

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XII: God's Condemnation Of Deceptive, Manipulative Idolaters (Ezekiel 14:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. People who are rebellious against God may try to hide their rebellion from upright believers or manipulate them to serve their own sinful interests. This situation leads to God's dealing in judgment with the deceivers.
- B. Ezekiel 14:1-11 presents God's message of condemnation to secret idolaters who came to His prophet under the guise of seeking God's will. We thus view this passage for our instruction and edification (as follows):

II. God's Condemnation Of Deceptive, Manipulative Idolaters, Ezekiel 14:1-11.

- A. While Ezekiel was still confined by God to his house (Ezekiel 3:2; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1252), some of Israel's elders came and sat before him. Ezekiel 14:3b reveals these culturally superior elders sought Ezekiel's counsel on the future of Jerusalem or the length of their exile, etc., Ibid.
- B. Ezekiel in his humanity could not know the real motives of these men, but since he had been led of the Lord to enter the prophetic ministry, and God knows the hearts of all men (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7), the Lord discerned what these men held in their hearts, and He told Ezekiel that they were idolaters in their hearts, Ezekiel 14:3a. They were seeking Ezekiel's counsel in a manipulative way, using their cultural superiority over the younger Ezekiel to get him to give them the information they wanted without his awareness of their true motives.
- C. God rhetorically asked Ezekiel if He should let Himself be consulted by such men, a question that expects a negative answer, Ezekiel 14:3b. As David wrote long before this, if one harbors sin in his heart, the Lord will not hear him, so neither will He provide him the counsel from the Lord that he seeks, cf. Psalm 66:18.
- D. Accordingly, God told Ezekiel to tell these elders that the Lord God of Israel claimed that every man who took his idols into his heart and set the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and then came before His prophetic messenger Ezekiel seeking God's counsel would be answered by the Lord in accord with the multitude of that man's idols, Ezekiel 14:4. God planned to lay hold of the hearts of all those in Israel who were spiritually estranged from Him by their idols, be they public or secret idols of the heart, Ezekiel 14:5.
- E. The message God had through His prophet Ezekiel to Israel's secretly idolatrous, manipulative elders was to repent and turn away from their idols and all of their abominations, Ezekiel 14:6.
- F. Indeed, God would hold accountable the deceptive idolaters or even foreigners who were deceptive idolaters, answering them Himself when they manipulatively came before His prophet seeking God's counsel, Ezekiel 14:7. The Lord would set His face against that sinner in judgment, making him a sign and a byword, cutting him off from His people presumably in death so that they would know that the Lord was God, Ezekiel 14:8.
- G. If a false prophet was deceived and spoke a word to these deceptive, manipulative idolaters, that false prophet would have been persuaded by the Lord's permissive will much as in the case of 1 Kings 22:19-23 where God let a lying spirit influence Ahab's false prophets to lie, getting him to go to Ramoth-Gilead that he might be slain in battle there, Ezekiel 14:9; Ibid., p. 1253. Thus, secret idolatry and manipulation would be appropriately met by God's manipulative use of lying spirits to punish the rebellious idolaters!
- H. God will then punish the false prophet like He will punish the idolater who manipulatively sought His counsel (Ezekiel 14:10) that the house of Israel might no more go astray in being polluted with all their transgressions, but that God might be their God and the people of Israel might be His people in truth, Ezekiel 14:11.

Lesson: *When the elders of Israel who secretly harbored idolatry in their hearts deceptively came before God's prophet using their cultural superiority manipulatively to inquire of the Lord on matters of their concern, God refused to give them counsel by His true prophet, but warned them to repent of their secret idolatry. Were they to remain rebellious, God would meet their deception by letting deceiving prophets give these secret idolaters errant messages, manipulating them into being set up for divine judgment, and then punish the deceiving listeners and false prophets alike that Israel might learn to part with all their sin and follow the Lord with a true, humble heart.*

Application: *(1) If we harbor secret idols in our hearts in place of the Lord, may we confess it as sin if we would expect God to give us edifying, Biblical insight on questions we have regarding matters of concern to us. (2) If we do not repent of such secret sins, but seek to manipulate God or His messengers, we can only expect God to let us fall prey to errant insight that leads not only to our harm, but to the harm of the sources who give the false insight. (3) God is omniscient, there are no secrets with him, so we must be utterly candid with Him to be blessed by Him.*