

Ezekiel 23 – Indictment Against the Final Gentile Nation

By Holly Effiom

VV1-4

Where else in Ezekiel, did we read about a mother and daughters? Eze 16:44-47

In these opening verses of Eze 23, what is God wanting us to remember?

Is the story He is imparting about these women similar to that told in Eze 16?

Would you say that God is “repeating” the same story?

From your experience of the scriptures, what does this mean?

What was the goal of sexually explicitly language in Eze 16? Eze 16:2

Why the reminder of the harlotries in Egypt? Ex 32:15-29; Num 14:1-4; Eze 20:28-30

What were the names of each sister?

- The elder – Aholah (meaning: her own tent)
- The younger – Aholibah (meaning: My tent in her)

What nation does Aholah represent?

What nation does Aholibah represent?

Are these women God’s daughters? How do you know?

Is this family similar to Leah and Rachel and Jacob (Israel)? Gen 29:16-30; 31:19

LESSON: It is interesting how an aspect of Jacob’s story, the two wives (Leah and Rachel), seems woven into the fabric of God’s own story. Why is this understanding significant? Is it significant?

With these first few verses of this chapter, God is calling to remembrance the words and anger expressed in Eze 16. In repeating this story (based on prior experience in reading the Bible) we understand that God is *revealing* something, a deeper understanding of the story transmitted. Ezekiel 16:2 admonishes the prophet to “...cause Jerusalem know her abominations...”, but in chapter 23, *who’s* abominations are being revealed this time?

VV5-10 The story of Aholah (Samaria) – 2 Ki 16; 18:9-12

What are the origins of Samaria? 1 Ki 11-12

What did Aholah do with her “neighbors”? Who were these neighbors?

What caught Aholah’s eye about her neighbors?

Why is God calling out what these neighbors were wearing?

What is significant about their positions and titles, and that they rode upon horses?

What are the origins of the Assyrians? Gen 10:11; Mic 5:6

So, what did Aholah do to get the attention of the Assyrians?

What did Aholah’s behavior with the Assyrians bring to remembrance?

Why is the nation of Egypt being mentioned here?

What message is being communicated in the discovery of her nakedness?

What happens to Samaria and her children because of her behavior?

Who destroys Samaria?

Who is ultimately executing judgment upon Samaria?

LESSON: Samaria’s harlotry with the Assyrians brought “to remembrance” her adultery with Egypt also, making her punishment all the more severe – Samaria ceased to exist – destroyed by the very one with whom she tossed away her vows.

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VV11-13 The story of Aholibah (Jerusalem) – 2 Ch 28:19-25

What is the story of Jerusalem?

Did Jerusalem draw even closer to God when they saw what happened to Samaria?

Why would Jerusalem also “dote” upon the Assyrians, with the same lustful eye as her sister?

What do the young men “riding upon horses” represent?

What would account for this behavior?

LESSON: What would account for Jerusalem’s behavior? Fear.

Make no mistake, it is easy to get caught up in the explicit language of the scripture, but when speaking of “captains” and “rulers, and the gorgeous clothes, “riding upon horses”, and “desirable young men”, what is under discussion is military prowess. Jerusalem covets the protection of the Assyrian nation, because they were fearful of losing. Losing what? Their own *freedom*, power, position, wealth, beauty, pre-eminence in the world, etc.

Jerusalem was no different than any other nation at any time in history, despite having the very presence of God in its capital. For whatever reason, they *knew* that they would fail and lose God’s support (what we learned from Ezekiel 19:28-29, they never had any *intention* of keeping their vows), so they were ever preparing a “Plan B”, while trying to remain in God’s good graces.

And, what is that “Plan B”? Something that invariably impinges upon that *vaunted* freedom – people do not *give* something – i.e., their protection, their *lives*, their *labor* – in return for *nothing*. Understand, as long as there is a need for an exchange, there is no such thing as *absolute freedom*, and anyone who peddles this notion is an *absolute liar!*

This is the driving mentality of that final Gentile world power, “You can have it *all... for free!*” but the jig is up, and the world is standing at the nation’s borders with an invoice in each hand. Fear strikes at the heart of this nation because it sees a loss of its *freedom*, power, position, wealth, beauty, pre-eminence in the world in *paying* its debt. It is at this time that the nation “discovers” the grifters in leadership, who are profiteering upon the nation’s *fears*.

In Genesis 4:9, Cain, after killing his brother Abel, asked a question when God was asking the whereabouts of Abel, “...am I my brother’s keeper?” I believe the lesson of this section of scripture is that in “keeping” our brothers we are “keeping” *ourselves*.

VV14-21

Where else did Aholiabah cast her sights?

What was it that caught her attention?

Where else in Ezekiel had we read about images portrayed on walls? Eze 8:10

What was under discussion in this section of Eze 8?

How does this inform our understanding of Eze 23:14?

What else caught the eye of Aholiabah?

What is significant about the dyed turbans?

Why are the Babylonians from Chaldea singled out, as opposed to Babylonians from Ur or Babylonia?

What do we know about Chaldeans? Dan 1:4; 2:2, 10.

What was it about the Babylonians of Chaldea that Jerusalem desired?

Did the Babylonians respond to Jerusalem’s “call”?

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What is meant that “...her mind was alienated from them...”? V17

What is significant in Jerusalem “discovering” her own harlotry, and “discovering” her own nakedness? Compare to 23:10.

In what way did, historically, Jerusalem uncover her own nakedness? 2 Kings 20

What other nation was brought to remembrance?

Is it significant that the “flesh” of the Egyptians is mentioned again in this section? Eze 16:26

What understanding do we gain from this?

LESSON: It is significant that God talks about Jerusalem’s mind being “alienated” after she had “relations” with Babylon, after whom she had deeply lusted. The scriptural cross-reference to Jeremiah 12:8, explains that God *hated* those to whom He had given His inheritance. Understand: Jerusalem, in her *alienation* of Babylon, felt she was *better* than them – she *hated* that after which she so lusted.

This reminds me of the story of Amnon, king David’s firstborn son, and how he had raped his sister, Tamar – sister of Absalom by a different mother (2 Sam 13:11-17). Amnon had lusted for his sister for so long, yet, after raping her, all his supposed “love” turned to *hatred*, and he had her physically thrown out of his house! He didn’t want to look upon his sister any more – not that *she* was sinful, but rather, she was a reminder of his *own* sin; the *mar* upon his own righteousness.

Perhaps, this was at the heart of Jerusalem’s *alienating* Babylon from her mind. She had knowingly *given* her very *nakedness* to Babylon, a “friend” (2 Ki 20) – unlike her sister, Aholah, who had had her nakedness and her children *taken* from her by an enemy (V10) – only to discover he wasn’t worth it (V17-18), he was no different from any of the others.

This only adds insult to the injury of the original offense of Egypt, in which she willingly threw out her vows for the *pleasure* and the *children* she coveted *with Egypt*, *not* with her own *Husband!* This is the story of Jerusalem. How does it correlate with that of the final Gentile nation?

This nation that lusts for *freedom*, power, position, wealth, security, and beauty, begrudges the same blessings for any other – this nation believes it is *better* than all the other nations of Adam. It has begged, borrowed, stolen, and *murdered* – throwing off any pretention to faith in a power greater than itself, even while using *righteousness* as a tool of *destruction* to other nations – in striving to the top.

Instead of viewing dominion in the earth as an achievement for *all* of Adam, this nation *seeks* dominion over *all* of Adam, and the earth, without taking on *any* of the responsibilities inherent in the position, i.e., power for the sake of power. It seeks *pre-eminence* in the world without doing the work of *servng* the world; it seeks to be above Almighty God – Who sought to become a *brother* to Adam in order to redeem him, under the Law. This nation put itself in direct *opposition* to God Almighty. I believe that this is what Daniel 8:25 is describing when it says “...he shall stand against the Prince of princes...”

VV22-24

With whom will God attack Aholibah?

Will she be attacked by people she loved, that were smarter than her, more beautiful?

Will she be attacked by people than which she presumed to be better?

Will the attack be from only one angle?

VV25-30

What does it mean that God set His “jealousy against” Aholibah?

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Why does God say that her nose and ears will be taken away from her?

What else will be taken away from Aholibah?

What will happen to her children?

What is significant about one's children being destroyed?

What is significant about the clothing and "fair jewels" being taken?

What will be accomplished in this treatment of Aholibah?

What did she bring from Egypt?

What will she have left after those from whom "her mind was alienated" dealt with her?

What will be completely uncovered at the end of this destruction?

Why is God bringing this destruction upon Aholibah?

LESSON: We learn so much about God in this section of scripture. His "jealousy" is set against Aholibah, marring the very things that endeared her to Him: the way she looked – her cute *nose* and precious *ears* cut off; her children – killed in battle and consumed by disease; the things that added to her beauty – clothes and jewels stripped away. It is in this naked state that the world will see the *real* filth of the nation – scheming, conniving, thieving, manipulations, and even *murders*, committed against the other, many poorer, nations in order to maintain her *pre-eminence*.

After losing everything valuable to her, the great pursuit of pleasure and illusions of whatever "could have been" with Egypt will be far from Aholibah's mind. And to know, all of this could have been avoided had Aholibah not been so caught up in her lust for power.

VV31-35

In what way has Aholibah "...walked in the way of thy sister...?"

What will happen to her because she decided to *follow* her sister's example?

Who did Aholibah's, Aholah, sister represent?

What did Aholah's cup contain?

What will Aholibah do with the cup?

Considering how Aholibah's nose and ears are cut off, what is the message conveyed in her cutting off her own breasts with the shards from the broken cup?

What is at the heart of Aholibah's destruction?

LESSON: Aholibah's choice to walk in the way of her sister, Aholah, causes her to inherit the same cup from which Aholah drank – Samaria had been conquered by her lover (the Assyrians) and ceased to exist as a nation. Though the cup is the same, Aholibah will have to drink its dregs, ultimately breaking the emptied cup and using the shards to cut off her own breasts, the things after which men have lusted. Her "lovers", her *enemies*, cut off her nose and her ears, but she will cut off her own breasts.

This is the story of Jerusalem. How does it correlate to that final Gentile nation?

This nation has sunk low in its sin, with it being hard to imagine that it can sink lower – i.e., drink the dregs in the cup – but it does sink lower in its insatiable quest for more power. It commits atrocities against its fellow nations, at which the whole world will look askance, and thus sealing the nation's fate for destructive judgment. It is not an enemy that overtakes this nation. Her destruction will be as result of her own greed - casting God behind its back!

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VV36-39

What does God describe judgment of His wives to be?
What is God's indictment against His wives?
With whom did His wives commit adultery?
How did they get blood on their hands?
On top of everything else, what had they done?
In what way had His wives defiled His sanctuary?
In what way had their actions profaned His sabbaths? 2 Ki 21:2-7

VV40-45

To whom had Israel sent messengers? 2 Ki 16
Why does God comment on the way that they fixed themselves up? 2 Ki 9
What is the message conveyed in V41? Eze 44:16
What is significant about a "...voice of a multitude..." being heard, considering Eze 7:12-14?
What is meant by "... men of the common sort..."? Compared to Eze 23:6-7, 12.
What is meant by "Sabeans from the wilderness..."?
Were Samaria and Jerusalem "back-water" towns?
Why would these cities consort with those of the "common sort"?
What were the common men from the wilderness wearing that caught attention?
What meant is the message in the term "old in adulteries"?
What prompts the question asked in V43?
What is the answer?
Who will judge Aholah and Aholibah?
How will they be judged? Why will they be judged?

LESSON: God lays out the indictment against those nations called by His own name, each of which can be found in the books of the Kings. It is like their actions are written down and used as testimony against them. The indictments are two – 1) Samaria and Jerusalem had transgressed their vows to God in seeking and gaining the protection of and alliances with other nations to meet their needs; and 2) They had blood on their hands in willingly sacrificing the lives of their children on the altar of their greed and selfishness; and then *shamelessly* entering the presence of God afterward, as if they had not just killed someone!

This ground was covered effectively in Ezekiel 16, but this chapter goes deeper in discussing the "voice of the multitude", which is referring to that final Gentile nation that grows old in its harlotries, that she needs to "paint her face" and wear ornaments to maintain the illusion of beauty, to the point that it is no longer "captains and rulers" (handsome, gentrified leaders of armies) getting her attention; it is men of the "common sort" after whom she is running. These *commoners* are from the wilderness somewhere, but clothe themselves with jewelry and crowns to make themselves *feel* special, and fool others into thinking they are worth something. Which begs the questions: Why on earth would an old whore want to have relations with a *worthless* man? And, why on earth would a man, who is worth *anything*, want to have relations with an old *whore*? Whatever the answer, they did it.

For any nation to continue to grow and prosper, it must raise up children to maintain and even *improve* the nation. This final Gentile nation kills its children on the altar of greed and selfishness – *freedom*,

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power, position, wealth, beauty, pre-eminence. Not only has this nation sunk into idolatry in setting *itself* up as “God”, it has sacrificed its children to maintain its position as “God” – it has blood on its hands.

VV46-49

What does God promise to bring upon them in the final Gentile nation?

How will the “company” be similar to that in Eze 16:40?

In what way will it be different? Eze 7:14

What will this “company” do to them?

Who is “them”? Eze 7:11-19

Why will they be “stoned”? Lev 20:10

Why will swords be used on them?

Why will their sons and daughters be killed?

Why will their houses be burned down?

Is it only “women” that be taught a lesson?

What message is being conveyed through using the term “women”?

What is God putting ending in this action?

Upon whom is that judgment being done? Eze 7:2

What is the purpose for the suffering of “them”?

LESSON: As sad as the word is in this Ezekiel 23, I must tell you, it is confirmation for *me* of the understanding I’ve gained and shared in these Bible studies, *especially*, on Ezekiel 16 and 7. Hallelujah!! I know it is selfish, but understand: to this point, the book of Ezekiel has been about the coming judgment upon people who are blessed with the education, knowledge, and information, the access and platform to teach people the *right* way to go, and are, instead, leading people in the *wrong* direction. My *fear* of this responsibility is what held me back from even starting these virtual Bible studies, and my proposal to apply a *Socratic* approach to studying the Bible!

In Ezekiel 7, God uses the example of what is happening in His relationship with Jerusalem as being *tantamount* to His relationship with our world (who is *Adam*) so that we *understand* and *prepare* for what is coming, that is, the end of Adam’s reign of flesh without Spirit. He tells us, in this chapter, that there are 2 separate time-periods, 2 different stages (of multiple stages) in Adam’s development, under discussion.

Ezekiel 16, in its explicit discussion of Jerusalem’s sexual exploits, is God showing the *deep* hurt and *offense* He felt at Jerusalem’s *duplicity* and infidelity; which, to me, shows the *deep love* He felt for her. He uses the examples of “marriage” and “family” so that we can *understand* what He has been yelling at the top of His lungs forever... He *loves* the world! He wanted Jerusalem to “know her abominations” (Eze 16:2).

Ezekiel 23 is making it clear that when God is speaking of “wives” and “women” He is referring to nations, and He lays out the indictment against that final Gentile nation (with Jerusalem’s *old*, whorish spirit) in particular. God will raise up righteous people to mete out judgment, according the law, upon the false leaders who lead the nation in the wrong direction by their horrendous example. These are the “them”, along with all their house, to be removed and destroyed (Eze 7:16-19). God is declaring to this nation and its leaders their abominations (Eze 23:36).