

an essay:

EZEKIEL 16 – THE CALL TO COVENANT FAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD

Robert Baral
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I. A PROPOSITION

There comes a point when GOD, as He was obliged to do with unfaithful ancient Israel, must spue out of His mouth the unfaithful Church and take away from her the very candlestick of witness!

II. THE SCRIPTURE TEXT – EZEKIEL 16:1-22

1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

16 And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,

18 And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

19 My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD.

20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,

21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. ¹

III. IMAGERY OF THE ABANDONED AND HELPLESS NEWBORN INFANT ISRAEL

First, EZEKIEL 16:1-5: “Again the word of The LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith The Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.” ²

In EZEKIEL 16:1-5 we have GOD personally taking note of His people Israel when they were yet as a newborn baby abandoned and in peril of death immediately after birth. For a newborn baby is struggling to take its first breaths, and here that infant is still covered in the fluids and blood of conception and delivery, its umbilical cord not even cut. Such a newborn is uncovered and naked, having no protection from the harshness of the world. This is the small tribe of Israel, his twelve sons and their families struggling to survive in a cruel world.

IV. IMAGERY OF THE RESCUE OPERATION OF ISRAEL BY THE LORD

Second, EZEKIEL 16:6-7: “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee

¹ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:1-22.

² KJV, EZEKIEL 16:1-5.

when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.”³

In EZEKIEL 16:6-7 we have The LORD personally performing a rescue operation to save Israel and his small family tribe from utter extinction in the famine and drought of his day, their sojourn into Israel and their miraculous deliverance from slavery at the hands of their pagan Egyptian masters. So we have a picture of The LORD taking this abandoned infant in His own arms, wiping away the blood of birthing, washing the child thoroughly with cleansing water and anointing her with oil.

V. IMAGERY OF THE MARRIAGE COVENANT BETWEEN THE LORD AND ISRAEL

Third, EZEKIEL 16:8: “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith The Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.”⁴ In EZEKIEL 16:8 we see The Almighty making as it were a marriage covenant with Israel, as a young man in love covenants in marriage with a young woman, that she becomes his wife. This is Israel, having been delivered by GOD’s mighty hand through Moses and Aaron and His many great works, now makes The Covenant of The Law with Moses and the people at Mount Sinai.

VI. IMAGERY GOD’S LOVE AND HONOUR TOWARDS ISRAEL HIS BELOVED

Fourth, EZEKIEL 16:9-12: “Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.”⁵

³ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:6-7.

⁴ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:8.

⁵ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:9-12.

In EZEKIEL 16:9-12 The Creator is as the loving and adoring husband of the only wife whom he loves, wiping away her reproach, clothing her in finery and bedecking her with precious jewels and gifts. The LORD makes Israel as it were His first officer by placing as it were a necklace of His authority about her neck. And GOD elevates Israel to be His very queen, placing as it were a crown of glory upon her head by His own loving hands. This is national Israel established at last in The Promised Land to be a glory to The Almighty and a light to the surrounding lost Gentile world around her.

VI. IMAGERY OF THE EXALTED WIFE OF JEHOVAH

Fifth, EZEKIEL 16:13-14: “Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith The Lord GOD.”⁶ In EZEKIEL 16:13-14 we see GOD’s Servant Nation Israel at her height of glory and peak of her purity of purpose, which she will not attain again or exceed until The Second Coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. This is the undivided Kingdom of Israel under King David and then his son Solomon. Here Jerusalem became the holy capitol city of Israel, The Ark of The LORD was brought into her walls and The First Temple was built and consecrated. Here Israel became renowned throughout the ancient world for wealth, power, wisdom and holiness, but only because she was as the bride of her husband The Almighty.

VII. ISRAEL FALLS INTO ADULTERY AND ABOMINATION

Sixth, EZEKIEL 16:15-19: “But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, And tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them: and thou

⁶ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:13-14.

hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith The Lord GOD.”⁷

In EZEKIEL 16:15-19, we find Israel as the adulterous unfaithful wife of JEHOVAH, having defiled her marriage Covenant and bed with false lovers in the form of worship of false gods. She pours her love out on every passing strange deity, taking the fine gifts and precious blessings of love bestowed upon her by The LORD and offering them up to others. Worse, she fashions for herself images of these false loves, that she might prostrate herself before them in worship. This is Israel’s infection of Solomon’s many foreign wives and concubines who brought with them their foul worship of false gods into Israel. This is also Israel as she proceeds into two divided Kingdoms, each of which become so perverted that, in their whoredom with idols and false deities, she gives away even the food from The LORD which had sustained her – the pure worship of GOD alone and The Covenantal contract of The Law of Moses.

VIII. ISRAEL THE UNLOVING MOTHER SACRIFICES HER OWN CHILDREN

Seventh, EZEKIEL 16:20-21: “Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?”⁸ In EZEKIEL 16:20-21 we find the horror of Israel having sunk so low in her adulterous worship of the pagan deities of the surrounding nations that she gives up her children and children’s children to them. This is figurative in that, as the father becomes apostate, his sins are upon both his own head and those of his children and following generations. Israel has cut her posterity off from the Covenantal blessings of GOD! This is also literal in that, to fully prostrate herself before some of these false deities, Israel physically sacrifices many of her babies in the flames of Baal!

IX. ISRAEL HAS FORGOTTEN GOD THE HUSBAND OF HER YOUTH

⁷ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:15-19.

In EZEKIEL 16:22 The Almighty confronts His Old Testament bride Israel: “And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.” Here we find the indictment against Israel for her unspeakable, intentional and ongoing abominations and whoredoms, her apostasy and idolatry, her unfaithfulness to JEHOVAH and to the mission appointed to her by The very hand of GOD.⁹ Like The Church on earth now, ancient Biblical Israel was imperfect because she was made up of fallible men who – like the saints of GOD under The New Covenant – were prone to sin, backsliding and even apostasy. They like us, though the saints of GOD under The Old Covenant, were just as prone to falling to the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil!

X. THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE IMAGERY AND ITS MEANING

We have noted the rich imagery in this passage and its picture of the relationship between GOD and ancient Israel. The combined flow of events in this picture of GOD and Israel speaks of the adulterous wife who, betraying the loving and caring husband over and over and over again, is not worthy of the marriage covenant, the marriage chamber or the marriage bed. Therefore when unfaithful ancient Israel is at last given her final bill of divorcement by GOD and wiped from the face of the earth as JEHOVAH’s Servant Nation, no man should be astounded at the right judgement of Providence!

Thus having laid out the grounds for the issuance of the bill of divorcement by The Almighty to ancient Israel, the door becomes open for the entry of a new bride of The LORD to enter into the prophetic history of Heaven and earth: The Church. GOD finds a new bride, The Church, but only by The Incarnation, Passion, Sacrifice, Resurrection and Ascension of He Himself as fully GOD and fully man – but without sin – our Lord JESUS CHRIST! It is now the mantle and mission of The Church, as the bride of CHRIST, to be a glory unto The LORD and a light to all men and nations of the earth!

⁸ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:20-21.

XII. THE SIN DESCRIBED AND THE PROPER RESPONSE DEMANDED OF US TODAY

The sin described here in EZEKIEL 16 is that of apostasy and idolatry. The Old Testament is witness to The Almighty's longsuffering with wayward ancient Israel: David in PSALM 86:15 speaks of The LORD's longsuffering with sinful men, that they may have multitudes of opportunities to repent and return to Him: "But thou, O Lord, art a GOD full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth.

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Just two chapters later Ezekiel speaks of GOD's heartfelt desire that men should put away their idols and return to Him and Him alone, that His judgement might be stayed from its awful advent. So we read in EZEKIEL 18:30-32, "...Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith The Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye!"

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XIII. IN CONCLUSION

The questions at hand are these: Does GOD allow the worship and reverence due unto Him and Him alone to be shared with false gods and idols in the hearts and lives of men? And if The King of The Universe did not spare ancient Israel His Covenant Nation, shall He spare that part of His Church who also plays the harlot? For CHRIST our King declares in MATTHEW 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon!"¹² We in holy Covenant with GOD can not both be called by His Name and bow down to our idols, false gods and things of this world! Though The LORD is longsuffering with men, His longsuffering must at a certain point come to an end and His judgement begin. Let The faithful Church then ever keep close to The

⁹ KJV, EZEKIEL 16:22.

¹⁰ KJV, PSALM 86:15.

¹¹ KJV, EZEKIEL 18:30-32.

¹² KJV, MATTHEW 6:24.

Saviour and Him alone!

For after all the blessings which The Lord has showered upon her, should not The Church forever cry out in thankful praise as did once ancient Israel as in JOSHUA 24:16, “And the people answered and said, GOD forbid that we should forsake The LORD, to serve other gods!”¹³ The Spirit of The LORD rebukes The Church at Ephesus in REVELATION 2:4-5, “...thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent!”¹⁴ JESUS CHRIST will not tolerate a Bride who has forgotten Him and runs after other lovers – other gods – who sets up idols within her sanctuaries to bow down to.

Even though The Messiah loves His Church so much that He gave up His own Body and Blood to build her, His longsuffering with her unfaithfulness must at some point come to an end. There comes a point when GOD, as He was obliged to do with unfaithful ancient Israel, must spue out of His mouth the unfaithful Church and take away from her the very candlestick of witness! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, AMEN.

¹³ KJV, JOSHUA 24:16.

¹⁴ KJV, REVELATION 2:4-5.

XIV. REFERENCES

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