

## The Image Factory • Ezekiel 8

### INTRO

1. It happens that occasionally during a message, someone will get up and leave; for all kinds of reasons.
  - a. Child gets fussy. Their buzzer goes off and have to go to child's class to check on them
  - b. They have an important appointment.
  - c. They develop a cough.
  - d. But sometimes they hear something that they don't like, so they walk out in protest.
2. **This** may be one of **those** messages; where some are offended.
3. If you're offended, please consider this before you walk out.
  - a. If the offence is because I mis-speak or do a hideous job of explaining the passage, forgive me.
  - b. But, if you're offended because the Holy Spirit **convicts** you—don't **resist**. Rather, **repent**.
4. God **wants** to **bless** us, so He holds up the truth as a mirror to us to show us where we're off.
  - a. Think of a small child with a sharp knife.
  - b. God may open our eyes to some knives we're clutching today.
    - 1) Surrender them.
    - 2) Don't give up & walk out clutching them by the blade, dripping blood all over the rest of your life.

### V. 1

And it came to pass 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, that the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there.

1. As we saw Wed, Ezekiel gave a long object lesson on Jerusalem's coming destruction; about 14 months.
2. As soon as it was over, he was sitting in his house when the leaders of the Jewish exiles in Babylon came to him for a advice.
3. As he was seeking God what to tell them, he got an answer he wasn't expecting; a vision that lasts all the way thru ch. 11.

### Vs. 2-4

<sup>2</sup> Then I looked, and there was a likeness, like the appearance of fire—from the appearance of His waist and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber. <sup>3</sup> He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner *court*, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, 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 plain.

1. In a vision, Ezekiel is transported 500 miles to the Temple in Jerusalem.
2. He sees the glory of the Lord as he'd seen it in ch. 1; a glorious cloud of living golden light.
3. But God's glory wasn't all he saw. He also saw something that ought not be. An idol had been set up, get this IN the temple.
4. Let's remember the first 2 of the 10 Commandments - Exodus 20:2–5a

<sup>2</sup> “I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before Me.

- Or, “beside, alongside Me.”

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God.

5. This wasn't an idol to God, but to some other deity. And people were **worshipping** it.
6. Fix that picture in your mind as Ezekiel describes it.
  - a. He sees God's glory in the Temple, but there is also an idol.
  - b. Let's update this so we can get a sense of Ezekiel's reaction.
    - 1) You're a member of CCO.
    - 2) You know the CC movmenet started at CM, & Chuck Smith is pastor there.
    - 3) So you decide to visit 1 Sunday.

4) You go into the sanctuary, and on the right side people are worshipping Jesus & Pastor Chuck is teaching the Bible.

5) But on the **left** side, is a shrine to Buddha. People are burning incense & chanting.

6) You'd be stunned. That's completely **unthinkable!**

7. It's in essence what Ezekiel sees at the temple in Jerusalem.

8. But wait, there's more...

Vs. 5-6

<sup>5</sup> Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance. <sup>6</sup> Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations."

1. God tells him Ezekiel while His glory still inhabits the Temple, what the people are doing is driving him out.

2. Note carefully the last words of v. 5.

Vs. 7-13

<sup>7</sup> So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. <sup>8</sup> Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there." <sup>10</sup> So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. <sup>11</sup> And there stood before them 70 men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick 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 do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.'" <sup>13</sup> And He said to me, "Turn again, *and* you will see greater abominations that they are doing."

1. Ezekiel is taken to the main temple building.

- a. All around the outside, Solomon had constructed rooms for the priests to use.
- b. At God's direction, Ezekiel pulls apart some of the bricks & sees inside 1 of the rooms.
- c. The inside walls are covered with obscene pictures.
- d. And standing in front of them, worshipping, are the leaders of the kingdom.
- e. Included among them is 1 of the most respected men in Jerusalem, Jaazaniah.

1) We can't go into his background now

2) Just know that from Jeremiah & 2 Kings, we know he had a **reputation** as being a good and godly guy.

3) But he's right with this crowd, worshipping these obscene images.

4) These were things Ex 20 & Deuteronomy 4:15-18 specifically said **not** to make images & bow down to.

5) These guys have **purposely** broken God's commands.

a) What does God say we're not to draw? Too bad There it is.

b) What does God say not to worship? Where's my incense & censer?

2. Now; was there a literal room in the temple Ezekiel saw, or is this a vision of something else?

a. The answer is in v. 12.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, Alone, in private.

every man in the room of his idols?

b. **Each** of these men had a **room of his images**.

1) It was in their mind. This was their **imagination**.

2) These were the religious & political leaders.

3) And most of them, like Jaazaniah, didn't bow down to **literal** idols in the Temple.

4) No, they **claimed** devotion & loyalty to Yahweh.

5) They thought **because** they didn't bow down to an idol, they could **fantasize** all kinds of evil & sin **in their imagination**.

6) As long as they **didn't act it out**; as long as it was **just imaginary** it was okay.

7) They thought no one knew their fantasies not even God.

8) But as v. 12 reveals, God **did** see. And now we **Ezekiel** sees too.

3. God knows our thoughts.

a. In Psalm 139 David says

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*. <sup>2</sup> You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. <sup>3</sup> You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.

b. In Heb 4:13 we read –

There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

c. In Luke 8:17 Jesus said –

Nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light.

4. How would you like an HDMI cable plugged into your head and your imaginations, your fantasies projected on the screen for all to see?

5. Let **me** answer that question – No Way!

6. By God's grace, they aren't shown Here! // But they are before God!

7. And by the Grace & Spirit of the Lord, He brings us here, to this moment to hear this word, so we can respond as we ought.

8. How is that? How should we respond? Hang on, we'll get to that.

9. But before we do, let's read on because it gets worse . . .

10. Note again how v. 13 ends

you will see greater abominations that they are doing.”

Vs. 14-15

<sup>14</sup> So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. <sup>15</sup> Then He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.”

1. It was **men** & their fantasies Ezekiel saw in vs. 7-13.

a. Now, we know about men.

b. They have a problem with lust. They're driven by the visual & are weak in the eyes.

2. But **women**— Well **THEY'RE** the traditional bastions of morality!

a. They're the ones who want to go to church, ...

b. Want to pray, want to take the kids to Sunday school.

3. But here, they're worshipping the pagan deity Tammuz.

a. This was a fertility god whose idol was an obscene pillar.

b. And worshipping it included ritual prostitution.

4. So the women who were supposed to be the last bulwark against immorality, were given over TO it.

5. It's with a broken heart we hear that pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry that takes in more than all the major media networks and professional sports combined.

6. And the fastest growing demographic using pornography is women.

7. A 3<sup>rd</sup> time we read there at the end of v. 16 –

you will see greater abominations than these.

Vs. 16-18

<sup>16</sup> So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, *were* about 25 men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.

1. This was a place only consecrated priests were to stand.

a. And when they did so, they were to face the temple where God's glory was.

b. When leaving, they were to **back out**, being careful to honor the holiness of the Lord by not showing Him their back.

2. But Ezekiel sees a couple dozen just ordinary guys, w/their backs to God – worshipping the sun.

3. Let's go back to our earlier illustration of your visit to CCCM.

- a. It's much worse than the Christians on right side & the Buddhists on the left.
  - b. At the left back of the room are 70 little cubicle-desks set up w/computers. Seated in front of each are city council members & church elders viewing porn.
  - c. Across from them, at the right back of the room are their wives, dressed like hookers, flaunting themselves.
  - d. And at the very front of the room, on the stage itself, a couple dozen people are bowing down to an idol of the sun that's ***sitting on top of the pulpit***.
4. As far-fetched as all that seems to us – it's precisely what Ezekiel saw in the Holy Temple of God. Look
- <sup>17</sup> And He said to me, "Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.
5. This was some derisive gesture they used. Like saying, "They thumbed their noses at God."
- <sup>18</sup> Therefore I also will act in fury. 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."

For Us

1. What are we to take from all this?
2. In Jesus' day, as in Ezekiel's, the religious were proud of their behavior & thought that's all that mattered.
3. So Jesus said ***the mind*** was important too.
  - a. He said, "If you ***harbor hatred*** in your heart toward someone, it's equivalent to murder."
  - b. If you ***linger in lust***; it's the same as adultery."
4. Sin ***begins*** in the mind. If we ***don't resist*** it, it WILL grow to produce death.
5. Jesus constantly urged people to consider their inner life.
  - a. He said It's ***out of the abundance of the heart*** that the mouth speaks.
  - b. He said It's not what ***goes into*** us that defiles, but what ***comes out***.
6. Our ***imagination*** is an ***image factory***.
  - a. It's an amazing gift God's given us to image Him to the Creation.
  - b. He's the Creator who created us in His image.
  - c. And imagination is the place where ideas are born & cultivated.
  - d. It's the ***center of the creativity*** we get from the Creator.
7. The problem is, ***sin has corrupted*** our imaginations.
  - a. What gets created there are ideas & images that aim, not at glorifying God, but at ***glorifying & satisfying our flesh***.
  - b. Don't think this is just of lurid sexual fantasies.
  - c. People fantasize about all kinds of things that are wicked and wrong.
    - 1) Their imagination is a ***catalog of worldliness*** as they picture themselves in the lap of luxury.
    - 2) They fantasize success and picture themselves living in an imaginary house in an imagined neighborhood, an imaginary car in the imagined driveway, sitting by an imaginary pool, wearing imaginary clothes, sipping an imaginary beverage – while imaginary paparazzi snap imagined pictures over the imaginary wall of their imaginary backyard.
    - 3) ***Harmless***, though –right? Because "no one gets hurt?"
    - 4) Excuse me; but what makes these fantasies sinful is they're all utterly selfish!
    - 5) They're all attempts at finding meaning, purpose & satisfaction ***in the things of this world***.
    - 6) Whether it's sexual or ***materialistic*** – the point is that they ***ignore God*** & the fact that we're created FOR Him & It's ***ALL ABOUT HIS GLORY!***
8. The whole point of this ch. was ***the big threat*** God would ***remove HIS GLORY*** from the temple, ***because*** they were spending their lives on everything BUT Him.
  - a. Idols ended up being erected there precisely because they'd been living in their imagination for years.
9. And note this: As God escorted Ezekiel around the temple, ***what he saw got worse***.
  - a. Thus the thrice repeated – "you will see greater abominations than these."
  - b. Sin is progressive; it gets worse as time goes by.
  - c. The thrilling fantasy we imagined yesterday does have quite the same effect today, so we make it a little darker & forbidden.

- d. But that won't work tomorrow, so we'll have to turn up the volume a bit more.
- e. Until we're conjuring up hideous wickedness that would have made us ill when we started.
- f. Then, & this is what some do; the imagination isn't enough, so they move over into **actually DOING** what they fantasize.

10. This is what happened in Jerusalem. It's what's happened to millions in our time. And it's happened to some in this room.

What the Solution?

1. In Rom. 12:2, Paul writes –  
Don't be conformed to this world,
2. Don't let it **squeeze** you into its twisted sick ways, which it's real good at doing by barraging you with media, entertainment, advertising, & marketing -  
but [rather] be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
3. How do we do that?
4. Well, the way to clean up the image factory of our minds, isn't by purposing to **NOT** think about sinful things.
5. Our minds are renewed by filling them with good things.
6. In 2 Kings 4 there's a story about a big kettle of stew.
  - a. A guy who didn't know how to cook decided to make some stew for his friends.
  - b. He found a wild vine w/some gourds that looked tasty, so he brought them home, cut them up & put them in the pot.
  - c. But they were poisonous & when his friends tasted it, they cried out, "**There's death in the pot,**" asked the prophet Elisha for help.
  - d. Elisha didn't tell them to throw it out and make a fresh pot; he told them to add some flour.
  - e. They did; & the stew was made safe.
7. There's death in our heads; evil imaginations in our thoughts, wicked fantasies that if entertained will do great harm.
8. The way of **mere religion** is to make **rules** that say, "**Toss out** those thoughts! **Stop** thinking about that!"
9. Grace says, "Come to Jesus & think about Him; His love, His promises – all the good He has for you if you'll just trust Him."
10. Paul puts it this way in Col. 3:1–2
 

<sup>1</sup> Since you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
11. Nothing is better for renewing our minds than God's Spirit working thru His Word.
  - a. The Word & Spirit can turn our imagination into a factory of holiness,
  - b. A place of love & devotion to Jesus.
  - c. Where we **fantasize** about **serving others, doing good, faithfulness**.
  - d. **Leading people** to faith in Jesus as their Savior & Lord.