

## Ezekiel 8

**Read Ezekiel 8:1-3:** We have talked about how Ezekiel has been commissioned to be a *watchman on the wall*. He is doing it remotely with the elders living in Babylon. There is a big difference between what Ezekiel and the elders in Babylon are doing, and the elders in Jerusalem. He will declare any approaching dangers to his people. That is the role of a prophet. They are called seers, because they are given visibility into the spiritual world. Ezekiel is one of the most spiritual books in the bible. We can relate to affairs at ground level more than angels in combat.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel have a different feel about them; and yet it is the same story. Jeremiah is like a *vice cop* continuously challenging his people to make better decisions. Ezekiel is more geared towards the unseen spiritual realities. The most spiritual books are the books most-geared to the future state. Jeremiah shows us famine, killing with the sword and disease. Jeremiah's Lamentations is like a Psalm of utter spiritual defeat. Ezekiel shows us angels transporting, messaging and killing men. Both prophets' accounts are accurate. Sometimes we feel that nothing seen or felt at ground level changes or is extraordinary. At any given moment, we can see things on the horizon that are disturbing. The key is to also see what is happening in heaven. We need to become more heavenly minded to see the whole picture.

Ezekiel is where he is supposed to be; while learning about those who are still resisting God back home. We too may have stepped away from unedifying friend groups. We may have turned down opportunities to go out on the town with bad influences. As believers, we have to escape the snares of sin; while being available to save those left behind.

God has provided a lot of generic information about Ezekiel's countrymen remaining in Jerusalem. There is an epidemic of idolatry and adultery that has consumed the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of Judah. It has become an infestation of sins leading to mind-control and death. His homeland is a cesspool of wicked imaginations and strange lusts.

### Virtual Desires vs Reality

This chapter is going to take us in for a closer look and unpacking the ugly categories of idolatry and lust; and even into the darkness inside the minds of men. God does not glorify home-made gods; but we need to learn from others' mistakes.

<sup>13</sup> *“And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth. (Exodus 23:13)*

The first point to remember is that there is no such thing as any other God. There is no such thing as an idol.

*“I am the LORD, and there is no one else; There is no God except Me. (Isaiah 45)*

*...we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— ... (1 Corinthians 8)*

Idols only exist in our imaginations and desires. They are constructs from our aspirations. Even so, the dark forces capitalize on this imaginary object of worship. It is just a prop for demons to manipulate. The Devil does not care who you worship, as long as it's not God. He is a spoiler.

*“They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods [by denying Him the honor and loyalty that is rightfully and uniquely His]; And with repulsive acts they provoked Him to anger. <sup>17</sup> “They sacrificed to demons, not to God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers never feared. (Deuteronomy 32)*

### Ground Level Losses

The history of the Jews has been written for our learning. We are inclined to do the same things. Relying on our ambitions and imaginations will land us in the same places. Here is what idolatry has done to Israel: Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times.

This chapter is in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Jeconiah's captivity. The first siege of Jerusalem was in 605 BC; where Daniel and other royalty were captured and taken to Babylon. The second siege was in 597 BC, where King Jeconiah is taken captive. That makes this chapter to be written in 591 BC. The prophecy given to Ezekiel is after the lighter sieges. The coming 3<sup>rd</sup> siege will result in destruction of the walls and temple and every structure in Jerusalem. In 587 BC the vassal King Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon. Now Babylon realizes that this rebellion won't end until the city is reduced to dust. In 587 everything was crushed and burned. This third wave would be the fulfillment of this chapter. It is as if the devil caused the Jews to not stop rebelling until they destroyed every remnant of the homeland. God predicted it in the last chapter. Who needs enemies when you are destroying yourself?

## Hair Raising Experience

We might compare Ezekiel to the prophet Jonah. They do not have stomach for their failing fellow man. They were in touch with God, but they were angry about their fellow man. Ezekiel was stressed out over the situation of the Jews back in Jerusalem. The situation was perplexing and very upsetting to him. We too can become *silo Christians*; who chaff at being saddled with others' bad decisions. After all, how do you minister to self-defeating behavior, without becoming an enabler? How do you help someone who does not want your help? We don't want anything to do with people who invite judgement by mocking God. We want to stay out of the lightning-strike circle. But involvement or indifference is not our call, if God wants to throw us into the soup. We are not on earth to retire. We are here to get our hands dirty and to be interrupted and to be inconvenienced. Ezekiel was not happy about this assignment.

*The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD on me.<sup>15</sup> I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Aviv near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days—deeply distressed. (Ezekiel 3)*

Knowing this helps me to understand verse three. Why would God use the heavy-handed method of grabbing Ezekiel by the hair to take him to Jerusalem (in the Spirit)? It seems a little hardened and rough. In reality, it was in the Spirit, so he probably did not feel anything. God is like lioness temporarily semi paralyzing her kittens to carry them so they could not fight back. Sometimes we don't want to be connected to those who oversee our lives. This is not a vote; and this is not about us. Let's go! God says "Don't procrastinate..."



God or an angel appears to Ezekiel. He is an open flame below the waist, and like molten metal glowing in a furnace above the waist.

*...our "God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)*

We try to find comfort in a world where our fellow man is poisoning himself. God will not stop the cleansing process until all the wood, hay and stubble in our lives is consumed with his holy fire.

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55)*

Angels are a big part of the Ezekiel account. They are God's ministers towards us (among other things). There is probably more angel activity in Ezekiel, Daniel and revelation than any other books of the bible. That is because they offer a deeper view into the spiritual world.

*<sup>31</sup> And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Matthew 24)*

**Read Ezekiel 8: 3 – 18:** This part of the chapter is to catalogue many of the different idols and imaginary beliefs and hopes of the people in Jerusalem. They are not worshipping a single false god. They are worshipping almost anything they can get their hands on. The idols are listed in order of decadence and moral failure. The people who should be the most opposed to idolatry are immersed in it. This includes the priests, the 70 elders, and those in the temple grounds, where worship and sacrifice takes place. All said, sometimes Satan tips his hand. If an idol was real, you would not be worshipping 8 different entities in the same grounds. This scene is more like a bizarre circus. Basically, the theme is not finding the true God. It's finding anything but the true God. This is why Satan worked in men's imaginations to put these shrines in the temple and its grounds. If God was not real, this would be done anywhere else. This is just an affront to God. This is just like the practice of drinking blood. It's not a normal desire; unless someone wants to defy God.

*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. (Romans 7:11)*

The Satanic Bible does not focus on worshipping Satan as much as it is all about pursuing anything except God. This whole display of gods is intellectually dishonest; and in no way a pursuit of the true or the real God. It is partially Satan's attempt to get God so angry with men and destroy them.

*“You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment. <sup>32</sup> You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. <sup>33</sup> Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry. (Ezekiel 16)*

It is almost comical how many odd and exotic gods were exhibited in this bazaar. Going to the temple must have become like going to a street fair. Why put them next to Jehovah, the true God? Idolatry must make people very foolish. The

definition of an idol is a manmade thing that personifies your view of God. It was almost like they piled up all of the possible gods, hoping that someone was listening.

*Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; <sup>23</sup> for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: <sup>24</sup> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. <sup>25</sup> Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. (Acts 17)*

One obvious problem with idolatry is that nobody is ever at home...so you have to impute responses.

*<sup>26</sup> So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. <sup>27</sup> And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” <sup>28</sup> So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. <sup>29</sup> And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. (1 Kings 18)*

There is obviously nowhere else on earth where you would find people worshipping every conceivable god in earnest. The Buddhists don’t do it. The Muslims don’t do it. Even the polytheistic Hindus gods all tie back to one main god. You really cannot be genuine about devoting your life to god, if literally dozens exist. The spirit of antichrist means anyone except Christ. We see a lot of this in our world today. It is a playground of unholy distractions. Faith includes keeping our eye on the ball.

The underlying issue is people getting what they wanted. They want pleasure and wealth. These gods were erected as means to get what you want (fertility for crop

yields). It is like people flocking to some fool handing out candy. The truth is often not what we hoped it was. It is not our plan for our life.

*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (Hebrews 11)*

### Hall of Shame

Let's begin with the first cartoon character idol. To the north of the altar gate was *an image of jealousy*. God does not get jealous in a petty or selfish way. He is desirous for our well-being. It tortures God to see us chase imaginary things.

King Ahaz went on a field trip to Syria. He saw an idol in Syria that tickled his fancy. He copied down all of the details; and had one made back home.

*Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser the king of Assyria, and saw the pagan altar which was at Damascus. Then King Ahaz sent a model of the altar to Urijah the priest along with a [detailed] pattern for all its construction. <sup>11</sup> So Urijah the priest built an altar; in accordance with everything that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, that is how Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz returned from Damascus. <sup>12</sup> When the king came from Damascus, he saw the altar; then the king approached the altar and offered [sacrifices] on it, <sup>13</sup> and burned his burnt offering and his grain offering, and poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. <sup>14</sup> He brought the bronze altar, which was before the LORD, from the front of the house (temple), from between the [new] altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the [new] altar. <sup>15</sup> Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "Upon the great [new] altar, burn the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, and the king's burnt offering and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land and their grain offering and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on the new altar all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. But the [old] bronze altar shall be kept for me to use to examine the sacrifices." <sup>16</sup> Urijah the priest acted in accordance with everything that King Ahaz commanded. (2 Kings 16)*

Manasseh joins this *Hall of Shame* with his contributions. He must have hated his dad, King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was one of Judah's best kings. His son went off the deep end in maximum unholy experimentations. He was the Alice Cooper of his day. He built two altars to worship the stars in the temple courtyards.



Astrology is the “interpretation” of an assumed influence the stars (and planets) exert on human destiny. According to astrology, the sign you were born under, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, or Capricorn, impacts your destiny. This is a false belief. The royal astrologers of the Babylonian court were put to shame by God’s prophet Daniel ([Daniel 1:20](#)) and were powerless to interpret the king’s dream ([Daniel 2:27](#)). God specifies astrologers as among those who will be burned as stubble in God’s judgment ([Isaiah 47:13-14](#)). Astrology as a form of divination is expressly forbidden in Scripture ([Deuteronomy 18:10-14](#)). God forbade the children of Israel to worship or serve the “host of heaven” ([Deuteronomy 4:19](#)). Several times in their history, however, Israel fell into that very sin ([2 Kings 17:16](#) is one example). Their worship of the stars brought God’s judgment each time.

*Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup> He did [great] evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with the [idolatrous] repulsive acts of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons (descendants) of Israel. <sup>3</sup> For he rebuilt the high places [for the worship of pagan gods] which his father Hezekiah had destroyed; and he set up altars for Baal and made an [image of] Asherah, just as Ahab king of Israel had done, and he worshiped all the [starry] host of heaven and served them. <sup>4</sup> And he built [pagan] altars in the house (temple) of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My Name (Presence).” <sup>5</sup> And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courtyards of the house of the LORD. (2 Kings 21)*

Many Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman gods are nothing more than personalities given to planets and nature’s cycles. When good or bad things happen on a certain date; the proximity of one star to another is given credit for the influence. It can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy; if you expect a certain outcome.

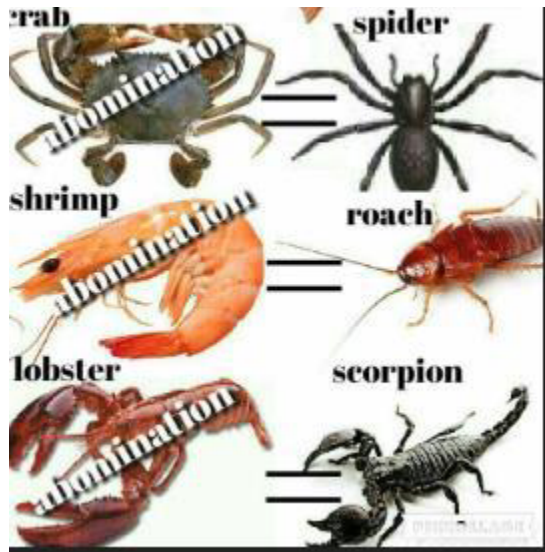
God not only takes Ezekiel into the temple grounds in his spirit. He takes Ezekiel into the minds of the priests. They believe that God does not see them. There are various carved images of unclean creatures and insects all over the interior walls of the temple. It was a simile of what is in their mind.

*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*



*<sup>25</sup> They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1)*

Creeping things can include insects that take small steps (centipedes, beetles, spiders, etc.). Abominable things are filthy things (vultures, rats, bats, etc.).



In the Bible, reptiles are mentioned in various contexts, often symbolizing uncleanness or danger, but also as part of God's creation. The term "reptile" in the biblical sense can refer to a range of creeping creatures, including snakes, lizards, and other similar animals. Reptiles, particularly snakes, hold significant symbolic meaning in the Bible. The serpent in Genesis 3 is the most notable example, where it is used as a vessel for Satan to tempt Eve, leading to the fall of man. Genesis 3:1 describes the serpent as "craftier than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made." This association with cunning and deceit has influenced the perception of reptiles, especially snakes, throughout biblical literature. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to serpents in a metaphorical sense when addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees. In Matthew 23:33, He says, "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the sentence of hell?" Here, the imagery of snakes is used to convey the deceitful and dangerous nature of those who oppose God's truth.

The laws concerning clean and unclean animals highlight the importance of obedience, holiness, and the distinct identity of God's people. While these specific dietary laws are not binding on Christians today, the underlying principles of holiness and separation from sin remain relevant. The New Testament teachings affirm that purity and holiness are now achieved through faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, rather than adherence to ceremonial laws.

Why did the ancient Egyptians worship a large beetle that rolls a ball of dung, lays its eggs inside it, and then pushes the ball along the ground? Why did the Egyptians call this beetle *kheper*, with the metaphorical meaning “becoming, to come into being”? Why did they associate the lowly dung beetle with Re, their supreme being and sun god, and give their beetle-god avatar of Re the name *Khepri*?

*“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen” (Romans 1)*

Many Pharaohs incorporated *kheper* into their “throne name,” the official name they assumed at their coronation. King Tut’s treasures are decorated with elaborate cartouches of his throne-name *Neb Kheperu Re*, “The Lord of Becoming/Manifestation/Creations is Re.” Tourists to Egypt buy scarabs modeled on King Tut’s scarab-jewelry, not realizing that they’re paying homage to dung beetles. Even Barbie has accessorized with them.

We also see 25 men with their backs to God worshipping the sun. In pre-scientific, pagan understanding, it was the sun that was responsible for bringing about each new day. It also warmed the earth and finally brought about the end of each winter, providing the necessary conditions for planting and cultivation. It was the largest object in the sky. Its brilliance was overpowering, and its heat could destroy. In the ancient world, the sun was the most powerful object known to man. As a result, it was common for ancient peoples to worship the sun or perhaps, more accurately, the sun-deity. The ancients would not have viewed the sun as an inanimate object, but rather as a deity or as part of a deity. The distinction between the physical and spiritual or the natural and supernatural was far less distinct than in modern thinking.

Tammuz is the attempt to explain the weather cycles. It tied to the winter and summer cycles of plants dying and re-sprouting. It takes a ton of imagination to even listen to their explanation of how their entity existed.

Tammuz was known as “the good, young one,” and his beauty caught the attention of Inanna (known to the Akkadians as Ishtar), who took him for her consort. At some point, they had a falling out. The most common story is that Ishtar travelled to the netherworld to take the throne of her sister, Ereshkigal. For her hubris, Ishtar was condemned by the Anunnaki (judges of the underworld) and sentenced to be killed and her corpse hung from a nail or hook. While Inanna/Ishtar was dead, sexual relations ceased over the entire universe. Enki/Ea allowed her to be resurrected, but she had to find another soul to take her place. She scoured the world, looking for someone who wasn’t mourning her death. Eventually she found her husband, Dumuzid/Tammuz, dressed in rich clothing and sitting

on her throne.

All of the nations surrounding Israel were involved in sun worship. In Egypt the sun god was called Amun-Ra; in Mesopotamia, Shamash; and in Canaan, Shemesh. One of the Canaanite cities conquered by the Israelites was Beth-Shemesh, “house of the sun,” which may have been a center of sun worship ([Joshua 19:22](#)). The Babylonians and Assyrians were also involved in sun worship.

In fitting irony, Jeremiah predicts a coming judgment on the [idolaters](#): “At that time, declares the Lord, the bones of the kings and officials of Judah, the bones of the priests and prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves. They will be exposed to the sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens, which they have loved and served and which they have followed and consulted and worshiped. They will not be gathered up or buried” ([Jeremiah 8:1–2](#)).

Adopting a false view of life and God takes an effort. There is a book called [I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist](#). The premise of the book is that anyone who looks at the empirical data in nature and who studies history cannot come away with conclusion other than The LORD is God. In *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, you’ll find a carefully structured argument, methodically leading readers from doubt to conviction. Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek craft an argument that aims to reason and demonstrate the logical necessity of theism. Each chapter builds upon the previous, forming a mosaic of interconnected evidence. They delve into the complexity of living organisms, the precision of cosmic constants, the existence of objective moral values, and the reliability of gospel accounts, arguing these phenomena not just suggest, but insist on a divine architect.

Lying requires more cognitive effort than telling the truth because the brain must manage and manipulate falsehoods while inhibiting the truthful response. This **cognitive load** can trigger stress responses, including increased activity in the **amygdala**, the area of the brain that processes fear and anxiety. The release of stress hormones, particularly cortisol, can have lasting effects on individuals who lie frequently. Elevated cortisol levels are associated with a range of physiological issues, including weakened immune function and heightened susceptibility to mental health disorders. The chronic stress resulting from habitual lying can create a cycle of anxiety and deceit that is difficult to break. Self-deception is a psychological process where we convince ourselves of something that isn’t entirely true, often to protect our ego or maintain a positive self-image. It’s like having a personal PR team in our heads, constantly spinning the facts to make us look good – even to ourselves.

In summary, idolatry cannot be the conclusion of a heart and mind seeking truth. It can become the means to freely engage in adultery or self-adulation.