

"Upon this rock I will build my church"

Matthew 16:18

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ENDURING PRINCIPLES FROM
EZEKIEL (No. 2)
GOD IS WATCHING (EZEKIEL 8:12)

INTRODUCTION

No matter where we are and no matter what we are doing, God is able to see us; and He is deeply concerned about our conduct. While Ezekiel was in Babylon, God showed him a vision of the influential leaders of Judah. There are some lessons that we can learn from this vision.

DISCUSSION

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF
SECRECY.

In this vision, the elders of Judah are portrayed as hiding in a secret room and worshipping the images of idols, beasts, and insects.

They were in a place where the others in Jerusalem could not see them or hear them.

They had wrongly concluded that God was not watching. "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" (8:12).

It may be that they were keeping up some appearance of faithfulness to God in their public behavior. Leaders have often used religion as a means of controlling people even when they, themselves, do not believe a word of it.

The subject of their religion, however, is REAL. He sees every act and hears every thought of our hearts.

Hiding ourselves from other men may have some temporary benefit. But God is watching!

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF
POSITION.

The holy positions that these men held among the people did not make them exceptions to God's rules.

In God's kingdom today, every elder, preacher, lectureship speaker, school of preaching director...needs to be reminded that such "positions" do not give them license to set aside God's will.

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF HUMAN APPROVAL.

These men seem to find strength in the mutual approval of one another.

Each one could look at his own actions and then correctly say that he had the approval of at least 69 other men of reputation and renown.

Human responsibility can be multiplied, but it cannot be divided.

Each of these men was not 1/70th responsible for what he was doing.

Each was 100% responsible for the choice that he made.

EVERY man had a censer in his hand (8:11), and EVERY man was doing these things in the chambers of his imagery (8:12).

The fact that others were supporting and approving their actions did not lessen the seriousness of their sins.

Wrong is wrong no matter who is “in it” with you.

Right is right no matter who disapproves of your doing it.

“Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment” (Exodus 23:1,2).

Paul illustrated this principle in his own life and in his relationship with the other apostles: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me” (Galatians 1:15-24).

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF APPARENT LEGITIMACY.

Ritual and ceremony seem to make people think that some things are “legitimate.”

The farther men wander from truth and right, the more they seem to feel the need to put on a greater show with robes, symbolic colors, symbols, dimmed lights, candles...

The ancients had borrowed the incense and censers from the sons of Aaron and used that which had a legitimate purpose in the true worship of Jehovah in their sickening worship of carvings on cold stone.

Their own eyes were likely impressed with the grand display of their religious devotion. God, on the other hand, saw abomination. "And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here" (8:9).

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS.

Jaazaniah, whose name means "God is watching," is the only one named among those involved.

His family was well known and well respected (if we have traced it out correctly).

His father was a faithful scribe under the good king, Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-14).

His brother, Ahikam, had been a willing helper in the restoration under Josiah (2 Kings 22:12-20).

Another brother, Elasa, had delivered his message from Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:3).

Yet another brother, Gemariah, had been a righteous worker (Jeremiah 36:10ff).

Obviously, the oldest and wisest of Judah considered him to be one of their own.

One might assume great things concerning Jaazaniah because of his family.

This assumption would be unwarranted, and it must have been distressing to Ezekiel to see him among this group.

We must not excuse, endorse, or participate in the sins of the Absaloms, Hophnis, and Phineasses among us because of our respect for the Davids and Elis and those who love or respect them. God is watching.

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM GOD BEHIND THE WALL OF TROUBLE.

Judah had had its share.

Their land had been overrun by a foreign power.

Their brethren had been carried into captivity.

They had been disgraced and humiliated before the nations.

They should have turned to God as David had in the midst of personal and national distress (Psalm 13:1; 35:17; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46).

Instead, they gave up on God and turned to lifeless idols.

They rejected the One who was, alone, able to help them.

We can all expect trials and difficulties to come our way. They will pass.

Please do not excuse your own sins because of these trials.

While it is reasonable and right to have compassion upon others who are distressed, you do them no favor when you excuse their sins because of some real or imagined difficulties.

Keep your eye upon heaven and help other brethren to go there with you. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24,25).

CONCLUSION

The sins of these “ancients” are often repeated in our day.

Please do not forget that God is watching.

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