Ezekiel 14:1-11

1Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. 2And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 3Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? 4Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; 5that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

6Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7For every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that separateth himself from me, and taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire for himself of me; I Jehovah will answer him by myself: 8and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. 9And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, Jehovah, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10And they shall bear their iniquity: the iniquity of the prophet shall be even as the iniquity of him that seeketh unto him; 11that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither defile themselves any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901)

THE ELDERS VISIT EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 14:1

1Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me (ASV, 1901).

At this time Ezekiel was still confined to his house (Ezekiel 3:24) but was receiving the elders of Israel who were prisoners of war along with him in Babylon. The elders were acting as spiritual leaders in Babylon since the official teachers (prophets) were in Jerusalem. Even though this message was delivered to these men it was intended for the
larger audience of the exiles in Babylon and possibly those in Jerusalem if communication could have been made with them. They came to him for a Word from God since they recognized that he was a genuine prophet. They were certain that Ezekiel’s previous warnings did not apply to them. The false prophets had made merchandise of the people of Jerusalem as seen in the previous chapter, thirteen. Both men and women prophets were making false predictions to comfort the people of Jerusalem with lies. They were only able to do so because the people in general had already turned away from God and followed their own selfish path to destruction. God then gave them over to idolatrous false prophets to tell them what they wanted to hear. Bad leaders gained prominence in Israel because they reflected the attitude and sinfulness of the citizens. Ezekiel receives these men sitting before him prepared to ask him for a prophecy. He being a human being could have had no humanly way of knowing what their genuine intention was prior to them coming to him. But the Lord God knows.

**THE ELDERS STILL FAVOR IDOLATRY**

Ezekiel 14:2-3

> And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 2Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them (ASV, 1901)?

As Ezekiel hosts them he receives the Word of God warning him of their true intentions. He says, “these men have taken their idols into their heart,” in other words the idolatry they embraced was deeply imbedded within their hearts. They feigned to have rid themselves of the idols but the idols still had a strong attraction for them. God who searches the hearts know exactly what was within them.

Jeremiah 17:10

> 10 I Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings (ASV, 1901).

When God says that they, “and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face,” He is saying that they openly defied the Lord God of Israel by what they were doing. They were asking for advice from God through the prophet but in reality they did not want it. They had already decided what they were going to do and they did not intend to take any corrective action that came through Ezekiel. They were being hypocritical thinking that God does not know what they think. They were hiding from God and He was well aware of it. Their hearts revealed that they really still wanted the idolatrous practices they engaged in back in Israel. Consider Lot’s wife who was provided a means of escape before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. But she still wanted the pleasures of Sodom and Lord judged her by turning her into a pillar of salt.

The false prophets rose up from the desire of the people who, really coveted the gods of their own making or may we say—*manageable* gods. This is the way of the unsaved human heart and some who profess to know Christ. They make up their own scripture, as well as characteristics of God and expect through their belief system to make truth. In other words if they believe something they think it is true. When in reality revealed truth
should be our pattern for life. Many who are self-serving and not following God even some professing Christians are, “serving their own belly,” as Scripture says.

Romans 16:17-18

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them, which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine, which ye have learned; and avoid them.
18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (KJV).

God rhetorically asks Ezekiel, “should I be inquired of at all by them?” The answer is obviously no. And that is because they really don’t want God. They want the god of their own imagination, the manageable god. God did not have to answer these men at all when they refused in their hearts shown by their action that they refused to acknowledge Him.

GOD ANSWERS WITH TRUTH

Ezekiel 14:4-5

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; 5 that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

God tells Ezekiel that He will answer them himself through Ezekiel. It will not be what they want to hear, but what they need to hear. He will give them His attitude toward idolatry. Ezekiel the true prophet will not make a deal for them with God. There is no negotiation here. He will clearly repeat the voice of God as clearly as possible to allow these elder to receive the truth. If they expected to “work” Ezekiel into comprising God’s Word or behaving like the false prophets they would find that Ezekiel did not concern himself about offending these leaders with flattering words through an endorsement of them harboring idolatrous intentions in their hearts. He knew that they needed to hear the truth not some watered down version of it while letting them continue with the deep longing for their idols. Ezekiel was aware of God’s requirement for answering prayers or requests.

Psalm 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (ASV, 1901).

God decides to answer them with truth instead of silence. He is exposing what they actually harbored in their hearts. He said, “that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.” He was simply describing the spiritual condition of these certain elders and the people as well. If God’s people do not give the Lord the place of pre-eminence and follow Him wholly they become estranged from Him. And such is the condition of thousands of professing Christians who walk in a carnal way, who follow their idols instead of the Lord and who still maintain an outward religiousness. It is no wonder with so many unequipped pastors
and Bible teachers that do not know the Word of God well and internalize it to make it their own so they can accurately convey it to their flocks.

**GOD DEMANDS REPENTANCE**

Ezekiel 14:6-8

6“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7For every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that separateth himself from me, and taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire for himself of me; I Jehovah will answer him by myself: 8and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

God now declares His message to the whole house of Israel. Even though it was the elders in Babylon who sat before Ezekiel they would get a message that was intended for a much broader audience and for all times. God wanted them to turn away from their idolatry in repentance and turn again to Him. He wanted them to make a complete about turn away from the idolatry they harbored in their hearts. Any halfhearted measures will not satisfy Him. He demands the full heart felt desire to adhere to His law for His children. He knows the thoughts and intents of all people so hypocrisy cannot be hidden. This was to apply to not just the Israelites but the proselytes too. That is those Gentiles (Hebrew hagaar) who joined the Commonwealth of Israel by means of professing faith in the God of Israel, being circumcised and keeping the festivals and Laws. God made a provision in His law to accept Gentiles who wanted to join Israel and worship the true God. He never commanded the Israelites to go out and make disciples of other nations. Rather, His approach was to attract outsiders by the example of obedient Israel being blessed by Him (e.g. Exodus 12:48). So the proselyte had responsibilities along with the rights they obtained by joining Israel. Israel was a theocracy and its laws were binding upon all citizens including the Gentiles who joined them. Consider the specific dietary command to not eat or drink the blood of the animals used for sacrifice. It applied equally to the Gentile proselytes (strangers) as it did to the native Jews.

Leviticus 17:10-12

10And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that eateth any manner of blood, I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life. 12Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood (ASV, 1901).

God demands complete surrender to Him and obedience. If one did not do that and chose to separate himself from God He will make an example of that person. The separation from God by the individual would not be done for any other reason but for the individual’s
own pursuit of personal satisfaction and pleasure. The result of which will be God’s visible judgment on that person which will then strike terror into others when they see it. All this will make His name known in Israel by cutting the offender off from the rest of the people like a leper because they would not obey God after this clear warning. This is not a new warning to the citizens of Israel. They knew this since the Law was given to Moses.

Deuteronomy 28:37

37 And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the peoples whither Jehovah shall lead thee away. 38 Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather little in; for the locust shall consume it. 39 Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but thou shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them. 40 Thou shalt have olive-trees throughout all thy borders, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast its fruit. 41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be thine; for they shall go into captivity. 42 All thy trees and the fruit of thy ground shall the locust possess. 43 The sojourner that is in the midst of thee shall mount up above thee higher and higher; and thou shalt come down lower and lower. 44 He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. 45 And all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: 46 and they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever (ASV, 1901).

This is what was happening to the nation Israel for their idolatrous sins again the God of the universe. Their crops would fail yielding little for a lot of work. The insects would invade and destroy the crops. Worms would eat the fruit and the olive trees would lose their fruit before it became ripe. The children would be sent into captivity and the Gentiles would become masters over the Jews. Finally they would become debtors to the Gentiles as they became more subservient to them. All these curses came upon them because they would not harken to the commands of the God who chose them to bring His message to the world. These are spiritual principles, which pertain to the Church and any nation that claims the name of God then slides into sin and apostasy. God will only tolerate this for so long before He brings judgment.

THE MARK OF A GENUINE PROPHET

Ezekiel 14:9-11

9 And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, Jehovah, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear their iniquity: the iniquity of the prophet shall be even as the iniquity of him that seeketh unto him; 11 that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither defile themselves any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901)
Now God declares that He would not respond through His prophet to an inquirer who was harboring idolatry in his heart. This then is the sign for determining a false prophet in Israel from this time forward. If a prophet did give an answer to the people who had separated themselves from God, it meant he was a false prophet.

The clause, “I the LORD have deceived that prophet” is God’s deliberate destruction of both the false prophet and those who should know better but follow them anyway. These people had the Bible for their guidance and knew better. For personal gain and pleasure the engaged in idolatry, which led to this declaration by God to cause their deliberate destruction. This is how He chose to do it. It is quite similar to the illustration in Romans chapter one. God allows the individual to continue in sin by giving them over to a debauched mind. They are then left with a condition that will not improve and will lead to a spiritual death spiral. One Old Testament illustration of this is the story of God letting false prophets deceive king Ahab, to bring him to his death (1 Kings 22:19–23).

So a false prophet in Ezekiel’s situation who received a word to give an idolater would lead to the destruction of both (the one who consults the prophet will be as guilty as the prophet). The false prophet and the one who inquired of him would both receive God’s judgment. By causing both parties to perish because of deliberately defying God and even going so far as to promote and receive false message would send a message to the citizens causing them to return to Him and no longer defile themselves by their sins. God would remove the stumbling block of idolatry that had brought the nation to ruin. Then, God said, they will be My people and I will be their God (Ezekiel 11:20; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Hosea 2:23). God ultimately will restore Israel to her place of fellowship with Him.

Next Message: The Lord Will Not Spare Jerusalem
Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments
E-mail info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com Toll Free 877-706-2479