

# EZEKIEL

## *Cry Me a River*

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,  
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion  
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 16:1-63

Topic

The LORD tells a captivating story in which He rescues an abandoned baby, raises her, marries her, only for her to betray Him and become a harlot

Title

***“You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby,  
But Harlot, Look At You Now”***

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**“From rags to riches.”**

It’s a genre beloved by every generation and culture that values great storytelling.

Cinderella immediately comes to mind. But which version? There are at least 345 variants of the story in Europe. The Brothers Grimm version is dark. To fit into the slipper, one stepsister cuts off her toes, and the other cuts off her heel. Both are exposed when the birds alert the prince to the blood in the shoe.

**Israel is a rags to riches story told by the LORD.**

The LORD found an abandoned baby, saved her life, and gave her a future. As she grew into a beautiful young woman, they became betrothed and later married.

Finish this sentence: “So they lived \_\_\_\_\_.”

Here is how it is finished in Ezekiel. "So they were married and Israel proved herself to be an insatiable idolater, an adulterous wife, a brazen harlot, and a murderer of her own children."

Would the Babylonian invasion be the stoning she deserved for being caught in her adultery?

Israel was *faithless* but God remains *faithful* to keep His promises. In verse sixty we read, "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you."

- We'll start with the baby, in verses 1-6.
- Next Israel is betrothed, in verses 7&8.
- Next, Israel is the LORD's bride, in verses 9-11.
- Next, she is His wife, in verses 12-14.
- After that the once beautiful bride is a "brazen harlot," and a "sister" to the city of "Sodom."

Ezk 16:1 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 16:2 "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

Captain America calls SpiderMan "Queens" because that is where he is from. Throughout this chapter Ezekiel addresses Israel, all 12 tribes, as "Jerusalem."

This story is about Israel, and that ain't us. But does the Lord love *us* any less? Are not you & I chosen by Him? Do we not start-out being born again, as babes in Jesus Christ? Are we not betrothed?

### **And, regrettably, are we not capable of spiritual adultery & harlotry?**

Ezk 16:3 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. Jerusalem was a Canaanite city in the Promised Land. The Israelites could not capture it until David came along.

Jesus, the greater son of David, will establish Jerusalem as the world's capital during the Millennial Kingdom and into eternity. The "New Jerusalem" is the heavenly city we should anticipate along our pilgrim journey home.

Ezk 16:4 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.

Ezk 16:5 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.

Some birth customs are listed. This isn't a class on 6<sup>th</sup> century Bible Manners & Customs. It is a poignant plea for God's beloved to repent and return.

Has anyone here, maybe a fire-fighter, found an abandoned baby? What would it be like? In a word, it would be emotional.

It's important to avoid attributing unbiblical traits to God, but we shouldn't be so cautious that we overlook God's emotional depth. The narrative begins with a vulnerable infant that affected the LORD. It is intended to tug at our heartstrings.

Ezk 16:6 "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!'"

In the story, this two-fold exclamation to "Live!" is a shout expressing a two-fold commitment to provide life, *and* to provide a life for this baby.

Humans are born physically alive but spiritually dead due to sin. God offers spiritual life through Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose again to bring many to glory.

The baby to whom the LORD gave life grew and was betrothed to Him.

Ezk 16:7 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.

Israel was "naked and bare" as the baby. The LORD had taken her in to grow into this beautiful woman.

Ezk 16:8 "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.

In the Bible, the act of spreading one's garment over another symbolizes a legal engagement. Ruth asked Boaz to take her under his wing, requesting him to marry her.

Couples still try for outrageous marriage proposals. You can forget scuba diving and skydiving. Russian Alexey Bykov staged his own death to propose to his girlfriend, Irena. He hired a film director and stuntman to orchestrate a fake car accident, complete with an ambulance. When Irena arrived and believed he had died, Alexey emerged to propose. She said "Yes!"

Here comes the bride!

Ezk 16:9 "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil.

Ezk 16:10 I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

Ezk 16:11 I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck.

- If you are a believer, you are "cleansed with the washing of water by the word, that Jesus might present you to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that you should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26-27). Charles Swindoll writes, "Just as clear, fresh water cleanses our bodies, God's written Word washes us clean deep down inside our souls. It purifies our thoughts, scrubs our motives, and cleans our conscience as we absorb it and obey its truths."
- You have been "anointed" by receiving the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. You are a light to the world that can never exhaust its supply of oil.
- You have been clothed with a robe of righteousness. You receive it by grace at the Cross. The Lord gives you this robe in exchange for the filthy garments you wear. The Lord then adorns your robe with the good works He performs through you (Revelation 19:8).

Ezk 16:12 And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

***Body piercings are biblical!***

Ezk 16:13 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.

Ezk 16:14 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.

Wow! Talk about an extreme makeover! What more could the LORD have done?

### **What more could Jesus do for you than He has already done?**

Ephesians 1:1-14 lists numerous spiritual blessings Christians have in Christ:

- From God the Father (v3-6) we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (v4); holy and blameless in His sight (v4); predestined for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ (v5); grace freely given in the Beloved (v6).
- Through Jesus Christ (v7-12) we have redemption through His blood (v7); forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (v7); the mystery of His will revealed to believers (v9); all things united in Christ, both in Heaven and on Earth (v10); and an inheritance as God's people (v11).
- By the Holy Spirit (v13-14) we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing salvation (v13); a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until redemption (14).

From here on is about a 15 minute read. We'll need to summarize. Two scathing descriptions of Jerusalem dominate the verses:

1. From verses 15 through 41 the LORD calls His wife a "harlot" ten times.
2. The cities of Samaria & Sodom are called Jerusalem's mother & sister from verse 46 through verse 55.

Drop down to verses 20&21. We see the depth and depravity of Israel's whoredoms.

Ezk 16:20 "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,*

Ezk 16:21 that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through *the fire?*

We've discussed infant sacrifice. Molech's idol had outstretched, red-hot arms where babies were placed to burn. There was no wriggling, no screaming. The parents first killed their baby, probably by slitting his or her throat.

Why would someone kill a baby? Why would they celebrate killing a baby as a right? Why would a society allow it to happen?

### **Shouldn't God do something about it?**

The LORD delineates Israel's whoredoms from verse 22 through verse 43.

God condemns sexual sin and judges it. The narrative here is not about a judge but a husband whose spouse is unfaithful. He reveals the profound emotional pain caused by her betrayal.

Adultery is a profoundly injurious sin. So grievous is its impact that Jesus acknowledged it as providing biblical grounds for divorce, despite God's deep hatred of divorce.

Drop way down to v44... In the next long section, through verse fifty-eight, the LORD calls the cities of Samaria and Sodom Jerusalem's "mother" and "sisters."

It's common to rank cities, e.g., best and worst places to live. I've previously mentioned that my hometown, San Bernardino, is currently considered the worst city in California.

### **Jerusalem held that honor and was worse even than Samaria & Sodom.**

What was so bad about Samaria? When Israel split and became two nations, King Ahab established Baal worship in Samaria.

God prescribed the way He was to be worshiped in the Old Testament. We have great freedom in the New Testament, seeing how our physical bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. But the gathered church is *also* the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We must be mindful to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

A megachurch pastor put on a *Die Hard* themed Christmas service where he reenacted a famous scene. Dressed as John McClane, he emerged from an air duct and lit a cigarette.

Drop down to verses 49&50...

Ezk 16:49 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.

Wait... I thought that homosexuality was the cause of Sodom's destruction? Folks who think homosexuality is not condemned in the Bible use this verse. *Keep reading!*

Ezk 16:50 And they were haughty and **committed abomination** before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*.

The Hebrew word translated *abomination* is the same word that appears in Leviticus 19:22, where it most definitely is homosexuality.

Biblical marriage is a covenant of companionship between one biological man and one biological woman in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship intended to last a lifetime. This union is characterized by mutual submission to God and to each other in their respective biblically defined roles as husband and wife. Sexual activity is to occur exclusively within this marital relationship.

Verse 53...

Ezk 16:53 "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,

Sodom & Samaria will be restored when Israel is restored in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

**A material Kingdom, ruled by Jesus after His Second Coming, with Jerusalem as its capital, is going to be established for one thousand years.**

Verse 60...

Ezk 16:60 "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

Ezk 16:61 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.

Ezk 16:62 And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD,

Ezk 16:63 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.' "

Despite their unfaithfulness, God will keep His unconditional promises. During the final days of the Great Tribulation, two-thirds of the Jews will perish, and the surviving third will hide. On the brink of extermination, they cry out to the Lord. Jesus comes, glorified and glorious, and saves them as they receive Him.

We want our judges to be impartial & unemotional in applying the law. God is more than Judge. The Father is husband to Israel, and Jesus the Bridegroom to the Church.

**When we yield to sin, we break God's Law; Do we not also 'break' God's heart?**