

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Ezekiel Chapter 23-24

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Ezekiel Chapter 23

Two Adulterous Sisters - Verses 1-21

The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ³They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed. ⁴The older was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. They were mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem. ⁵“Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians—warriors ⁶clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen. ⁷She gave herself as a prostitute to all the elite of the Assyrians and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after. ⁸She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when during her youth men slept with her, caressed her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her. ⁹“Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. ¹⁰They stripped her naked, took away her sons and daughters and killed her with the sword. She became a byword among women, and punishment was inflicted on her. ¹¹“Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet in her lust and prostitution she was more depraved than her sister. ¹²She too lusted after the Assyrians—governors and commanders, warriors in full dress, mounted horsemen, all handsome young men. ¹³I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way.

¹⁴“But she carried her prostitution still further. She saw men portrayed on a wall, figures of Chaldeans^[a] portrayed in red, ¹⁵with belts around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of Chaldea.^[b] ¹⁶As soon as she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. ¹⁷Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust they defiled her. After she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust. ¹⁸When she carried on her prostitution openly and exposed her naked body, I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister. ¹⁹Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt. ²⁰There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses. ²¹So you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled.

23:1 Ezekiel continued his discussion of the reasons for God's judgment by telling a further allegory. He compared the northern and southern kingdoms to two sisters who became prostitutes. The proud citizens of Jerusalem had long scorned their sister city of Samaria, thinking that they of Jerusalem were superior. But God called both of these cities prostitutes—a shock to the people of Jerusalem, who thought they were righteous. Just as the imagery of this message was shocking and distasteful to the people, so our sins are repugnant to God.

23:4-6 Oholah (meaning “her tent”), the northern kingdom of Israel, was lured away from God by the dashing Assyrians—their fashionable clothes and powerful positions. The people of Israel coveted their youth, strength, power, wealth, and pleasure—the same qualities people think will bring happiness today. But the charming Assyrians drew Israel away from God.

23:11 Oholibah (meaning "my tent is in her") was shown to be worse, because she did not learn from the judgment upon her sister, but continued in her lust for the Assyrians and Babylonians. Therefore, her judgment was equally certain. Just as Oholibah was privileged and should have known better, so we are privileged because we know about Christ. We need to be doubly sure that we follow him.

23:12 "She too lusted after the Assyrians" probably means that Judah excessively tried to please Assyria and may refer to Ahaz's paying protection money to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 16:7-8).

23:17 At first, Judah made an alliance with Babylonia (Chaldea), but then changed its mind. During the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, Judah looked to Egypt for help. Judah's unfaithfulness (its alliances with godless nations) cost it the only real protection it ever had—God.

Two Adulterous Sisters - Verses 22-49

²² "Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side—
²³ the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, all of them governors and commanders, chariot officers and men of high rank, all mounted on horses. ²⁴ They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons and with a throng of people; they will take up positions against you on every side with large and small shields and with helmets. I will turn you over to them for punishment, and they will punish you according to their standards. ²⁵ I will direct my jealous anger against you, and they will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will fall by the sword. They will take away your sons and daughters, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire. ²⁶ They will also strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry. ²⁷ So I will put a stop to the lewdness and prostitution you began in Egypt. You will not look on these things with longing or remember Egypt anymore. ²⁸ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to deliver you into the hands of those you hate, to those you turned away from in disgust. ²⁹ They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you stark naked, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity ³⁰ have brought this on you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. ³¹ You have gone the way of your sister; so I will put her cup into your hand. ³² "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You will drink your sister's cup, a cup large and deep; it will bring scorn and derision, for it holds so much. ³³ You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of ruin and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria. ³⁴ You will drink it and drain it dry and chew on its pieces—and you will tear your breasts. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

³⁵ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Since you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution." ³⁶ The LORD said to me: "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then confront them with their detestable practices, ³⁷ for they have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; they even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to me, as food for them. ³⁸ They have also done this to me: At that same time they defiled my sanctuary and desecrated my Sabbaths. ³⁹ On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house.

⁴⁰ "They even sent messengers for men who came from far away, and when they arrived you bathed yourself for them, applied eye makeup and put on your jewelry. ⁴¹ You sat on an elegant couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed the incense and olive oil that belonged to me. ⁴² "The noise of a carefree crowd was around her; drunkards were brought from the desert along with men from the rabble, and they put bracelets on the wrists of the woman

and her sister and beautiful crowns on their heads. ⁴³ Then I said about the one worn out by adultery, 'Now let them use her as a prostitute, for that is all she is.' ⁴⁴ And they slept with her. As men sleep with a prostitute, so they slept with those lewd women, Oholah and Oholibah. ⁴⁵ But righteous judges will sentence them to the punishment of women who commit adultery and shed blood, because they are adulterous and blood is on their hands. ⁴⁶ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Bring a mob against them and give them over to terror and plunder. ⁴⁷ The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses. ⁴⁸ "So I will put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not imitate you. ⁴⁹ You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness and bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD."

23:22-26 This predicts the last attack on Jerusalem that would destroy the city and bring to Babylonia the third wave of captives in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 52). The first attack came in 605 B.C., the second in 597 B.C. Pekod, Shoa, and Koa were Babylonian allies.

23:39 The Israelites went so far as to sacrifice their own children to idols and then to sacrifice to the Lord the same day. This made a mockery of worship. We cannot praise God and willfully sin at the same time. That would be like a person going to bed with a neighbor and then celebrating his or her wedding anniversary.

Ezekiel Chapter 24

Jerusalem as a Cooking Pot - Verses 1-14

24 In the ninth year, in the tenth month on the tenth day, the word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. ³ Tell this rebellious people a parable and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'Put on the cooking pot; put it on and pour water into it. ⁴ Put into it the pieces of meat, all the choice pieces—the leg and the shoulder. Fill it with the best of these bones; ⁵ take the pick of the flock. Pile wood beneath it for the bones; bring it to a boil and cook the bones in it. ⁶ "'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! Take the meat out piece by piece in whatever order it comes. ⁷ "'For the blood she shed is in her midst: She poured it on the bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground, where the dust would cover it. ⁸ To stir up wrath and take revenge I put her blood on the bare rock, so that it would not be covered. ⁹ "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'Woe to the city of bloodshed! I, too, will pile the wood high. ¹⁰ So heap on the wood and kindle the fire. Cook the meat well, mixing in the spices; and let the bones be charred. ¹¹ Then set the empty pot on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows, so that its impurities may be melted and its deposit burned away. ¹² It has frustrated all efforts; its heavy deposit has not been removed, not even by fire. ¹³ "'Now your impurity is lewdness. Because I tried to cleanse you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity, you will not be clean again until my wrath against you has subsided. ¹⁴ "'I the LORD have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will not have pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"

24:1-14 Ezekiel gave this illustration in 588 B.C., about three years after the first of the previous messages (see 20:1-2). The people in Judah thought they were the good pieces of "meat" because they hadn't been taken into captivity in 597 when the Babylonians last invaded the land. Ezekiel used this

illustration before (chapter 11) to show that though the people thought they were safe and secure inside the cooking pot, this pot would actually be the place of their destruction. This message was given to the exiles in Babylonia the very day that the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem (24:2), beginning a siege that lasted over two years and resulted in the city's destruction. When God's punishment comes, it is relentless.

24:6-13 The city of Jerusalem was like a pot so encrusted with sin that it would not come clean. God wanted to cleanse the lives of those who lived in Jerusalem, and he wants to cleanse our lives today. Sometimes he tries to purify us through difficulties and troublesome circumstances. When you face tough times, allow the sin to be burned from your life. Look at your problems as an opportunity for your faith to grow. When these times come, unnecessary priorities and diversions are purged away. We can reexamine our lives so that we will do what really counts.

Ezekiel's Wife Dies - Verses 15 - 27

¹⁵ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶ "Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. ¹⁷ Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover your mustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners." ¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. ¹⁹ Then the people asked me, "Won't you tell us what these things have to do with us? Why are you acting like this?" ²⁰ So I said to them, "The word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ Say to the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword. ²² And you will do as I have done. You will not cover your mustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners. ²³ You will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep but will waste away because of your sins and groan among yourselves. ²⁴ Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.' ²⁵ "And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes, their heart's desire, and their sons and daughters as well— ²⁶ on that day a fugitive will come to tell you the news. ²⁷ At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with him and will no longer be silent. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD."

24:15-18 God told Ezekiel that his wife would die and that he should not grieve for her. Ezekiel obeyed God fully, even as Hosea did when he was told to marry an unfaithful woman (Hosea 1:2-3). In both cases, these unusual events were intended as symbolic acts to illustrate God's relationship with his people. Obeying God can carry a high price, but not obeying God will cost you more—eternal life. We should be wholehearted in our obedience to God as Ezekiel was. We can begin by doing all that God commands us to do, even when we don't feel like it. Are you willing to serve God as completely as Ezekiel did?

24:20-24 Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn for his dead wife in order to show his fellow exiles that they were not to mourn publicly over Jerusalem when it was destroyed. Any personal sorrow felt would soon be eclipsed by national sorrow over the horror of the city's total destruction. The individuals would waste away because of their sins, which caused the city's destruction.

24:27 For some time Ezekiel had not been allowed to speak except when God gave him a message to deliver to the people (3:25-27). This restriction would soon end when Jerusalem was destroyed and all Ezekiel's prophecies about Judah and Jerusalem had come true (33:21-22).