

Would Ezekiel have stood a better chance of success in our Churches today?

Study 4

Ezekiel chapter 8

King James Bible throughout the study

Bill Holdstock

In the Sixth year of the captivity of the Children of Israel, Ezekiel was given yet more visions from God. This was approximately 5 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian King. These visions were frightening and very disturbing to God's Prophet.

We find him sitting in his house with the elders of Judah; in later chapters they are called the elders of Israel (14:1) when the Hand of God fell upon him. There has in recent years been a question over the word "impartation" where the laying of hands by a Preacher, Elder, Pastor etc. on another's head and passing on the blessing or anointing of God. Much has been written and preached that this is not the right thing to do.

Well here is one of many references to the laying on of hands to impart; here God laid His hand on Ezekiel to equip him for the very soul disturbing task ahead. Ten times the hand of God came upon him or fell upon him to equip him, to impart God's anointing and message. Ezekiel could not have thought up all the mimes or taught the things he taught from his own thinking, he did not know what God knew about Israel's rebellious ways he had to have impartation from God Himself.

Verse 2 and 3

Then behold a likeness as the appearance of fire. From the appearance of His loins even downwards fire and then from His loins even upward the appearance of brightness as of the colour of amber. And he put forth 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 the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looks toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy. And behold the glory of the God of Israel was there according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

The hand of God brought Ezekiel in a vision to the Temple of God in Jerusalem. This was then and will be in the future the place where God dwelt. There were different sections in the Temple grounds; one was called the court of the women or the treasury and where men and women could have access. It was in this outer court where offerings were given for the upkeep of the Temple and works of the Priests were taken. It was where the Priests did their teaching.

It was where Jesus upset the tables of the money changers. It was in this part of the Temple the widow would give her small donation that was not overlooked by the Lord. It was where the men would bring a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. It was a busy place full of people.

Up some steps into a corridor that went round the inside of the actual Temple there was one door in and out of the Court of the Priests facing North right opposite the Great Altar. It was on this Great Altar the sins of the people were laid on the sacrificial lamb and offered as a burnt offering to Israel's most Holy God. This Altar was in the Court of the Priests and right in front of the steps up and into the Holy Place. It was here, by the side of the Great Altar that an "image of jealousy" had been placed in the presence of the Glory of The Lord. It appears that Ezekiel saw this blasphemous image from outside the Temple, may be from above as he was transported by God to the Temple.

He was then outside the Temple, shown a hole in the wall and God asked him to dig through the wall.

Verse 8

Then He said unto me Son of man dig now in the wall, and when I had dug in the wall behold a door and He said unto me go in and see the abominations they do here.

So I went in and saw and behold every form of creeping thing, and abominable beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall round about.

And there stood before them stood seventy men (elders) 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.

Jaazaniah and the 70 elders were impostors trying to fulfil the role of Priest and Elders offering incense to God which was a further abomination. The sins and disobedience of Israel were great so much so that they not only caused the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah but almost the total destruction of the Jews in the Kingdom of Israel. But here God promised to show Ezekiel even greater abominations than what he had heard, seen or imagined.

Ezekiel went in through the door in the wall and in his vision he saw paintings and images of all sorts of creatures on the walls of the Temple and all sorts of idols everywhere. Solomon built this Temple to be the Sanctuary of God, and God dwelt there and was worshiped there.

1 Kings 9: 3

And the Lord appeared to Solomon and said unto him I have heard your prayer and your supplication that made before Me I have hallowed this house which you have built to put My Name there for ever; and eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually.

Solomon covered all the walls and pillars with pure fine gold engraved with vines of figs, pomegranates, leaves and fruit. Now they were covered with paintings of detestable creatures. God called them Chambers of Imagery.

The Elders got the idea of painting the walls from Egypt. It was about this time that Zedekiah was king and he wanted to make an alliance with Pharaoh so to impress him he allowed their worship, idols, and paintings into God's Temple. Most probably some of the paintings were of the crocodile because the crocodile was Egypt's main god. The tombs and burial places of Egypt were beautifully painted depicting their Pharaohs, their

wars, and their women, but they were a heathen nation. Israel knew better, they worshipped the One true God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

Ezekiel saw the seventy Elders of Israel standing at the altar and with them stood Jaazaniah who was a wicked prince of Judah all with incense burners in their hand and the smoke filled the Temple. This Altar and the sacrifices made on it was a shadow of the sacrifice of Jesus on Cross, and at that time it was the entrance to eternity for the People of Israel.

How many idols have we and the church put in front of and before the Cross. Humanism and secularism are certainly a couple that are way up there next to the Altar of The Lord. Maybe it is the fear of man, which is a snare, caused the church to bow down to secular ideas and half hearted preaching instead of being bold enough to preach the whole council of God.

Please try and appreciate that this was none other than God's Holy House, where He dwelt, where His Glory was, and where the Ark of God's covenant was. Also try and appreciate how God felt when He looked down from His throne and saw the people He created to show God to the world behaving so wickedly. How dare Satan encroach on God's ground and plant this idol of worship right next to the Altar and guess what, it was placed there by the Priests and religious leaders of the day!

Today's church must reflect Jesus; we are the only ones that God can use to tell the unsaved the time is short and Jesus is coming back very soon and will leave behind all those who have not given their lives over to Him and made Him their personal Saviour. But the church must first get its own house in order, Pastors, Priests Leaders, Bishops, Reverends, The very Reverends or what ever you call themselves in this modern age must lead the congregations to the altar of the cross of Christ and not any other image that is an abomination to the Lord.

These Priests were the Pastors and Prophets of the day and they were turning the House of God into a very sinful place indeed. These leaders of the people were saying that God could not see what they were doing in the dark! But they had the book of Kings and knew that God said His eyes and His heart would be in His house perpetually:

1Kings 9 verse 3

I have heard your prayer and your supplication, that you have made before Me. I have hallowed this house, which you have built to put my Name there for ever and My eye and My heart shall be there perpetually.

They also said that God had forsaken the earth! They had forgotten that it was God who had created the earth in the first place and God has very good eye sight in the dark. How Satan had blinded them, they obviously had lost their real experience with their God and had forgotten the many miracles He had done for them from the Red Sea onwards relived in stories told over and over again from generation to generation. But they had lost their divine purpose and mission; they had been robbed of their calling of God. There were no true fathers to mentor and disciple them. Satan had them just where he wanted them powerless, compromised and comfortable in their selfish sinful ways. Can we see the similarity in our churches today?

We now understand why God went a far off from the Temple even abandon it to destruction. (V6)

I wonder if we realise that sin however small or insignificant in our own eyes can have such a devastating effect on what God wants to do in our World, country, nation, town, church or indeed in our lives.

Verse 13.

And He said also unto me, turn yet again and you will see greater abominations that they do.

(14) Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was towards the North; and behold there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

According to verse 14 this image of jealousy was an image of Tammuz and it was set up in the Temple of God right next to the Great Altar where the sins of the people were taken away by the blood sprinkled lamb. Now, a Greek god of a dead boy was being wept over by the women of Israel. This caused God to be jealous, this was His Temple and He could not stand His house being used to worship other gods and by His own Spiritual Leaders at that.

The abominations of Israel were so great that they caused the destruction of Jerusalem and almost the total destruction of the Jewish nation in the kingdom of Israel. Their sins were listed in the book of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. Ezekiel had read of these atrocities and now he found himself a part of God's plan to give Israel another chance to change their ways and that was the reason he was in Jerusalem.

Tammuz was a Phoenician deity, the Adonis of the Greeks. He was a Sumerian or Babylonian sun-god called Dumuzu, the husband of Ishtar who made contact with Aphrodite of the Greeks. With all those names and places attributed to him he didn't know if he was coming or going. Anyway he was dead! Thank God we know in who we have believed, thank God our God is alive forever more, we know where He is who He is and that He is living in the heart of every Born Again Christian.

But yet I will tell you more, the worship of these gods were introduced into Syria by Tammuz and Aphrodite. The Babylonian Tammuz was represented as a beautiful shepherd boy slain by a wild boar the symbol of winter. Ishtar had long mourned for him and descended into the underworld to deliver him from the embrace of death. (which didn't do him much good) The death of Tammuz was supposed to typify the long dry summers of Syria and Palestine when vegetation perished. His return to life symbolized the rainy season when the dry land was revived. His death again was a symbol of the cold and his return to life the beautiful and fruitful spring. This god had to die several times a year to please the people! Our God had to die once for all then rose again and is seated at His Fathers right hand on the throne of Glory. Praise His Name.

This type of worship of Tammuz spread to Gebal, Syria, and in the temple of Venus in South Phoenicia. Out of all this worship of gods with different names from different places linked to the Greeks came a form of worship of such immoral and disgusting nature that it was even suppressed by Constantine the Great.

I give you all this useless information about Tammuz just to tell you this was one of the Greek gods that these women of the Children of Israel, God's special people were weeping over but he was none other than a mixed up kid! Think about it, the women were worshipping and in tears over this dead god and the Leaders of the House of God were condoning this blasphemy and in the temple of Solomon. No wonder God had to leave His dwelling place. This is a warning to Christian parents not to get involved with the occult films, books and DVDs that Satan has seen to it are very popular in today's world. The TV is full of witchcraft, spells, dragons, evil potions that have caught children's imagination all this evil finds its way into their young spirits and they are not strong enough to combat its influence. I have discussed this subject with some mum's and dad's only to be told I am a spoil sport and "Harry Potter" is harmless enough! That's what these women of Israel thought as they worshipped and cried over a dead boy who died and came to life several times a year but it separated them from the care and protection of God!

Verse 16

And He brought me unto the inner court of the Lord's House and behold at the door of the Temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar were about five and twenty men with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun towards the east.

This was an appalling form of idolatrous abomination. The High Priests and Chiefs of the twenty four courses of Aaron's priesthood were standing in the Holy Place at the Great Altar with their backs to the Most Holy Place and worshipping the sun. Sun worship was forbidden see Deut. 4:19 17:3 2Kings 23:5. Why didn't the Pastors and Leaders teach these scriptures and bring the congregation to order under God?

Can you imagine the hurt in God's heart when He saw the Leaders of God's people turning their backs on the Holy Place, and just behind the Holy Place was the curtain to the Holy of Holies wherein was placed the Ark of the Covenant. The Pastors and Leaders had once known of the presence of God in that area because that was where God was, now they were bowing to the sun, one of their solar gods and worshipping it.

Verse 17

Then he said unto me have you 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.

Four times in the Bible the Spirit calls the Messiah "the Branch" meaning the author of Life. Satan always has to copy what God will do at least as far as he can, so Satan introduced the Asherah pole typifying the Greek Phallus. Asherah is rendered Grove in the Authorised Version and it comes from the root word Asher, to be straight, upright, and erect. The pole was set upright in the ground like a totem pole. It could have been made from a tree with the top branches cut off and the trunk fashioned into shape. Once worshipped as the tree of life these poles were perverted to mean the origin of life and fashioned into the shape of a male reproductive organ with all sorts of impurity, perversion and licentiousness by crowds of people involved in obscene orgies. (In an archaeological museum in Grease the writer has seen these gods fashioned out of stone they are very embarrassing).

This pole was Satan's answer to God being The Branch; the author of life eternal, and their actions were of the deepest depths of abomination and affirmed by God's words "they are thrusting the branch in my face".

So serious was this form of worship centred in Canaan of all places, the very place God led His chosen people through the red sea to and called it The Promised Land, soon brought Israel to its knees. It was this very idol that made God reveal His name, "Jealous" Exodus 20; 5. Numbers 25; 11. Joshua 24; 19

This study of Ezekiel 8 may not be a pleasant one to many of us but it is all found in these chapters of the Bible nothing is made up from books or off the Internet.

You may check it out yourself with the aid of a King James Version of the Bible, and a Bible commentary. I have given you God's word and I am pleased to move on to Chapter 9 in the next study!