

EZEKIEL 8

GREAT ABOMINATIONS IN JERUSALEM!

About 14 months after Ezekiel's vision of the glory of the Lord, he was sitting in his own house; and the elders of Judah who sojourned with him on the banks of the Chebar River were sitting before him – probably for the purpose of receiving from his lips some communication of the Divine will. But instead of prompting him to address his speech directly to those before him, the Spirit of the Lord carried him away – in a vision – to the Temple at Jerusalem, so that he might gain an insight into the state of corruption that was prevalent there among the remaining Jews who had not yet been taken into captivity.

Being raised by the Holy Spirit into this vision, the prophet beheld the Lord Jesus – in human form, yet radiant with celestial fire, which was a token of the purifying righteousness that was about to be manifested. Then, in his vision, he was suddenly carried by the Spirit to the Temple in Jerusalem. There, at the altar-gate – the gate that opened into the inner court, and led straight to the altar of burnt-offering – he saw again the glory of the Lord, as it had formerly appeared to him on the plain of Chebar. And a little to the north, his eyes fell upon “the image of jealousy” – that is, an image of an idol, which was offensive to God in the highest degree. He resented it as a husband would resent the unfaithfulness of his beloved wife, and He would certainly revenge it. We err greatly from the spirit of childlike confidence and devoted love which our profession of faith ought to instill within us, if we are not giving the Lord Jesus the undivided homage of our hearts, and worship anything besides Him alone.

Being commanded to turn around, the prophet presently found himself at the door of the Temple-court, where he spied a hole in the wall. After digging, as he was told to do, he discovered a door; and upon entering, he saw “every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel,” painted upon the wall. There in this secret room stood 70 of the elders of Israel with their censers in their hands, and a thick cloud of incense was going up. No wonder the people were so corrupt, when their leaders were so wicked!

From the secret abominations practiced in the chambers of imagery, the prophet's attention was next turned to a scene in the outer court of the Temple. There he beheld women sitting in an attitude of grief, and weeping for Tammuz. What an abominable thing indeed, that anyone would rather choose to serve an idol in tears, than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart!

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord brings Ezekiel to Jerusalem – in a vision – where he sees an idolatrous image set up at the Temple gate – verses 1-6
- ❖ He sees Israel's elders secretly worshiping images in the Temple – verses 7-12
- ❖ He sees the women of Israel weeping for Tammuz – verses 13-14
- ❖ He sees men worshiping the sun in front of the Temple – verses 15-16
- ❖ The Lord asks Ezekiel whether such wickedness deserved any pity – verses 17-18

Yet sadly, such absurdities as these are all too common. Some think that Tam-muz was a variation of the Greek idol Adonis, while others believe that it was associated with the Egyptian god Osiris – both of which were surrounded by false legends claiming the death of the idol, which brought mourning among its



worshippers; and then its subsequent resurrection, which caused great rejoicing among them. And these alleged tales concerning those heathen deities were the basis of ceremonial rituals that took place to bewail their supposed death and return to life. It was in rituals such as these that these mourning women were participating in, right at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, in defiance of Jehovah and His sacred worship. And it is almost certain that their idolatry also involved grosser impurities that were freely indulged in.

But upon turning away his eyes from this, the prophet was once more directed to another and even greater abomination – greater, because of the persons and the place connected with it; for it was a more direct and flagrant dishonor to God. Immediately in front of the door of the Temple, the prophet saw about 25 men with their backs toward the Temple – the reverse position of all devout worshipers (1 Kings 8:44; Dan. 6:10). Their faces were toward the east, and they were worshiping the rising sun!

Thus, from the various scenes that met the eye of the prophet in his walk through the Temple at Jerusalem, it was only too plain to see that instead of the worship of God being preserved there in its purity, the land had become a cesspool of heathenism. Surely the prophet never imagined it possible to ever see such things done in the very Temple of the Lord! And now God appeals to the prophet himself, concerning the heinousness of the crimes that he had just beheld. The nation of Judah knew better, and they had been dignified with so many more spiritual privileges than other nations were. Therefore, did they not deserve the approaching judgment that they would soon suffer at the hands of the Babylonians? Should not such abominations as these make any land desolate?

So in verse 18, the Lord passes a just and righteous sentence upon these people: they would be utterly cut off. Since they had willfully continued in rebellion against Him, He would now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were (1 Kings 18:26). There had been a time when He was ready to hear, even before they cried; and when He answered them before they were even done speaking. But now they would seek Him early, and not find Him (Prov. 1:28). It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that the Lord will regard. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may implant the latter within us!

Lord, by nature, we stand just as guilty before You as the idolatrous Jews in Eze-kiel's time. Help us to repent of the many abominations that we have often com-mitted, especially after enjoying so many mercies from Your gracious hands! Amen.