

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part XXXI: God's Disgust Of His People's Idolatrous Reliance On Other People

(Ezekiel 23:1-49)

I. Introduction

- A. We often think of idolatry as the pagan worship of a false idol image. However, even in ancient Israel's day, they could do what many people today do -- idolatrously rely on other people instead of God for their needs.
- B. In Ezekiel 23:1-49, God painted a picture by way of a proverb on how repulsive was His people's idolatrous reliance on other Gentile nations instead of Himself, and we study this passage for our instruction (as follows):

II. God's Disgust Of His People's Idolatrous Reliance On Other People, Ezekiel 23:1-49.

- A. In Ezekiel 23:1-35, God expressed His disgust at Israel's idolatrous reliance on other nations versus Himself:
 - 1. In the form of a parable, the Lord told Ezekiel about two women, sisters as daughters of the same mother, who had committed harlotry in the land of Egypt, Ezekiel 23:1-3. These sisters were the people of Israel in their sojourn in Egypt later to become the Northern Kingdom with its capitol in Samaria, here figuratively named "Oholah," and the Southern Kingdom of Judah with its capitol in Jerusalem, here figuratively named "Oholibah," Ezekiel 23:4. In other words, in Egypt, Jacob's descendants came to rely idolatrously upon the nation of Egypt for protection and sustenance instead of the Lord Himself.
 - 2. "Oholah" (Samaria) means "her tent" and "Oholibah" (Jerusalem) means "my tent is in her," referring to God's sanctuary figuratively mentioned as a "tent" in their midst. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1270-1271)
 - 3. However, Oholah (Samaria) played the harlot with the Assyrians, making a national alliance with them, so God gave her over to be destroyed and taken captive by Assyria for her idolatry with them, Ezek. 23:5-10.
 - 4. Oholah's (Samaria's) judgment should have been a warning to Oholibah (Jerusalem), but the Southern Kingdom of Judah instead turned more depraved than her sister Oholah (Samaria): Jerusalem's officials committed spiritual adultery first with the Assyrians and then with the Babylonians, making alliances with both nations, Ezekiel 23:11-18. Recalling her spiritual idolatry with Egypt, Oholibah (Jerusalem) lusted after the Babylonians as if their genitals were like those of donkeys and their seminal emissions those of horses, graphic language in displaying God's disgust for such heinous idolatry, Ezekiel 23:19-21 NIV.
 - 5. God would thus raise up Oholibah's (Jerusalem's) lovers against her, bringing the tribal groups of the Babylonians against Judah to destroy her, seen figuratively in their disfiguring her face by cutting off her nose and her ears, typical punishment for adultery in the Ancient Near East, Ezek. 23:22-25; *Ibid.*, p. 1272.
 - 6. God would fittingly use Oholibah's (Jerusalem's) lovers, the Babylonians, to punish her as they disgraced her, stripping her of honor and the material blessings she obtained from the Lord, Ezekiel 23:26-35.
- B. Then, God described the intensity of His people's wickedness in their worship services, Ezekiel 23:36-39:
 - 1. The climax of Judah's idolatry was the sacrificing her children to idols, Ezekiel 23:36-37; *Ibid.*, p. 1273.
 - 2. As if this sin were not enough, those guilty of that wicked sacrifice the very same day of offering such idolatrous sacrifices would enter the temple of the Lord to worship Him with the blood of their infant children still on their hands and the smoky smell of burning flesh on their clothes, Ezekiel 23:38-39; *Ibid.*
- C. However, such worship wickedness was only matched by the idolatry of Judah's political ties, Ezek. 23:40-49:
 - 1. Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) enticed other nations to help them, figuratively bathing, painting their eyes, donning jewelry and sitting on plush couches like alluring prostitutes, Ezek. 23:40-41.
 - 2. Yet, the type of men they attracted were of baser types, so God would commit the prostitutes to be punished as prostitutes in accord with the words of His prophets, causing the two women to be stoned and cut down with swords with their houses being destroyed by fire, Ezekiel 23:42-49a; *Ibid.*, p. 1273.
 - 3. Then Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) would acknowledge God as Lord, Ezekiel 23:49b.

Lesson: *The idolatry of relying on other people rather than the Lord is so repulsive in His eyes that He likened this sin in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Oholah) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Oholibah) to having His people like a wife commit adultery against Him and then go into depraved prostitution with other base men.*

Application: *(1) If we have come to rely on some human being or a group of human beings besides the Lord, may we realize that such a sin is idolatry in God's eyes that He likens to disgusting prostitution, that we then confess it to the Lord and turn from it in the power of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16. (2) If we see others relying on us as an idol in place of God, may we correct their error and turn them to the Lord. (Revelation 22:8-9)*