Peeping Through a ‘Knotty’ Hole
Ezekiel 8:1-- 11:1-25

The Move to Jerusalem (8:1-18)

*The transporting of Ezekiel (8:2-6)*... Ezekiel, in a vision was carried off to Jerusalem when the Spirit lifted him by a lock of his hair and brought him to the door of the north gate of the inner court of the temple where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provoked God to jealousy.

Four things to observe:

1. The power behind the vision... “The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven...” (8:3).

2. The place where Ezekiel was transported... “... to the north gate of the inner court.... (8:3); that would be Solomon’s temple.

3. The provoking of God... “Where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy;” the northern gate was called the “altar gate” from where sacrifices were offered to God; it was adjacent to the king’s palace; before Ezekiel was the glory of God; north of him was the idol of jealousy (see Exodus 34:14); this goddess was most likely Asherah, the mother goddess and wife of El, and mother of 70 gods of whom Baal was most famous; she was called “the Queen of Heaven” (Jeremiah 7:18;44:17,25); she was most likely a nude goddess sitting at the northern entrance of the temple.

4. The position of God outside His sanctuary... The abominations committed by Israel was “to make Me go far away from My sanctuary” (8:6); Liberalism in the Church is driving God out; only 9% of all Americans hold to a Biblical worldview; 7% of Protestants; 19% of Evangelicals; 54% of Christians say homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle; 70% Catholics; 66% Protestants;36% Evangelicals.

*The task of Ezekiel (8:7-13)*... There was a hole in the wall; he was to dig into the wall until he could get inside the temple and observe the abominations going on;
he saw 70 elders burning incense to his own idol; there were creeping animal-like creatures painted on the temple walls; they were worshipping the gods of Egypt; outside the temple they were worshipping the gods of the Canaanites and Babylonians.

In verse 11 there is mention of Jaazaniah, son of Shaphan, the secretary of King Josiah; it was Shaphan who read the “book of the law” who then brought spiritual reform to Judah and had all the idols destroyed (2 Kings 22-23); 20 years later, the son of Shaphan, is among others, standing among the worshippers worshipping these false gods; it takes one generation to turn away from God.

*The trouble with Israel...* Five things to note about adulterous Israel:

1. There were abominable acts... “the greater abominations that the house of Israel commit here to make Me go far away from My sanctuary (8:6b; see Hosea 4:8).

2. There was atheistic thinking... “For they say the LORD does not see us” (8:12; see John 3:19).

3. There were adulterous practices... “So He brought Me to the gate of the Lord’s house. And to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz” (8:14); Tammuz was the Babylonian god of nature related to vegetation and harvest; the reincarnation of Nimrod who died every autumn and resurrected every spring; these people were praying to a dead god for the fall and winter rains.

   Also there were 25 men with their backs toward the temple, facing east worshipping the sun (8:16); they turned their backs on God and worshipped the created rather than the Creator (Romans 1:24-25).

4. There was aggressive behavior... “they have filled the land with violence” (8:17a); failure in worship leads to failure in morality.

5. There was the act of God’s fury... “They have returned to provoke Me to anger.... Therefore I will act in fury... though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them” (8:17b-18); we are told to flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14-22); you cannot have a pagan worldview and profess Christ; to do so is to worship the god of jealousy.

*The Mark of the Cross (9:1-11)*
The seeking out of the faithful (9:1-4)... A man with an inkhorn in his hand is to go throughout Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of the faithful with last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, taw, which is in the shape of a slanted cross, or an x; in the Greek script it is the first letter in the title “Christ;” during the great Tribulation those who follow the Antichrist will receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:15-17); the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who survive the Tribulation will stand with Jesus on the heavenly Mount Zion having the name of God written on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1).

In 312 AD Constantine was fighting his rival Maxentius for control of the Roman Empire; he told Eusebius he saw a fiery cross in the sky and the words: “By this sign conquer;” it was at the Edict of Milan in 513 AD the Catholic Church adopted the “sign of the cross.”

The slaughter of the unmarked (9:5-7)... Ezekiel hears the Lord say to six men with battle axes to destroy all who do not have the mark of the cross; they began with the 25 elders; judgment begins in the house of God (1 Peter 4:17).

God is going to do to His people what He did to the Egyptians at the time of the Passover; slaughter those without the mark of the lamb on their doorposts (Exodus 12).

The bodies of the 25 elders were left in the temple to rot and stink up the place; in 2 Kings 11 we read of wicked Queen Athaliah, who ruled Judah for 6 years; she murdered all the royal heirs to the throne, except Joash who was hidden by his nurse; once the child was declared king, Athaliah was dragged out of the temple and executed, so as not to defile the temple; in Ezekiel’s vision the temple was already defiled so the bodies of the elders remained.

The sorrow of Ezekiel (9:8)... Ezekiel is concerned that God is going to destroy all the remnant in His fury.

The severity of God (9:9-11)... God replied He would not spare nor have pity.

The Moving of God’s Glory and the Message of Ichabod (10:1-22)
The duty of the man with the lined suit (10:1-2)... Ezekiel sees a reappearance of the glory of God that he saw in chapter one; then a man dressed in linen moving among the wheels and under the cherubim throws coals of fire on the city.

God’s glory was in the pillar of fire and cloud that led the children of Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21); it filled the tabernacle at Shiloh (Exodus 40); then the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11); now God’s glory is departing.

The departure of the glory of God (10:18)... God’s glory departs in stages (1 Kings 8:11; Ezekiel 10:18,19; 11:22-23); God’s glory did not depart all at once; He is still giving time for repentance (2 Peter 3:9); God said He would never give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8); to be without glory is to be Ichabod, “without glory” (1 Samuel 4:19-22); Peter Carnegie wrote: “The ultimate privilege of religion is the presence of God, however elusive. The most awful loss is the removal of that presence.

The Mission of the Elders (11:1-25)

The plotting of the 25 princes (11:1-4)... Ezekiel has another vision where he sees the elders telling the people not to believe the message of the prophet; “The glory of God will not depart,” the people “will not be like meat cooked in the caldron.”

The plan for the punishment that is prophesied (11:5-12)... The people who were slain are like meat cooked in the caldron of Jerusalem; others, God will drive out as He drove Israel out of Egypt; they will face their judgment at the border and their realize they are headed for captivity.

The passing of Pelatiah (11:13)... As Ezekiel was prophesying a man named Pelatiah drops dead; Ezekiel wonders if God is bringing a complete end to Israel; Pelatiah means, “The Lord causes a remnant to escape.”

The promise to restore Israel (11:14:21)... God is not only going to preserve the Jewish people, He will be a sanctuary to them while they are in Gentile bondage; then God will remove their stony hearts and give them new hearts of flesh that they may walk in His statutes (11:19-20).
The place of beginning (11:22-25)... The vision ended with Ezekiel being transported back to Tel Abib among the captives to speak to them what he saw.

The practicalities for us...

1. That when anything is more important to you than God, it becomes an idol of jealousy to God.
2. That when idolatry exists in the house of God, it drives God from His house.
3. That when the integrity of the leadership is lost, so are the people.
4. That what is done in secret is evil before God, for men love darkness rather than the light, but God sees in secret and will expose the deeds of darkness so “your sins will find you out” (Numbers 32:23; Hebrews 5:13).
5. That when you fail God in your worship, you also fail Him how you live. There is a direct connection between worship and morality.
6. That you need the mark of the cross on you to be saved; that is you need to be under the blood.
7. That when God’s glory begins to depart, it does so in stages, giving time for repentance.
8. That God’s glory as “coals of fire”(10:2) not only purifies as it did Isaiah (Isaiah 6:6), but destroys as it did when scattered over Jerusalem.
9. That once God’s glory departs you become Ichabod and are now at the threshold of God’s judgment.
10. That just as God will never give up on Israel, He will never give up on you.
11. That God wants to change your heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh that by His indwelling Spirit you can be born again to more perfectly do His will.
12. That what God has shown you, you must share with others.

The one single fundamental truth is you can not hide from God; there are those who think God cannot see them when they are in darkness (John3:19; Ezekiel 8:12); there is no place we can hide from His presence (Psalm 139:7,12).

The true character of a person is what they do when no one is looking; remember, “Your sins will find you out” (Numbers 32:23); whether it’s night or day, light or darkness, may what we do bring glory to God! Amen!