

# Sisters & Cooking Pot

(21) Ezekiel 23:1–24:27

By Scott Huckaby

8/29/2021

**BIG BEND  
BIBLE  
FELLOWSHIP**

## Why is it reasonable to think that God’s judgment on Judah might also apply to the United States?

As Judah represented God in the world during her day, the United States more than any country represents also represents God in the world. Despite our slide into secular humanism, the USA is considered by many to be a Christian country...

- We were founded on Christian principles.
- USA responsible for most of the missionaries in the world
- God has greatly blessed the USA
- The USA continues to be a beacon of freedom in the world.

Keep this in mind and we consider Judah’s fall and God’s judgment...

## Ezek 23:1-4 – Two Harlot Sisters

*The word of the Lord came again to me, saying:*

<sup>2</sup> “Son of man, there were two women,  
The daughters of one mother.

<sup>3</sup> They committed harlotry in Egypt,  
They committed harlotry in their youth;  
Their breasts were there embraced,  
Their virgin bosom was there pressed.

<sup>4</sup> Their names: Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister;  
They were Mine,  
And they bore sons and daughters.  
As for their names,  
Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

## Who were the two sisters introduced here?

*There were two women, the daughters of one mother:* Ezekiel 23 presents two symbolic sisters, representing the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This story of the two sisters is not a perfect illustration of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel; the Lord did not have two wives. But the story of the two sisters is a powerful description of how Judah followed in the sinful steps of Israel.

## What did both of the sisters do?

*They committed harlotry in Egypt:* Ezekiel states a theme that will be repeated several times in this chapter. The is that *Israel was unfaithful to Yahweh from the very start, worshipping idols in Egypt*. Symbolically, their worship of Egyptian idols was like giving their bodies to those gods (*their breasts were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed*).

*Their names: Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister:* God gave these two symbolic sisters names. The elder was **Oholah**, which means *Her Own Tabernacle*, with the sense that she rejected God’s temple and the service that attended it. The younger was **Oholibah**, which means *My Tabernacle is In Her*, with the sense that she was home to God’s temple and its service.

## How were these sisters God’s own?

*They were Mine, and they bore sons and daughters:* These sisters belonged to Yahweh by the principles of election, redemption, and marriage covenant. They were “mothers” to many **sons and daughters**.

*Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah:* To avoid any misunderstanding, God stated it clearly. *Oholah* represented **Samaria**, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and *Oholibah* represented **Jerusalem**, the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah.

## Ezek 23:5-10 – The Older Sister, Samaria

Once again God used the idea of harlotry to symbolically express the idolatry of Israel. Before the Assyrians conquered Israel she followed her attraction to their gods, their power, their protection, and their ways. The Northern Kingdom started out by giving herself to Egyptian idols and continued giving herself to the idols of the nations.

Because Israel gave herself to foreign gods and morals, God allowed them to be conquered by those foreign nations. When the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 b.c. they humiliated Samaria and Israel, took her **sons and daughters** captive, and killed many **with the sword**. This was well known to Ezekiel’s listeners and readers, having happened more than 100 years before. Samaria and Israel had become **a byword** for well-deserved judgment.

### **Ezek 23:11-21 – The Younger Sister, Jerusalem**

Jerusalem had the example of Samaria to take warning from and to learn by. They did not. Even as the northern kingdom of Israel lusted after Assyrian power, wealth, fame, and influence, so did the southern kingdom of Judah. It was bad enough that Jerusalem imitated the sins of Samaria; it was far worse that she **increased** her rejection and rebellion.

The **images of Chaldeans** seduced them to follow their sins, even as they had previously done with the Assyrians. Long before the Babylonians conquered Judah, they *pursued* diplomatic relationships with them and eventually they conquered the people of Judah. The theme of sexual promiscuity illustrating Jerusalem's idolatry was particularly appropriate because many of the rites connected with the Babylonian idols were sexual in nature, especially sex with prostitutes representing the idol.

As a faithful husband would distance himself from a promiscuous wife; even so, God **alienated** Himself from Jerusalem as He had previously done in regard to Samaria (**her sister**).

### **Ezek 23:22-35 – Judgment on Jerusalem**

Judah would find that those they gave themselves to would not treat her well. The severe judgment of the conquest of Jerusalem and the exile would be like strong medicine to the Jewish people. They would no longer run after their idol-loves as they did before.

Though Jerusalem went after the nations and their gods as if they were her lovers, there was never any *real* love between them. Instead of love and glory, Jerusalem and Judah would find shame. More than 100 years before, Samaria and Israel fell against the invading Assyrians. Now Jerusalem and Judah would suffer the same fate, drinking from the same **cup** of judgment.

The on looking nations will offer no sympathy; they will offer only **scorn** and **derision**. This great penalty would come upon Jerusalem and Judah because they ignored God and wanted to have nothing to do with Him. Such an attitude is a great sin, and worthy of judgment.

### **Ezek 23:36-49 – Both Sisters Judged**

<sup>36</sup> *The Lord also said to me: "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. <sup>37</sup> For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me, passing them through the fire, to*

*devour them. <sup>38</sup> Moreover they have done this to Me: They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths. <sup>39</sup> For after they had slain their children for their idols, on the same day they came into My sanctuary to profane it; and indeed thus they have done in the midst of My house.*

<sup>40</sup> *"Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and there they came. And you washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. <sup>41</sup> You sat on a stately couch, with a table prepared before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil. <sup>42</sup> The sound of a carefree multitude was with her, and Sabeans were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort, who put bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads. <sup>43</sup> Then I said concerning her who had grown old in adulteries, 'Will they commit harlotry with her now, and she with them?' <sup>44</sup> Yet they went in to her, as men go in to a woman who plays the harlot; thus they went in to Oholah and Oholibah, the lewd women. <sup>45</sup> But righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner 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 an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder. <sup>47</sup> The assembly shall stone them with stones and execute them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire. <sup>48</sup> Thus I will cause lewdness to cease from the land, that all women may be taught not to practice your lewdness. <sup>49</sup> They shall repay you for your lewdness, and you shall pay for your idolatrous sins. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God.' "*

*Declare to them their abominations:* God has thus far mostly spoken in a symbolic way about the sins of Samaria and Jerusalem, using the figure of sexual immorality to illustrate their idolatry. Now God will speak directly and literally about their sins.

### **What specific issues did God have with the people of Jerusalem?**

*They have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands:* They were unfaithful to their marriage covenants and unfaithful to their communities, committing adultery and practicing violence under the cover of law.

*And even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me:* They **sacrificed** their children in tribute to the terrible idol Molech, burning their infants to death.

*They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths:* They would offer their children to

Molech on one of the **Sabbaths** and **on the same day** go to the temple **to profane it**.

*Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar:* After plainly stating the sins of Samaria and Jerusalem in the previous section, Ezekiel returned to the symbol of the harlot to represent their unfaithfulness to God.

*You washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself:* They happily and carefully prepared themselves for their unfaithfulness to Yahweh. They worshipped idols in comfortable and ornate surroundings.

*On which you had set My incense and My oil:* God had appointed sacred incense and oil for the service of the temple. Jerusalem was so corrupt that they took these sacred things and used them in idolatry.

### **How comfortable with idolatry did Judah become?**

*The sound of a carefree multitude was with her:*

They *loved* their idolatry. Their rebellion against God made them feel **carefree** and popular with the **multitude**. Foreigners came and rewarded them for their idolatry.

*Then I said concerning her who had grown old in adulteries:* All the while, they became like old, tired, worn-out prostitutes. Their young years of attractiveness and allure were a distant memory and they were merely **lewd women**. Their unfaithfulness to God made them age poorly.

*But righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses:* Their illusion of glamorous prostitution could never last. Any **righteous** man would perceive they were simply unfaithful **adulteresses**, and that **blood is on their hands**.

### **How would the sisters be judged as adulteresses?**

*Bring up an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder:* This refers to the literal invading armies that came against Samaria and Jerusalem.

*The assembly shall stone them with stones and execute them:* The punishment for adultery according to the Law of Moses was execution. This penalty had already been carried out against Samaria; it would soon be carried out regarding Jerusalem.

### **What would be the end result of God's judgment on Judah?**

*Thus I will cause lewdness to cease from the land:* As before stated in Ezekiel 23:27, the punishments of conquest and exile would have a cleansing effect upon Jerusalem and Judah. The particular sin of gross idolatry would never again be the same problem as it was before the exile.

*Then you shall know that I am the Lord God:* The severity of conquest and exile had a purpose greater than punishment. The ultimate purpose was to reveal God in both His holy judgments and gracious restorations.

### **If there are striking parallels between Judah and the USA and Judah had an older sister in Samaria... Who is the older sister to the USA?**

England, France and Spain... or we could just say Europe. Christianity had significant growth in Europe before America was even colonized. Western Civilization emerged in Europe and expanded to include the European colonies. It is all just an extension of the Old Roman Empire.

### **Going with the analogy that Europe was the older sister to the USA, what European sins have been embraced by the USA?**

Some have said the USA is 20 years behind Europe where few church buildings are used for worship and have been converted to museums, night clubs, mosques, and other things. All our idols in America were first worshipped in Europe...

- Atheistic Evolution – God was not needed to bring about the creation
- Naturalism – “the cosmos is all there is, was or ever will be” Carl Sagan
- Humanism – the belief that humanity is capable of morality and self-fulfillment without belief in God
- Universalism – there are many ways to heaven
- Scientism – science reveals all people need to know and is the savior of mankind
- Globalism – collective human effort is necessary to preserve and prosper the human race
- Socialism – the idea that the fairest economic system is where there is no private property and the government supplies everything people need.
- Critical Race Theory – While this is unique to the USA, the basic ideas of oppressor versus the oppressed is copied from Marxism
- Higher Criticism – questions the authenticity of biblical Scripture: when written and by who... usually for the purpose of discrediting the authority of the Bible. Such critics do not believe Scripture was inspired by God.

### **How is atheistic evolution a racist concept?**

If people evolved, some races are more advanced than others.

- This was reflected in Charles Darwin's original full title of his famous book introducing theistic evolution: "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life" [Why hasn't the culture cancelled Darwin?]
- Hitler used atheistic evolution to justify his vision to purge what he considered to be inferior races

### **Why is naturalism so attractive to unbelievers?**

With naturalism, there is no soul, no mind, and no self, and it also teaches that there is no choice.

- This fatalistic philosophy becomes a problem in the realm of ethics; if our actions are out of our control, can criminals be held responsible for their crimes?
- The Bible teaches that we have a distinct soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:12) and that mankind has a specific purpose (Genesis 1:26-31).
- In the end, naturalism is just a fancy way to deny the existence of God (Psalm 14:1).

### **How should a Christian respond to secular humanism?**

As Alexander Solzhenitsyn observed, humanism offers no solution at all to mankind's desperate condition. He puts it this way:

"If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature."

Mankind's task is to seek and find God (Acts 17:26-27; cf. 15:17), our true redeemer who offers us a better than earthly inheritance (Heb 6:9; 7:17).

- How much more excellent is this than all the proud and lofty goals contained in secular humanist manifestos?

### **Why is universalism so attractive?**

- It lets you be the captain of your own soul.
- It accommodates salvation-by-works which appeals to pride.
- No one wants to consider the prospect of eternal punishment.

### **How is scientism a problem in the world today?**

The most prominent practitioners of scientism have been referred to as technocrats... elite technical experts ruling over the people. We have seen this on a daily basis during the Covid pandemic where once healthy scientific debate would happen, dissention can no longer be tolerated.

### **What can we expect to happen to the idol of technology?**

It will eventually fail us... the convenience of digital devices (and money) will enable a surveillance state that will enslave us. The artificial intelligence that gives us targeted advertising will divide us with social credit scores and identify enemies of the state. The vaccines that are supposed to make us healthier will make us more vulnerable to future pestilences.

- We've already seen green energy failing us in Texas when it gets cold.

### **How is it that globalism explains most of the political division in this country today?**

The vitriol against Trump and his supporters were primarily because he was a nationalist who wanted to Make America Great Again. That can not be tolerated in the face of global problems demanding collaboration between nations. Issues like open borders reflect a globalist view of the future when there are no national borders.

### **How has socialism become the solution to all our economic ills?**

It seems to work in Europe...

- but their prosperity is due to the capitalistic principles they retain.
- And their demographics are different lacking the diversity of the USA.
- Innovation is stifled and it is not as easy for people to improve their financial situation as it is in the USA.
- Increasing regulations make it harder for entrepreneurs and small businesses to create value.

People are attracted to socialism because equality of outcome is appealing but it is a formula for mediocrity.

- We have creeping socialism in the USA because of the appeal to have a safety net.
- And the cost of socialism doesn't seem to be a problem in this age of governments just printing more money... all nations are doing so the impact is delayed but even with that inflation is beginning to make itself known.

Invariably the solution to inflation will be more centralized government control.

### **How is Critical Race Theory prophetic?**

CRT stirs up racism and Jesus said one of the signs of His coming would be ethos against ethnos (Matthew 24:7). He also said, "*many would be offended*" (Matthew 24:10) which describes the politically correct woke culture to a T.

## How have we seen Higher Criticism influence the church?

It has successfully convinced many professing Christians to question the inspiration of Scripture...

- Referring to Genesis as “poetry” instead of history
- Thinking the Bible has errors and contradictions because it is the story of man’s search for God rather than God’s revelation to mankind.
- The creation account and Noah’s flood are considered myth.

## Ezek 24:1-14 – Symbol of the Cooking Pot

Summary: Ezekiel recorded the anticipated and memorable day when *the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem*. Ezekiel either acted out this parable, or simply told the story about a cooking pot filled with water and *pieces of meat*. He referred to Jerusalem as the bloody city and was represented by the cooking pot. As Jerusalem boiled and cooked, its worst qualities would become evident to everyone and called *scum*. The fire under the cooking pot was increased to be described as a *pyre* – a burning for the dead. All of Jerusalem’s impurities, her *scum*, will *be consumed* in the judgment coming upon her.

## How could God say in verse 13, “because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed”?

Through many generations God sent His prophets to His people. They had the institutions of the temple, sacrifice, the feasts, and the priesthood. All of these should have been cleansing, purifying agents upon His people – yet they were not. Therefore God would not cleanse them anymore; in His fury He would judge them.

## Ezek 24:15-27 – The Prophet’s Wife Dies

<sup>15</sup> *Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying,* <sup>16</sup> *“Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down.”* <sup>17</sup> *Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man’s bread of sorrow.”*

<sup>18</sup> *So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.*

<sup>19</sup> *And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then I answered them, “The word of the Lord came to me, saying,* <sup>21</sup> *‘Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind*

*shall fall by the sword.”* <sup>22</sup> *And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man’s bread of sorrow.”* <sup>23</sup> *Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another.”* <sup>24</sup> *Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God.’ ”*

<sup>25</sup> *‘And you, son of man—will it not be in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters:’* <sup>26</sup> *that on that day one who escapes will come to you to let you hear it with your ears?’* <sup>27</sup> *On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ ”*

## What does God reveal to Ezekiel?

*I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke:* God brought Ezekiel a shocking message regarding his wife (touchingly referred to as **the desire of your eyes**). The message was that she would suddenly and unexpectedly die (**I will take away...with one stroke**).

## How was Ezekiel to react to his wife’s death?

*Yet you shall neither mourn nor weep:* Ezekiel was strangely forbidden to grieve or even **weep** over the loss of **the desire of his eyes**. The command was strong: **nor shall your tears run down**, and no visible signs of mourning were permitted.

## Did Ezekiel change his routine knowing his wife would die?

*So I spoke to the people in the morning:* Presumably, Ezekiel spoke as he had many times before, reporting what God had told him to proclaim. This time the message was both strange and sad. As a prophet, he told them that his wife would die. We can only wonder what Ezekiel had told his wife the night before.

*At evening my wife died:* This was a great loss to Ezekiel, one that many have suffered. The title *the desire of your eyes* (Ezekiel 24:15) points to a dear and loving relationship. Throughout the book Ezekiel is presented to us as a man of deep feeling and emotion who often mourned and wept over the fate of Jerusalem and Judah. He certainly was deeply affected by this sudden loss of a dear companion and spouse.

*The next morning I did as I was commanded:* Remarkably, Ezekiel obeyed God. However overwhelming the feeling may have been to mourn and weep, Ezekiel was determined to honor God by obeying Him despite his feelings and the quite understandable circumstances.

### **How did Ezekiel's fellow exiles react to his lack of mourning?**

*Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?* The strange event had the intended effect. The people were shocked and mystified at Ezekiel's sudden loss and strange behavior.

### **What was Ezekiel's explanation for his strange behavior?**

*Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul:* As a husband finds a proper source of joy, confidence, and security in his relationship with his wife, so Israel had an improper source of confidence and security in the temple (**your arrogant boast**). As Ezekiel's wife suddenly died, so the **sanctuary** would suddenly and soon perish.

*Your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword:* The captives in Babylon had many **sons and daughters** still in Jerusalem and Judah, and many of those dear ones would die in the judgment that had now come upon the land.

*You shall do as I have done:* When all this tragedy comes upon their dear ones and their dear temple, the people would have to respond as Ezekiel did. Their shock would make them unable to mourn "normally," and perhaps the Babylonian culture would also hinder their expressions of grief.

*When this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God:* The consistent purpose of God throughout the book of Ezekiel is the revelation of Himself even through tragedy and crisis. In all their unexpressed sorrow, there would be a revelation of the **Lord God**.

### **What was the desire of Israel's eyes?**

*In the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes:* The day would soon come when the temple (**stronghold**) and all else they held dear would be conquered and destroyed.

### **How would Ezekiel's message change from this day forward?**

*On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute:* Ezekiel's loosened tongue will mean that he will begin to prophesy

in a much more hopeful tone. The judgment had been measured out in all its strength; now it God could begin to rebuild and do so with true hope. The ultimate restoration would be glorious.

*Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the Lord:* In the end, both the prophet and his God, the covenant God of Israel, would be vindicated and revealed.

### **If it was not politically correct for Israel's exiles in Babylon to mourn the destruction of the Temple, what sort of things do we need to be careful about expressing in mixed company (with unbelievers, or even carnal Christians)?**

- Political views... stolen presidential election
- The evidence that something nefarious is going on with the Covid mandates.
- Avoid public forums for religious debates.
- Avoid exposing controversial positions on social media and other social gatherings.

### **Why should we keep a low profile as much as possible in our culture today?**

Christians are being cancelled for our counter-cultural beliefs. We should focus our energies one-on-one with those who are responding to the Holy Spirit.

### **What applications do you see from our discussion today?**

- We live in a culture that God is giving over to itself... don't allow ourselves to be caught up in it.
- Times are changing, focus on what is important: laying up treasure in heaven.