

Ezekiel Part 16 (Ezekiel 16:1-34)

1. **16:1-14** God commanded Ezekiel again to confront Jerusalem with its “detestable practices.”
2. This message was so forceful and explicit that it was excluded from use as a public reading in later synagogue practice.
3. The birth of the nation as God’s covenant people is portrayed in parable form and compared to the untimely birth of an unwanted female child. (Ezekiel 16:4)
4. God had chosen Israel from among its Canaanite neighbors, principally the Amorites and Hittites, to be specially related to and used by him. (Ezekiel 16:3)
5. When David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, he made it the capital and crown jewel of the Hebrew nation.
6. The Jebusites retained control of Jerusalem until its conquest by David. (2 Samuel 5:6-9)
7. The nativity of Israel was traced to Egypt when the Hebrews were delivered and “born” as a nation at Mount Sinai. (Exodus 19:1-8)
8. Ezekiel described normal birth practices such as rubbing the newborn with salt, water, and oil, then wrapping the baby in cloth strips for seven days and repeating the process for forty days.
9. This was supposed to enhance the child’s character and promote general health and well-being for newborn children. But Israel’s nativity was deprived of these rites. Instead,
10. Israel was portrayed as a female abandoned at birth with no one to care for or have pity on her helplessness.
11. This practice of exposure of sickly, deformed, and unwanted children was common in the ancient Near East, especially for unwanted female babies.
12. When she was unlovely and no one else wanted her (Israel), God had compassion on her as she lay struggling in her own blood, and He rescued her and decreed her life by the word of His power.
13. God then cared for the nation and caused it to increase and flourish like plants in a field.
14. So she (Israel) prospered until she reached the maturity of womanhood. As a beautiful young woman of marriageable age, she became the wife of Yahweh.
15. The “spreading the corner” of a garment over a young woman was the ritual for claiming a bride.
16. God made a “covenant” with her in which he pledged to care for her with words that are reminiscent of Sinai. (Exodus 19:1-8)

17. The language of the marriage ritual continues through the passage.
18. Ezekiel reported how God cleansed her, clothed her luxuriously with the garments of a princess, gave her bridal jewelry, the best food usually reserved for royalty, and crowned her as His queen. (Ezekiel 16:9-10)
19. As a result she became renowned for her beauty (vv. 10–14). Israel was the orphan who became a queen. All the figures used in the description were reminders of the providential care God gave Israel from the time of Abraham to nationhood and onward. (Ezekiel 16:10-14)
20. **16:15–34** However - it turned tragic because Israel's repayment for God's love and care was betrayal.
21. The infant once left for dead, who was nurtured to maturity and who became the bride of her benefactor, also became unfaithful.
22. The reasons for the fall of the nation are presented with great sadness in this section.
23. Ezekiel provides at least eight reasons for the exile:
 - a. pride (v. 15a)
 - b. spiritual prostitution (vv. 15b–19)
 - c. materialistic idolatry (vv. 16–19)
 - d. human sacrifices (vv. 20–21)
 - e. forgetting God (v. 22)
 - f. propagating her prostitution (vv. 23–25)
 - g. trusting relations with pagan nations (vv. 26–29)
 - h. a weak will that cast off all moral restraints (vv. 30–34)
24. The language of this whole passage is very explicit. Pride and self-sufficiency were the foundation for all its spiritual adultery. (Ezekiel 16:15)
25. Israel ignored the warnings given in the early days of its national life.
26. Deuteronomy 6:10–12 was a clear warning against the danger of becoming self-sufficient and forgetting God.
27. Deuteronomy 8:1–20 was an additional warning that the nation must not forget its heritage.
28. Israel was to continually remember that God found it, nurtured it in the wilderness, made it His own, and gave it a land of promise and blessing.
29. Israel ignored these clear warnings and became what Ezekiel portrayed as an “adulterous wife” who preferred strangers to her husband. (Ezekiel 16:32)
30. Israel exchanged worship of Jehovah for worship of pagan gods at pagan shrines called “high places.”
31. It was wickedly ironic that the people used God's gifts to build shrines and make idols of gods that were nonexistent. (Ezekiel 16:17-21)

32. These were undeniable evidences of their greed, selfishness, and self-will that are true of any materialistic society.
33. Such conduct produced injustice, violence, immorality, decadence, and blindness to the sanctity of human life.
34. The basic cause behind all the evil excesses presented in v. 22 was neglect of the covenant.
 - a. They “did not remember the days of their youth.”
 - b. They forgot God in the sense that he made no difference in their daily lives.
 - c. They were practical atheists, professing to worship Yahweh along with other gods but failing to believe and obey his word.
35. God’s response was to cry, “Woe, Woe” to the nation (v. 23), an expression of lament and horror that was uttered at the arrival of disaster.
36. God was horrified that they would not listen to his prophets but multiplied altars for sinning.
37. They placed hope for present and future security on alliances with idolatrous neighbors who further prostituted the nation.
38. Ezekiel mentioned specifically Egypt (v. 26) and Assyria (v. 28), who captured some of Judah’s territory in Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 B.C. and Babylon (v. 29).
39. The people’s conduct was so depraved that even the Philistines, noted for their debauchery, were “shocked” by their lewd conduct (v. 27).
40. Israel had failed to remember their history of grace received from God.
41. Their annual festivals and daily worship were designed to remind them of this grace, but they became deaf to the message (v. 22).
42. Failing to remember their history, they became proud of who they were and of what they had. (v. 15)
43. The result was that they cast off all moral restraint and gave themselves to permissiveness and perversions. (v. 30)
44. So Israel was an “adulterous wife” who preferred strangers to her own husband. (v. 32)
45. Israel bribed her clients and paid them to commit adultery with her, enslaving herself to them. (Ezekiel 16:33–34 and 1 Cor 7:22–23)

With this record of the sordid deeds of the queen who became a harlot, the message turns to the theme of judgment.