

Ezekiel 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

Analysis

Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. God commands Ezekiel to observe specific idolatrous object in the temple, beginning the systematic exposure of abominations. The image of jealousy represents idolatry that provokes divine jealousy, violating the first and second commandments.

Son of man is Ezekiel characteristic title, appearing over 90 times in this book. It emphasizes human frailty and mortality in contrast to divine glory, reminding the prophet of his creaturely status before the Creator. Lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north gives specific directional instruction, showing God deliberately guides Ezekiel through this vision to witness particular sins.

At the gate of the altar this image of jealousy locates the idol at the temple altar entrance, where worshipers would encounter it immediately. This image of jealousy likely refers to an Asherah pole or image (2 Kings 21:7) or similar idolatrous object. Which provoketh to jealousy reveals divine interpretation—this idol violates covenant exclusivity, provoking God righteous jealousy for His people undivided worship.

From Reformed perspective, this demonstrates God holy jealousy is not petty human emotion but righteous response to covenant violation. He entered exclusive relationship with Israel; idolatry is spiritual adultery. This points to Christ as the bridegroom who desires His church undivided affection (2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-27).

Historical Context

The image of jealousy likely refers to Asherah worship, a Canaanite goddess often paired with Baal. Despite repeated prophetic condemnations and Josiah reform (2 Kings 23:4-7), idolatrous practices had returned to the temple under his successors. King Manasseh earlier set up Asherah pole in the temple (2 Kings 21:7), which Josiah removed; evidently it had been restored.

Archaeological discoveries from this period include numerous female figurines throughout Judah, confirming widespread goddess worship syncretized with Yahwism. The location at the altar gate was strategic—it affected everyone coming to offer sacrifices, corrupting worship at its entry point.

The phrase provoketh to jealousy recalls covenant language. Exodus 20:5 declares I the LORD thy God am a jealous God. Deuteronomy 32:16,21 warned they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods. This jealousy is not insecurity but covenant fidelity—God demands exclusive worship because He alone is God and Israel sole redeemer.

For Ezekiel audience, this revelation exposed the root problem. Jerusalem fall would not be arbitrary disaster or divine weakness but justified judgment against covenant violation at the highest level—temple worship itself had been corrupted.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God jealousy teach about the nature of covenant relationship?
2. How does idolatry in worship spaces demonstrate deeper spiritual adultery?
3. In what ways do churches today place images that provoke God jealousy at their gates?
4. What is the difference between God righteous jealousy and sinful human jealousy?
5. How does Christ exclusive claim on believers reflect God covenant jealousy (Matthew 6:24)?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר Then said H559	אֵלַי H413	בֵּן he unto me Son H1121	אָדָם of man H120	וָאֲשָׁא So I lifted up H5375	נָא H4994	עֵינַי mine eyes H5869
דֶּרֶךְ now the way H1870	וּמִצְפּוֹן and behold northward H6828	וָאֲשָׁא So I lifted up H5375	עֵינַי mine eyes H5869	דֶּרֶךְ now the way H1870		
וּמִצְפּוֹן and behold northward H6828	וְהִנֵּה H2009	וּמִצְפּוֹן and behold northward H6828	לְשַׁעַר at the gate H8179	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ of the altar H4196		
זֶה this image H5566	הַקִּנְיָן of jealousy H7068	הַזֶּה H2088	בַּבֹּאֶה: in the entry H872			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 8:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

Jeremiah 3:2 (Parallel theme): Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

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