

Behind closed doors
(A study of Ezekiel 8)
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Introduction: Warning! You are about to see men as God does.

- A. Men without the influence of God's word are wicked. (**Jer 9:9; 14:14; 17:9**)
 - 1. When you life is based on the flesh you will take "short cuts."
 - 2. If "religion" has an earthly advantage then you will do that for a while.
 - 3. If a man does not trust God then dishonesty "makes sense."
- B. We need to see the true nature of a living God. (**Heb 4:12-13**)
 - 1. If someone walks in and everything that you are doing is seen then there is no point denying it. Right?
 - 2. The real issue is do we know God? Men approach their "god" that cannot see.

I. Ezekiel meets the Elders of God's people and then meets the living God (8:1-5)

- A. The Elders of Israel represented the spiritual Shepherd of God's people. (**8:1**)
 - 1. They looked and dressed like good men. Ezekiel is about to see as God does.
 - 2. Jesus knew men for who they really were. (**Jn 2:23-24**)
 - a. What is a hypocrite? hupokrites 1) one who answers, an interpreter
 - b) an actor, stage player 3) a dissembler, pretender, hypocrite.
 - 3. Dishonesty is the foundation of the hypocrite's character.
- B. Ezekiel comes into the presence of God. (**8:2-5**)
 - 1. God wants us to know His nature. Our God is fire and light!
 - 2. No sin is in Him or can abide in His presence. (**1 Jn 1:5-6**)
 - 3. God now allows Ezekiel to bear a burden, he will now see these men as God does!

C. Ezekiel sees their works in contrast to the glory of God.

- 1. He is brought to the temple and sees some incredible scenes.
- 2. An idol, "the image of jealousy *was*, which provokes to jealousy" was there.
- 3. What if these men had known the living God? (**Ezek 16:38; 23:25**)
- 4. Paul wanted Christians to know this well. God will not share us!
(**1 Cor 10:22; 11:2**)
- 5. This idol was in the open and the Elders would have denied their sin.

II. Ezekiel through the Spirit of God now sees behind closed doors (8:6-12)

- A. Sin causes God to depart from us! (**8:6**)
 - 1. The most incredible thing about this is that these Elders thought God was with them! (**Isa 59:1-2**)
 - 2. The desire to practice sin causes men to justify anything.
- B. What are the hidden sins of the hypocrite? (**8:7-12**)
 - 1. This room was off limits except to the priests. The Elders used it because the people could not see them.
 - 2. Can you imagine this scene? A room filled with idols, the walls covered with idols, and secret worship to idols by the leaders of God's people?
 - 3. The most incredible statement is made about their thoughts about the nature of God!

- C. The acceptance of sin and deceit has a terrible fruit.
 - 1. Dishonesty has a progressive effect upon the mind. **(1 Tim 4:1-2)**
 - a. How many have told a lie so many times that they believe it?
 - b. When you want something so bad your “thinking” lines up with your desires. **(2 Thess 2:10-11)**
 - c. Ever have a Bible study with someone like this?
 - 2. Jesus described these influential men as “blind.” **(Mt 15:10-14)**
 - a. Jesus tells us to protect the heart! Just as drugs have a progressive effect and eventually enslaves, so does dishonesty.
 - b. Could men think they are serving God but in reality miss the foundation of what God wants? **(Mt 23:23-24)**
 - c. Some of the greatest hypocrites of today will condemn the Pharisees.

III. The fruit of hypocrisy (8:13-16)

- A. Hypocrites think that their actions only affect them.
 - 1. Ask anyone who has had a relationship with one like this can bear witness.
 - 2. Satan knows there will be fruit that will abound in others. **(Rom 2:17-24)**
 - 3. Consider the deep commitment that many under these Elders had made to Satan. **(8:13-16)**
- B. Jesus knew that this kind of “religion” can be taught and shared.
 - 1. Imagine the stern warning of Jesus himself. **(Lk 12:1-3)**
 - 2. The temptation to become a hypocrite is great. *It is not hard to be one.*
 - 3. The Pharisee’s were very successful in duplicating their character. **(Mt 23:15, 27-28)**

IV. What can we do to avoid hypocrisy?

- A. We need tender hearts. Consider the reaction of the disciples. **(Mk 14:18-19)**
 - 1. We need to ask as His disciples did at the last supper: “Is it I?”
 - 2. Are you teachable?
- B. We need close associations with spiritual men. **(Gal 2:11-13)**
 - 1. When men have little associations with Christians and close associations with the world this is done for a reason.
 - 2. Sadly there are some Christians that are too “spiritual” to rebuke.
- C. We need to love justice and mercy and faith. **(Mt 23:23)**
 - 1. Hypocrisy will cause men to be critical and merciless. **(Jas 2:13)**
 - 2. We can be a hypocrite that hates hypocrisy.
 - 3. Did Jesus condemn openness and rebuke here? **(Mt 7:1-5)**
 - a. Some view their “spirituality” only in terms of criticism.
 - b. Some of the weakest Christians I know think there are in fact strong.
 - 4. When we are concerned only for ourselves then we will run over others that get in our way. **(Lk 13:15-16; Jn 16:1-3)**

Conclusion: Can you see what is going on behind your closed doors? **(Rev 3:20-21)**