

- OT prophets took their life in their hands to speak to the people; NT preachers also take their “life” in their hands, because hearers who are uncomfortable with the Word are uncomfortable with them!

Ezekiel 8:7-12 *And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients 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. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.*

1. The Circumstances of Ezekiel's Vision (v. 1-4)

- The elders of Judah have come to visit Ezekiel in his Babylonian captivity to “hear from God”
- But they are faking; they only came hoping to hear the message they wanted to hear, that God would reverse the captivities of 605 BC and 597 BC (first two of three deportations to Babylon)
- God gives Ezekiel a vision of what is really happening back home inside the Jewish Temple
- These supposedly God-fearing men have let the worst kind of idolatry creep into their lives
- Wherever the fire of God's glory appears, secrets are revealed and sin is exposed and judged

2. Worship of Asherah by the People (v. 5-6)

- God simply calls this image at the gate of the altar of sacrifice “the image of jealousy”
- It was probably an image of Asherah, the mother-goddess of all the Canaanite gods
- Manasseh had erected it in the Temple (2 Kings 21:7), Josiah had removed it in his reformation 30 years before (2 Kings 23:6), Jeremiah denounced worship of the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18)
- In giving the ten commandments, God told Israel that He was a jealous God (Exodus 20:1-6)

Exodus 20:1-6 *And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*
- SKIP AHEAD TO VERSE 13

3. Worship of Tammuz by the Women (v. 13-14)

- Instead of weeping for national sins, women were weeping before an idol named Tammuz
- Tammuz was the Syrian name for the god Adonis, the lover of Venus, who died every fall and resurrected every spring, bringing fertility to the land; they were wailing for his revival
- His death was marked by weeping, tearing the hair, and women giving themselves in prostitution, then donating the proceeds to Venus; a similar feast of rejoicing was held when he revived

4. Worship of the Sun by the Priests (v. 15-16)

- Last, Ezekiel sees 25 men with their backs to the Temple in the inner court, worshipping the sun
- Sun worship came from the Persians, who made the sun the eye of their god Ormuzd
- Only priests were permitted here (2 Chronicles 4:9); the number 25 signifies one representative from each of the 24 courses of the priests (1 Chronicles 23) plus the High Priest himself!
- They were facing east to worship the rising sun, strictly forbidden by the law (Deuteronomy 4:19)
- Josiah had removed this heathen practice once (2 Kings 23:5), now the priests were doing it!
- You couldn't worship the rising sun without turning your back on the Temple!

5. The Abominations of Judah before God (v. 17-18)

- The house of Judah filled their own land with violence because of their abominations
- God asks, "Is it a light thing to [them]?" - literally, "They don't see their sin as I see it!"
- God says, "They put the branch to their nose" - breaking a twig under the nose showed contempt
- Literally, "You're thumbing your nose at me!" - you see your abominations as trivial!

6. Worship of Images by the Elders (v. 7-12)

- SKIP BACK TO VERSE 7
- There are many striking images in this chapter's lengthy litany of idolatry, but one stands out most to Ezekiel (six verses) - the elders worshipping idols in their "CHAMBERS OF IMAGERY"
- Ezekiel is instructed to dig through a wall and find a secret door leading to hidden chambers
- The 70 elders were worshipping images of animals, reptiles and idols (unclean - Leviticus 11)
- They were leaders only by traditional appointment (Numbers 11:16) - they were hurting Israel!
- Those judicially bound to suppress idolatry were in fact the very ringleaders of it - in secret!
- They said God had forsaken them because He allowed the captivity, so they were seeking their help from other gods while pretending to serve Him. Their wickedness had brought captivity!
- Ezekiel is most astonished by their leader, an elder named Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan
- He was a son of the scribe who read the book of the law in Josiah's reformation (2 Kings 22:10)
- His name means "Jehovah hears" - a mockery since they said "the Lord seeth us not" (v. 12)
- They offered a "thick cloud" of incense to their images - excess for idols, and little left for God

CHAMBERS OF IMAGERY

- No phrase could better describe the mind of man than a secret chamber of imagery.
- Memory is the painter of your images, painting every deed and struggle.
- Our very wishes and purposes, even though not acted upon, are all there.
- This is where secret plans and resolves are made, where the passions are conquered or subdued.
- The idea of secrecy is a great and strong temptation to engage in private wickedness.
- Humans persuade themselves that all is well, as long as they can conceal their indulgences.
- Others may be unaware of your chamber's contents, but you cannot forget what is there.
- In this secret chamber, a man swings his censer and bows down in adoration before his gods.
- In this secret chamber, your unuttered wishes and hopes form audible prayers which God hears.
- In this chamber, the private thoughts and imaginations you indulge take form before God.
- In this secret chamber is the real life of man in God's sight; all else is just outward show.
- The secret bowing down of your soul is what determines your true worship.
- Listen to what Jesus said about the heart, your secret chamber of imagery:
 - **Matthew 5:8** *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*
 - **Matthew 22:37** *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*
 - **Matthew 6:21** *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*
 - **Matthew 15:19-20** *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*
 - **Matthew 12:34-35** *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*
 - **Matthew 5:28** *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*
 - **Mark 7:6** *He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

- We now enter our secret chamber of imagery by choice, but there is a time soon coming when we will be forced to enter it for judgment.
 - **Romans 14:12** *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*
 - **2 Corinthians 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*
- What are the contents of your secret chamber of imagery? Are you burning more incense before your idols than before God? REPENTANCE is the only remedy!
- **Proverbs 28:13** *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*