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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Ezekiel 8.

(2014)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Ezekiel 8.

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### Topics.

- The hand of the LORD is upon Ezekiel
- The vision of a man.
- The vision of the 1<sup>st</sup> great abomination.
- The vision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> great abomination.
- The vision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> great abomination.
- The vision of the 4<sup>th</sup> great abomination.
- The land of Judah is filled with violence.
- The LORD will not listen to the prayers of Judah.

**Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel:** Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD”. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chapter 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

**NOTE:** Ezekiel’s message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

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### The Hand of the LORD is upon Ezekiel

Ezekiel 8:1 -----<sup>1</sup>In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there.

This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year Ezekiel has been in captivity in Babylon (Jerusalem is doomed to be destroyed in four years’ time).

**The rest of this chapter is visions:** a vision can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind).

A biblical vision is always under God’s control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the

prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision.

### **The Vision of a Man.**

Ezekiel 8:2-4 ----- <sup>2</sup>Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal. <sup>3</sup>He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. <sup>4</sup>And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the valley.

**The vision I saw in the valley:** refers to the Chebar canal (see chapter one).

While Ezekiel is sitting with some elders he sees the form of a man, whose lower body was like fire and his upper body like bright metal. The Spirit of the LORD lifts him up and suspends him above Jerusalem and he sees in the entrance of the inner north a gate God's glory and a seat of jealousy.

### **The Symbolism.**

**The man:** is a symbol of God's judgment.

**The fire:** is a symbol of suffering and punishment.

**The bright metal:** is a symbol of God's glory.

The following verses of this chapter show that the seat of jealousy is a symbol of the LORD'S heart. This is a symbolic picture of the LORD by His Spirit walking into Jerusalem starting from the north gate in the wall and continuing through the city and on into the temple of God and describing the gross wickedness as He move through the city.

**NOTICE:** the seat of jealousy is seen next to God's glory. The LORD'S jealousy is stirred up because in the Old Testament the temple of God was a symbol of the glory of God on earth, which means when the people of Israel polluted the temple they were polluting God's glory.

### **The Vision of the 1<sup>st</sup> Great Abomination.**

Ezekiel 8:5-6 ----- <sup>5</sup>Then he (a man of brightness and fire) (v2) said to me, "Son of man, lift up your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. <sup>6</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations."

**Son of man:** is a title for mortal man.

Ezekiel (in the vision) begins walking into the city of Jerusalem and sees things that are immoral, shameful unjust and offensive to the LORD which are all stirring up the jealousy of the LORD. This first abomination refers to all the pagan idols the priests have set up in the temple.

### **The Vision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Abomination.**

Ezekiel 8:7-12 ----- <sup>7</sup>And he (a man of brightness and fire) (v2) brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, there was a hole in the wall. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to me, "Son of man, dig in the wall." So I dug in the wall, and behold, there was an entrance. <sup>9</sup>And he said to me, "Go in, and see the vile abominations that they are committing here." <sup>10</sup>So I went in and saw. And there, engraved on the wall all around, was every form of creeping things and loathsome beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel. <sup>11</sup>And before them stood seventy men of the

elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up. <sup>12</sup>Then he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.'"

#### **Jaazaniah and Shaphan.**

**Shaphan:** was a faithful scribe his faith is seen in his son's (Ahikim, Elashah Gemariah) lives except for Jaazaniah.

**Ahikim:** became Jeremiah's protector.

**Elashah:** with others, spread Jeremiah's message to exiles in Babylon.

**Gemariah:** resisted destructive attempts against Jeremiah's writings.

**Jaazaniah:** Jaazaniah did not possess his father's faith; he is pictured standing amongst things abominable and offensive to God.

**A censer with smoke going up:** symbolises prayers being offered up.

Ezekiel in his vision is taken to the entrance of the temple Court; he goes through a hole in the wall and sees idols in the House of God and vile abominations that the priests, the elders and leaders are committing, even while they were offering up prayers for the nation. This is a picture of those proclaiming to be God's servants and appearing outwardly righteous, but when no-one can see them (behind closed walls) commit all sorts of gross wickedness. They seem to think that just because no human can see them neither can God.

The priests and elders are in the temple and offering up prayers on behalf of the nation and think God has forsaken them because their prayers are not being answered. God is showing Ezekiel that the prayers of the priests are not being answered because they corrupt and have filled the House of God with idols and pagan images.

**The lesson for us today:** we may be able to fool our friends, work mates even church members, but no-one can fool God, there is no escape from the eyes of the LORD, we must be honest before God and live with integrity, repent, confess and acknowledge our failing before him to escape judgment and treat others with respect, decency and honest justice.

#### **The Vision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Abomination.**

Ezekiel 8:13-14 ----- <sup>13</sup>He (a man of brightness and fire) (v2) said also to me, "You will see still greater abominations that they commit." <sup>14</sup>Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

**Tammuz:** was a fertility god whose worship involved licentious rites.

As Ezekiel in his vision moves further into the temple of the LORD the wickedness increases, now he sees Jewish women (symbolising all the women of Israel) weeping before the goddess of fertility instead of weeping and praying to God.

#### **The Vision of the 4<sup>th</sup> Great Abomination.**

Ezekiel 8:15-16 ----- <sup>15</sup>Then he (a man of brightness and fire) (v2) said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these." <sup>16</sup>And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD. And behold, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east.

As Ezekiel in his vision moves even further into the temple of God the abominations continue to increase, he reaches the altar by the entrance of the inner court and he sees men worshipping the sun.

## **The Land of Judah is Filled with Violence.**

Ezekiel 8:17 ----- 17 Then he (a man of brightness and fire) (v2) said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger? Behold, they put the branch to their nose.

### **Sins of Judah so far: -**

- Jerusalem is full of things that are immoral, unjust and offensive to the LORD.
- The temple court; is full of idols and vile abominations.
- God's servants commit gross wickedness when no-one can see them.
- Jewish women are weeping before the goddess of fertility.
- At the altar of the LORD men are worshipping the sun.

And now Ezekiel (still seeing a vision) sees added to all these abominations is violence throughout the land of Judah and in the city of Jerusalem.

**Behold, they put the branch to their nose:** is the same as saying Israel is sticking their nose up at God.

### **The LORD will not Listen to the Prayers of Judah.**

Ezekiel 8:18 ----- 18 Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

Because of Israel's gross wickedness and rebellion the LORD will not hear their prayers or show them any mercy.

**NOTE:** based on how God is punishing Israel there are preachers who teach that the reason faithful Christians suffer sickness or are struggling with a sorrowful situation or difficulty of life is because they have some hidden sin, but to put this guilt upon faithful Christians is just as much an abomination as the sins Israel was committing at the time of Ezekiel. Worldwide no faithful brother or sister is exempt from times of sadness, sorrow and hardship, God uses these moments to test the honesty of our faith. For those who think this is a false statement consider the following words of Peter: -

- So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7).

Added to this no Christian no matter how faithful they are is free from sin. If any of us could attain to a lifestyle free of sin Christ died for no reason since we would all be able to save ourselves simply by living a life totally sin free.

Added to this John wrote: -

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Even more than this not one of us could be saved without God's grace, think this is not true? Consider the following words Paul in his letters wrote: -

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states: -

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that: -

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life.

By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practise of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

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End.