

Jerusalem's Adultery and Shame

Ezekiel 16:35-63

Ezekiel 16:35-52: *"Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord!"* ³⁶ Thus says the Lord God: *"Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them, ³⁷ surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. ³⁸ And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy. ³⁹ I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare.*

⁴⁰ *"They shall also bring up an assembly against you, and they shall stone you with stones and thrust you through with their swords. ⁴¹ They shall burn your houses with fire, and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; and I will make you cease playing the harlot, and you shall no longer hire lovers. ⁴² So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more. ⁴³ Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me with all these things, surely I will also recompense your deeds on your own head,"* says the Lord God. *"And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your abominations.*

⁴⁴ *"Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: 'Like mother, like daughter!'"* ⁴⁵ You are your mother's daughter, loathing husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶ *"Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters.*

⁴⁷ *You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.*

⁴⁸ *"As I live,"* says the Lord God, *"neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.*

⁵¹ *"Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done. ⁵² You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins that you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters."*

Background Notes

In Ezekiel 16, Jerusalem - the capital of the nation and the city of God's Temple - was likened to an adulterous wife because of her departure from the Lord and her extremely sinful condition. In the parable, Jerusalem was considered to be the "wife" of the Lord. God had mercifully raised her from an abandoned infant to a beautiful young woman. He made a covenant with her ("married" her), and gave her the riches of a queen. But Jerusalem, as representative of the nation, had turned away from her husband and become involved in idolatry, with all of its immoral practices. The beautiful queen had become a prostitute tramp. This parable described Israel's spiritual adultery, and God would have to deal with Jerusalem and the nation because she was an "adulterous wife."

This is a two-part parable. In the first part of the parable, there is an analogy between Jerusalem and an adulterous wife, as we've seen. In the second part of the parable, the analogy is between Jerusalem and her sisters, Samaria and Sodom. Why these two cities? For several reasons:

1. Samaria was to the north and Sodom was to the south of Jerusalem, so indeed they were like sister cities, with Jerusalem in the middle.
2. Both Samaria and Sodom had been prominent and well-known cities like Jerusalem. Samaria had been the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and the prominence of Sodom was well known.
3. Both of these cities had been judged for their evil and wicked ways. God had allowed the Assyrian Empire to conquer Samaria, and the fate of Sodom is common knowledge.

Now Jerusalem's time had come, and she would not escape God's judgment for her spiritual adultery.

Doctrinal Points

1. God will judge His people for not remembering their roots.

Verses 35-52 were a scathing denunciation of Jerusalem for her spiritual adultery. Jerusalem's sins were worse than the sins of the pagan Hittites and Amorites and other Canaanites that formerly lived in the Land - that's the idea in the phrase "like mother, like daughter" (v44). Under the Old Testament Law, the inhabitants of any city that was given over to idolatry were to be put to the edge of the sword, and the city burned (Deuteronomy 13:12-16). Judgment by sword and by fire is exactly the judgment that came to Jerusalem when God allowed the Babylonian armies to sweep in and conquer the city (v40-41). Ezekiel 23:46-47: *"For thus says the Lord God: 'Bring up an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder. 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.'*"

Furthermore, the punishment would fit the crime. Jerusalem and the nation had turned away from the Lord and had committed spiritual adultery with the foreign nations. Now God would bring those same foreign nations back, and they

would despise the adulterous city and nation. God would use these foreign nations in the downfall and judgment of this adulterous wife.

In verses 46-52, Jerusalem was compared with her sisters, the cities of Samaria and Sodom. God had judged both these cities for their idolatry and immorality, but Jerusalem was worse than either Samaria or Sodom. Verse 47: *“You became more corrupt than they in all your ways.”* Jerusalem was so bad that Samaria and Sodom appeared righteous in comparison! *“Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters...”* (v52) - in other words, your behavior was so bad, you made those wicked cities appear to be righteous by comparison.

Jerusalem had to be pretty corrupt if Sodom appeared more righteous. Usually the people of Sodom are condemned for their sexual sin, but notice in verse 49 that they were guilty of more than just sexual sins. They were arrogant, excessively greedy, and idle. They lived in luxury, but didn't extend a helping hand to the poor and needy. Sound familiar?

Verse 43 gives us the bottom line cause of Jerusalem's problems, and the reason why God had to judge this special city: *“Because you did not remember the days of your youth.”* They had forgotten how God had rescued them and greatly blessed them. They had forgotten the covenant of blessing that God had made with them.

Is it possible that we, too, have forgotten our roots? Have we departed from our Christian heritage, as a nation and as individuals? This doctrinal point about Jerusalem can certainly apply to us today. God would judge His people for not remembering their roots.

2. God will restore His people, and they will be ashamed.

Ezekiel 16:53-63: *“When I bring back their captives, the captives of Sodom and her daughters, and the captives of Samaria and her daughters, then I will also bring back the captives of your captivity among them, ⁵⁴ that you may bear your own shame and be disgraced by all that you did when you comforted them. ⁵⁵ When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters return to their former state, then you and your daughters will return to your former state. ⁵⁶ For your sister Sodom was not a byword in your mouth in the days of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered. It was like the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria and all those around her, and of the daughters of the Philistines, who despise you everywhere. ⁵⁸ You have paid for your lewdness and your abominations,” says the Lord. ⁵⁹ For thus says the Lord God: “I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant.*

⁶⁰ *“Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. ⁶² And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, ⁶³ that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open*

your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done,” says the Lord God.”

Here’s the good news: *“Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.”* Even though Jerusalem and the nation had sinned greatly and must be judged, nevertheless God in His great mercy promised to restore Jerusalem and the nation of Israel.

Verse 62: *“And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.”* This verse is speaking of the New Covenant. Notice here (as well as in Jeremiah 31) that *this New Covenant is made with Jerusalem and Israel*. It is *not* made with the Church. The Church is not Israel, and the Church does not replace Israel. Hebrews 8 teaches that the blessings of the New Covenant have been *extended* to the Church, but the New Covenant was made with the Jewish people, with *Israel*. In the future, God will restore His special people - not only to the Land but also to the Lord. At that time, they will be ashamed of their sinful past.

Because we believe this passage is to be taken literally, verse 53 indicates that the cities of Samaria and Sodom will also be restored in the future. This passage is *not* teaching that there is a second chance for the wicked dead, or that ultimately there will be salvation of everyone. No, this prophecy is speaking of the future restoration of these cities during the millennial kingdom of our Lord here on this earth, when He returns to earth in power and glory.

Under the Lord’s unconditional New Covenant with Israel, these cities, Samaria and Sodom, will be subject to the Lord’s rule from Jerusalem (v61). What a great day that will be! God will restore His people, and they will be ashamed of their sin.

Practical Application

There is hope for you!

Is it possible that you think you have gone too far in a sinful life for God to have mercy on you, and save you, or restore you? If so, read Ezekiel 16. Think of the moral corruption and depravity of Jerusalem as described in this chapter – worse than Sodom! And yet God said, *“Nevertheless I will restore you to your former relationship with Me.”*

Can God show this kind of grace and mercy towards you? Of course He can! You’re **not** “too far gone.” Turn back to the Lord! Be ashamed and repentant for your sins. Receive His forgiveness in Christ. The Lord will save you and restore you. There is hope for you!