

**Introduction:** When hearing about Ezekiel's vision, when he was an exile in Babylon, of the gross idolatry in the courtyards of the Temple, it is all too easy to dismiss it because surely we have not fallen that far? But, if we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit we know these abominations, and more, are growing in our own country. So we would be wise to heed the admonition of Joshua to the Israelites after they received their inheritance from the Covenant God that we not be closely associated with people practicing and promoting these abominations. \*\*\* We must pray for our neighbors and be filled with God's Word and Spirit. Then, as committed followers of Jesus The Savior, we must look for opportunities to show them the strong and firm love of Jesus and speak His life-changing words to them. \*\*\* Let's now look at our texts to see the dark spiritual forces we are being forced to confront; but, take hope from the last words of the first Joshua to God's people settled into their inheritance. We are in a better position if indeed we have eternal life in us now. If we do, we must act so others may be delivered from the power of darkness into God's Kingdom of light IN Jesus (Colossians 1:3-13).

**I. The Spirit takes Ezekiel from Babylon to the Temple in a vision where he sees two forms of abominable idol worship in the courtyards.** (*Ezekiel 8:1-8, 12-13*)

- A. The Spirit takes Ezekiel to the Temple in a vision where he sees an abominable image near the gate. (*Verses 1-6*)
1. [Ezekiel says] in the sixth year in the sixth (month) in the fifth day of the month I (am) sitting in my house with Judah's elders: then the hand of Adonai-Yahweh fell on me. (*Verse 1*)  
**When:** Historians put the date as September 17, 592 BC. Ezekiel is dating from when Jehoiachin was captured (Ezekiel 1:2) in the first Babylonian invasion. The final invasion was 588-586 BC.  
**Where:** His house was in the city of Nippur near the Chebar River off the southern Euphrates River. It is seven hundred miles from Jerusalem by trade routes, but only five hundred fifty air miles.
  2. Then I looked, behold! a form as the appearance of a man, from what appeared to be his hips and down (was) fire; and, from his hips and up (was) the appearance of brightness as gleam of amber. (*Verse 2*)  
**Who:** This is the same 'person' Ezekiel saw in his first vision (chapter 1). Knowing Him to be the all powerful only God of Israel he uses the words 'appearance' and 'as' to avoid making an 'image' of the unseen God.
  3. He sent out pattern of hand, took me by lock of my head; then, Spirit lifted me between earth and heaven and brought me to Jerusalem in visions of God to the entrance of the gate of the inner court facing north where was the seat of the image of jealousy provoking jealousy. (*Verse 3*)  
**Spirit:** The Spirit is God's Holy Spirit.  
**Vision:** This was a dream-like vision, not something that physically happened to Ezekiel.  
**Image of jealousy:** In the north of the outer court of the Temple he saw an image set up in violation of the Second Commandment (Deuteronomy 5:8-10). It may have been the fertility goddess Ashtoreth, whose image Manasseh placed in the Temple (2 Kings 21:7); but Josiah, his son, removed and burned (2 Kings 23:4-6).
  4. Behold! there! the Glory of the God of Israel, as the vision I saw in the plain. (*Verse 4*)  
**God's Glory:** The Spirit carried Ezekiel to this point, and now he sees the Glory of God still in the Temple. But God and His Glory will soon depart at the end of this vision (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22).
  5. Then He said to me: son of man please lift up your eyes to the north, then I lifted my eyes to the north and behold! to the north of the altar gate was the image of this jealousy in the entrance. (*Verse 5*)  
**God's command:** God addresses Ezekiel 'son of man', meaning he represents all people. God commanded him to intensely look at this abominable violation of His second Word to His people.
  6. He said to me: son of man, what (are you) seeing? What great abominations (are they) doing that the house of Israel (are) committing here to drive Me far from My Sanctuary? But you will see greater abominations. (*Verse 6*)  
**See great abominations:** God describes His take on what Ezekiel is seeing: all Israel's people (many faithful from the northern tribes, called Israel) had come to Judah and Jerusalem as Assyria overran Samaria (2 Chronicles 30:6-25).  
**Worse to come:** This first abomination idol was bad, but God says it will get worse!

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- B. Then Ezekiel digs through the wall of the Temple court and sees elders sitting in the dark alone with their carved images. (*Verses 7-8, 12-13*)
1. Then He brought me to the door of the court and when I looked, behold! a hole in the wall; then He said to me: son of man dig in the wall; then I dug in the wall, behold! a door. (*Verses 7-8*)  
**Door to court:** Ezekiel is now at the door to the inner court (from the court of the nations) to the court for God's chosen people Israel.  
**Dig through wall:** He is commanded to dig through the wall near the door. [He does so and he sees every form of creeping things, unclean animals carved in the wall with seventy elders burning incense to them! (*Verses 9-11*)]
  2. He said to me: son of man have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each man in the chamber of his images, because (they are) saying: not Yahweh seeing us, Yahweh has forsaken the land. (*Verse 12*)  
**Elders in the dark:** These elders who are supposed to set a good example of worshipping Yahweh are worshipping His creation, and the unclean animals at that (Romans 1:18-25)!
  3. Then He said to me: still you will see greater abominations which they will commit. (*Verse 13*)  
**Worse to come:** First the whole house of Israel erected an abominable image in the outer court. Now the elders are worshipping detestable creatures near the inner court. And, it will get worse!

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**II. Then Ezekiel sees women weeping over a goddess and men worshipping the sun, and God says He will do wrath; and, Joshua declared obedience to Torah brings nearness to Yahweh.** (*Ezekiel 8:14-18; Joshua 23:3-8*)

- A. Then Ezekiel sees women weeping over the goddess of spring near the gate of the Temple court. (*Ezekiel 8: 14-15*)
1. Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the House of Yahweh which is north and behold! there women (are) sitting, weeping for Tammuz. (*Verse 14*)

**Women and Tammuz:** Ezekiel sees women weeping for the goddess of spring vegetation. In addition to the men and elders of Israel engaging in abominable worship practices, the daughters and mothers of the people are perverting worship of their Creator with worship of the seasons He created!

2. Then He said to me: have you seen son of man? Still, you will see greater abominations than these. (*Verse 15*)

**Still worse coming:** For the second time, Ezekiel is told he will see worse abominations than this third abomination he saw at the very door to God's Temple!

**Homiletical Idea: Idols in God's Temple are an abomination. (#3)**

- B. At the entrance to the Temple Ezekiel sees twenty-five men, with their backs to the Temple, worshipping the sun in the east; all this means God's wrath with no pity. (*Ezekiel 8: 16-18*)

1. Then He brought me to the inner court of the House of Yahweh, and behold! the door of the Temple of Yahweh, between the porch and the altar, about twenty-five men: their backs to the Temple of Yahweh and their faces to the east, and they (are) worshipping the sun to the east. (*Verse 16*)

**Inside court:** These men are between the entrance to the Temple and the altar of sacrifices.

**Twenty-five men worship sun:** Instead of looking toward the place where their Covenant God is dwelling in a special way, they have turned their backs to Him and are worshipping the sun He created!

2. Then He said to me: have you seen son of man? Is it a light thing for the house of Judah to do the abominations they are doing here: to fill the land with violence, then they return to provoke Me to anger! Behold! they are putting the branch to their nose. (*Verse 17*)

**Judah provoking:** We do not need to know the details of sun worship in the days Judah was being sent to the Babylonian exile. What is important is the people of Judah who had been faithful to Yahweh are now committing the grossest abomination of idol worship in the very place they should be worshipping Yahweh with all that is in them (Deuteronomy 6:4-8)!

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3. Also, I will surely do wrath, My eye will not spare and I will not have pity; and, they have cried in My ears in a loud voice, and I will not hear them. (*Verse 18*)

**Bottom Line:** It is too late. These four abominations culminate a long descent into unfaithfulness and disobedience to God. Therefore He says He will do wrathful acts to them for what He has seen of them, including violence as a fruit of unbelief, and He will no longer hear their insincere pleas to Him.

**Application:** As God's people we must be aware of the dark spiritual forces threatening to lead us astray from Him.

We must seek to distance ourselves from the evil practices of those still under the control of God's adversary (1 John 5:18-20).

We must not closely associate with such people.

- C. All Israel will remain in the inherited land if they are steadfast to do the Torah by staying close to Yahweh. (*Joshua 23:3-8*)

1. You all have surely seen all that Yahweh your God has done for you all to all these nations for your sake, because Yahweh your God (is) fighting for you all. (*Verse 3*)

**Yahweh their God:** Joshua reminds the wilderness generation that since they crossed the Jordan River Yahweh has been fighting on their behalf, and still is.

2. You all must look! I have assigned to you all the nations remaining as an inheritance for your tribes from the Jordan, and all the nations I have cut off, and the Great Sea (to the) going down (of) the sun. (*Verse 4*)

**Land assigned:** Joshua has already assigned all the land they conquered under him, and is exhorting them to fully finish the job of expelling the original inhabitants per God's Word (Judges 2:1-3).

3. Yahweh your God will cast them out, and drive them from your sight; and, you all have possessed their land, as Yahweh you God spoke to you all. (*Verse 5*)

**Possession:** Joshua reminds all God's people He fulfilled His words to Abraham (Genesis 15:17-21).

4. And you all have been very strong to keep and do all written in the book of the Torah (instruction) of Moses, to not turn from it to the right or left, to not go in to the nations remaining with you all and you all will not mention the name of their gods, and will not swear (by them), and will not serve them, and will not bow down to worship them. (*Verses 6-7*)

**Strength:** They have kept and done all that Yahweh had Moses write down for them as their written instructions for living.

**Separate:** They must also commit in the future to live separate from the idol worshippers among them so they will remain faithful to their God and His ways.

5. Because if you all will cling to Yahweh your God as you have done to this day (you all will continue in the land). (*Verse 8*)

**Cling to God:** Clinging to God in a close relationship by obedient faith is the way to receive all He has said He will give to His people, most importantly to always be with Him (Revelation 21-22).

**Application:** We must seek God to be filled with His Word and Spirit so we may show people the love of Jesus and speak His life-changing words to them. This is our mission and privilege. So let's live to please our Savior with the Joy of the Spirit.

*Those who obey God's instruction stay close to Him*

**Conclusion:** As God's people we must be aware of the dark spiritual forces threatening to lead us astray from Him. We must seek to be close to God and distance ourselves from the evil practices of those still under the control of His adversary. We must not closely associate with them; but, we must seek God in prayer to be filled with His Word and Spirit so we may show people the strong and firm love of Jesus and speak His life-changing words to them. This is our mission and privilege in this time and place.

Let's live to please our Savior with the Joy of the Spirit; and, not let ourselves fall into idolatry because:

**Idols in God's Temple are an abomination**