

## Redeemer C.S.I Church Kansas Bible study

### Ezekiel Chapter 23 on 09/26/2024 (7 Pm to 8 Pm)

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Ezekiel 23 presents a vivid and symbolic allegory concerning the spiritual unfaithfulness of both the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) and the southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). The chapter is notorious for its explicit language and imagery, using the metaphor of two sisters—Oholah (representing Samaria) and Oholibah (representing Jerusalem)—to describe the idolatry and faithlessness of God's people.

1. **The Allegory of the Two Sisters** (Ezekiel 23:1-4) - Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem): The names are significant. "Oholah" means "her tent," suggesting Samaria's separation from Yahweh's true worship at the Jerusalem temple. "Oholibah" means "my tent is in her," indicating that God had chosen Jerusalem as the center of His worship. These two cities represent the divided kingdoms of Israel (Oholah) and Judah (Oholibah). - **Sisters of One Mother:** Both are from the same spiritual lineage, representing the United Kingdom of Israel before the split after Solomon's reign. This reflects how both kingdoms share in the same covenant with God but have broken faith in Him.

2. Oholah's (Samaria's) **Apostasy and Punishment** (Ezekiel 23:5-10) - Samaria's Idolatry: Oholah (Samaria) is described as having committed "adultery" with the Assyrians. This adultery is metaphorical, representing Israel's alliances with pagan nations and its adoption of their idolatrous practices. - **Judgment:** Because of Samaria's spiritual adultery, God allows her to be handed over to her lovers, the Assyrians, who eventually conquer and exile the northern kingdom in 722 B.C.

3. Oholibah's (Jerusalem's) **Apostasy and Punishment** (Ezekiel 23:11-21) **Jerusalem's Greater Guilt:** Oholibah (Jerusalem) saw what happened to Samaria but instead of learning from it, became even more corrupt. She is described as lusting after the Assyrians, Babylonians, and other foreign nations, symbolizing Judah's political alliances and idolatry. - **Graphic Imagery:** The language used to describe Jerusalem's lust and spiritual infidelity is deliberately graphic,

underscoring the depth of the nation's betrayal of God. Ezekiel uses sexual imagery to convey the seriousness of their covenant violations.

4. **God's Judgment on Jerusalem** (Ezekiel 23:22-35) - **Betrayal by Her Lovers:** God declares that the nations Judah had turned to for help (Assyria, Babylon, etc.) will turn against her. These nations, once Judah's "lovers," will bring about her destruction, which culminates in the Babylonian exile. - **The Cup of Wrath:** In verses 31-34, Jerusalem is made to drink the same "cup" as her sister Samaria, symbolizing the judgment of God. The "cup" is a common biblical metaphor for divine wrath (see also Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15).

5. **The Conclusion of the Allegory** (Ezekiel 23:36-49) - **Both Sisters Judged:** Ezekiel declares that both Samaria and Jerusalem will bear the consequences of their idolatry, violence, and unfaithfulness. The final verses summarize the judgment on both nations, stating that their punishment will be severe because they have defiled God's covenant and worshipped false gods. - **Revelation of Sin:** The graphic description of sin in this chapter serves a dual purpose: to reveal the extent of Israel and Judah's corruption and to show the righteousness of God's judgment. The punishment fits the crime—since the sisters defiled themselves with foreign nations, those very nations would become their oppressors.

**Key Themes:**

1. **Spiritual Adultery:** The primary sin addressed in Ezekiel 23 is idolatry, which is frequently portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as spiritual adultery. Just as a spouse breaking their marital covenant is guilty of adultery, so Israel and Judah are guilty of unfaithfulness to God, who is portrayed as their divine husband.

2. **Divine Judgment:** The consequences of their unfaithfulness are severe. Both Samaria and Jerusalem are depicted as receiving the just punishment for their sins. This punishment includes invasion, destruction, and exile.

3. **Warning to the People:** The graphic imagery and strong language serve as a powerful warning to Ezekiel's audience. Jerusalem is on the verge of falling to Babylon (which occurs in 586 B.C.), and Ezekiel is warning the people of Judah that their continued unfaithfulness will lead to disaster.

**4. God's Holiness and Justice:** The chapter underscores the seriousness of God's covenant with Israel and Judah. Their repeated violations of this covenant through idolatry and alliances with pagan nations highlight God's demand for exclusive worship and faithfulness.

**5. Hope in the Larger Context:** While this chapter is focused on judgment, it is part of Ezekiel's larger message that includes both judgment and restoration. Though the judgment is severe, the book of Ezekiel ends with a vision of the future restoration of Israel, showing that God's ultimate plan is to renew His relationship with His people.

Ezekiel 23 is a vivid and dramatic portrayal of Israel and Judah's unfaithfulness to God, using the metaphor of two adulterous sisters to highlight their idolatry and political alliances with foreign nations. It illustrates God's righteous judgment against sin but, within the broader scope of Ezekiel, it is also part of the larger story of eventual restoration for a remnant of God's people. This chapter invites reflection on the seriousness of spiritual faithfulness and the consequences of abandoning a covenant relationship with God.