8: “Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God.

9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.

10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

11 This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but I will judge you in the border of Israel:

12 And ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you.”

God told them that since they had disobeyed Him and lived as the pagans in the land, He would bring the sword upon them. Since they refused to listen to Him and had served other gods, He was going to kill them. They would die by the sword. The judgment that they said was never going to come would come, and it would come soon. The very thing that they feared would happen to them. They would be proven to be liars – and they would die for their sins. They had misled the people, and they would be punished for it.

Ezekiel 11:13: “And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?”

Pelatiah was one of the princes that God had singled out by name as lying to the people and

misleading them about the coming judgment. As punishment for what he had done, God struck him dead on the spot. The elders thought that God had not seen their sin; they were wrong. The elders thought that God was not going to judge them; they were wrong. God proved to them that He did know what was going on and that His judgment was very real.

Ezekiel 11:16: “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.”

In this passage God addresses two different groups of people. God says that to those who walk after the abominations of their heart, and who disobey Him, He will repay them for what they have done. He will be against them. Instead of blessing they will receive cursing. God will watch over them for evil, not for good.

However, God said there would also be a faithful remnant, who feared God and who walked in His ways. God promised to be with that remnant. He said He would take care of them while they were in exile, and He would bring them back to the land. He promised to give them a new heart and a new spirit. He said that they would be His people and He would be their God. Although they would be in exile for a while, the exile would not last forever. God would remember them and would bring them back.

What Exile Is Like: Ezekiel 12:1-28

Ezekiel 12:1: “The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.”

For a long time God had sent prophets to warn the people that judgment was coming. Prophet after prophet had warned the people, but the people refused to listen. Although they had ears, they refused to hear what God was telling them. Although they had eyes, they refused to see. They simply would not listen.

Because of this God decided to use Ezekiel as an object lesson. God commanded Ezekiel to act something out in the sight of the people, so that they could have a graphic illustration of what was about to happen to them. God told Ezekiel to gather his stuff, dig through the wall, bring it out at night, and carry it away on his shoulder. When the prophet did this, the people would see and ask questions. God then explained what was going on:

Ezekiel 12:9: “Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

11 Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.

12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

15 And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the Lord.”

Now that the people have seen the object lesson, God told Ezekiel to explain what it meant. God told them that Israel was about to go into captivity. King Zedekiah was going to be blinded and brought to Babylon, and he would die there. The people would be scattered among the nations. The king himself would do what Ezekiel had done.

Incidentally, this is exactly what happened. When King Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king came and besieged Jerusalem. When the city fell he took King Zedekiah, killed his sons in front of him, put out his eyes, and carried him to Babylon where he died. The very thing that God warned them about came to pass.

Ezekiel 12:17: “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

19 And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of

the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

God was not done with His object lessons. In this demonstration He had Ezekiel eat with great fear and drink with trembling and caution. God then told the people that they were going to do exactly as Ezekiel had done. Their princes had told them that nothing bad was going to happen – that judgment was not near and that everything was fine. However, the truth was very different: fear and judgment were coming upon them. God warned them that the cities would be laid waste and the land would be made desolate. What Ezekiel had done, they would do.

Ezekiel 12:26: “Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying.

27 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.”

When Ezekiel acted out these object lessons, the people still refused to hear. They claimed that Ezekiel's prophecies were for a long time from now. They said that the judgment would fall upon someone else, not them. They saw no need to repent or change their ways. They just dismissed Ezekiel's words as not pertaining to them at all.

God was not pleased by this, and commanded Ezekiel to warn them that the judgment was not going to be prolonged and was at hand. He told them that the things He had spoken were going to be done – and that is what happened. These people dismissed God's warnings, and it killed them.

Why False Faith Imperils: Ezekiel 13:1-23

Ezekiel 13:1: “And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord;

3 Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken?”

Here God is pronouncing judgment upon false prophets that plagued the land. At the time there

were many people who were claiming to have heard a word from the Lord – but they were lying. They said that God had spoken to them, but God had never spoken to them at all. Instead they were claiming to be a prophet so that people would listen to them, and they were then proclaiming lies and deceit. They were using the title of prophet to mislead the people.

This was a very serious crime. Under the Mosaic Law, false prophets were to be put to death. Proclaiming lies in the name of the Lord was a terrible offense.

Ezekiel 13:8: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God.

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

11 Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.”

These prophets were urging the people to not repent. They were saying that peace was at hand, and that judgment would not come, and that everything was fine. Because of this – because of their lies and deceit – God was against them. God said He would remove them from His people. He was going to destroy them, and their work, and their lies. The peace that they falsely proclaimed would be destroyed. The lies that they uttered would be exposed. God would judge them for the wickedness that they had done.

Ezekiel 13:19: “And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? . . .

22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

23 Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

These were the terrible crimes of these false prophets: they discouraged the righteous, and they strengthened the wicked. They made the lives of the righteous more difficult, and they urged the wicked to not repent by saying things would go well with him. Because of these things God said He would destroy these false prophets and would deliver the people from these liars.

Where Idolatry Leads: Ezekiel 14:1-23

Ezekiel 14:1: “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

2 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.”

In this passage we see that the elders of Israel have come to Ezekiel, so that they could enquire of God. They wanted God's help – but God was not interested in helping them. They wanted to do things for God, but they had no interest in serving God themselves. God had no interest in hearing from them because their hearts belongs to other gods. They were serving idols.

Somehow these people thought that they could worship idols and rebel against God, and yet God would still be there to rescue them whenever they needed Him. But God was not interested in that bargain. God said that He would not hear them because of the idols that were in their hearts. Since they had rebelled against Him and served other Gods, they were estranged from Him. Their idols were a stumblingblock, and invited God's wrath upon them. God was not their friend and He was not going to aid them.

Ezekiel 14:6: “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by myself:

8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

God commanded these wicked men to destroy their idols and repent of their sins. He ordered them to serve God alone, and stop being hypocrites. He told them to turn away from all of their abominations, and warned them that if they did not then He would be against them. God said that if they did not repent He would be against them, and would make him “a sign and a proverb”. God's judgment against that person would be so great that he would become *a proverb*! God would cut them off and make it apparent to everyone that He was God and He was not to be trifled with.

Ezekiel 14:13: “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.

15 If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:

16 Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.”

There were some who were saying “Oh, God will never judge this land because our ancestors were righteous.” In the day of Jesus, there were many who thought that since Abraham was their father, that alone was enough to get them into Heaven. All they needed in order to win favor with God was a couple righteous ancestors. Those righteous people would then purchase God's favor for everyone else, which mean that the people could live as they pleased.

In this passage God is telling them that they are very much mistaken. The righteousness of their ancestors was only enough to deliver themselves; it had no saving power on anyone else. It didn't matter how good Noah, Daniel, and Job may have been; all that mattered was the righteousness of each individual person. You cannot earn favor with God by the righteousness of your forefathers. God is not going to give you credit for their actions.

God is warning the people that when the land sins, God will pronounce judgment upon it no matter who used to live in the land. If the land trespasses, God will send famine upon the land. He will kill both its inhabitants and the animals who lived in it. God takes sin seriously and He judges nations for it.

Ezekiel 14:21: “For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.”

God warned the people that He was going to send four judgments upon the land: war, invasion, animal attacks, and disease. These four judgments would kill people and make the land desolate. However, God also said that He would not make a full end of the people. Although He was going to judge them, He was not going to kill them all. He would leave a remnant behind.