

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel
Message 46
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The Adoration of the Golden Calf by Nicholas Poussin Cir 1633-34

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The Book of Ezekiel
Message Forty-Six

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO HARLOTS

July 24, 2016

Daniel E. Woodhead

Ezekiel 23:1-10

¹The word of Jehovah came again unto me, saying, ²Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: ³and they played the harlot in Egypt; they played the harlot in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there was handled the bosom of their virginity. ⁴And the names of them were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister: and they became mine, and they bare sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah.

⁵And Oholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbors, ⁶who were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. ⁷And she bestowed her whoredoms upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and on whomsoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself. ⁸Neither hath she left her whoredoms since the days of Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they handled the bosom of her virginity; and they poured out their whoredom upon her. ⁹Wherefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. ¹⁰These uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters; and her they slew with the sword: and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgments upon her, (ASV, 1901).

ONE MOTHER

Ezekiel 23:1-2

¹The word of Jehovah came again unto me, saying, ²Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother (ASV, 1901).

This chapter continues with the Lord's displeasure of Israel's sins. It is another long parable of spiritual harlotry similar to that which the Lord gave us in chapter sixteen. Chapter sixteen focused on the breaking of marriage vows between Israel and Jehovah's sacred covenant with the Jews. This chapter will discuss Israel's worldiness particularly with treaties and alliances with other nations. These alliances were treated by the Jews as being stronger for security and safety than the total dependency they should have had on God. They represent a desire to free their souls away from God, seeking to satisfy themselves, apart from His commands, with practices He forbade. He faults them particularly with her spiritual sins. While the references here will be to sexual immorality the imagery actually is "spiritual fornication" or leaving the genuine God of Creation for pagan occultic non-gods. Scripture uses sexual lust as a metaphor for idol worship

(Ezekiel 16:15-34). The imagery employed here is vivid with the illustration of sexual immorality through prostitution which closely resembles Israel's departure from the genuine (sexual intercourse ordained by God in a committed marriage). They left for that which did not love her or have her best interest at heart. She preferred the cold heart of prostitution to the warm loving secure relationship to the God of the universe that called her out from the people groups of the world. There are many illustrations that God gave Ezekiel to describe the Jew's sins. When all are assembled in this book as they are they only comprise a small reflection of the disappointment and displeasure the Lord experienced with them.

God starts this chapter by stating a parent - children relationship that existed in Israel. One mother is cited who had two daughters. The mother as we will see is indicative of the single nation that existed from their formation as Jacob's family whose name was changed to Israel. They continued their unified (one mother) growth in Egypt, the Exodus and finally through the three kings in the united monarchy period of Saul, David, and Solomon. During the entire period of their united existence leading up to the civil war and split after Solomon's reign (cir. 930 B.C.), they had some divisions between the entries. Jacob had two wives and each had a concubine. The twelve sons from two different mothers who had some contention between them can be seen as a source of the division of two contending groups of Israel's sons. Judah and Ephraim were also contentious with each other (Judges 8:1; 12:1; II Samuel 19:43).

THE TWO DAUGHTERS

Ezekiel 23:3-4

³and they played the harlot in Egypt; they played the harlot in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there was handled the bosom of their virginity. ⁴And the names of them were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister, : and they became mine, and they bare sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah (ASV, 1901).

The text moves on to discuss the two harlots each representing the sections of Israel after the civil war which caused ten of the tribes in the north under the leadership of Jeroboam to split from Judah and Benjamin under Rehoboam in the south. Interestingly the Lord says that even while they were in Egypt *they played the harlot in their youth*. Israel had loose morals while in Egypt for the four hundred year sojourn (Ezekiel 20:7-8). Rather uniquely God describes the level of their harlotry as having *their breasts pressed, and there was handled the bosom of their virginity*. This is an illustration of the level of their spiritual and moral depravity while in Egypt. The comparison of sexual immorality to spiritual immorality is seen here as only advancing to the early stages of sexual activity compared to what it would be later in the life of Israel just before the last Babylonian captivity. The metaphor of squeezing of the breasts is representative of a limited licentiousness which is not complete sexual intercourse. The use of complete intercourse would represent full idolatry and being completely given over to blatant departure from God's Laws and protection.

Their names were *Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister*. Oholah which means "her tent" in Hebrew is representative of the northern ten tribes which had its headquarters in Samaria (Hebrew *Shomron*). The Northern Kingdom has been called Shomron after its

capital city Samaria. It was build by king Omri about fifty years after the split of the two entities (cir. 880 B.C.). The Southern Kingdom is referred to as Oholibah (Hebrew, My tent is in her). These names are significant because the capital of Judah the southern kingdom was Jerusalem which is where God lived in the Holy of Holies of the Temple until the cherubim lifted Him up and out of the Temple cir. 586 B.C. God never lived in Samaria as can be seen by the meaning of the Hebrew words *Oholah and Oholibah*. God was blasphemed early after the split as they worshipped a golden calf which Jeroboam ben Nevat had erected (I Kings 12:28) to defy the Lord God. Many of the believing priests left there and went to Jerusalem for genuine worship (II Chronicles 11:16). This left only absolute pagans there. This is reflected in the kings. Not one has ever been seen as having any fidelity to God.

These two sisters were married to one man (God) but one (Oholah) chose to live in a separate tent away from Him. Almost immediately she engaged in further immorality as she engaged with other men (countries) in her tent away from the protection of her genuine husband. The other sister initially focused on her husband's tent. He thought of her as "My Tent is Within Her." However before too long she too succumbed to the attraction to other lovers (countries) and left her Lord. Only eight of the twenty total kings were obedient to God.

OHOLAH COURTS THE ASSYRIANS

Ezekiel 23:5-7

⁵And Oholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbors, ⁶who were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. ⁷And she bestowed her whoredoms upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and on whomsoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself (ASV, 1901).

The dependent relationship that the Northern Ten Tribes has on Assyria is well documented. It was this relationship that God used to seal their doom as He caused the Assyrians to attack them and carry them off to Assyria as slaves in 722 B.C.

Israel's relationship with Assyria are sufficiently documented. Assyrian kings documented their conquests on stones called obelisks. The Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (dated cir. 856-824 B.C.) mentions "Jehu son of Omri" and pictures him bowing down to the Assyrian monarch.

Syria was coming into Israel's land in the Transjordan during Jehu's reign (II Kings 10:32-34). Instead of relying on God, Jehu allied Israel with Assyria and submitted himself as a vassal. The obelisk pictures Jehu and his servants bringing tribute to the Assyrian king.



Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III in the British Museum



Close up of a vassal subject named Iaua PGP (known in the Bible as king Jehu of Israel) crouches in a pose of tribute at king Shalmaneser III's feet.

The ostentatious wealth of the Assyrians which was captivating to the Jews which is depicted here in the text as; those *who were clothed with blue*. Menahem and Hoshea, two other kings of the Northern ten tribes known as Israel, also paid tribute to Assyria (II Kings 15:19–20; 17:3–4). Without thinking through the end result of her lust for the Assyrians instead of God, she allowed the unthinking pursuit of bodily gratification which in her lust led to her defilement. The Prophet Hosea (760-720 B.C.) rebuked Israel for her reliance on Assyria for her security and safety instead of on the Lord (Hosea 5:13–14; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1). Lust overtook the Jews clear thoughts and truth of God's Laws.

EGYPT IS SOUGHT FOR HELP

Ezekiel 23:8-10

⁸Neither hath she left her whoredoms since the days of Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they handled the bosom of her virginity; and they poured out their whoredom upon her. ⁹Wherefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. ¹⁰These uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters; and her they slew with the sword: and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgments upon her, (ASV, 1901).

After Israel became Assyria's vassal she could not extricate herself. So now her love affair with Assyria turned sour and Assyria became a mortal enemy. King Hoshea ben Elah of the Northern ten tribes, which was also known as Ephraim, when to Egypt for help. God tells the people what His thoughts are through the prophet Hosea regarding them leaving His security and trusting in Egypt instead of Him for their circumstances.

Hosea 7:11-16

¹¹And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria. ¹²When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the birds of the heavens; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. ¹³Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me. ¹⁴And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds; they assemble themselves for grain and new wine; they rebel against me. ¹⁵Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they devise mischief against me. ¹⁶They return, but not to him that is on high; they are like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt (ASV, 1901).

Whoredoms or promiscuity symbolizes the misguided thoughts and politically motivated actions for alliance instead of trust in God. It also makes reference to the attraction to the idols in these two countries that lured the Jews to lust after the promiscuity of an alliance with them. In terms of Egypt they never lost the attraction for the idols they experienced when they sojourned in Egypt for four hundred years. She had been warned several times not to go to Egypt. The first of these were in the days of Sennacherib of Assyria.

Isaiah 31:1-3

¹Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah! ²Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. ³Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together (ASV, 1901).

This refers to the catastrophe when Hoshea ben Elah sent messengers to Soth the king of Egypt. Since coming out of Egypt in the Exodus Israel had desired many times to return.

Exodus 16:3

³ and the children of Israel said unto them, Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger (ASV, 1901).

In addition when she finally attempted to break away she joined forces with both Syria and Egypt (II Kings 17:4; Isaiah 7:1), she incurred the anger of the Assyrians. God finally gave all Israel, including Samaria, over to her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she lusted and who killed her with the sword. In 722 B.C. the Northern ten tribes headquartered at Samaria fell to Assyria (II Kings 17:5–6, 18–20).

Finally the women of Israel will for a long time refer to this time as one when correcting people to not turn from God.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE TWO HARLOTS CONTINUED

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