

Ezekiel 14

Read Ezekiel 14: 1-5: God is in the business of destroying our idols and revealing that he is the only source of life and health. This has been happening from the beginning. God uses poetic justice to show us that our expectations from our own solutions will cause the opposite effect. Idols are fabrications of our desires. Have you ever had a dream that it was alright to do something bad just because of the strange and unlikely circumstances? That is your heart and mind at war over the accepted ground rules.

Any source of inspiration or strength other than God will become our weakness or a curse. The children of Israel were faced with problems designed by God. They are attempts to reconnect.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

These tests were designed to bring about a change of heart and create humility before God. Instead, these people doubled down and turned to unknown foreign gods and powerful nations to solve their problems. It would be like President Biden spending too much money; and then putting America’s future with Communist China.

These attractive distractions use bait; but they are loaded with poison. Pastor Ray used to say that there is nothing sadder than a sinner who has gotten all of the juice out of their sinful practices; and there is no more enjoyment. They often seek the more and more exotic things to regain that feeling. You can connect the dots between ancient religions and today's forms of self-medication.

There are a variety of forms that self-medication can take. These include alcohol, drug abuse, overeating and binge eating, and other risky behaviors such as sex and gambling. None of these things work. To chase them usually comes at the cost of losing what is important; jobs, relationships, family, finances, reputation and honor, etc.. This is why the devil is characterized as an adept trader. The end of that road is a feeling that we have traded away everything of value for trash and damage.

This chapter opens with the idol-chasing city elders, who are morally bankrupt; just now discovering that they need help. They have distracted themselves right up until the time that the barbarians are at the gate. Feeling good and self-doping can blind you as long as you want...until the music stops.

Their good luck charms are not helping them now. Their willingness to ask the prophet for a solution in no way is a commitment to follow God or listen to him. They just want a quick genie in a bottle; that they can put back on the shelf. They are grabbing at straws for solutions; but they have no interest in submitting to God. God will make fun of their worthless gods before the whole world. He certainly did that in Egypt.

12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12)

God knows that these men are not seeking God. They just want to restore a comfortable lifestyle. Their godless decisions have stopped producing pleasure. It is now leading them to a place of danger and death. Baal, the idol of fertility is bringing a famine and death. Why should God throw them a rope? He has been telling them to repent for centuries; and they won't do it. There is nothing else to say.

6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. (Matthew 7:6)

Read Ezekiel 14:6-8: God has been telling the Jews to dump their idols. He characterizes idols as stumbling blocks. He reiterates that they will become poster children for those who follow idols. It is amazing how some people who have no interest in God will throw up a prayer. I suppose that there were people pounding on Noah's ark after the door was shut; and the water started rising too.

These men may not realize that sometimes they are essentially asking God to sin in peace. They want God to stop the inconveniences but otherwise leave them alone. God will not allow us to enjoy sin for more than a brief season. Once you are saved, you are essentially ruined for this world. Now you have an active conscience tied to the Holy Spirit.

God is not going to flash green lights; when his signal has been to take a U-turn. They want to go further in sin; but God is telling them they have reached their limit. *Repent or die.* These people are sorry about their circumstances, but that is not the definition of repentance. It's just a response to fear. Repentance involves more than stopping bad behavior. It includes God-honoring and God-loving behavior. It is impossible to just stop sinning for long, without moving towards God. You cannot *white knuckle* it. You have to start rowing in Gods direction. That is the only way out.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
(Galatians 5)

Repentance (H7725) here has a simple definition.

- to turn back or retreat
- to lie down or die to something treasured
- to restore what has been lost, abandoned, neglected or underappreciated
- to restore or regain yourself back

There are various definitions of idols; including man-made things that are cherished.

Idols (H 1556) here are just woodworking projects to put your hope in. It really seems impossible for the person who cut down the tree to become the wood worshipper.

- a log or an image
- a tree trunk

The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, Fashions it with hammers, And works it with the strength of his arms. Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails; He drinks no water and is faint. ¹³ The craftsman stretches out his rule, He marks one out with chalk; He fashions it with a plane, He marks it out with the compass, And makes it like the figure of a man, According to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars for himself, And takes the cypress and the oak; He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵ Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. ¹⁶ He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire." ¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and

worships it, Prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” ¹⁸ They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand.

¹⁹ And no one considers in his heart, Nor is there knowledge nor understanding to say, “I have burned half of it in the fire, Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals; I have roasted meat and eaten it; And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?” ²⁰ He feeds on ashes; A deceived heart has turned him aside; And he cannot deliver his soul, Nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isaiah 44)

Read Ezekiel 14:9-11: False prophets were supposed to be killed.

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ (Deuteronomy 18)

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. ⁹ then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹ whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. (2 Peter 2)

God is saying also that he will deceive false prophets; like he deceived Pharaoh according to his inflated self-image. God uses the demons to confuse the sinners when it serves his purposes.

Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ ²² The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ ²³ Therefore look! The LORD

has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.” (1 Kings 22)

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3)

We have to keep these things in mind when it seems like the world is going to hell in a hand basket. Is God in more or less control during a crisis or in the tribulation? It's the same. The devil seems to be operating at full speed. The devil is unknowingly accelerating God's plan for forced repentance. Isaiah spoke of wicked kings acting out their greed and hatred as the alter ego of Satan. In reality, the harder he tries to crush us, the more God uses it to bless us. It is absolutely not his intention. Somehow these obstructionists to our government are both under demonic influence, and somehow glorifying God.

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger. And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. ⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations. ⁸For he says, ‘Are not my princes altogether kings? ⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? ¹⁰As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, ¹¹As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?’ ” ¹²Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.” ¹³For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, And by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, And have robbed their treasures; So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. ¹⁴My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, And as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved his wing, Nor opened his mouth with even a peep.” ¹⁵Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? (Isaiah 10)

Read Ezekiel 14:12-21: Noah, Daniel and Job are singled out as faith examples. The point is that even these well-known captains of faith can only save themselves.

They cannot save their city or their neighbors...or even their family. Why are these elders looking to buddy up with Ezekiel, to call off the curse?

God is sending the sword, wild animals, disease and famine on Jerusalem. The prophet cannot put in a good word; and hold off these judgements. This is all their doing. Only they can repent for themselves.