

Ezekiel Chapter 16

Verses 1-7: Covers the period from Abraham entering Canaan.

The longest chapter in Ezekiel (is similar to chapter 23), in that both indict Judah as spiritually immoral. The story of Israel's sin and unfaithfulness to the love of God is told in all its sordid, vile character. The chapter is so sad and indicting that some of the ancient rabbis did not allow it to be read in public.

In this chapter, the nation is compared to a foundling, an infant that has been deserted by its parents. The statement (in verse 3), "thy father was an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite" is of course, not to be taken literally. It is like the statement that Sodom was a sister of Jerusalem. Rather, it pictures the idolatrous character of the people in Jerusalem.

Though the Lord had compassion on her as one would have compassion on a foundling, Jerusalem still loved her idols (verses 23-29), and became like a brazen prostitute (verses 30-34), Therefore, the Lord says, "I will judge thee" (verse 38).

A striking contrast occurs here. Rather than reproaching the character of God who had reclaimed her as an unwanted infant that had been exposed to death (verses 4-6), Israel had degenerated so far in its pagan practices that it participated in the abominable rites of infant sacrifice (verse 20).

Ezekiel 16:1-3 "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying," "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations," "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity [is] of the land of Canaan; thy father [was] an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite."

This begins a totally different Word from the LORD.

Jerusalem, as well as the physical house of Israel, are thought of symbolically as the wife of God. This is in the same thinking as the Christians being the bride of Christ. Notice her abominations. We know that abominations means revolting sins. There is no worse sin than for a wife to be a harlot.

Canaan was the name of the land that later became the Promised Land. It was named for the fourth son of Ham, Canaan. The Canaanites and Amorites many times speak of the same people. The Hittites were also, dwellers in Canaan. Jerusalem was not established with just Hebrews, but had been established with those who intermarried with the Hebrews. Jerusalem was a city born of Canaan.

These names identify the residents of Canaan who occupied the land when Abraham migrated there. Jerusalem had the same moral character as the rest of Canaan.

Israel was like an abandoned child. (In 16:4-14), we see the history of Israel from her conception to her glory under Solomon.

Ezekiel 16:4-5 "And [as for] thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple [thee]; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all." "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born."

Israel, in the day of its birth, was unwanted and uncared for. Actually, this is probably speaking of the Israelite nation being born in captivity. This speaks of a baby, whose birth mother has abandoned it and it was not even cared for by others. They were not a clean nation. They were not even washed with salt (preserved). They were naked, not wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Ezekiel 16:6 "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee [when thou wast] in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee [when thou wast] in thy blood, Live."

God looked on this wretched family, and told them to live. They were polluted, because they were not living the way God had intended. They were in the land of Egypt (symbolic of the world). This was an evil land of many false gods. God looked down upon them, and told them to live.

The time intended here is probably the patriarchal period of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when God formed His people.

Ezekiel 16:7 "I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: [thy] breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou [wast] naked and bare."

A baby comes into the world naked and bare. This is speaking of a time beyond that, when they have begun to mature. Just a handful of Jacob's family went into Egypt, and approximately 2 to 3 million came out of Egypt. God saw them, and sent them a deliverer, Moses. We see that they are spoken of here, as a maiden who is taking shape as a woman.

Verses 8-14: Is best taken as the time from the Exodus through David's reign.

Ezekiel 16:8 "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time [was] the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine."

"The time of love": This refers to the marriageable state. Spreading his "wing" was a custom of espousal and indicates that God entered into a covenant with the young nation at Mt. Sinai. Making a covenant signifies marriage, the figure of God's relationship to Israel.

God, through the ten plagues on Egypt, got them released. They became His own. The skirt thrown over them, covering their nakedness, was a sign of marriage. They had become His wife. The covenant made between God and Israel, made Him their God and them His people.

Chapter 24 of Exodus speaks of this covenant sealed with blood. The children of Israel agreed to that covenant. I will give just a little of that here.

Exodus 24:3: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do." From that moment on, they were His.

From verses 9-14: These gifts were marriage gifts customarily presented to a queen. The crowning may refer to the reigns of David and Solomon, when Jerusalem became the royal city. Israel was actually a small kingdom but with a great reputation. This refers to the time for Joshua's conquest of Canaan through David's reign and into Solomon's time.

Ezekiel 16:9 "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil."

"Washing" and "anointing" were both symbols of the marriage. This is similar to the washing (baptizing), and anointing with oil (Holy Spirit), that Christians participate in, when they accept Jesus as their bridegroom.

Ezekiel 16:10 "I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk."

These items mentioned are things in the tabernacle in the wilderness. They, also, speak of the beautiful garments God clothes His bride with. The fine linen symbolizes righteousness. Broidered work speaks of the beauty, and the silk speaks of the softness. Badgers skin shows that their feet are protected with leather.

Ezekiel 16:11 "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck."

The children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians, and wore necklaces, earrings, and bracelets made with gold into the wilderness.

Exodus 12:35-36 "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:" "And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them [such things as they required]. And they spoiled the Egyptians."

Ezekiel 16:12 "And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head."

We know that Egyptian women wore jewels in the center of their foreheads. All of this is speaking of the vast wealth the Israelites brought out of Egypt.

Ezekiel 16:13 "Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment [was of] fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom."

This is speaking of the magnificence of Jerusalem when the Israelites reached their height in the reign of David and Solomon. They were favored above all the nations around them. All of the things mentioned were part of their everyday fare.

Ezekiel 16:14 "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it [was] perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD."

This is speaking of the time of Solomon, when the temple was a thing to behold. People from other countries came to see the beauty in Jerusalem. Even the queen of Sheba came to see the beauty. God had blessed them beyond their wildest dreams.

Verses 15-19: We see a general summary of the nation's idolatry as she gave herself to the religious practices of the Canaanites. Every gracious gift from God was devoted to idols.

Ezekiel 16:15 "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was."

The spiritual adultery began in the time of Solomon, when he made places of worship to please his foreign wives. Many of them were idolaters. Not only did Solomon build the temple for God, but built for the false gods of his wives, as well.

Ezekiel 16:16 "And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: [the like things] shall not come, neither shall it be [so]."

These high places were places of idolatrous worship. They had decorated them with beautiful tapestry. They committed spiritual adultery by worshipping these false gods.

Ezekiel 16:17 "Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,"

At one time, they had been the richest country in the world. God had blessed them with silver and gold. They had taken the gifts of gold and silver God had given them, and formed gold and silver idols with them. This is the worst kind of spiritual adultery. We have talked, in previous lessons, about idols made with men's hands. An idol is a nothing.

Ezekiel 16:18 "And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them."

The oil and the burning of incense symbolize prayers rising from man to God. This is especially evil to involve false gods in their prayers.

Ezekiel 16:19 "My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, [wherewith] I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savor: and [thus] it was, saith the Lord GOD."

These gifts of God being offered in sacrifice to false gods, is the very height of idolatry. The sweet savor offering was for God alone.

Ezekiel 16:20-21 "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. [Is this] of thy whoredoms a small matter," "that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through [the fire] for them?"

Children were a gift from God. The Hebrews had thought it a curse from God to be barren. This sacrificing of their most precious gift from God is horrible. The worship of Molech was involved in the sacrifice of children. The True God brings life, not death. These children, not only belonged to the parents, but were God's, as well. This is one of the worst forms of worshipping false gods.

To say that God had expressly forbidden this is an understatement. Still the children were burned until Josiah's abolition of it. It had been reinstated in Ezekiel's day.

Let's see this as its stated in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 19:5-6. "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire [for] burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake [it], neither came [it] into my mind:" "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter."

Tophet. Hebrew uses the word toph for "drum." This was another name for the Valley of Hinnom, an East West valley at the south end of Jerusalem where, when children were burned in sacrifice to idols, drums were beaten to drown their cries. Rubbish from Jerusalem was dumped there and continually burned. The place became a symbol for the burning fires of hell, called Gehenna. It was to become a place of massacre.

Ezekiel 16:22 "And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, [and] wast polluted in thy blood."

None of these false gods came to their rescue, when they were slaves in Egypt. It was not one of these nothings that came and got them out of Egypt. God saw them in their worst estate, and loved them enough, to send them a deliverer.

Verses 23-30: This section, partly woe and partly lament, spoke to Judah's obsession with idolatry and her being influenced by Egypt, the Philistines, Assyria and Babylon.

Ezekiel 16:23 "And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)"

God cannot overlook their unfaithfulness. These woes are for the punishment, which is coming for their unfaithfulness.

Consider what the 3 woes meant in the book of Revelation. One (in chapter 9 and two in chapter 11).

Ezekiel 16:24-25 "[That] thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street." "Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms."

These high places, which seemed to be everywhere, were places of whoredom. In this particular case, this is spiritual whoredom.

From this, we see they were not guilty of worshipping one false god, but every one they were offered. They had picked up the ways of the evil ones around them. They were worshipping many false gods. Just as any beautiful girl, who becomes a harlot, they were now ugly and filled with sin.

Ezekiel 16:26 "Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger."

We have mentioned several times, that Egypt symbolized the world. This means they have become very worldly. They have taken up the ways of the Egyptians, who worshipped many false gods. All of this causes God to be very angry. He is like a jealous husband.

Ezekiel 16:27 "Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary [food], and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way."

The stretched out hand of God speaks of judgment. Their food supply has dwindled severely. Suddenly, God has cut the provisions for His adulterous wife (Israel).

The Philistines had always been the enemy of Israel. Even they knew that God's chastisement was upon the Jews because of their unfaithfulness.

Ezekiel 16:28 "Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied."

Each one of the nations, like Assyria that they had made political agreements with, was as if they were saying God was not powerful enough to help them. They were depending on the arm, of man instead of the arm of God. They picked up the worship of everyone's false gods in all the countries they made agreements with.

Ezekiel 16:29 "Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith."

They even prostituted themselves with the Babylonians.

We are quickly brought back to the fact that Ezekiel is in captivity, when this is given. He is shaming them, because they still do not realize why they are in captivity. They are now worshipping the false gods of Chaldea.

Ezekiel 16:30 "How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these [things], the work of an imperious whorish woman;"

Their hearts are not stayed upon God. They have two-faced hearts. They are making deals with the devil. A whore is someone who is for hire. This is what is meant here. Their worship can be bought, for special favors. They are no longer a faithful wife. They are a whore.

Verses 31-34: Shows that it is wicked to solicit and then be paid for immorality. Israel engaged in far worst behavior, she solicited and even paid her idol consorts. This refers to the heavy tribute (taxes), Israel had to pay to the godless nations.

Ezekiel 16:31 "In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire;"

They are so deep into their sins, they no longer even have to be paid. They sin for free. They are freely running after all the false gods.

Ezekiel 16:32 "[But as] a wife that committeth adultery, [which] taketh strangers instead of her husband!"

The sad thing is, she is now giving herself to strangers, instead of to her own husband, God.

Ezekiel Chapter 16 Questions

1. Cause Jerusalem to know her _____.
2. Who was Jerusalem, symbolically?
3. Who is the bride of Christ?
4. Thy birth and thy nativity is of _____.
5. Thy father was an _____.
6. Thy mother was an _____.
7. What did Canaan later become?
8. Verse 4 is speaking of what?
9. The years Jacob's family was in Egypt, seemed as if they were _____ and _____.
10. When did Israel become a nation?
11. When God passed by them in Egypt, what did He say to them?
12. Egypt is symbolic of the _____.
13. The handful of Jacob's family that went into Egypt grew to approximately how many?
14. What was the skirt being thrown over their nakedness a sign of?
15. What had they become to God?
16. "Washing" and "anointing" were symbols of the _____.
17. What do these symbolize in the Christian?
18. The children of Israel spoiled Egypt, and took what with them into the wilderness?
19. What is verse 13 describing?
20. In what king's reign did Jerusalem attract the queen of Sheba?
21. When did the spiritual adultery begin?
22. What had they made their idols of?
23. What does the oil and the burning of incense symbolize?
24. What was the name of the false god they sacrificed their children to?

25. Who do these children really belong to?
26. What does "eminent" in verse 24 mean?
27. What ways of the Egyptians had they taken up?
28. They had played the _____ with the Assyrians?
29. Where was Ezekiel, when he brought this prophecy?
30. What is the sad thing they have done to God?