

## Message #19

## Ezekiel 16:1-63

I read an interesting story about some people on a boat that was wrecked in a storm on Lake Michigan. Many years ago some students from Northwestern University formed a rescue team. One night on Lake Michigan at Evanston, Illinois one of the students named Edward Spencer saved 17 people from a sinking ship. Many years later, R. A. Torrey (pastor of Moody church and head of Moody Bible Institute in late 1800's) was talking about this event in a meeting he was conducting in Los Angeles. As Mr. Torrey was telling the story, a man in the audience called out and said, Edward Spencer is in the audience tonight. Well Mr. Torrey invited him to come up on the stage. Spencer was now an old man with white hair and he slowly climbed to steps to the applause of the audience. When he got to the pulpit where Mr. Torrey was, Mr. Torrey asked him if anything specifically stood out in his mind or memory about that event. Edward Spencer said the only thing that stands out in my mind is that of the seventeen people I saved, "not one of them said thank you" (Mark F. Rooker, *Ezekiel*, p. 124).

Ezekiel 16 is one of the longest passages in the entire Bible. It is also one of the saddest chapters in the entire Bible. One commentator observed it is longer than six of the Minor Prophets. It is a chapter that is designed to show the depravity that God's own people have had in past times in doing abominable things. They did not even think about God after He had done so much for them. Not only were God's people not thankful, they were abominable. **The thing that is amazing about this chapter is the way it ends.** In spite of the evil and corruption, in the end God will one day restore her and bless her.

**IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT ISRAEL HAS DONE ABOMINABLE AND SHAMEFUL THINGS AGAINST GOD, WHICH HAS CAUSED GOD TO PERMIT TERRIBLE THINGS TO HAPPEN TO HER, IN THE END, GOD, IN HIS GRACE, WILL REGATHER HER AND RESTORE HER.**

Now according to **verses 1-2**, Ezekiel was to make known to Israel and to Jerusalem the truth about her abominations.

There are five themes that show up in this chapter:

**THEME #1** – Israel was an abandoned and helpless child. **16:3-14**

The chapter opens with God describing the condition of her birth, specifically the birth of the capital city of Jerusalem. According to **verse 3**, Jerusalem was born in the land of the Canaanite and her father was an Amorite and her mother was a Hittite.

Now Israel as a nation descended from Shem (Gen. 10:21-31); but Jerusalem, before it was conquered by King David (I Chron. 11:4-7), was a Canaanite city that descended from Ham (Gen. 10:6-20) The people who initially lived in the city were the Jebusites (Jud. 19:10-12). Now two of the pagan groups who influenced the Jebusites were the Amorites and the Hittites.

So the birth of the nation Israel into Jerusalem was a birth into a place that had been dominated by idolatry. This place originally had pagan roots.

But the early beginnings of making Jerusalem a city for God's people was like that of an unwanted baby. No one wanted the people of God in Jerusalem. No one cared about Israel and no one did anything to help her.

Now when Israel was first born into the land as a baby, no one loved her nor took any interest in her. According to **verse 4**, no one cared enough about her to cut her navel cord, or wash her and cleanse her with water, nor rub salt on her or even wrap her.

In fact, according to **verse 5**, not one of these people took any interest in her at all to have compassion on her. She was thrown out into the open field for she was hated the day she was born.

This nation of God, this people of God and this city of God was despised by all dominant powers in the world. She was nothing and she meant nothing. She was in this world and no one cared for her. God saw her as an abandoned people.

But according to **verse 6**, God took an interest in Israel and He wanted her in Jerusalem and He had compassion on her.

**Action #1** - God said "live." **16:6** - God brought her to life.

**Action #2** - God made her numerous. **16:7a** - God made her fruitful.

**Action #3** - God let her grow. **16:7b** - God let her grow and prosper.

**Action #4** - God clothed her. **16:8a** - image is caring and providing for a wife.

**Action #5** - God made a covenant with her. **16:8b** - This is a pure grace covenant.

**Action #6** - God washed her and cleaned her. **16:9a** - Only God can make one clean.

**Action #7** - God anointed her. **16:9b** - He set her apart as His own.

**Action #8** - God beautifully adorned her. **16:10-12a**

God not only helped her, He lavished her.

**Action #9** - God made her royalty. **16:12b -13** - Jerusalem became home of Davidic dynasty.

**Action #10** - God made her famous. **16:14** - During days of Solomon, nations were in awe.

God did wonderful things for the nation Israel.

**THEME #2** – Israel became an immoral and worldly child. **16:15-59**

But in spite of all of the wonderful things God did for Israel, she was not faithful to Him and she was not loyal to Him. What did she do? She played the harlot. She did not even worship Him. God describes her despicable descent into depravity:

**Reality #1** - She trusted in her beauty and not God and became a harlot. **16:15**

**Reality #2** - She turned some of the things God gave her into idolatry. **16:16-17**

**Reality #3** - She took sacred things and sacrificed them to idols. **16:18-21**

A. She sacrificed her embroidered cloth. **16:18a**

B. She sacrificed God's sacred oil. **16:18b**

C. She sacrificed God's incense. **16:18c**

D. She sacrificed God's bread. **16:19**

E. She sacrificed her sons and daughters. **16:20-21**

In II Kings 16:3 we learn that Ahaz was a king who made his son pass through the fire. Manasseh, the wicked king did exactly the same thing (II Kings 21:6).

**Reality #4** - She did not remember what God did for her. **16:22**

Not one time in all of their evil pursuits did they remember God and what He had done for them. Many believers forget about their commitment to Christ. God says after all of this wickedness, "woe, woe" to you.

**Reality #5** - She built religious shrines in every place. **16:24-25a**

Dr. Charles Ryrie said, "Idolatry and prostitution were everywhere" (*Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1284).

**Reality #6** - She was immoral with everyone. **16:25b-34**

This was God's nation. This was the nation that was in a covenant relationship with God and she was a harlot. She actually sought out evil, immoral pursuits. She was a harlot with the Egyptians (**v. 26**), the Assyrians (**v. 28**), the Babylonians (**v. 29**). As Moshe Greenburg said, "she fornicates with every passerby" (*Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 293).

She was an adulterous wife who played the harlot with everyone. She was a “nymphomaniacal adulteress and harlot.” She was so immoral that even the Philistine women were ashamed of her lewd conduct (v. 27).

She was a “bold-faced whore” (v. 30). She was so evil that she did not accept money like most harlots; in fact, she paid any heathen to have a relationship with her (v. 34).

**THEME #3** – Israel will receive punishment for her rebellion against God. **16:35-43**

God is not about to let His people get away with rebellious sin and evil.

**Judgment #1** - God will gather all nations she loved and turn them against her. **16:36-37**

All evil religions and nations have been connected to Israel, so what God will do is cause all of these nations to come against her from every direction. There is a Tribulation coming headed by an Antichrist that will bring every nation in the world against her.

**Judgment #2** - God will bring upon them His wrath. **16:38**

Because He is a jealous God, He will pour out His wrath on them.

**Judgment #3** - God will allow foreign nations to demolish them. **16:39**

**Judgment #4** - God will allow foreign nations to cut His people to pieces. **16:40**

**Judgment #5** - God will allow foreign nations to burn down houses. **16:41**

The judgment of God will be an exhaustive judgment. God warns Jews to flee from the city as fast as you can, when you see the Abomination of Desolation.

**Judgment #6** - God will be pacified by what He permits to happen. **16:42**

**Judgment #7** - God will bring His people’s evil conduct down on their own heads. **16:43**

**THEME #4** – Israel will be the talk of the nations. **16:44-59**

Everyone will be talking about Israel. People will be saying Israel is more corrupt than Samaria or Sodom (16:46). Verse 47 says that Israel was more corrupt than the most godless nations in existence.

In Sodom’s case, the women were arrogant and they had abundance and they were careless. They did not help anyone in need (16:49). It was her luxury that led to her abominable immorality. They got involved in abominable things such as homosexuality and God removed them (16:50).

Samaria did not do half of the evil things that Israel did in Jerusalem. In fact, Israel was so evil that she made Sodom and Samaria appear to be righteous (**16:51**).

Look at **verse 52**. Israel was so corrupt that the women of Sodom and Samaria appeared to be righteous.

**What a sad commentary when lost heathen people appear to be more righteous than God's own people.**

One has to be totally depraved to make other depraved people look good.

**Verses 53-59** are significant because we learn here that one reason God allows foreign, God-mocking powers to exist is so that they can see the humiliation of His own people. He wants His people totally ashamed and humiliated and one of the ways God does that is to let other people see it.

Look at the hypocrisy of **verse 56**. The pious, proud Jews would not even repeat the name "Sodom" because the people were so despicable to them and yet they were worse than they were.

As **verse 57** says, God had enough of their games and he surfaced their wickedness.

**THEME #5** – Israel will be a repentant and restored child. **16:60-63**

Here is the most amazing thing of all. This is truly "unconditional grace." In spite of all of the evil that His people have done and all of the judgments that God has let hit His people, "nevertheless" God will remember His people and restore His people because of the covenant He made with His people.

Do you see this? When God enters into a covenant relationship with His people, He does not forget it even if His people have lost their way.

This is an encouragement to any child of God. You are in a covenant relationship with God. God will be faithful to His people even when His people are not faithful to Him.

God's people will remember her ways and be ashamed. She will be humiliated by her sin. The last part of **verse 63** is pure grace: "I have forgiven you for all that you have done."

No matter what one's past, one may have a covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.