

Ezekiel Chapter 23

Ezekiel 23:1-2 "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying," "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:"

This is the beginning of a new prophecy.

This chapter describes the spiritual infidelity of Israel and Judah, pictured as two sisters, to convey the gravity of sin in Judah. "One mother" refers to the united kingdom, while "two women" refers to the divided kingdom.

Ezekiel 23:3 "And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity."

Israel had not become the wife of God, when she was in Egypt. She was even thought of as the family of Jacob, at that time. She would have been the two virgins then. They were in Egypt over 400 years where they picked up idol worship it appears, when they were there. This was the time they were "in their youth" and the time they became unfaithful to God because of their idol worship.

They became the wife of God, when they made covenant with God on the way to the Promised Land. They promised to keep God's laws and commandments. They actually went into covenant relationship with God. They became His wife. All of this is in a spiritual sense, and not in the literal.

Ezekiel 23:4 "And the names of them [were] Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus [were] their names; Samaria [is] Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah."

We know from the Scripture above, that, the two sisters meant Samaria, the capital of the Northern tribes, and Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern tribes.

In the Hebrew Bible, Oholah and Oholibah (or: Aholah and Aholibah) are pejorative names given by the prophet Ezekiel to the kingdom of Israel and Judah respectively.

There is a pun in these names in the Hebrew. Oholah means "her tent", and Oholibah means "my tent is in her". Ezekiel's rhetoric portrays Oholah and Oholibah, or Samaria and Jerusalem, as the daughters of one mother. Both are said to be "brides of God", and both are guilty of idolatry and of religious and political alliances with Gentile nations.

These kingdoms are described as prostitutes and adulteresses, given up to the abominations and idolatries of the Egyptians and Assyrians. Because of Oholah's crimes, she was carried away captive, and ceased to be a kingdom.

Aholah had her separate dwelling place apart from the temple, represents Samaria and is the Northern kingdom. Here Jeroboam had set up worship, which God rejected.

Aholibah, "My tabernacle is in her," represents Jerusalem or the Southern kingdom, where God did establish worship.

Ezekiel 23:5 "And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians [her] neighbors,"

Samaria's lovers were nations she had signed treaties with. Assyria, one of Samaria's lovers, is the very country that God uses to chastise the 10 tribes, when they go into captivity. Samaria had belonged to God in the beginning. She made peace treaties with the world, which Assyria symbolizes here.

The national god of Assyria was Ashur. Their religious worship was patterned after Babylonia. They worshipped many false gods such as Ishtar, Anu, Bel, and Ea. Samaria picked up some of their idol worship from them.

Aholah or the Northern kingdom of Israel was a harlot, in a spiritual sense, by seeking union for fulfillment and security with idolatrous, young, wealthy, attractive Assyria. Assyria turned on her, conquered her, and deported Israel (in 722 B.C.).

Ezekiel 23:6 "[Which were] clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses."

The Assyrians appealed to the flesh of the Samaritans. Israel (Samaria), thought highly of the military of Assyria. They made quite an impression on them, and they sought their protection.

Ezekiel 23:7 "Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them [that were] the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself."

They turned from the worship of the One True God to the worship of these Assyrian idols. The whoredoms, spoken of here, are speaking of committing spiritual adultery. To worship false gods, was spiritual adultery.

Ezekiel 23:8 "Neither left she her whoredoms [brought] from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her."

The sin of idol worship with them had never stopped, since Egypt. They had never truly given up their worship of false gods. God was displeased with her idol worship in Egypt. The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was partially to get the ways of Egypt out of her.

Ezekiel 23:9 "Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted."

Now, we see that God had allowed the Assyrians to capture the 10 tribes, and carry them into captivity in Assyria. They were in Captivity in Assyria 136 years, before the capture of Judah by the Babylonians. The very ones she had put her confidence in, captured her and put her in captivity.

Ezekiel 23:10 "These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her."

It was her punishment that became famous. Assyria realized her weakness, and came in and took her. Of course, this could not have happened, had it not been the will of God. God allowed this to happen, as a chastisement upon her.

Ezekiel 23:11 "And when her sister Aholibah saw [this], she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in [her] whoredoms."

Aholibah symbolized Jerusalem, or Judah. Remember, that the temple of God was in Jerusalem. One of the things that caused the 10 tribes to be captured for a longer period of time, than Jerusalem and Judah, was the fact that all of their kings were evil, where Judah had a few that were not evil. Actually out of the 19 kings they had, 8 of them were good kings.

It does look like the capture by the Assyrians, would have caused the tribe of Judah to have learned from their error and repented, but it did not. In fact, instead of repenting and turning back to God, they began worshipping more false gods and making more idols than they had before.

Earlier we discovered that the rulers, priests and elders were doing this in God's house. But that wasn't all as they were involved in physical adultery as well. Plus they had sacrificed children to Moloch.

Ezekiel 23:12 "She doted upon the Assyrians [her] neighbors, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men."

Ahaz placed Judah under the protection of Assyria, a political move denounced by Isaiah (Isa. 7:13-17).

"Doted" means to breathe sensually. This speaks of adultery. God does not want His wife (Israel), finding help from others. This is speaking of spiritual adultery. They were taken of them, because it appeared they were so strong militarily.

Ezekiel 23:13 "Then I saw that she was defiled, [that] they [took] both one way,"

This, of course, is speaking of Judah. They have defiled themselves with Assyria.

Ezekiel 23:14 "And [that] she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,"

They went even further with their unfaithfulness to God than did Samaria. It appears, they were so taken by the statues of men who were great military men that they began to worship them. "Vermillion" means red ochre.

Judah was drawn to portraits of Babylonian men, done in brilliant colors, lusting for the Chaldean lifestyle. Social and political alliance led to spiritual defection.

Ezekiel 23:15 "Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity:"

These images were of princes with beautiful brightly colored turbans upon their heads, as some of the monuments of Nimrod have.

Ezekiel 23:16 "And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea."

Notice, this was appealing to the eye. This is one of the temptations that Eve faced. The lust of the eyes, many times, is what causes the lust to become a reality.

Ezekiel 23:17 "And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them."

The description here portrays spiritual unfaithfulness graphically.

This lust of the eyes was for the great military power and the great wealth they possessed. This was a political defilement here. God had always protected Israel, and He did not plan for them to seek help from the world. This is showing a lack of confidence in God, when they place their confidence in Babylon.

Even Josiah had been a king pleasing unto God, but Jehoiakim and Zedekiah were not pleasing unto Him. Zedekiah was actually put into power by Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel 23:18 "So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister."

God had not liked the ten tribes seeking help from Assyria, and He did not like Judah accepting help from Babylon. Both, in His sight, had committed spiritual adultery. They had made an alliance with the world.

Ezekiel 23:19 "Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt."

The false gods of Babylon were not enough; she actually still worshipped the false gods of Egypt. Both, Babylon and Egypt were symbols of the evil world.

Judah renewed her old sins from the days of Egypt, returning to her first degradation.

Ezekiel 23:20 "For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh [is as] the flesh of asses, and whose issue [is like] the issue of horses."

Judah had courted the favors of these Egyptian princes. She remembered the Egyptians with fondness. In the spiritual sense, they committed adultery with Egypt.

Ezekiel 23:21 "Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth."

Even before they had gone into covenant relationship with God, they had worshipped the false gods of Egypt. They were promised to God, but had not become His wife at that stage.

Ezekiel 23:22 "Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;"

God's anger at Judah's sin prompted His bringing Babylonians and others to deal severely with her.

The lovers, which turned against Judah, were the Chaldeans. God will use the very ones they had put their confidence in, to destroy them.

The passage sets forth how Judah's companion nations were the instruments of her judgment.

Ezekiel 23:23 "The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, [and] all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses."

Pekod, Shoa, and Koa are three different Aramean tribes.

Ezekiel 23:24 "And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, [which] shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments."

This is describing a great army that will come against them. The Babylonians, and the Egyptians, had such an army. God will place them into the hands of those they had put their trust in. God had always fought Israel's battles for them. This time the battle will be theirs alone. They are much smaller, and not as well equipped as the mighty army, spoken of here.

Ezekiel 23:25 "And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire."

Atrocities by Babylonians would include facial dismemberment, ancient punishment for an adulteress practiced in Egypt, Chaldea and elsewhere so we do know that severe things like this were done.

They poked out the eyes of Zedekiah. The other things are really what did happen in the conquest.

Ezekiel 23:26 "They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels."

The siege came, and they took everything they had. They took everything of any value. The verse above, is speaking of leaving them the way they were born, naked and without anything of value.

Ezekiel 23:27 "Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom [brought] from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more."

God will prove to them in this that their only help is from Him. They in desperation, will reach out to God for help. God will have proved that all the false gods together could not help them. He was their only help.

Ezekiel 23:28 "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand [of them] whom thou hatest, into the hand [of them] from whom thy mind is alienated:"

This is another statement, that the ones they had put their confidence in, are the very ones who came to destroy them. They had once claimed them as lovers, now they hate them.

Ezekiel 23:29 "And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labor, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms."

These are heathen lands. They have no compassion upon them at all.

Their enemies will destroy many of them, plunder their belongings, including their livestock, clothing, food, crops and those they do leave will be left with virtually nothing.

Their love had turned on them. Their lover had left them naked and alone.

Ezekiel 23:30 "I will do these [things] unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, [and] because thou art polluted with their idols."

This entire chapter is speaking of the unfaithfulness of the people, when they looked for help from the world and its idols and not from God.

Ezekiel 23:31 "Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand."

The sister, Samaria, had made the very same mistake, by looking to Assyria for answers. We see that the very same punishment that came on the sister, comes on Judah as well. The same sin deserves the same punishment.

Ezekiel 23:32 "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much."

This great people, who had been the chosen of God and respected by all lands, will now be thought of as accursed by her enemies. They lost all respect for Judah, when their God forsook them. Their cup had ceased to be a cup of blessings. It is now, filled with the wrath of God.

Ezekiel 23:33 "Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria."

Judah was to experience the “cup” of God’s judgment as Samaria had (in 722 B.C.). Often the idea of “drinking a cup” is symbolic of receiving god’s wrath.

This is speaking of the drunkenness, because of the siege which came on them when they were attacked by the Chaldeans. Their sorrow, astonishment, and desolation came on them all at once. God had turned His back on them.

Ezekiel 23:34 "Thou shalt even drink it and suck [it] out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken [it], saith the Lord GOD."

This is speaking of Judah as a desolate adulterous wife of God. The natural source of nourishment for the children will be no more. This just speaks of the desperation, when God abandons them.

Ezekiel 23:35 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms."

The sins of an adulterous wife are the cause of this terrible calamity that has come upon Judah. The Husband is not sympathetic so she must bear the punishment for her own sins.

Verses 36-42: The prophet detailed a shameful summary of God’s case against the nation, a double arraignment calling for judgment.

Ezekiel 23:36 "The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations;"

God is telling Ezekiel to judge them, and see that their punishment is right for their sins.

Ezekiel 23:37 "That they have committed adultery, and blood [is] in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through [the fire], to devour [them]."

Their abomination and adultery, they had committed, was the worship of idols and false gods. The false god, they made their children walk through the fire for, was Molech.

“Blood is in their hands” means they have shed the blood of others.

Ezekiel 23:38 "Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths."

This again, is speaking of the idols they had brought into the sanctuary itself (read chapters 8 to 11). As to the Sabbaths, they were not following God’s law on obeying the Sabbath.

Ezekiel 23:39 "For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house."

The fact they sacrificed to these false gods on the very day they sacrificed in the temple, was an abomination, as well. These Hebrews, who regarded children as blessings from God, had even sacrificed their children.

Ezekiel 23:40 "And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger [was] sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments,"

These were the same men that had been spoken of as their lovers earlier. They were Babylonians and Assyrians, and others like them. They dressed as if their lovers were coming, even painting themselves up, as a harlot would.

Ezekiel 23:41 "And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil."

This table is where they burned the incense that rightly belonged to God. This incense was to be burned to God alone.

Ezekiel 23:42 "And a voice of a multitude being at ease [was] with her: and with the men of the common sort [were] brought Sabean from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads."

These were people of the common sort. Certainly, they were not worshippers of God. Sabeans: This word (in Ezek. 23:42), should be read, as in the margin of the Authorized Version, and in the Revised Version, "drunkards."

This Scripture is intended to convey their continuation into worse and worse sins.

Ezekiel 23:43 "Then said I unto [her that was] old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she [with them]?"

This spiritual adultery had been going on so long, God speaks of it, here, as being done not only with the leaders but with the commoners as well. Seems they have fallen so deep in sin, it doesn't make any difference with who or why anymore.

Ezekiel 23:44 "Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women."

This is speaking of the ungodly Jews who had completely forgotten or turned against God. She had completely lost her honor and now would have to face the judgment which was about to come.

Ezekiel 23:45 "And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they [are] adulteresses, and blood [is] in their hands."

This likely refers to the remnant of godly people in the nation who would affirm the justice of judgment and would be led into captivity as they were told to do by the prophets. These would be the remnant who would live although they would still go into captivity until the 70 years were completed before returning to Jerusalem when the second temple was rebuilt.

Ezekiel 23:46 "For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled."

God brings war on these unfaithful. This will be shown (as we go into chapter 24).

Ezekiel 23:47 "And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire."

All of this is divine judgment on God's unfaithful wife (Israel). All will suffer in this siege.

Ezekiel 23:48 "Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness."

Of course, the wife of God is not just women. They are spoken of as women, because symbolically, they are the wife of God.

Ezekiel 23:49 "And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord GOD."

This is another statement that, their sin of idolatry brought this terrible siege upon them. God did not choose to destroy them, but must, because of their sins. All the world must know that He is God. The warnings are to be fulfilled, because God spoke them.

Ezekiel Chapter 23 Questions

1. Who is this prophecy speaking of?
2. Who are the women in verse 2?
3. What were the whoredoms they had committed?
4. When did they become the wife of God?
5. What were the names of the two sisters?
6. Who do each of them symbolize?
7. What does the word "Aholah" mean?
8. What does "Aholibah" mean?
9. The tent is the same as the _____ in the wilderness.
10. Who were Samaria's lovers?
11. What was the national god of Assyria?
12. Who were some other false gods they worshipped?
13. The Assyrians appealed to the _____ of the Samaritans.
14. They turned from worship of the _____.
15. To worship false gods, was _____.
16. Where were the ten tribes carried captive?
17. What was one reason for their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness?
18. God allowed their capture, as a _____ upon them.
19. Why did the 10 tribes spend more time in Captivity, than the two tribes of Judah?
20. What does "doted" mean?
21. Who is the wife of God?
22. What does "vermillion" mean?
23. What was on the heads of the images?
24. What kind of defilement is verse 17 speaking of?

25. Who put Zedekiah into power?
26. The alliance Judah had made was with the _____.
27. Who, besides the false gods of Babylon, did Judah worship?
28. Pekod, Shoa, and Koa could be what?
29. What is verse 24 describing?
30. Taking away the nose and ears was punishment for what?
31. Who came to destroy Judah?
32. This entire chapter is speaking of what?
33. What had God fit the punishment to?
34. Who was to judge Aholah and Aholibah?
35. The false god, they made their children walk through the fire for was _____.
36. What does "lewd" mean?
37. What was the punishment for adultery?
38. Who were the women of verse 48?
39. All the world must know that He is _____.