

Ezekiel 14:1-23 – Idols in the Heart and the God Who Answers in Truth

1. Elders in Front of Ezekiel, Idols Inside Their Hearts (Ezekiel 14:1-5)

“Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?’”
(Ezekiel 14:1-3, NKJV)

Some of Israel’s leaders come and sit respectfully before Ezekiel, as if they are seeking God’s word. Outwardly, it looks spiritual. Inwardly, God sees something very different: they have installed idols in their hearts.

Idolatry always starts inside. Before a statue is ever built, a value or idea is exalted above God. It might be comfort, control, success, reputation, pleasure, money, or even religious image. You can reject physical idols and still worship something other than God in your heart.

God’s question is piercing: *“Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?”* They want a word from the Lord, but they will not let the Lord be Lord in the deepest places of their lives.

“Therefore speak to them, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Every one of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.”’” (Ezekiel 14:4-5, NKJV)

God says He will answer them “according to the multitude of [their] idols.” In other words, His dealings with them will expose their divided hearts. Why? Because their idols have estranged them from Him.

2. A Clear Call: Repent and Turn from Idols (Ezekiel 14:6-8)

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.”’” (Ezekiel 14:6, NKJV)

God does not just expose the problem; He calls for a response: repent. Repentance is not just feeling bad; it is turning. Turning from idols. Turning from abominations. Turning from a sinful lifestyle. Turning to the living God.

“For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 14:7-8, NKJV)

To come to God while clutching idols and refusing to let them go is spiritually dangerous. God warns that He will personally oppose such a person. The issue is not that they stumble; the issue is that they cling to what causes them to stumble and still want a religious experience on top of it.

3. Accountability for Prophet and People (Ezekiel 14:9-11)

“And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired, that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God,” says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 14:9-11, NKJV)

Whether it is the one who speaks falsely or the one who wants to hear lies, both are held responsible. God’s purpose in discipline is not to crush His people but to reclaim them: “...that they may be My people and I may be their God.”

That has always been His heart: a real relationship, not just religious talk.

4. The Limits of Borrowed Righteousness (Ezekiel 14:12-20)

“The word of the Lord came again to me, saying: ‘Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,’ says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 14:12-14, NKJV)

God lists three well-known righteous men:

- **Noah** – faithful in a corrupt world
- **Daniel** – faithful in a pagan empire
- **Job** – faithful in suffering

God says that if He sends famine, wild beasts, sword, or plague on a land, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were present, they would only save themselves by their righteousness. They could not rescue their children or their neighbors by their own walk with God.

This means no one can live off another person’s faith. You cannot depend on the godliness of your parents, your spouse, or your pastor. God has no grandchildren, only children. Each person must personally respond to Him.

Verses 15-20 repeat the same point with each of the four judgments: sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague. In every case, Noah, Daniel, and Job “*would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.*”

5. God’s Four Judgments and His Righteous Reasons (Ezekiel 14:21-23)

“For thus says the Lord God: ‘How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it? Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be

comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it,' says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 14:21-23, NKJV)

God promises that a remnant will survive and be brought to the exiles in Babylon. When Ezekiel and the others see how those survivors have been living, they will understand that God's judgment was not random or cruel. He says, "*You shall know that I have done nothing without cause.*"

God's judgments are never careless. He always acts with purpose, justice, and full knowledge. Even when we do not understand His timing or His methods, His character remains righteous and good.

Practical Application

1. **God Sees the Heart Behind Our Worship**

We can sit in Bible studies, pray in groups, and use spiritual language—and still have idols lodged in our hearts. God cares about what we trust most, what we fear losing most, and what we love most. Those things reveal our true worship.

2. **Religious Appearance Cannot Replace Real Repentance**

The elders came to Ezekiel, but they did not come to God on His terms. God still calls us: **"Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations."**

3. **You Cannot Live on Someone Else's Walk with God**

Noah, Daniel, and Job could only deliver themselves. In the same way, your parents' faith, your church's faith, or your friends' faith cannot substitute for your own response to God. Each person stands before Him individually.

4. **God's Goal Is Relationship, Not Mere Religion**

His desire is that we be His people and He be our God. That kind of relationship cannot coexist with stubborn, protected idols in the heart.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are there "hidden idols" in your heart—things you would never bow to physically but that have taken a higher place than God in your affections, decisions, or priorities?
- Do you ever seek God's guidance while secretly planning to obey only if His word fits your preferences?
- Are you relying on your spiritual heritage, your church, or your religious activity instead of walking honestly with the Lord yourself?

God's word in Ezekiel 14 calls believers to honest self-examination. The Lord is not interested in spiritual posing. He is ready to cleanse and restore, but He calls us to turn from idols and turn to Him with an undivided heart.

You might need to pray something like:

“Lord, show me any idol I have protected in my heart. I do not want to just look religious while being far from You inside. Give me courage to repent, to lay it down, and to let You be first in every part of my life.”

An Invitation to Those Who Have Not Yet Given Their Life to Jesus

Ezekiel 14 shows that idols in the heart separate people from God and that no one else’s righteousness can save you. That is why God sent His Son.

Jesus came into this world not merely to give advice, but to save us. He did that by shedding His blood on the cross for our sins. He took our guilt, our idolatry, our rebellion upon Himself. When He died, He paid the price we could never pay. When He rose from the dead, His resurrection declared that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

No idol can do that for you. No philosophy, no habit, no relationship, no achievement can cleanse your heart or give you eternal life. Only Jesus can.

If you sense God drawing you, you can respond to Him today. There is no magic formula, but you might pray in words like these:

“Lord Jesus, I admit that I have had idols in my heart, and I have sinned against You. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and that You rose again. I turn from my idols and turn to You. Please forgive me, cleanse me, and make me Yours. I confess that You are my Savior and my Lord. Teach me to follow You from this day forward.”

If you truly turn to Him, He will not turn you away. He will begin the work of transforming your heart, removing idols, and leading you into a real relationship with the living God.