

# Ezekiel 16 • The Dual Example of Judah

## Introduction

One of the lessons we learn as Christians is how God can take the most evil of circumstances – even things directly perpetrated by the devil himself – and turn them around for good. Have you ever considered the possibility that He does this with people as well? Not just simply by bringing the unsaved into His kingdom, but in the course of dealing with those who have fallen away and can only be reconciled through dramatic efforts. In the process, we're a dual example of God's grace and love serving as an example to others, both Christian and non-Christian alike.

<sup>1</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations <sup>3</sup>and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, “Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. <sup>4</sup>As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. <sup>5</sup>No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

<sup>6</sup>“When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you while you were in your blood, ‘Live!’ <sup>7</sup>I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare.

<sup>8</sup>“Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,” declares the Lord GOD.

<sup>9</sup>“Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. <sup>10</sup>I also clothed you with

## [Read v.1-5]

### Q: What exactly is an “abomination”?

A: Something that is offensive to God. Most of the Hebrew words translated “abomination” mean “impure”, “filthy”, “unclean” – all of which combine to describe something which is foul-smelling and objectionable to a holy God. In chapters 8-10 of Ezekiel we saw how abominations resulted in driving out the very presence of God from the temple.

### Q: What is the meaning of their parentage in v.4?

A: The Amorites and Hittites embodied the worst of the nations of Canaan, all of which were so spiritually corrupt – had themselves become an abomination to God – that God judged that they should be completely destroyed. Instead, Israel embraced their ways and became like them so that their spiritual heritage was no longer confirmed by their behavior in adhering to the covenant provided through righteous Abraham, but through abominable Canaan.

### Q: What is the greater meaning of the condition of their birth?

A: They had none of the basic parental or natal love, care, or nurturing that naturally comes to an infant, representing their treatment by the world. It's a picture of everyone's condition before adoption by the Lord.

**Point:** The point to be made about Judah's particular abominations is how they are rendered by someone whom God took as His own child, who offered His own Self as their parent. Instead, in a strange, reverse-type of adoption, they rejected their Parent for false parents who allowed their original condition in the first place.

## [Read v.6-14]

### Q: What are the two stages of development contrasted here?

A: First is an infant growing up to the point of reaching puberty, and then the transition from childhood to adulthood.

### Q: What is the biblical meaning to be clothed by God?

A: It represents serving and living before Him in righteousness according to His Word. Those who are disobedient are described as clothed in filthy rags. It's important to note that God's clothing of Israel doesn't actually take place until God “entered into a covenant with you”; in other words, established His Word.

### Q: What does “spread My skirt over you” represent?

A: The hems of garments were often ornate and unique to each individual. The fancier and more ornate the trim, usually the more powerful the person. So the skirt – particularly the hem of the skirt – was a sign of authority. (This is the meaning of Ruth seeking to be covered by her kinsman-redeemer's skirt, the Mosaic Law's instruction for the ornamentation on priest's skirts, and why in Jesus' time people reaches

embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. <sup>11</sup>I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. <sup>12</sup>I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. <sup>13</sup>Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. <sup>14</sup>Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,” declares the Lord GOD.

<sup>15</sup>“But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing. <sup>16</sup>You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen. <sup>17</sup>You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them. <sup>18</sup>Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them. <sup>19</sup>Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened,” declares the Lord GOD.

<sup>20</sup>“Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? <sup>21</sup>You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire. <sup>22</sup>Besides all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood.

for His hem.) It's another expression of God's Word.

**Q: Are all these things speaking only of material blessings?**

A: No. It's likely that this is a description of how Israel was intended to be an example to all the other nations around it not just by God's material blessings provided, but those of the covenants, His Word, the temple, the priesthood, and all the things witnessing to the glory and power of the One True God. Worshiping and serving the One True God was supposed to stand out as a stark contrast to those worshiping and serving false gods.

**Point:** *Having been given God's Word and all the things that go with it, they were to be clothed in it – that is, obedient to and living it – to such a degree that it was a shining example to everyone else of the results of embracing His Word and ways alone. They should have also known that the only reason they had all that they had was a direct result of God's grace and Word and nothing they ever did on their own to deserve it.*

**[Read v.15-22]**

**Q: What is the basic, repeated behavior expounded here?**

A: Marital unfaithfulness. Taken to be His bride just as exclusively as a marital relationship, Israel pursues and engages in illicit relationships with others. But it's even worse because a harlot is not merely seeking another husband, but running around with anyone she can find; she's not particular about who she takes up with.

**Q: What is the point of how she used all the things provided to her?**

A: No one took notice of her until God raised her up and she had nothing until it was given to her by God. She used the very things of God to get attention from those who originally ignored her and did nothing to ease her original condition of hopeless suffering.

**Application:** *All of the things mentioned – high places, male images, oil, incense, bread, etc. – are associated with worship. Biblical worship is an expression of one's faithfulness. Does a spouse believe you love them while you're still seeing others? Does God want worship from a heart even partially committed to things other than Him?*

**Q: What is revealed about the character of someone who would offer their own children as a sacrifice to an idol?**

A: They are completely self-centered, willing to do anything to get something for their self, even if it means giving over their children. They recognize no obligation to God either for their own person or for those He has given through them.

**Application:** *How might this apply to modern-day parents and what they give their children over to? What are the similarities to parents who themselves don't seek and follow God exclusively and therefore the influences to which they give their children over to?*

<sup>23</sup>“Then it came about after all your wickedness (‘Woe, woe to you!’ declares the Lord GOD), <sup>24</sup>that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square. <sup>25</sup>You built yourself a high place at the top of every street and made your beauty abominable, and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry.

<sup>26</sup>“You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry. <sup>27</sup>Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct. <sup>28</sup>Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. <sup>29</sup>You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied.””

<sup>30</sup>“How languishing is your heart,” declares the Lord GOD, “while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot. <sup>31</sup>When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdain of money, you were not like a harlot. <sup>32</sup>You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! <sup>33</sup>Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries. <sup>34</sup>Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different.”

### [Read v.23-29]

**Q: What does it mean in Scripture when a “woe” is pronounced?**

A: It indicates a behavior or course which, if not radically changed, inevitably results in God’s judgment for destruction.

**Q: What do Egypt, Assyria and Babylon have in common where it concerns Israel?**

A: They all held Israel captive, they were all tremendously bad spiritual influences, at one time or another Israel sought their protection through political alliances. They personified the very people who abandoned Israel to an open field as an infant and continued to try to take advantage of her at every opportunity, doing the exact opposite of what God did for Israel.

**Q: Why should the Philistines have been a kind of spiritual example to Israel?**

A: Although they were devoted to false gods, they were “faithful”, so to speak, to the same false gods. Unlike Israel, they didn’t run after any and every foreign god that came their way.

**Point:** *The picture is one of not being satisfied, of first running to the Egyptians, then the Assyrians, then the Babylonians. It’s an indication that they weren’t trying to please ANY God or ANY thing but themselves. They weren’t faithful to anyone, just looking to satisfy themselves.*

### [Read v.30-34]

**Point:** *A bad spiritual influence is often identified as something that “seduces” or “misleads” in order to get someone to commit to something else, to exchange one set of values for another. In order for behavior to achieve the distinction of being labeled by God an “abomination”, the person has absolutely no intention of influencing others but actually invites the seduction. It’s not “accidental” behavior, but conscious choice which is at work. It’s like a married man who goes out looking for prostitutes to enjoy new experiences.*

**Application:** *Is there an application of this in the church today? What about those who actively seek to bring into their worship the practices and beliefs of other religions? What about those who seek alliances with non-Christian denominations, organizations, or even religions? What about those who seek “experiences” more than God’s Word?*

### [Summary]

*Review the cycle established in these verses. Note how things transitioned and why from being an abandoned, bloodied infant, growing to puberty yet still naked, to adulthood and being clothed and honored as a wife, to not just becoming unfaithful, but the worst kind of prostitute imaginable, only interested in pleasing one’s self regardless of the cost. God doesn’t bring about final judgment because of a little backsliding, but as a result of conscious, willful, deliberate disobedience that is obsessed with pleasing one’s self – and no one else – regardless of the consequences.*

<sup>35</sup>Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>36</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols, <sup>37</sup>therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved and all those whom you hated. So I will gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness. <sup>38</sup>Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

<sup>39</sup>“I will also give you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare. <sup>40</sup>They will incite a crowd against you and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. <sup>41</sup>They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women. Then I will stop you from playing the harlot, and you will also no longer pay your lovers. <sup>42</sup>So I will calm My fury against you and My jealousy will depart from you, and I will be pacified and angry no more. <sup>43</sup>Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head,” declares the Lord GOD, “so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your other abominations.

<sup>44</sup>“Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb concerning you, saying, ‘Like mother, like daughter.’ <sup>45</sup>You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

<sup>46</sup>“Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lives south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. <sup>47</sup>Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were

### [Read v.35-43]

**Q: What is ironic in v.35-38 how God will use Judah as an example to the nations around her to which she prostituted herself?**

A: Originally she was adorned and exalted as a positive witness and example of God’s Word and ways; now she will become a kind of negative witness to same in the course of being given over to God’s judgment through them.

**Point:** This is why in various Scriptures spoken to these nations that God sometimes mentions how these nations failed to learn the right lesson from Israel being handed over to them by Him. They were to learn themselves the awful consequences of disobedience, yet did not and later bore the consequences of judgment themselves.

**Q: What should Israel learn about her “lovers” in what they’ll do to her in v.39-41?**

A: They’re to learn that they’re no “lovers” at all.

**Point:** Even in the course of human relationships with one another, there’s a difference between one that is based on lust versus love. Lust – like all sin – provides immediate, personal gratification but with the price of long-term consequences; love achieves long-term benefits at the expense of short-term personal gratification. This is the kind of choice we’re making as to whether to be daily obedient to God’s Word or our own desires.

**Q: What does it take to recover from this level of unfaithfulness?**

A: A personal judgment of the worst magnitude. It’s like the story oft-repeated by people with drug or alcohol dependencies who experience tragedies so overwhelming that they’re forced to face the reality of what their behavioral choices are doing to them.

**Point:** God began from the point of love and grace when we were completely incapable of responding, much less doing anything for our self. As we strayed, He sent His Word through His many messengers to convict us of the truth. It escalated to the point of discipline, but in the face of repeated refusal to change, He often sends a tremendous, personal tragedy. This is actually a witness and warning to others (although we’re not proud of it) as much as it is a personal wake-up call.

### [Read v.44-52]

**Q: What is the foremost detrimental behavior exhibited by Judah?**

A: She “loathed her husband and children”. In her unfaithfulness to God to the point of even offering her children to other gods, she is first and foremost self-centered, caring for nothing but her self.

**Q: What is reiterated here about her heritage?**

A: Having rejected God’s Word and ways, she is not a child of God’s covenant but of the worst offenders found among the abominable nations of Canaan.

**Q: What might be surprising about what is revealed about Sodom?**

A: Sodom is most often associated with the worst kind of sexual sin, particularly homosexuality. God here reveals the earlier root causes

too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they. <sup>48</sup>“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

<sup>49</sup>“Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. <sup>50</sup>Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

<sup>51</sup>“Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous by all your abominations which you have committed. <sup>52</sup>Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous.

<sup>53</sup>“Nevertheless, I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity, <sup>54</sup>in order that you may bear your humiliation and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them. <sup>55</sup>Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state. <sup>56</sup>As the name of your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride, <sup>57</sup>before your wickedness was uncovered, so now you have become the reproach of the daughters of Edom and of all who are around her, of the daughters of the Philistines—those surrounding you who despise you. <sup>58</sup>You have borne the penalty of your lewdness and

leading to the visible evidence of sexual sin in that they “*had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.*” They were self-centered and used the things of God only for themselves – the very same behaviors at the core of Judah’s problems of unfaithfulness. (Also expressed in sexual terms.)

**Application:** *One of the milestones indicating that a person or organization is rushing headlong into apostasy and spiritual darkness is when they lose their love and concern for others. Ever been to church meetings where people keep saying, “We want...” and “Our needs...” seems to qualify every remark? Ever notice how this leads to even more cliques and divisions within?*

**Q: Why would Judah’s sins overwhelm the sins of Sodom or Samaria?**

A: Judah retained the temple, the priesthood, the royal line to David through whom the Messiah was to come – they even experienced spiritual revival from time to time under the likes of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, etc. Samaria – the name here given to the northern kingdom of Israel who ceded from Judah – never adhered to a single thing of God in all its existence. Jeroboam, their first king, set up a false priesthood, false centers of worship, and so on which were embraced throughout its entire history. They never had a single “good” king who led a spiritual revival. Likewise, Sodom never had any of the things given to Judah. Judah’s sins were far greater **BECAUSE** of having been entrusted with the Word and ways of God.

**Application:** *Do you see why, when the church allows sin to take root within such as homosexuality or divorce, that it’s far more egregious than when it runs its normal course in the world among non-Believers? Consider how this might be applied to Jesus’ teaching:*

*“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”*

*Matthew 7:3-5*

**[Read v.53-59]**

**Q: So what is one of the chief works of spiritual restoration of God’s people?**

A: To be a witness and testimony of faithfulness and obedience to His Word to such a degree that those to whom they were a terrible witness during their unfaithfulness will actually be won over to God’s kingdom.

**Q: Have these things literally come true?**

A: Not yet. There have been limited, partial fulfillments, but it most certainly speaks of a time yet to come in Israel’s history.

**Point:** *“Replacement Theology” is the false teaching that the Gentile church has replaced Israel. God does not plainly state He’ll do something and then later retract it by saying, “No, I did it symbolically another way.” As Scripture indicates in a host of places, there is a significant spiritual work God is yet to literally accomplish through Israel, to allow them to fulfill His original intentions for them to be a light to the rest of the world.*

abominations,” the LORD declares. <sup>59</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

<sup>60</sup>“Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. <sup>61</sup>Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. <sup>62</sup>Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, <sup>63</sup>so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,” the Lord GOD declares.

**Q: What does God reinforce in v.59 as the originating cause of all the sinful behavior which followed?**

A: Disobedience to God’s Word.

**[Read v.60-63]**

**Q: What is the key, repeated word in these closing verses?**

A: “Covenant”, a name for God’s Word.

**Q: What is implied in the statement in v.60, “I will establish an everlasting covenant with you”?**

A: There is a work of spiritual reconciliation yet to come to Israel.

**Point:** Whereas Judah was originally an example of God’s judgment to those around her, she will also become an example of God’s grace, mercy, and truth. It’s the same, dual example that we provide others in the course of our own life’s witness.

**Application:** Discuss to what degree you believe the following statement to be true or not, “Returning to God’s Word will eventually correct everything that is currently wrong.”