

## Ezekiel 23—I May Love My Sin, But My Sin Will Never Love Me

### Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

### Revision

Last time in Ezekiel 22 we saw how forgetting God led to moral decay, which led to the eventual destruction of the nation. The nation of Israel had become dross, which is waste metal that is discarded as the silver is purified. We too become worthless in character and fruit when we forget God and, by default, allow sin to rule over us.

We also saw that forgetting God is not something that we have to try hard to do. For example, today I remember very little of the specifics of the cell biology that I learned at university around 30 years ago. Did I have to try hard to forget? Did I have to painstakingly remove one fact at a time from my memory, saying to myself, “you really must forget this”? No. All I had to do was *nothing*. And this is the point. *Doing nothing means going backwards!* Any dead fish can go with the flow, but it takes a living fish to swim upstream. Any person living for themselves will go with the flow of the world, and become more and more like the world—this is living in the wilderness, being a weak, baby, carnal, fleshly and immature Christian. However, a person who is born again—and also submitted to the Spirit (see Romans 8:5-6)—will be doing so *only* because they have made a deliberate, calculated, and conscious decision to submit to God and resist the devil—they have made the decision to actively fight against the world system and instead draw near to God—this is living by faith in the promised land.

Keep in mind that this slow fade from God to the world doesn't have to be falling into obvious sin. Often it's just us losing our desire for the Word of God and instead becoming more focused on worldly and temporary things, e.g. holidays, caravans, money, comfort, cars, houses, family, entertainment, leisure, camping, going to the beach, whatever is true for me or you. Again, there is nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves—but—if we start to rely on them as our main source of satisfaction and contentment, then we are in trouble. If I start saying, “I need to go to the beach”, or, “I need a camper trailer”, or “I need a husband or wife”—then what I am really saying is that *God isn't enough!* We all need to learn the lesson that Christ is all we need, but we'll never experience this truth until Christ is all we have. In the meantime we continue to believe that we need all these other things to be content.

Another sure sign of this moral decay is that I no longer invest in or protect my relationships with others. I begin to tolerate broken relationships, tend to harbour unforgiveness, and become more difficult to get along with—basically I am becoming self-focused—I'm only seeking what will make me happy. Why? Because my love for others is in direct proportion to my love for Christ. If I am fervently seeking to grow in my relationship with God, then a natural result of that is that I will also be growing in relationship with others—my increased love for God automatically spills over into all my other relationships. As I treasure and guard my relationship with God, I also do the same with my relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Of course the opposite is also true.

## Introduction to Ezekiel 23

Today we see a clear lesson that the sins we love will come back to bite us—the poison we consume will eventually kill us—what we sought to gain pleasure from will only end up causing us pain. We will learn the hard lesson, again, that the things of this world will never bring lasting satisfaction. As Jesus said in John:

John 4:13-14 NLT paraphrase

Jesus replied, “**Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.** <sup>14</sup> But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

Jesus was referring to the physical water as a picture of worldly pursuits—the most you will receive from them is temporary satisfaction—you will thirst again. However, choosing to drink the water that Jesus offers (a picture of the Holy Spirit) will lead to everlasting life, an abundant life, a life characterised by lasting contentment and satisfaction.

The moment I choose to do nothing about growing in my relationship with God (forget God), I become self-focused and selfish, because my reason for living is solely to quench my thirst for contentment and satisfaction with worldly pleasures. However, when I commit myself to a thorough and systematic study of God’s word, regular set prayer times with specific prayer points, and spending time with other believers in fellowship, I become others focused, selfless, and suddenly I don’t *need* all those other things. I can still enjoy them, and I actually enjoy them more, because I’m also walking in fellowship with God and my joy is complete. This week we see a clear picture of what happens when I cease to seek lasting satisfaction, contentment, and pleasure in my relationship with God, and instead seek to find temporary satisfaction, contentment, and pleasure in what the world offers.

**Outline**—The passage breaks down into 5 sections:

1. Two unfaithful sisters (vs 1-4)
2. The Older Sister, Samaria (vs 5-10)
3. The Younger Sister, Jerusalem (vs 11-21)
4. Judgement on Jerusalem (vs 22-35)
5. God judges their gross hypocrisy (vs 36 - 49)

### **1. Two unfaithful sisters**

#### **Ezekiel 23:1-4 NKJV**

**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.**

Here we have a picture of two symbolic sisters who represent the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The main point is that Judah (the southern kingdom) followed in the sinful ways of Samaria (the northern kingdom). Judah or Jerusalem did not learn the lesson of her ‘older’ sister Samaria who was taken into captivity by the Assyrians after a bloody three year siege that ended in 722 BC, about 120 years prior. Below is a table showing the differences between the two sisters and who they represent.

Oholah	Oholibah
Northern kingdom (Israel), capital was Samaria	Southern Kingdom (Judah), capital was Jerusalem
<b>meaning:</b> <i>Her own tabernacle</i> (The northern kingdom of Israel rejected worshipping God at the temple and instead made two golden calves for the citizens to worship)	<b>meaning:</b> <i>My tabernacle is in her</i> (The southern kingdom of Judah maintained temple worship, though they added idol worship to the mix as well.)

v 3 **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**).” (David Guzik)

v 3 **They committed harlotry in Egypt:** As we have seen over the last few chapters, the nation of Israel never really forsook or left behind the Egyptian idols. This means that there was always a part of them that longed for the worldly Egyptian lifestyle, which included the sexual immorality associated with the worship of many idols, and the resulting unwanted pregnancies. They dealt with the unwanted children in the same way we do today—murder the babies so they can keep having fun. It’s no coincidence that, in this chapter that graphically describes both spiritual and physical adultery, God also brings up again His pet hate—murdering children.

Ezekiel 20:5-8 tells us that, while the Israelites were still in Egypt, God told them to forsake the idols of Egypt, *but they did not*, and now we see the sad consequences of *not dealing decisively with the root of the sin*. We see several evidences of their failure to forsake Egypt (representing worldly living):

- They worshiped the golden calf at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 32:1-6)
- Joshua told the people to “Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!” (Joshua 24:14)
- Jeroboam choose to worship golden calves as is national religion in place of the temple (1 Kings 12:26–33)

v 4 **They were Mine:** Judah and Israel belonged to God according to the same principles as does the church; election, redemption, and marriage covenant. If replacement theology is correct, and God really has broken and forsaken His covenant promises made to Israel, then what eternal security or hope do we the church have, considering that we are just as faithless as them? Just take a look at the horrors of church history! It should make any Christian blush.

**Application: Not fully dealing with or forsaking our sin, our desire for the world**

Just as the Israelites never completely forsook their desire for worldly Egypt and its fleshly pleasures, so can we fall into the same trap. You might question, “But what about the times when they were obeying God; hadn’t they forsaken their desire or longing for Egypt then?” Well, yes and no. Yes, outwardly they had, but no, inwardly they hadn’t. There are several reasons why our desire for worldly things may remain latent or hidden:

- Our reputation/pride—fear of others finding out
- Negative side effects—not wanting to damage or jeopardise relationships, career etc
- Fear of the obvious direct personal, painful, practical, and physical consequences—STI’s, jail, financial loss etc.

But what happens when these objections to sin are minimised (no-one will know...), or the desire to sin grows enough to overcome these other selfish objections (I don't care...)? I then seek to satisfy the desires of my sinful nature and my physical appetites. Now the true condition of my heart becomes painfully obvious. This is the danger of not dealing with the root cause of our sin—the desires of our hearts. Like we learned with Jesus' prayer in the garden last time, we must completely submit our desires to God. Half-hearted obedience is self-delusion at best, and deadly at worst. Even just enjoying thinking about the sinful desire without actually acting on it—letting it simmer below the surface—is still very dangerous; a simmering pot will eventually boil over.

James 4:1-5 NLT paraphrase

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. <sup>3</sup> And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—**you want only what will give you pleasure.**

<sup>4</sup> **You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.** <sup>5</sup> Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him.

What is required is that I choose to leave that desire or physical appetite completely submitted to God, meaning completely forsaken. For example, by God's strength, I resolve to not watch worldly TV ever again, which leaves no room or opportunity for me to return to the filth. It's not, "I'll watch less or I'll have a break for a while so I don't feel so guilty," but rather, "This content doesn't meet the purity or holiness criteria of Philippians 4:8-9 and so it must go!" This is the only way to bring lasting change into our lives. Those sinful desires and physical appetites must be completely submitted to God—not my will but Your will be done—not my way but Your way. **If we don't deal with our sin at the desire level, not just at the behavioural level, then it will come back one day with a vengeance and destroy us, just like we will see with the nations of Judah and Israel.**

Philippians 4:8-9 NKJV

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. <sup>9</sup> The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you [in contrast to "I will be against you"].

## **2. The Older Sister, Samaria**

Ezekiel 23:5-10 NKJV

<sup>5</sup> "Oholah played the harlot even though she was Mine; and she lusted for her lovers, the neighbouring Assyrians, <sup>6</sup> Who were clothed in purple, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. <sup>7</sup> Thus she committed her harlotry with them, all of them choice men of Assyria; and with all for whom she lusted, with all their idols, she defiled herself. <sup>8</sup> **She has never given up her harlotry brought from Egypt, for in her youth they had lain with her, pressed her virgin bosom, and poured out their immorality upon her.** <sup>9</sup> **Therefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted.** <sup>10</sup> They uncovered her nakedness, took away her sons and daughters, and slew her with the sword; **she became a byword among women, for they had executed judgment on her.**

v 5 **Oholah played the harlot: Played the harlot**, or physical adultery, is a common metaphor in the Old Testament Scriptures for spiritual adultery, the worship of other gods. However, in this context, it means both; literal and spiritual adultery. 1 Kings 12:26-33 shows us how the northern kingdom of Israel had been spiritually unfaithful ever since God had split the nation into two.

v 5, 9 **She lusted for her lovers, the neighbouring Assyrians... Therefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted:** “Before the Assyrians conquered Israel [Samaria] she followed her attraction to their gods, their power, their protection, and their ways. This repeats an irony expressed before in Ezekiel; *when God’s people reject Him and embrace the idols of the nations, He allows those nations to conquer His people.*” (David Guzik)

“Samaria had no true faith in the living God, so she looked to the Assyrians to help her. The picture here is that of a prostitute seeking a lover to care for her and the language is quite graphic. Samaria not only welcomed Assyria’s soldiers but also Assyria’s idols, and the religion of the Northern Kingdom became a strange mixture of Mosaic Law and Assyrian idolatry (2 Kings 17:6–15).” (Wiersbe)

Isn’t it true that I can look to those in the world who are doing well materially and consider them to be successful? I then envy their success and seek to be like them. I end up adopting the same values and priorities in life, thinking that if I live like them, then I will become like them and share in their material success. How many today make idols out of famous bands, actors, rich people, or sports stars? They dress like them, talk like them, and end up living like them; all because of the illusion that by living that way, they can experience the same material success as their worldly idol.

What is the cost? Well, if I am seeking God and worshipping Him alone, then I will become like Him and will eventually share His glory, even though I suffer for now (see Romans 8:17)—*I become like what I worship or look up to.* However, if I take my eyes off God, and by default begin to worship someone or something else, then I will surely become depraved like them and will inevitably share their certain disgrace and punishment—*I become like what I worship or look up to.*

Also, Romans 6:16 says that when I bow down to someone or something, whether it be God or another person or thing, then I become a slave to them. This was born out literally in the history of the nation of Israel before they eventually fell to the Assyrians.

“The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III illustrates Jehu prostrating himself before the Assyrian king (the date would be about 840 bc, at the beginning of Jehu’s reign) and offering gifts, possibly with a view to buying support against Hazael of Damascus.” (Taylor)

“2 Kings also describes the paying of tribute by Israel to Assyria in the reigns of Menahem (c. 745–738 bc) and Hoshea (c. 732–724 bc); see 2 Kings 15:19ff.; 17:3.” (Taylor)

Remember that the worldly things I chase become my masters. If I am seeking to be rich, then money becomes my master. If I am seeking physical gratification, then my body and it’s appetites become my master.

Again, what they looked to for help and a pathway to success ended up being their downfall. Before we look at worldly people and envy their temporary material success, remember and consider Psalm 73—the material success and pleasure of the wicked is an illusion and their downfall and eventual judgement is the reality.

*“Throughout the Scriptures it may be discerned that divine retribution operates in such a way that the source of sinful pleasure becomes the source of punishment. Samaria’s lovers became her destroyers.”* (Feinberg)

v 6 **Who were clothed in purple, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men:** This represents purely physical attraction. The pleasures of this world are literally only skin deep, and therefore leave the heart empty and dry.

v 8 **She has never given up her harlotry brought from Egypt:** The northern kingdom of Israel never stopped worshipping the two golden calves, gods they brought from Egypt.

v 10 **They uncovered her nakedness, took away her sons and daughters, and slew her with the sword:** This was literally fulfilled when the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BC, and was a pointed reminder of what the Southern kingdom of Judah already knew. They looked down on their northern brethren who had previously rejected God (v 10), but now they are living like them and so would also share their fate, except for them it would be the Babylonians whom God would use to bring judgement upon them.

“The ten northern tribes flirted with the idols of Assyria and were taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 b.c. You’d think the younger sister would see the difficulty of her older sister and learn a lesson. But that is not what happened...” (Jon Courson)

### **3. The Younger Sister, Jerusalem**

#### **Ezekiel 23:11-21 NKJV**

<sup>11</sup> “Now although her sister Oholibah saw this, she became more corrupt in her lust than she [Oholah or Samaria], and in her harlotry more corrupt than her sister’s harlotry. <sup>12</sup> “She lusted for the neighbouring Assyrians, captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. <sup>13</sup> Then I saw that she was defiled; both took the same way. <sup>14</sup> But she increased her harlotry; she looked at men portrayed on the wall, images of Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, <sup>15</sup> Girded with belts around their waists, flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like captains, in the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity. <sup>16</sup> as soon as her eyes saw them, she lusted for them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. <sup>17</sup> “Then the Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their immorality; so she was defiled by them, and alienated herself from them. <sup>18</sup> She revealed her harlotry and uncovered her nakedness. Then I alienated Myself from her, as I had alienated Myself from her sister. <sup>19</sup> “Yet she multiplied her harlotry in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, when she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> For she lusted for her paramours, whose flesh is like the flesh of donkeys, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. <sup>21</sup> Thus you called to remembrance the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians pressed your bosom because of your youthful breasts.

Just like the northern kingdom of Israel idolised and craved to be like the Assyrians, so the southern kingdom idolised and craved to be like the Babylonians. Isn't it funny how history repeats itself. Again, the one thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. I know that this has been true in my own life. Many times I have not learned from my mistakes, because if I had I wouldn't have repeated them so often, and suffered the same shame and other consequences.

v 11 **[Judah] became more corrupt in her lust than [Israel]:** After seeing their northern sister's judgement, Judah not only does the same, but does worse. This would have to be the definition of stupidity and foolishness. But this is what sin does to us—we lose our ability to think logically and clearly. In our drive for self-pleasure and self-gratification we become blind to the dark reality of our situation.

Romans 1:21-25 NLT paraphrase

**Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.** And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. **As a result, their minds became dark and confused.** <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. <sup>23</sup> And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

<sup>24</sup> So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. <sup>25</sup> **They traded the truth about God for a lie.** So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

v 17 **The Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love:** "Ezekiel continues with the familiar theme using gross sexual promiscuity to illustrate Jerusalem's idolatry. This was accurate as a spiritual illustration, but was also connected to literal reality, because many of the rites connected with the Babylonian idols were sexual in nature, especially sex with prostitutes representing the idol. Truly, **they defiled her with their immorality.**" (David Guzik)

"If a Christian choose worldly prosperity, or his own reputation, or any earthly object apart from God, it is through this that he will suffer. The things that he has loved will be raised up against him, just as Israel, that had dallied with Babylon, was carried into captivity to Babylon." (Meyer)

### **Application: Guard your eyes and the eyes of your children from pornography**

v 13, 16 **She looked at men portrayed on the wall...as soon as her eyes saw them, she lusted for them:** This shows just how important it is for us to protect our eyes from evil things, and especially the eyes of our children—we must protect them from going down this disgusting road that has such terrible consequences. Imagine giving teenagers, hormonal beings with little self-control, access to any and all types of pornography? What parent would do such a thing? Actually, any parent who either gives their child a smartphone or allows unsupervised access on any kind of device that is connected to the internet is guilty of this. Also, many parents even take or allow their children to see movies or watch TV with way too much skin in their vision, and/or sexual themes. We must protect our children. What the world considers normal is not right. It might be normal that children are sleeping around in their early teens, but it's not right, and even worldly professionals admit that it's not healthy or beneficial. Why is the average age of sexual promiscuity getting lower and lower? I would suggest that the unfettered access to younger and younger minors of uncensored content is one of the

leading causes—children are getting smartphones at younger and younger ages as time goes on—as it becomes more acceptable or normal to do so. What do you think that they are doing on their phones as they huddle in groups during school breaks and out of school? They're definitely not playing pac-man, that old space invader game. Here's a warning from Jesus that can be applied to parents:

Luke 17:1-3a NLT paraphrase

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! <sup>2</sup> It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. <sup>3</sup> So watch yourselves!

Here's some free advice for parenting children in a morally depraved world:

- Because of the intense peer pressure put on our children by other children who have already been led astray and are already trapped in sin and burdened by various addictions, the choices we make as godly parents to protect our children from the evils of this world will not be popular decisions with our children. Just remember that you are their parent, not their friend.
- These difficult decisions are made easier the younger we begin to explain the general differences between God's way and the world's way to our children.
- Our children, being children, lack the ability to see the big picture, and can only see that they are apparently missing out on something good that everyone else is enjoying [satan's original lie]. We need to show empathy towards our children, understanding the tremendous struggle that they endure. The children of this world are often very cruel, and being different to the crowd and not being accepted by the crowd is not easy for our children—they will face rejection by their peers because they are not allowed to, or choose not to, enjoy the popular sinful worldly attractions.
- To counteract this, the home must be a place of strong, healthy, and godly relationships so that our children have somewhere safe to call home and be accepted for the right reasons. This is where a godly church family is also so important.

## **4. Judgement on Jerusalem**

**Ezekiel 23:22-35 NKJV**

**"Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I will stir up your lovers against you, from whom you have alienated yourself, and I will bring them against you from every side: <sup>23</sup> The Babylonians, all the Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa, Koa, all the Assyrians with them, all of them desirable young men, governors and rulers, captains and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. <sup>24</sup> And they shall come against you with chariots, wagons, and war-horses, with a horde of people. They shall array against you buckler, shield, and helmet all around. 'I will delegate judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments. <sup>25</sup> I will set My jealousy against you, and they shall deal furiously with you; they shall remove your nose and your ears, and your remnant shall fall by the sword; they shall take your sons and your daughters, and your remnant shall be devoured by fire. <sup>26</sup> They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewellery. <sup>27</sup> '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.' [this is God's purpose for the judgement]**



**28 “For thus says the Lord God: ‘Surely I will deliver you into the hand of those you hate, into the hand of those from whom you alienated yourself. 29 They will deal hatefully with you, take away all you have worked for, and leave you naked and bare. The nakedness of your harlotry shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotry.’ 30 I will do these things to you because you have gone as a harlot after the Gentiles, because you have become defiled by their idols. 31 You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will put her cup in your hand.’**

**32 “Thus says the Lord God: ‘You shall drink of your sister’s cup, the deep and wide one; you shall be laughed to scorn and held in derision; it contains much. 33 You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of horror and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria. 34 You shall drink and drain it, you shall break its shards, and tear at your own breasts; for I have spoken,’ says the Lord God.**

**35 “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, therefore you shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry.’ ”**

v 24, 27 I will delegate judgment to them... 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: Again, God uses natural means to discipline us, usually those evil things that we loved so that we will learn hate them.

v 21 I alienated Myself from her: The natural response of a husband to a promiscuous wife is to alienate himself from her because of the breach of trust. Broken trust and disloyalty is exceedingly painful. This is why sin grieves God (see Ephesians 4:30).

v 25 I will set My jealousy against you: He would also feel jealous in a positive way toward the other man in her life—I have so much love to give her, I want to provide for her needs, that other guy won’t care for her like I would.

v 29 They will deal hatefully with you, take away all you have worked for, and leave you naked and bare: All the good we have done will be undone, wasted, and ruined. We will lose our reward and experience great shame. Is the sin worth the cost?

v 35 Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, therefore you shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry: Again, we see the root cause of our slide into sin; we forget God and by default end up becoming more and more like the world.

## **5. God judges their sins and gross hypocrisy**

**Ezekiel 23:36-49 NKJV**

**36 The Lord also said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. 37 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. 38 Moreover they have done this to Me: They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths. 39 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.**

**40 “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. 41 You sat on a stately couch, with a table prepared before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil. 42 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.’ ”

v 39 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: It’s hard to imagine this happening. A person goes to the Molech idol and watches their son or daughter sizzles to death on the red hot metal of the statue as the drums beat to drown out their child’s screams. They then go to the temple and offer up sacrifices, read scripture, and sing the songs. God takes this as a personal insult—“**Moreover they have done this to Me**” (v 38)—it’s a total lack of respect and reverence.

**Application—Hypocrisy:** God will not accept my worship if I’m *continuing* to live or practice a worldly lifestyle. Remember that until I repent, then God is against me, He has alienated Himself from me. Playing the Christian on Sundays and at Bible study will only make God more angry with me. God hates hypocrites. So be real. Be hot or be cold, but don’t be lukewarm. I must choose this day who I will serve—I must not pretend to serve God if my heart is elsewhere; if my affections are given over to seeking sinful pleasures and desires, or, if I am holding onto bitterness or unforgiveness, which causes my heart to be cold both to God and to others.

**Application: Continuing in sin even though I understand that it is destroying me.**

v 43 Then I said concerning her who had *grown old* in adulteries, ‘Will they commit harlotry with her now, and she with them? Yet they went in to her: Their sin had prematurely aged them and made them weak—they could see the negative effects of their sin and how it was destroying them. However, they still stubbornly continued in it. It’s amazing how illogical and stubborn I can become when it comes to my sin. Often I don’t even enjoy it anymore. I don’t even know why I’m continuing in it. But this is what sin does to those who submit to it instead of submitting to God. Sin both blinds me and then consumes me until there is nothing left of me—I will have sacrificed my life for what? For something I end up not wanting and feel trapped in. I will end up completely spent, wiped out, and rendered useless. “So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death” (Romans 8:6a NLT).

Romans 13:11-14 NKJV

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.