

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part VI: God's Explanation Of His Wrath Against Judah's Idolatry (Ezekiel 8:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Ministering to a spiritually hardened, rebellious people is a humanly overwhelming task, but God at times directs some of His servants to function in that kind of a ministry.
- B. However, God equips His servants to serve Him well in such cases, and one such event involved Ezekiel's explaining God's great wrath against Judah for her specific sins of idolatry in Ezekiel 8:1-18.
- C. We view this passage for insight and application in ministering in our era (as follows):

II. God's Explanation Of His Wrath Against Judah's Idolatry, Ezekiel 8:1-18.

- A. Fourteen months after his call to the ministry when Ezekiel's shorn hair had re-grown, the elders of Judah who had been taken captive with him were sitting before Ezekiel in his house possibly asking why God would so severely punish Jerusalem like Ezekiel had predicted, Ezek. 8:1; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Ez. 8:1.
- B. The Lord then equipped Ezekiel to explain this coming judgment: an angel of the Lord transported Ezekiel in a vision from Babylon to Jerusalem to show him the abominations being committed there, Ezekiel 8:2-3a.
- C. On this spiritual journey, God showed Ezekiel four infuriating abominations of idolatry, Ezekiel 8:3b-17a:
 - 1. God showed Ezekiel the infuriating evil of a naked idol of the goddess Asherah in the temple, Ez. 8:3b-6a:
 - a. Upon bringing Ezekiel in the spirit to Jerusalem, the spirit left him at the north gate of the inner court of the temple where there was an idolatrous image, presumably "a replacement of the image of the goddess Asherah, originally set up by King Manasseh (2 Kings 21:7)," Ibid., ftn. to Ezek. 8:3; Ezekiel 8:3.
 - b. The glory of the Lord that Ezekiel had seen in his call to the ministry was also there (Ezek. 8:4), and the Lord in His glory directed him to look to the north and view this lewd, idolatrous image, Ezekiel 8:5.
 - c. Images of this goddess found by archeologists are extremely pornographic, so to have this image of a lewd, naked goddess in the temple court was loathsome to God and to all the godly. (Merrill F. Unger, Archaeology and the O. T., 1973, p. 173-175; J. D. Douglas, ed., The New Bible Dictionary, 1973, p. 95)
 - d. God explained that such an abomination motivated Him to abandon His temple in judgment, v. 6a.
 - 2. God showed Ezekiel the infuriating evil of the secret pagan worship of Judah's 70 elders, Ezekiel 8:6b-13:
 - a. The Lord directed Ezekiel to view an even more abominable thing that occurred in secret, Ezek. 8:6b-9.
 - b. Upon being directed of God to an inner room in the temple area, Ezekiel saw 70 elders, one of whom was Jaazaniah, a son of the godly Shaphan who had found the book of the law for good king Josiah (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1164), and they were worshipping images of all kinds of animal deities from Egypt, Canaan and Babylon, a pantheon of idolatry, thinking God had forsaken the land, Ezekiel 8:10-12.
 - c. The Lord explained that such an abomination was topped by even greater abominations, Ezekiel 8:13.
 - 3. God showed Ezekiel the infuriating evil of the women who worshiped Tammuz in lewdness, Ez. 8:14-15a:
 - a. The Lord next led Ezekiel to the entrance of the north gate of the temple where He showed him women who were mourning for Tammuz, the Sumerian god Dumuzi, Ibid., p. 1244; Ezekiel 8:13-14.
 - b. The worship of this god involved "base immorality" (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Ezek. 8:14), so Judah's women were involved in vile immorality, leading God to express His outrage as He had the other sins, Ez. 8:15a.
 - 4. God showed Ezekiel the infuriating evil of men who worshiped the sun to the east in front of the temple with their backs turned to God's presence there, Ezekiel 8:15b-17a. Such complete rebellion against the Lord was obviously infuriating to Him, a "putting of the branch to the nose," an expression we don't understand today, but that we assume refers to a severe irritation of some sort, Ezekiel 8:17b.
- D. The Lord explained that these infuriating, idolatrous abominations were also filling the land with unjust violence, that God had thus decided that He would act in wrath without showing mercy even when the people eventually called unto Him for help when He began to express His great wrath against them, Ezekiel 8:17b-18.

Lesson: *To explain why He was about to unleash great wrath against the people of Jerusalem, God took Ezekiel in a prophetic trance to view four infuriating abominations the people of Jerusalem were committing in the temple precincts themselves, giving Ezekiel information to share with Judah's elders in captivity for their understanding.*

Application: *(1) God always has just cause to administer His discipline, so may we heed His warnings to repent. (2) May we repent sooner than later, for when God's discipline eventually falls, He administers it relentlessly.*