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## Ezekiel 23

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Ezekiel 23.

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### Topics.

- A parable of two women with one mother.
- The two women played the whore in Egypt.
- Oholah the elder sister.
- Oholibah the younger sister.
- Judah lusted after people of importance and power.
- Babylon defiled Judah with their whoring and lust.
- The LORD will bring Judah's lovers against them.
- Jerusalem will drink her sister's cup.
- Molech.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

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Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the "likeness" of the LORD". Ezekiel was keenly aware of God's presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem. After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chpt. 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins. For a greater overview of the entire book, visit the introduction to the book of Ezekiel in chapter one.

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**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### EZEKIEL 23:1-2

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#### A Parable of Two Women with One Mother.

- **Ezekiel 23:1-2:** The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother.

**The mother:** is Jerusalem.

**The two women are:**

1. Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) called the Southern Kingdom.
2. Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samarian) called the Northern Kingdom.

**The Two Women played the Whore in Egypt.**

- **Ezekiel 23:2-4:** They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled. <sup>4</sup>Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

**Oholah:** (the elder sister) is Samaria (the ten tribes of Israel).

**Oholibah:** (the younger sister) is Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah).

Oholah and Oholibah became the LORD'S in Egypt, but even in their youth they were unfaithful to God and not surprisingly their sons and daughters have continued in their parent's rebellion which is now at full bloom in the land of Samaria and the city of Jerusalem.

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**EZEKIEL 23:5-10**

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**THE FOCUS IS UPON SAMARIA** (Oholah the elder sister).

- **Ezekiel 23:5-10:** Oholah played the whore while she was mine, and she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors <sup>6</sup>clothed in purple, governors and commanders, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. <sup>7</sup>She bestowed her whoring upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them, and she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone after whom she lusted. <sup>8</sup>She did not give up her whoring that she had begun in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and handled her virgin bosom and poured out their whoring lust upon her. <sup>9</sup>Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted. <sup>10</sup>These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and as for her, they killed her with the sword; and she became a byword among women, when judgment had been executed on her.

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In their youth Israel embraced the gods of Egypt and as they grew their rebellion toward God constantly increased.

Following are the sins that permeated the land of Israel:

- Worship of golden calves at two religious centres (one at Dan the other at Bethel).
- Baal altars and multitudes of other altars were built on their land to worship pagan gods at.
- Drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality.
- The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property.

This idol worship, injustice toward others and indiscriminate, indulgent living resulted God using the armies of Assyria to invade the land of Israel and take the people into captivity.

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**EZEKIEL 23:11**

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**THE FOCUS IS NOW UPON JERUSALEM** (Oholibah the younger Sister).

- **Ezekiel 23:11:** Her sister Oholibah saw this, and she became more corrupt than her sister in her lust and in her whoring, which was worse than that of her sister.

As wicked as Israel was Judah was even worse, especially since they had seen the judgment of God come upon Israel, yet instead of examining themselves and their faith they blindly continued in their rebellion toward God and against everything He valued.

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## EZEKIEL 23:12-15

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### Judah lusted after people of Importance and Power.

- **Ezekiel 23:12-15:** She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and commanders, warriors clothed in full armor, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. <sup>13</sup>And I saw that she was defiled; they both (Israel and Judah) took the same way. <sup>14</sup>But she (Judah) carried her whoring further. She saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermillion (bright colours), <sup>15</sup>wearing belts on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them having the appearance of officers, a likeness of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea.

Chaldea is the country of which Babylon was the capital which conquered Judah and carried its inhabitants into captivity. Chaldea (also called Chaldaea and Chaldeans) is sometimes translated Babylon or Babylonians, because the Chaldeans eventually established the Babylonian dynasty in the country of Chaldea (called Iraq today). It is located at the head of the Persian. The name occurs in King James Bible only in

(Jer. 50:10) (Jer. 51:24, 35) (Ezek. 11:24) (Ezek. 16:29)  
(Ezek. 23:25-16)

Judah was captivated by the beauty and glory of Babylon and enticed by people of importance. Because they lusted after importance and fame themselves, they followed after Babylon's gods and their occulted ways.

**The lesson for today:** many people desire to be seen as someone important or a person of fame, if they can't achieve it on their own they will often attach themselves in some way to someone who is considered important or famous and in many cases adopt their look, clothing, and behaviour. The craving to be considered important is not only valid in the secular world, but sadly is evident in God's family, as it was with Judah. It is dangerous to crave after importance and fame because it has the power to lead people of God away from Him and what He values as it did the inhabitants of Judah.

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## EZEKIEL 23:16-21

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### Babylon Defiled Judah with their Whoring and Lust.

- **Ezekiel 23:16-21:** When she (Judah) saw them (men of importance and power), she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. <sup>17</sup>And the Babylonians came to her (Judah) into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. And after she (Judah) was defiled by them, she turned from them in disgust. <sup>18</sup>When she (Judah) carried on her whoring so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned in disgust from her sister. <sup>19</sup>Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt <sup>20</sup>and lusted after her paramours there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses. <sup>21</sup>Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts."

**A paramour:** is a lover, especially one in a relationship with a married person, in this context it is referring to the gods of Egypt and their idols (built to resemble horses and donkeys). Both Israel and Judah were paramours, because God through the Bible is pictured as the husband of Israel, but Israel is having affairs with other gods. Judah would have been aware that LORD was disgusted with them because God sent prophets to warn them to turn from their wicked ways or they would reap His wrath,

but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD and continued increasing their altars and openly flaunting their idol worship in the city of Jerusalem. After Judah had polluted themselves by their association with the Chaldeans they turned against Babylon the capital city of the Chaldeans in disgust at their religious practices, but they themselves carried on worshipping their idols and other gods so as they had turned from Babylon in disgust because of their corrupt religious practises, God turned from Judah in disgust because of their corrupt religious practises (see verses 40-44).

**Judah openly flaunted her sins:** Judah remembered the days of their youth, and lusted after the idols of Egypt.

**The lesson for today:** when the troubles and stress of life comes our way there is a danger of thinking back to what the world calls the "Good old Days" and trying to recapture some of the past life again. Even though it is an illusion, simply because life moves on, the nostalgia of it entices some into its deceptive trap as it did with Judah and turned them away from God and what He values.

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### EZEKIEL 23:22-31

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#### **The LORD will Bring Judah's Lovers against Them.**

- **Ezekiel 23:22-31:** Therefore (because they longed for the lewdness of their youth) (v21), O *Oholibah* (Jerusalem), thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will stir up against you your lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side: <sup>23</sup>the *Babylonians* and all the *Chaldeans*, *Pekod* and *Shoa* and *Koa*, and all the Assyrians with them, desirable young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. <sup>24</sup>And they shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples. They shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments. <sup>25</sup>And I will direct my jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. <sup>26</sup>They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. <sup>27</sup>Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring begun in the land of Egypt, so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore. <sup>28</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust, <sup>29</sup>and they shall deal with you in hatred and take away all the fruit of your labor and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whoring shall be uncovered. Your lewdness and your whoring <sup>30</sup>have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. <sup>31</sup>You have gone the way of your sister; therefore, I will give her cup into your hand.

#### **The LORD will bring the following nations against Jerusalem:**

- The Assyrians.
- The Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa Koa which are affiliated nations to Babylon.

After the Assyrians had taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) into captivity they invaded the land of Judah and destroyed their farms, their homes and slaughtered the people, but they could not conquer Jerusalem, but years later the Babylonians did.

**God's sovereignty over the nations:** sometimes we read things that display the enormous wonder and mystery of God, the LORD says He will direct His wrath through the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa, Koa and the Assyrians and allow them to judge, according to their judgments the nation of Judah (v24). This is a fabulous example of the truth that God works through the nations and a perfect example of God's control over the nations of this world and His sovereignty over the nations, kingdoms and governments of the world.

**The lesson for today:** we may not fully understand what is happening in the world around us, but we can be fully confident that God does, He is in control, He does have an eternal plan and it will all work out for the eternal good to those who love Him.

The following verses show that God Rules over the Nations.

- He (the LORD) makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away. (Job 12:23).
- The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land (Psalm 10:16).
- For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations (Psalm 22:28).
- The LORD brings the counsel of nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples (Psalm 33:10).
- God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne (Psalm 47:8).
- The LORD rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations (Psalm 66:7).

History evidences the truth contained in these verses. God's vision is eternal, He purposed a plan for earth before it even came into existence, we may not always fully understand what is happening around us, but the faithful who endure the troubles and hardships of life can be confident that whatever happens in their mortal lives it will work to their eternal glory.

**Cut off your nose and your ears:** refers to Judah's king, priests and prophets.

**Your survivors shall fall by the sword:** refers to those who fled from the city of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar entered the city.

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**They shall seize your sons and your daughters:** when the armies of Babylon entered the city of Jerusalem, they slaughtered the people.

**Devoured by fire:** Babylon's armies burned the homes and city of Jerusalem

**Strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels:** King Nebuchadnezzar had all the gold, silver and sacred items of the temple of God taken back to Babylon.

**Deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate:** Babylon took the inhabitants of Jerusalem in chains into Babylonian captivity for seventy years.

**Leave you naked and bare:** the farms and land of Israel became a wilderness for seventy years, because there were no farmers to till the ground and keep the weeds under control and therefore wild animals multiplied upon the land.

**NOTE:** all of these horrific events are about to take place in three years-time.

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## EZEKIEL 23:32-35

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### Jerusalem will Drink Her Sister's Cup.

- **Ezekiel 23:32-35:** Thus says the Lord GOD: "You shall drink your sister's cup that is deep and large; you shall be laughed at and held in derision, for it contains much; <sup>33</sup>you will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow. A cup of horror and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria; <sup>34</sup>you shall drink it and drain it out, and gnaw its shards, and tear your



breasts; for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. <sup>35</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring."

**Oholah:** (the elder sister) is Samaria (the ten tribes of Israel).

**Oholibah:** (the younger sister) is Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah).

Jerusalem will drink her sister's Samaria cup means they will suffer the same punishment. The inhabitants of Jerusalem will be: -

- Scorned, mocked and laughed at.
- Filled with drunkenness (a chaotic and disorientated state of mind and no longer able to carry out everyday tasks).
- Become a horror, ruin and desolation.
- Tear their breasts (suffer enormous grief and sorrow).

The inhabitants of Jerusalem must bear the consequences of their own sin because they have forgotten the Lord their God and cast Him behind their back.

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### THE FOCUS IS NOW UPON JUDAH (OHOLIBAH) AND ISRAEL (OHOLAH)

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#### EZEKIEL 23:36-44

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The message of these verses is horrific, like a demonic horror movie.

- **Ezekiel 23:36-44:** The LORD said to me: "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Declare to them their abominations. <sup>37</sup>For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. <sup>38</sup>Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths. <sup>39</sup>For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. And behold, this is what they did in my house. <sup>40</sup>They even sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and behold, they came. For them you (Oholah and Oholibah) bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. <sup>41</sup>You sat on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. <sup>42</sup>The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and with men of the common sort drunkards were brought from the wilderness; and they (Oholah and Oholibah) put bracelets on the hands of the women, and beautiful crowns on their heads. <sup>43</sup>"Then I said of her (Oholah and Oholibah) who was worn out by adultery, Now they (men from afar) will continue to use her for a whore, even her! <sup>44</sup>For they (men from afar) have gone in to her, as men go in to a prostitute. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, lewd women!

Ezekiel is told to judge Oholah (Israel) and Oholibah (Judah) because of their adultery with their idols.

**Blood is on their hands:** refers to the murder and slaughter of their children by sacrificing them to Molech. At this time Ezekiel and the people who had influence in Jerusalem have been in Babylonian captivity for seven years, and even now those remaining at Jerusalem are still offering up their children as a sacrifice to Molech. These are children borne to God being cruelly murdered to please a pagan god named Molech.

How crushed God's heart must have been when He looked down on such tragedy and horror. Is it any wonder He is about to pour out His wrath out on the city of Jerusalem. For further information see the title:

- Molech (at the end of this chapter).

Adding to this gross cruelty and evil that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were doing to the LORD'S children and to the LORD Himself is their wickedness of defiling His temple and the Sabbath on the very same day they are slaughtering the children of the LORD. The leaders and priests of Jerusalem are pictured as a woman without morals making herself seductively attractive ready to seduce her lovers into her bed (the bed being the temple of God). They brought common people and drunkards into the temple of the LORD, in which only God's priests were to enter and they adorned the beautiful women with jewellery (meaning they lusted after them in the temple).

The LORD says both Judah and Israel have destroyed themselves by adultery and will continue to do so, because now that the nations have had spiritual sex (i.e. been invited into the temple of God) with them they will continue to use her as a prostitute. God is basically saying just as men will use a woman who gives her virginity freely away to all men will be used by those men for easy and free sex, so the men of the surrounding nations of Jerusalem will use the temple of God for their own spiritual experiences and to worship their own gods.

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### EZEKIEL 23:45-49

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#### **Righteous Men will Judge the Inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

- **Ezekiel 23:45-49:** But righteous men shall pass judgment on them (Oholah and Oholibah,) with the sentence of adulteresses, and with the sentence of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands." <sup>46</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD: "Bring up a vast host against them, and make them an object of terror and a plunder. <sup>47</sup>And the host shall stone them and cut them down with their swords. They shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. <sup>48</sup>Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. <sup>49</sup>And they shall return your lewdness upon you, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry, and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD." The LORD says everyone who loves God will clearly see that Israel (Oholah) and Judah (Oholibah) have been spiritual adulteresses and will understand why God has judged them when they are suffering the penalty of their idolatry.

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**The host:** (v47) refers to Babylon it is called the host because it was head of all the nations that came against Jerusalem.

**Will kill their sons and daughters and burn up their houses:** (v47) when Babylon entered Jerusalem, they burned the houses, the city and slaughtered the inhabitants.

**They will know that the LORD is their God:** (v49) God achieved this through Babylon and Cyrus. Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (king of Persia) who the LORD called His shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to pagan gods again).



Both the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Ammonites were sacrificing their children to Molech. The statue of Molech stood in the valley of the son of Hinnom (the Hebrew word for Gehenna) which was a valley of Jerusalem. Molech was so tall that he appeared as if he were staring down from a throne of brass. Fire in the pit beneath the hollow statute would blaze with a loud roar, tongues of flame would reach up and lick around the edges of Molech's open mouth and a column of smoke would billow high into the air and be seen from some distance. The arms of Molech reached upward and out as if waiting to be filled they formed a steep incline that ended in Molech's open mouth. Priests would bring a child to be sacrificed to Molech and chant, Molech, Molech, Molech and the frenzied crowd would also chant Molech, Molech, Molech to the throbbing beat of drums.

While the priests and the crowd chanted to the pounding rhythm of drums, the chief priest faced Molech with his arms raised, pleading with the god in a frenzied cry, when the chief priest finished his prayer, he would lower his arms and lift the child sacrifice in the air. The chief priest would then toss the child into the monsters waiting arms the child would roll down the hot and smoothly polished arms and into Molech's open mouth and the roaring fire and flames would devour the sacrificial child. In the New Testament Gehenna is the valley of Hinnon where the statute of Molech stood. It became a very appropriate symbol for the horror and total destruction of the human body, soul and spirit. How God must have wept as His heart was torn in grief as He looked down on His people doing such cruel and horrific things to the LORD'S children.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*