

**EZEKIEL**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 23 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our study this evening we are going to see the sins of Israel and Judah as we finish up this section dealing with the sin and the judgment of God upon them that began in chapter 1 of Ezekiel and continues through chapter 24. Then, the next section we will get into will deal with the judgment of the nations that surround Jerusalem and that covers Ezekiel chapter 25 through Ezekiel chapter 32.

Now here in Ezekiel chapter 23 we are going to not only see the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom of Israel but also the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the alliances they made with other nations. You see, instead of trusting in the Lord they placed their trust in these other nations to help them.

Let me share this with you regarding this chapter and then we will get into our study this evening. We are told,

This chapter contains the most graphic language in the Bible in reference to sexual imagery. For that reason it requires extreme care in teaching and preaching. Indeed, in Jewish tradition this chapter was among the last to be taught to young men studying for the rabbinate because of its potential to offend.

This potential to offend is, of course, its very point. The chapter is an allegory about the offensive disobedience of the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah), with regard to their lack of trust in the Lord and their willingness to seek peace, security, and religion from the great international powers of the day, Assyria and Babylon.

Behind the allegory is the common metaphorical language of ancient international treaties and of Israelite prophets that likened unfaithfulness to the Lord to adultery and, more commonly, prostitution (Hebrew, *zanah*, vv. 3, 7, 8 etc.).

Israel – either north or south or both – could be imagined as the wife of the Lord, cheating on Him with other gods and/or nations by her political and religious infidelity. . . .

- Douglas Stuart, *The Preacher's Commentary, Ezekiel*, p. 211

Now don't think that this is an outdated allegory, it is not. It is for us today as we are called the Bride of Christ! Thus, if we are flirting with other religions, if we are seeking after things and making them more precious to us than the Lord, if we are trusting in other things and not the Lord, are we acting any different than Israel or Judah? Of course not and thus, these lessons are for us today just as they were for the children of Israel back in Ezekiel's day!

As we will see there will be the parable of the two sisters here in Ezekiel chapter 23 and thus, with that as our background, let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 23, beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

### **EZEKIEL 23**

#### **VERSES 1-4**

1. Early on we see the wickedness of these nations or the children of Israel, even in their youth when they were down in Egypt. In a sense, this is where the nation of Israel was born and yet they went after other lovers, after other gods even though it was the Lord who birthed this nation.

2. These two daughters spoken of here represent both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The name “Oholah” represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel and her name means, “Her tent” or “Her own tabernacle.”

What does that mean? Keep in mind that the nation was divided under the reign of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. 10 of the tribes followed after Jeroboam and they were known as the Northern Kingdom of Israel with their capitol being Samaria. The remaining 2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin followed after Rehoboam and they were known as the Southern Kingdom of Judah with their capitol being Jerusalem. And these nations grew and prospered for a time.

The problem for the Northern Kingdom of Israel was that they did not have a Temple to worship God by. Remember the Temple was in Jerusalem. That is the place that God told them to build the Temple. But Jeroboam, the first King in the Northern Kingdom of Israel tried to prevent his people from leaving him so they could worship the Lord in the Temple that was in Jerusalem.

The way he did that was that he built places of worship up in Dan to the north and down south in Bethel. And the center of worship was a golden calf, supposedly to represent the Lord. And the idea here is the sanctuary they made was out of their own heart and not from God. It was born out of their imagination; it was, ***“Her own tabernacle.”***

The other daughter was named “Oholibah” and it represented Jerusalem or the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Her name means, “My tent is in her.” And I think the idea here is that the Temple of God was in Jerusalem, it was, ***“My tent is in her.”***

3. But there was a problem with both of these nations. They were both involved in the same false worship, idolatry, alliances. Instead of the Lord being the focus of their lives they let these false gods and the pagan practices of worshiping these false gods become the focus of their lives. And thus, Jerusalem was no different in her actions than her sister Samaria.

4. One more point here. Samaria was called the older sister and yet she came into existence later than Jerusalem, why is that? I think the reason is that Samaria experienced the judgment of God long before Jerusalem did.

#### VERSE 5-10

1. Regarding the judgment of God we see the Lord first speak of Samaria or the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Her sin was her alliance with the Assyrians, even worshiping the same gods. And the evidence speaks for itself. Archeologists have discovered a black obelisk dated back to 841 B. C. and from the King of Assyria, Shalmaneser III. And written on this black obelisk is the name "Jehu, son of Omri" and it pictures Jehu and his servants bowing down and paying tribute to the King of Assyria.

Why did he do that? Because the Syrians were making advances into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and to try and stop this from continuing on, Jehu submitted himself to Assyria as a vassal King and to their gods!

And keep in mind of all the Kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jehu was probably one of the best and yet he still encouraged the worship of the golden calf in Bethel and Dan. We are told of him in II Kings 10:31, **“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all of his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.”**

And keep in mind that it was not just Jehu who sided with the Assyrians, Menahem paid tribute to them, and you can read of this in II Kings 15.

Also, Hoshea paid tribute to the Assyrians and you can read of this in II Kings 17. And Hoshea tried to break his alliance with Assyria by looking to Egypt for help, but Shalmaneser, King of Assyria found out and put down that rebellion to the point of taking the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity in 721 B. C.

In II Kings 17:5-12 we read of this, **“Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the Lord their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations**

**whom the Lord had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, ‘You shall not do this thing.’”**

What is interesting to me is that this nation that they loved, the gods that they worshiped became her slayer! Instead of trusting in the Lord they trusted in that which could not help but only hurt them, as they found out. James Smith picks up on this as he wrote,

Because of her harlotries, Oholah (Samaria) was delivered by God into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians. What irony, to be destroyed by the nation that she counted on as lover, i.e., ally (v 9).

The Assyrians stripped Oholah - ravished her land, removed her wealth. The sons and daughters of Samaria were carried away into captivity. Oholah herself was slain with the sword, i.e., Samaria was destroyed by military action. Oholah became a name - a byword or warning - to all other women (nations) who might contemplate unfaithfulness to the Lord. What happened to Samaria should have been a warning to Jerusalem (v 10).

- James E. Smith, *An Exegetical Commentary on EZEKIEL*, pp. 147-148

2. What a powerful object lesson for her sister, the Southern Kingdom of Judah to see. The question is, “Did Judah learn from her sister?” We know the answer to that question but let’s see what the Lord has to say.

VERSES 11-21

1. Talk about not learning your lessons; that was Jerusalem or the Southern Kingdom of Judah. They saw what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of their idolatry and they didn't learn from what took place, the captivity that came upon that nation. And it is even worse than that. Not only did they not learn the lesson but they transgressed even more than Samaria. They had become even more wicked than the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

Now before we are too harsh on them, are we learning the lessons that God is showing us, the examples He has given to us in His Word? Paul said in Romans 15:4, "**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**" We should learn from the past, the good and the bad so that we don't walk where God has warned and we do walk where He is leading!

2. First of all we see the Southern Kingdom of Judah lust after the Assyrians. They did not trust in the Lord but they looked to the Assyrians for help. We are told of this in II Kings 16:7-9, "**So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, 'I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me.' And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.**"

Here we see that the Syrians, along with Israel come against Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. So the King sent word to Tiglath-Pileser, the King of Assyria asking for help. In doing so they had become a vassal to the Assyrians. Instead of trusting in the Lord they were trusting in man for their help and look at how bad it got.

Ahaz saw how the god of the Assyrians gave him this victory and listen to what transpired beginning in verse 10 of II Kings chapter 16, how far away from God he had gone. We are told, **“Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. And when the king came back from Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. He also brought the bronze altar which was before the Lord, from the front of the temple - from between the new altar and the house of the Lord - and put it on the north side of the new altar. Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, ‘On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.’ Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded.”** II Kings 16:10-16.



That is how bad it was. But then Hezekiah took the throne and he was a Godly King. Under his reign God wiped out 185,000 Assyrians in one night, freeing them from the oppression of the Assyrians as they turned to the Lord.

And Josiah, trying to stop an alliance between Egypt and Assyria, was killed in battle and the Egyptians were now in control. And this lasted until the fourth year of Jehoiakim who turned to Babylon for help and when the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was now vassal to Babylon. And they were even worse than the Egyptians and the Assyrians, if that were possible. And as they tried to escape from this oppression it only brought about the nation going into captivity in 586 B. C.

3. Now the Lord is going to explain what is going to happen to Oholibah or Jerusalem because of their wickedness!

#### VERSES 22-27

1. Once again we see God use the lovers that Judah went after to be the instrument of their judgment! The Babylonians had become a world power at this time. And these three tribes; Pekod, Shoa, and Koa were Aramaean and had been incorporated into the Babylonian empire, along with the Assyrians and other nations. Ezekiel names the various racial and linguistic groups that made up the empire of Nebuchadnezzar and this is the army that is coming down upon Judah!

2. As you look at verse 25 and you read that **“they shall remove your nose and your ears”** and it sounds very strange. What is that all about? Facial mutilations were a common practice in Mesopotamia for those who committed adultery.

The idea being that the woman’s face became so grotesque that she would be undesirable to anyone else. And thus, wherever she went she would bear the humiliation, the shame, the guilt of her actions. And that is what God is doing with Judah here. As they are taken into captivity, beaten, disfigured, naked, she would bear her shame for all to see. And their possessions, their children, all they were using to worship other gods with, were being taken away. Why would God do such a horrible thing? Because He loved them!

I realize that sounds strange but it is true. Listen again to verse 27, **“Thus I will make you cease your lewdness and your harlotry Brought from the land of Egypt, So that you will not lift your eyes to them, Nor remember Egypt anymore.”** You see, God did everything possible to prevent this from happening. But they refused to listen so God had to hurt them to heal them of their sin of idolatry. And it did work. Their eyes finally were open to their sin. They were trusting in earthly powers, false gods and that is idolatry and God did not tolerate it back then and He does not tolerate it today! And as you look at what happened to the Jewish people, this judgment did have this purging and purifying effect on them!

#### VERSES 28-31

1. Keep in mind that the Babylonians were once their lover and now they hate them and it is this lover that will come after them and bring them into captivity! God warned them not to be unequally yoked together with Gentiles or these unbelievers and yet they did not listen and judgment came.

God has warned us as well. In II Corinthians 6:14-18 we are told, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”**

Paul is not saying we don't associate with unbelievers but how can we unite with them when we are going in different directions. We are serving the Lord and they are serving themselves, the world and so on. Thus, the Lord tells us to come out from among them and not go in! Light and darkness don't mix!

2. And Oholibah or Jerusalem did not learn the lesson from her sister Oholah or Samaria. Thus, what happened to Samaria would happen to Jerusalem, they would go into captivity! The cup of God's judgment that fell upon the Northern Kingdom of Judah was now going to pass to the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

#### VERSES 32-34

1. The cup of their sin overflowed and the cup of God's judgment was going to be poured out completely. Even the broken shards would release the residual judgment. And this judgment was going to be so severe that they would feel the agony deep into their heart!

Look at what it took for God to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep and we may wonder why it took them so long to awaken! But think about this for a minute, how long does it take God to get our attention?

VERSE 35

1. That word “**forgotten**” can mean “to mislay.” Thus, to forget God is to deny His saving acts and to choose the path of trusting in self or others rather than in God. It wasn’t that they were absent minded or they forgot where they placed God. The problem was that God was lost beneath all the other garbage they had placed in their life. Instead of being the focus, He became common to them to the point of losing Him in the crowd of junk they had gathered into their life! And thus, they were paying the penalty for their actions.

2. Once again we have not learned the lesson. America has “**forgotten**” God and we are looking to our own strength, our own power, what we want to do instead of what God desires. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Many people wonder what has happened to our country. Out of frustration, some ask questions on social media about the moral decline in America: How did we get here? How did we reach the point where this people, a nation “under God”, failed so miserably to keep His commandments? John R.W. Stott once said:

We should not ask ‘what’s wrong with this world?’ For that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, ‘What has happened to the salt and light?’

The root cause of every moral failure, problem, and societal decline is sin. And for a culture in which sin is celebrated and promoted, God's judgment is right around the corner.

A society that used to claim Christianity now allows the murder of 4,000 innocent babies a day – government approved and funded by our taxes. Washington D.C. has an irresponsible spending addiction; and instead of cutting spending and paying down the national debt, government keeps spending what they do not have. The Bible considers this “the love of money.”

Unelected Judges overrule the will of the people in many states that once voted to protect the definition of marriage as homosexual activists continue to push their agenda in every part of our culture. The next step must necessarily be to silence the speech of Bible-believing Christians.

God was kicked out of, and His Word banned from, public schools that once promoted and valued its principles. Instead, they've ushered in “health” education including the approval of sexual experimentation, promiscuity, and government-funded distribution of condoms to young kids, promoted by Planned Parenthood.

We used to have it all, didn't we? In such a blessed nation, it's obviously very easy to take things for granted. It's also easy to trust in our own strength, wealth, and accomplishments. . . .

- <http://www.westernjournalism.com/official-forgotten-god/#dzOPsh7QEqmuxGS8.97>

It is time for America to wake-up and maybe the problem is not the unsaved but us as believers. Remember what John Stott said, “We should not ask ‘what's wrong with this world?’ For that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, ‘What has happened to the salt and light?’”

3. Now the Lord is going to show how wicked these nations were and thus, the judgment was fair, it was what needed to happen.

### VERSES 36-39

1. The Lord is indicting them by showing them how wicked they had become. They were not only committing physical adultery as they worshiped these false gods but they were also committing spiritual adultery. But there is much more than just that, as bad as that was. They committed murder of innocent people. They sacrificed their children to the god Molech in the fire. They placed idols in the Temple.

And the same day they sacrificed their children in the fire to the god Molech they went to church or I should say Temple and they thought everything was okay; at least they went to church!

What we learn from history is that we don't learn from history! Think about it. Throughout the world people lie, cheat, steal, murder people's reputation with their tongues, commit adultery, have abortions, covet, and-so-on. And then on Sunday they are in church like nothing happened, nothing is wrong. There is no remorse, no repentance; they are not affected at all by their actions. God rebuked these nations for their actions and He is doing the same today! How do you come to worship God when the things you are doing are contrary to what God has said? And I am not saying that we have to be perfect before we can come to church because none of us would be here. But I am saying that when we do wrong, when we sin we repent and get right with God, we feel the conviction of God in our lives and we return to Him!

VERSES 40-44

1. God is speaking of how Samaria and Jerusalem enticed her lovers to come into her. They went looking for people that would lead them in the worship of these false gods! And this word “**Sabeans**” is a Hebrew word that may also be read as “drunkards.” The nomadic peoples east and south of Israel were considered uncivilized and offensive to the Hebrews. That is the kind of people they were attracting themselves to. And even when they were old they tried to continue on in their harlotry. They used their charm to bring these other nations with their gods to them and in the end it would be these lovers that take them into captivity!

VERSES 45-49

1. Who are these righteous men who will judge this nation? I believe they are the true prophets of God. Understand that they are not righteous in themselves, but in God. They spoke forth the Word of God and it is God’s Word that is judging them for their sin.

Interestingly enough we see that the punishment for adultery, both physical and spiritual, was stoning, (Leviticus 20:10, 27). And God said here in Ezekiel that they, “**. . . shall stone them with stones . . .**”

Also, for the city who is doing these things, committing adultery, we are told in Deuteronomy 13:12-16, **“If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell in, saying, ‘Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods”” - which you have not known - then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword - utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God; and it shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again.”**

And here in Ezekiel God says that He shall destroy them, **“... and execute them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire.”** Ezekiel 23:47. God means what He says and says what He means, we just need to listen and obey!

2. Now the reason for all of this is they are reaping what they have sown. God warned them and they refused to listen. Thus, His judgment came down upon them, not to completely wipe them out but to help them to see the Lord once again. God wanted to open their eyes to the truth so that they might repent and return to Him. Finally, God must execute this punishment in order to bring his people into a proper knowledge of Himself. It is as verse 49 says, **“Then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.”**



3. Let me close this chapter with these words. It is a good summation and it will help us to look at our own lives, our own heart, what we are doing and what we are saying. I also see this in our nation as you will see. We are told,

In their own eyes they weren't wrong. In God's eyes, they were not only wrong, but completely disgusting! They were His special covenant people blessed with all sorts of advantages and opportunities to be light to the nations. Instead they had completely forgotten Him (v. 35). They were His bride sworn to love only Him. Instead, they cheated on Him constantly. To themselves, they seemed attractive. To Him, they were lewd. So no matter what they thought of themselves, God knew what they were and what they deserved.

- Douglas Stuart, The Preacher's Commentary, Ezekiel, p. 224

## **EZEKIEL 24**

### **VERSES 1-2**

1. God warned them that judgment was coming and here in Ezekiel we see 23 chapters of warning and now comes the judgment of God upon them. He sent them prophet after prophet, and they mocked them and refused to listen. And now, that day is here, judgment has come! The Babylonians are at the door! Nebuchadnezzar began his attack against Jerusalem in the ninth year of Zedekiah reign, the tenth day of the tenth month and the city walls were broken through in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign. The Jews commemorated this date for centuries by fasting according to Zechariah 8:19.

VERSES 3-5

1. We saw back in Ezekiel chapter 11 the people of Jerusalem seeing themselves as the meat and the pot or caldron was the city of Jerusalem with the protection of its walls. Thus, they saw this pot as good as the walls of protection around them as their safety net and as I have said, they were the meat in this pot.

Here in Ezekiel chapter 24 we see what the Lord has to say about this picture of the pot or caldron and it is opposite of what they were seeing. Here we see the Lord have Ezekiel put a pot on the fire and some good meat into this pot and to then boil this stew real good. Why?

I think that the good meat did represent them, that is how God blessed them and gave them all that they needed to do. But they did turn from Him and now the Lord is telling them that they were in hot water as Ezekiel was told to boil the water in the pot and cook the meat! I guess you could say that their goose was cooked!

VERSES 6-8

1. God is saying that the meat in this pot, instead of releasing those delicious juices, they have released scum or rust. Their lives were stained with sin and now that is rising to the surface for all to see. This once great nation was destroyed by sin. It was no longer sweet tasting.

VERSES 9-14

1. God, in speaking of this city of Jerusalem and her people, said He is going to make them a pyre or fire or a combustible heap for the burning of dead bodies! Why did He say that? Because they refused to repent and get right with God, and keep in mind that God tried to purge the wickedness out of them and they refused to listen, they refused to change. That is probably speaking of the first two invasions of the Babylonians in 606 B. C. and then again in 587 B. C. God even brought judgments of drought and famine but it did nothing for them. So God says that this judgment by the Babylonians will be so intense they won't miss it, they will see their sin!

2. As we read on Ezekiel is going to be told something that may be very difficult for us to understand. Keep in mind that with Ezekiel and some of the other prophets, their lives were used as an illustration to the people to show them their sin. God used these prophets to try and awaken them out of their spiritual sleep. And this one must have been a difficult one as we shall see.

VERSES 15-24

1. God is telling Ezekiel to go out and preach to the people in the morning, share with them all day, and tell the people what is coming down upon them. Let them know that the pot is boiling, the Babylonians are coming.

And then, in the evening, your wife will die. Now don't get the idea that Ezekiel hated his wife and was looking forward to her death. She was the desire of his eyes, he loved her dearly. Why would God do such a thing? God was trying to get the people's attention and by Ezekiel's actions it did get their attention. They wanted to know what was going on.

And the Lord tells Ezekiel not only that his wife is going to die but that he is not to mourn over his wife's death. Also, I think if you were to ask Mrs. Ezekiel if she was happy where she was now at, she would say, "You bet!" We tend to look at death as punishment, but that is only true for the wicked, not those that love the Lord! You see, she went to a place called Abraham's bosom until the Messiah came and then He set those captives free and she is now with the Lord! Thus, what God was doing in the personal life of Ezekiel he was going to do with Jerusalem nationally!

This judgment would include the death or captivity of their sons and daughters, the desire of their eyes will be taken away from them. The Temple would be destroyed. And this destruction was going to be so catastrophic that all their grief would be inadequate. They will stand there totally numb, pale, at what has happened. And once again the reason for all of this is to point them back to the Lord.

2. Now what Ezekiel found out is what it means to be a servant of God - your life is used for His glory, His purposes. You see, serving the Lord means whatever **HE** wants it to be. It is not only living for Christ, but also to die with Christ! We are placing our lives on the altar of sacrifice, given over to Him to use as He sees fit. And thus, our lives will be a sweet smelling sacrifice unto Him!

VERSES 25-27

1. After Ezekiel spoke these words to the people, telling them destruction is coming, he was silent until these things came to pass. We can read of this in Ezekiel 33:21-22, **“And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, ‘The city has been captured!’ Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.”**

And as God’s Word came to pass the prophet once again began to speak forth the truths of God as a witness to these rebellious people. The key, learn the lessons, that is why God is showing us these things. Don’t place yourself in a boiling point of water, don’t get into hot water but keep your eyes focused upon Him. Look to Him to be the strength of your life!

It is as one commentator wrote,

Our personal concerns must not keep us from responding to God’s direction. What’s happening in His kingdom doesn’t wait for us to get around to doing something about it. What He has ordained in history can’t depend upon our deciding whether it is convenient for us to pay attention to it.

- Douglas Stuart, The Preacher’s Commentary, Ezekiel, p. 235

2. Now, in Ezekiel chapters 25-32 we see the judgment of the nations that surrounded Jerusalem. There are some 16 nations that God’s judgment will be poured out upon so that they may know who the Lord is!

**EZEKIEL 25****VERSES 1-7**

1. The Ammonites were a nomadic people that settled down east of the Dead Sea between the Arnon and Jabbok Rivers. And the Ammonites were related to the Jews through Abraham's nephew, Lot. You may remember the story, as God was pouring out His judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his family fled to Zoar and finally up into the mountains. And Lot's daughters, thinking they would remain barren, got their father drunk, and each of them had sex with him. The younger daughter had a son through this relationship and called his name, Ben-Ammi, he was the father of the Ammonites. But even though they were family, the people of Ammon had no love for the Jews.

We see that in how they responded when Jerusalem fell. They shouted when the people were taken into captivity and the Temple was destroyed. Because that was their attitude, what happened to Judah would happen to them, and Rabbah, their capitol will be destroyed. Their people will be taken into captivity. In other words, what you sow you will also reap!

2. Now how does that apply to us today? Simply, you will never move up when you put others down! Secondly, you will never get ahead when you try to get even! You see, our responsibility is to love people as much as they are willing to allow us to, and let God take care of the rest. Vengeance is His, not ours! And it is easy to get into that mode where you are constantly putting people down and trying to get even with them. God is saying "Don't go down that path, you won't like the results!"

VERSES 8-11

1. The Moabites occupied the land to the south of the Arnon River on the east side of the Dead Sea. And the Moabites were related to the Jews through Abraham's nephew Lot, this time from Lot's older daughter. And they too had no love for the Jews even though they were family.

Also mentioned here is Seir which is speaking of the Edomites, which God will deal more fully with shortly. But the Moabites also enjoyed seeing the Jew's put down. And not only did the people of Moab rejoice, but they were declaring that Judah's God was no different than the other god's from the other nations. He was just another local deity that got defeated. And God judged them to show them there is only one true and living God!

2. Now how does that relate to us? Don't we hear today, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe in something!" Or "All roads lead to God!" And God is saying, "Not so!" In the King James Version verse 9 says that God "**I will open the side of Moab**" or tear into them and show them there is only one true God. May we not fall prey to the Ecumenical teaching and the false teaching that is going on, the teaching that is trying to unite people outside of Jesus Christ or with a different Jesus! They speak of a god but it is not the God of the Bible. God will judge!

VERSES 12-14

1. The Edomites occupied the area to the south of the Dead Sea, south of Moab, and they too were family. Esau was the brother of Jacob and as you remember, Esau did not love Jacob and that hatred continued on through the generations.

And the Edomites loved to take advantage of Israel when they were down. In fact, we see in 588 B. C. that the Edomites sided with Babylon in her assaults upon Judah. They saw this as vengeance, possibly for what Jacob did many hundreds of years earlier to his brother Esau. It is possible they never let that go and that bitterness grew and was manifested in their actions.

2. How does that apply to us today? We can allow bitterness to grow inside of us and it will finally be manifested in our actions, we will try to avenge the wrong that was done to us or the wrong we think that was done unto us. But that is not what God desires. In fact, God told the Edomites that they poured out their vengeance on Israel and He will pour out His vengeance upon them.

Paul, in Hebrews 12:14-15 said, **“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”** I think that is clear. If you are angry, or bitter, give it to the Lord before it gets the better of you!

#### VERSES 15-17

1. The Philistines occupied the land along the Mediterranean Sea in an area we know of today as the Gaza Strip. It was a beautiful coastal area but the Philistines hated the Jews. They were the perennial enemy of the Jew’s. And for all that was done to them, all the defeats the Philistines had encountered by the hands of the Jews, they were going to get back at them. And God is telling them, “Not so!” You see, God is going to pour out His vengeance upon them and they will know who the Lord is.



2. Again, we can see this too applies to our lives. We saw bitterness before and here is some **“old hatred,”** something they refused to let go of, and it was going to destroy them.

Paul says in Colossians 3:8, **“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”** Why? Because John tells us very clearly in I John 4:20-21, **“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”** Some good principles we can take with us and learn from the mistakes of others so we don’t fall into them, or if we do, we can repent and get right with God.

3. One last point before we close this evening. In these 8 chapters dealing with the judgment of the nations that surrounded Jerusalem, why isn’t Babylon mentioned? Because Babylon was the instrument of judgment that God was going to use upon these nations. It wasn’t that Babylon was good or better than these nations, but God was using them to bring judgment upon not only Judah but these other nations as well.