

Ezekiel 8:1–18 – When Hidden Sin Comes into the Light

1. Ezekiel Carried into a Vision of Jerusalem

“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.”
(Ezekiel 8:1, NKJV)

Ezekiel is in Babylon, sitting in his house with the elders of Judah. While they are seated before him, the hand of the Lord comes upon him, and he is taken into a vision.

“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.” (Ezekiel 8:2, NKJV)

He sees a glorious, fiery figure—radiant and powerful. A hand reaches out, takes him by a lock of his hair, and the Spirit lifts him up between heaven and earth.

“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.” (Ezekiel 8:3, NKJV)

In the vision, God transports Ezekiel from Babylon to the temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel stands at the north gate, where an idol—an “image of jealousy”—stands in God’s house. This idol provokes the Lord to jealousy, because Israel has brought false gods into the very place that was meant for Him alone.

2. First Scene – The Image of Jealousy

“And 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.”
(Ezekiel 8:5, NKJV)

Right at the entrance to the temple court is a blatant idol. The people have not merely drifted slightly; they have brought idolatry to the front door of worship.

“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.’”
(Ezekiel 8:6, NKJV)

God shows Ezekiel the first layer of corruption, then tells him, “You have not seen the worst yet.”

3. Second Scene – Secret Chambers of Imagery

“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.” (Ezekiel 8:10, NKJV)

Ezekiel is led to a wall where he sees a small opening. God tells him to dig. Behind the opening he finds a door, enters, and discovers a hidden room. The walls are covered with images of unclean creatures and idols—filthy, idolatrous scenes.

“And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel... Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.” (Ezekiel 8:11, NKJV)

These are the elders—the spiritual leaders of the people. They are secretly participating in idolatry, using incense, which should have belonged to the worship of the Lord, for false gods instead.

“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.’” (Ezekiel 8:12, NKJV)

This is a picture not only of what they are doing outwardly but of what they are harboring inwardly. God is exposing the hidden chambers of their minds and hearts—what they think no one sees. They tell themselves, “The Lord does not see... the Lord has forsaken the land.” They are wrong on both counts.

Nothing is hidden from God—not our actions, not our secrets, not even our thoughts.

Again, God says, *“Turn again, and you will see greater abominations.”*

4. Third Scene – Weeping for Tammuz

“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.”
(Ezekiel 8:14, NKJV)

Tammuz was a pagan god associated with seasons, fertility, and a kind of mythical “resurrection” in ancient Near Eastern religion. The women of Judah are weeping for Tammuz in God’s house instead of weeping over sin and the spiritual condition of the nation.

Their emotions, tears, and devotion are directed to a false god rather than to the Lord who loves them.

Again the Lord says:

“Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.”
(Ezekiel 8:15, NKJV)

5. Fourth Scene – Turning Their Backs on God

“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 twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.” (Ezekiel 8:16, NKJV)

This is the most shocking scene. In the very inner court of the temple—between the porch and the altar—twenty-five men are standing with their backs to the temple and their faces toward the east, worshiping the sun.

Their posture says it all:

- *Backs toward the temple – turning away from the Lord*
- *Faces to the east – giving worship to the creation instead of the Creator*

They are in the place that should be filled with prayer and sacrifice to the Lord, yet they are honoring a created light instead of the true Light.

6. God's Response – No More Pretending

"Then 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... 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.'" (Ezekiel 8:17–18, NKJV)

God asks a piercing question:

"Is this a small thing?"

They have filled the land with violence, yet still persist in provoking God with idolatry. They are not victims of ignorance; they are choosing to turn away from Him.

Judgment is coming—not because God is cruel, but because the people have persisted in rebellion, polluted His house, and hardened their hearts. They have rejected His patience, treated His presence lightly, and now their cries will be too late.

Practical Application

1. God sees what we think is hidden.

The secret "chambers" of imagery in Ezekiel's vision picture the hidden places of our minds and hearts. God knows not only what we do, but what we imagine, desire, and entertain inwardly.

- This calls us to honesty before Him.
- We cannot hide behind outward religion while nurturing inner idolatry.

2. Idolatry is anything that takes God's rightful place.

- For Israel, it was literal images, pagan gods, and cosmic powers.
- For us, idols can be success, pleasure, comfort, control, self-image, relationships, or anything we trust more than God.
When something else becomes the source of our identity, security, or hope, it has become an idol.

3. Turning your back on God is often gradual.

The elders, the women, and the men in the inner court did not arrive there overnight. Idolatry begins in the heart long before it shows up in outward worship. It starts with small compromises, cooled affections, and divided loyalties.

4. God exposes sin to invite us back, not to shame us away.

Before judgment falls, God lets Ezekiel see the truth. Exposure is an act of mercy—it is God saying, “This is what is really going on. Come back to Me while there is time.”

A Challenge for Believers

- Are there “hidden chambers” in your life—thoughts, habits, or desires that you justify, excusing them as “private” while God sees them clearly?
- Has anything begun to take your passion, time, or devotion more than the Lord Himself?
- Are you, in any way, turning your back toward the presence of God and setting your face toward something else for fulfillment?

Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you anything that competes with Jesus.

Pray:

“Lord, You see what no one else sees. I do not want to live with secret idols. Reveal anything in me that is not pleasing to You. Cleanse my mind, my heart, and my imagination. I surrender every part of my life to You.”

Remember that Jesus shed His blood on the cross to save us—not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord, and He is able to cleanse the deepest places of our hearts.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

The picture in Ezekiel 8 is sobering. It shows what happens when people turn from God outwardly and inwardly—exchanging His glory for empty idols. But this same God who exposes sin is also the God who reaches out in love.

We have all, in one way or another, turned our backs on God. We have all entertained thoughts, desires, and actions that dishonor Him. The Bible says that sin separates us from God, and if we persist in it, judgment is real.

But God did not leave us in that condition.

Jesus Christ came into this world to rescue us.

- He lived a sinless life.
- He willingly went to the cross.
- He shed His blood to save us, bearing the judgment our sins deserve.
- He rose again from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You do not have to stay distant from God, hiding, pretending, or running. Today, you can turn to Jesus and receive forgiveness, cleansing, and new life.

If you want to give your life to Him, you can talk to Him right now. You might pray something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and turned from You in my heart and in my life. I believe that You shed Your blood on the cross to save me, and that You rose again as God, my Savior, and my Lord. Please forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I surrender my life to You. Help me to follow You from this day forward.”

If you truly turn to Him, He will not reject you.

He will forgive you completely.

He will begin His work of transforming you from the inside out.

And for all of us who know Him, may we walk with undivided hearts, letting His presence rule every “chamber” of our lives.