



Ezek 8

Seeing our sin, so we might see our salvation.

- When you're young you're trying to find your feet trying to find your personality.
 - Often we chose role models to follow.
 - Or things to follow, ideas to adopt.
 - Young men often see people they admire, and try to copy them.
 - Even to worship them.
- But they often ignore the One person they are made to Worship, to be like, to believe in.
 - Why?
 - Because of what has happened to our nature.
- Question: Who are you?
 - I mean as a human?
- You may think you have nothing to do with God, but you have everything to do with Him.
 - Try to live a life apart from Him and you'll try all sorts of things in order to make life worthwhile - to give it meaning and purpose,
 - but in the end they'll be beneath who you really are,
 - and you'll find them hollow and empty (even though initially they can give pleasure).
- Why?
 - Because you're made a living soul

Genesis 2:7 “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

- you were made in His image

Genesis 1:26 “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

- You're a person with consciousness, and reason, and creativity, and a moral understanding, with attributes and senses.
- You're above the creeping things.
- You have a spiritual aspect designed for worship of your Creator.
- You were made for holiness and righteousness.

- But

- We're fallen beings, and increasingly we become wretched things in God's sight.

- Why?

- Because we don't worship God.
- Instead we dethrone Him and set anything and everything up in His place - on the throne of our hearts

- Ask yourself if that isn't true

- Does God occupy the most important place in your life and heart?
- Or do you just live with yourself as the 'king' of your life?

- It's true of any who aren't Christians that in reality they say in their hearts

"I live as I please. I decide what I think is right and wrong" - (even judging God's Word, and God Himself!)

"I rule my life.

I decide,

I love what I want,

I worship what I desire.

No one tells me how to live.

I follow no one!

I do as I please.

And I use my own feelings and reason to do so"

- Ah, but such people will be driven by those feelings.

- The body was given to be a servant, but it can become a master.
- They'll try to reason for things they want to be true, rather than what is true, but which they don't want to be true.
- Try to believe in nothing and you'll fall for everything.
- You'll be pressed into the mould of modern culture.
- Doing as you are tempted by darker influences.
- We're much more manipulated than we think we are..

- Those feelings - Where did you get those?

- We understand there is a thing called right and wrong - how do we know that?

- That reason and logic - where did that come from?

- If it's by random processes, then why trust it?
- We have a desire to follow something, to live for something, to have a meaning and purpose -
 - Why do we have that?

- God gave us all these things.

- And they can only find their true purpose, fulfilment, and satisfaction in Him.
- That's why you and God are inextricably linked.
- But Mankind tries to live as if that isn't the case - as autonomous beings

- That's why I asked you to consider who you are.
- Let's use our reason together.
 - If there are men who do wicked things - like murder, theft etc,
 - then we can reason that a perfectly just God must punish such men.
- Likewise He must punish all sin, great and small, not just some.
 - Then why should we think God would not require punishment for our sins?
- And what is the greatest sin? Murder?
 - No
 - The first is 'Thou shalt have no other Gods apart from Me.'
 - That's false worship
 - Idols.

- In our reading Ezekiel is shown this fallen state and condition of the people.
 - He is taken to Jerusalem which is a bit like the city of 'Mansoul' in Bunyan's book 'The Holy War'.

We can see it as a city representing our soul.

- He is taken by the Spirit to see their sinful actions.

- First he sees the glory of God

Ezekiel Chapt 8 v2 "Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber."

Perfectly holy and righteous.

- Then he is shown the great idolatry that goes on even though they still bear a fallen image of God.
 - A great idol, even at the entrance to the city.

"And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there"

- This is like us.
 - The glory of God is still in us, in a sense.
 - But the image is marred and spoiled.
 - We can still reason, and have the capacity for praise and worship.
 - We have a moral sense.
 - Personhood and creativity.
 - But how do we use it?
 - Because it is our inclination to run away from God, we try to use our reason to wrestle ourselves away from any responsibility to God!
 - We worship and serve other things rather than our God that gave us everything.
 - We're like an unfaithful wife who provokes her husband to righteous jealousy.

Like it says in the last part of v3

"the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy."

- We know about images in our day more than ever.
 - Images are everywhere
 - But they've always been there
 - False religion loves its images, earthly robes, and idols.
 - But modern worldly entertainment is also full of images designed to worship.
 - Pop idols, sports stars, movie heroes.

- The teenage bedroom is often full of posters of such things.
- But the real image that is reflected back at us is that of ourselves, because we want to be like them.
 - Therefore the real idol is King Self.
 - That's who has really dethroned God.
- If we start to realise this, then that's how we start to find God.
 - He shows us out of mercy.
 - He could just judge us immediately.
 - But He shows us.
 - It should elicit initial conviction.
 - We should say:
"yes, that's me." in realization
Not:
"I don't do that" in blind defiance.
- We should see we bear God's image (the glory of God was in Jerusalem)
- but there is also an image of jealousy (our own fallen nature, that refuses to worship God, but instead worships ourselves)
- This results in greater sin (the way of sin is progressive, it is downhill)
 - Secret sins, abominable images. 'Creeping things'.
 - We find pleasure in the unclean, shameful things, so we do them in private.

See v6

"Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth."

- Our sinful nature bears unrighteous fruit in our 'inner sanctuary', the place of worship - our heart.
- Do you think you don't worship?
 - But we make little shrines out of our loves.
 - We collect things to cherish.
 - And they're not always wholesome are they?
 - We keep things, save things on our phones and computers.
 - We don't always want people to know.
 - We wouldn't want people to know our search history.
- These are like the private rooms of these corrupt priests.
 - Full, symbolically, of abominable creeping things.
 - Like when you turn over a rock or an old tree stump and find slugs, insects, and spiders.
 - We naturally recoil, and think them unclean.

- But that's really how we should see our sins, with holy eyes like Gods.

- But it gets even worse

See v13

“He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.”

- He was a Mesopotamian false god thought to bring abundance to the land
- He was the consort of Ishtar, whose descent into the underworld, leads to his own death and subsequent return, representing the life-death-rebirth cycle of nature.
- Men love myths rather than the Messiah.
- You can see how this Tammuz is a false Christ like figure.
 - The cycle of nature is supposed to point to Him
 - But this was a doctrine of demons, trying to make us love and weep for a false hero who conquers death.
- You may say, but I don't worship Tammuz.
 - No, but we can do the same for the fictional heroes of the world.
 - We watch make-believe heroes in TV and film, designed to tug on our emotions.
 - Often the narrative revolves around a hero who triumphs over adversity, even near death.
 - And we cry and cheer our hero on, like these women weeping for Tammuz!
 - This is worshipping man made idols. But we don't realise what we do.
- These heroes don't really exist, and the real Hero of souls goes unworshipped, unwept over.
 - The One who really does great exploits, Who conquered death for His people.
- The women (could symbolise our emotions).
 - We have none for Christ, but instead we turn our love and affection to fiction,
 - and stimulate them to feel for make-believe characters that don't exist.
 - But we pretend they do, so we can worship something.
 - Some character, some actor, some music, or sports star.
 - That doesn't deserve your worship (because they're an unholy sinner), but they take it because they love praise.
- I had a movie star in my shop recently. -
 - Apparently he played someone called 'Adam Warlock' in some movie-
 - Some people said “that's amazing! They said “what did you do!”
- Well, I didn't know who he was, to me he was just another customer -Mr Poulter.
- What did they want me to do?
What did they want me to say?
To bow down, to say I love you?
- No, we shouldn't do that.
- Maybe I should have said “Oh are you that person who pretends to be other people, in dressing up clothes, make believing you're a hero with magic powers?”
- But it gets worse with the people in our passage.

Look at v15

“Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house,

and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.”

- They worship the Sun
 - Eastern mysticism.
 - And we can do the same, worship of the creation rather than the Creator.
 - Loving cosmology, physics, and the natural world.
 - But never giving glory to the One who created it all.
 - They say in their hearts “No, I worship my own ability to find out these things”.
 - And what do men conclude?
 - It all happened by blind chance processes, in opposition to the obvious fact that it all points to a Designer.
 - That maths, that men use to do science, those laws of nature -
 - where did they come from?
 - The very fact that we can even do science points to God, not away from Him.
 - But men don't want that conclusion, so they invent impossible ways that the universe and life could have made itself, and try to believe it in a sinful act of confirmation bias.
 - Being convinced of what they want to believe is true, rather than what is self-evidently true.
 - All to worship the material realm, but not the One who spoke it into existence, spreading the firmament out like a sheet.

- All this false worship brings on God's wrath.

See v17

“Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?..v18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity”

- In all this am I trying to teach you that we (Christians) were any better?
 - Am I trying to teach you that you need to try to be a better person?
 - No and No.
- I'm trying to teach you that we all need a free forgiveness.
- No matter if you're an adult or a child, male or female.
- Did any of these people find that?
 - Yes some did
 - We see it in chapter 9
 - I haven't time to expound those verses, but I encourage you to read them.
- How did they find salvation?
 - What set them apart?
- Well they were marked for mercy
- And a particular Person is singled out amongst the destroying angels to do the marking.
- One dressed in linen like a priest.
- And he carried an ink pen.
- There was a difference between those marked and those not marked.
 - What was it?

“And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that **sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof**. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.”

“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.”

- So the Righteousness God acts justly, and punishes the sins of the people.

But some are spared.

- The ones that were marked ‘**sighed and that cried**’ for their sins.

How is that fair, we might ask?

- One word

SUBSTITUTION

- The man clothed in linen is a symbol of Christ, not only our Priest but the sacrificial Lamb of God taking the punishment on Calvary for those who ‘sigh and cry’ for their sins in repentance and faith.
- That's what we did in true prayer when we became Christians
 - And we testify that God is good to His promise to save us.
- Christians have the mark - sealed by the Holy Spirit.
 - Christ is still marking people out.
 - You better pray He marks you, before the destroyers come.

Ezekiel 9:1

“He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man (that is angel) with his destroying weapon in his hand.”

- The Babylonians did come and destroy Jerusalem, like a slaughter weapon in an angel's hand.
- It serves as a warning picture for us.
- And when I say “you better pray He marks you out”, I mean pray.
- It's not just a figure of speech.
- God showed the prophet Ezekiel all this so He might write it down for people to read, and so He might save them.
 - People like you.
 - Will you hear God's plea to mourn your sin, and seek out salvation?
 - If so then you may be saved.