

Jerusalem's Rescue and Rebellion

Ezekiel 16:1-34

Ezekiel 16:1-14: *"Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² 'Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, ³ and say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴ As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. ⁵ No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.*

⁶ "And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' ⁷ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. ⁸ "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord God.

⁹ "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. ¹⁰ I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹ I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. ¹² And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. ¹⁴ Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord God."

Background Notes

In chapters 15-17, the prophet Ezekiel gave three parables to the people of Judah, to try to convey the sinful condition of Israel to them. Chapter 15 was the parable of the fruitless vine, and chapter 16 is the parable of the adulterous wife, and in chapter 17 we'll look at the parable of the two eagles.

The sinful city of Jerusalem was especially in view in the parable of the adulterous wife. Verse 2: *"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."* However, because Jerusalem was the capital of the nation and the city of God's holy Temple, what is said in condemnation of Jerusalem could be extended to include the entire nation.

Verse 3: *"Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.""* In what way was an Amorite the father of Jerusalem, and a Hittite the

mother of Jerusalem? This verse refers to the history of Jerusalem, not the lineage of the Jewish people. Remember, when the children of Israel came into the land of Canaan at the time of the Conquest, Jerusalem was already a city that was populated by the inhabitants of the Land. The inhabitants of the Promised Land included Amorites, Hittites, and a host of other Canaanites. Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Jebusites until the time of David.

Doctrinal Points

1. As a helpless orphan, Jerusalem was rescued by the Lord.

In this parable, the early beginnings of Jerusalem were likened to an unwanted child that was left in the open field to die. The normal procedure for caring for newborn babies in that culture had not been carried out, such as rubbing the newborn's skin with salt for antiseptic reasons. But in His sovereignty, God had special plans for Jerusalem. In this parable, the Lord showed mercy and compassion for the dying baby, and gave her life.

God did not let the "foundling" city of Jerusalem die, because it was to be a special chosen city in the future. And so in the parable, when the young girl (Jerusalem) grew up under God's blessing, the Lord entered into a marriage covenant with her. The phrase "spread my wing" or "spread my skirt" or "the corner of my garment over you" (v8) refers to a symbolic act meaning marriage. This gesture was part of the marriage proposal between Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 3).

In the parable, the Lord then clothed His wife with the finest garments, adorned her with beautiful jewelry, and advanced her to royalty and fame. This pictures the history of Jerusalem. At the time of David, the city was captured by Israel and made the capital of the nation. King David then brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem, and paved the way for the construction of the house of the Lord. David's son, King Solomon, built the beautiful Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, the holy city of God.

God blessed Jerusalem with wealth and prosperity. The fame of Jerusalem went forth among the nations. This was the glorious city of God! And it all started from humble beginnings, as portrayed in this parable. As a helpless orphan, the Lord rescued Jerusalem.

2. As an adulterous prostitute, Jerusalem rebelled against the Lord.

Ezekiel 16:15-34: *"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be. ¹⁷ You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them. ¹⁸ You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. ¹⁹ Also My food which I gave you—the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you—you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was," says the Lord God.*

²⁰ “Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, ²¹ that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? ²² And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood. ²³ “Then it was so, after all your wickedness— ‘Woe, woe to you!’ says the Lord God—²⁴ that you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street. ²⁵ You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry. ²⁶ You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbors, and increased your acts of harlotry to provoke Me to anger.

²⁷ “Behold, therefore, I stretched out My hand against you, diminished your allotment, and gave you up to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. ²⁸ You also played the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; indeed you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. ²⁹ Moreover you multiplied your acts of harlotry as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then you were not satisfied.

³⁰ “How degenerate is your heart!” says the Lord God, “seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot. ³¹ “You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment. ³² You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. ³³ Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry. ³⁴ You are the opposite of other women in your harlotry, because no one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment was given you, therefore you are the opposite.”

Sadly, the beautiful love story turned sour. In the parable, the beautiful young bride betrayed the husband who had rescued her and cared for her, and she left him for a life of prostitution. In the same way, Jerusalem, the holy city and home of God’s Temple, betrayed God’s trust. She led the nation away from the Lord into spiritual adultery. She prostituted herself by making alliances with the foreign nations and adopting their pagan ways, including the religious fornication of pagan worship. Idolatry was making its way into Israel even before the end of King Solomon’s reign.

The sins of Jerusalem are listed in these verses, and the list starts with **pride**: “But you trusted in your own beauty” (v15). Pride was the sin that led to Satan’s rebellion and downfall, and unchecked pride and self-glory will lead us away from the Lord as well.

In verses 16-19, Jerusalem took the good gifts that God gave His people and used them to build bigger and better idols. What a lesson for our own nation! The abundant material blessings God has bestowed on this land have been used to turn this great nation away from its Christian roots.

In verses 20-21, Jerusalem and the nation of Israel had turned so far away from the Lord that the people were literally practicing child sacrifice like the surrounding heathen nations! The prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, denounced this horrible sinful practice in Jeremiah 32:35: *“And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech.”* I’m sure there were some people in Israel at that time that used the argument that “pro-choice” people use today – and said it was a private, personal choice what they did with their own infants. God saw the selfish and deliberate murder of children as an *abomination* - then and today.

In verses 23-25, the point is that Israel not only practiced idolatry in a few high places but they built idolatrous shrines on every street and in every village square. Verses 26-27 emphasize that Jerusalem’s alliances with the pagan nations were not to be taken lightly. In God’s eyes these foreign alliances were nothing less than spiritual fornication and adultery – and that still is true today, by the way. In James 4:4 we read, *“Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* Somehow we as Christians make light of the sin of “friendship with the world” - but **God** sees friendship with the world as **spiritual adultery**. Read 1 John 2:15-17 in this connection.

The main point of verses 30-34 is that Jerusalem was even worse than the average prostitute. Prostitutes of the street at least got paid for their illicit practices, but Israel was like a greedy, adulterous woman who actually paid strangers to be her lovers. As an adulterous prostitute, Jerusalem rebelled against the Lord.

Practical Application

Don’t forget to remember!

Look at what God said to the nation in verse 22: *“And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood.”* Jerusalem and the people of the nation forgot the incredible love and mercy that God had shown them. They had become so morally corrupt that even the pagan Philistines were ashamed of Israel’s lewd behavior (v27). If they had remembered what God had done for them at the beginning, this would not have happened.

What about us? Do we remember what God has done for us in sending His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to die the horrible death of crucifixion on the cross? Remembering our beginnings as believers will help to preserve us from falling. Don’t forget to remember!