

## October 8

**Scriptures:** Read Ezekiel 16 & 17

**Key Verse:** "... I, the Lord, have spoken and have done it." (Ezekiel 17:24)

### Overview

The allegory of the sin and consequent rejection of the personified Jerusalem, found in Ezekiel 16, is a rebuke in stronger terms than anything that had been previously written; but how can one describe sin without using strong terms. Through this allegory, the Lord wanted the exiles to understand the gross atrocities of Jerusalem, and He wanted to show that her destruction was well deserved. Thus they would be comforted to know that the justice of the Lord had been executed (16:54; cf. 14:22-23).

In her infancy, Jerusalem had been scorned and left to die of exposure by her heathen parents (16:4-5; infanticide was practiced by the pagans, but forbidden for the people of Israel). There was nothing attractive about her, but the Lord had compassion and showed her His mercy. As time went on, the Lord graciously chose her to enter into the marriage covenant with Him (16:8). Jerusalem was the city in the Promised Land where the Lord chose to put His name; this was accomplished under God's guidance when David threw out the heathen inhabitants, made it his capital, and moved the Ark of the covenant to Mount Zion. The Lord cleansed His queen, Jerusalem. He made her beautiful and bestowed honour and riches upon her (16:9-14), which reached its peak under the reign of Solomon. After all God had done for her, she became proud and proved to be ungrateful, disrespectful, and unfaithful to God, her husband.

She was not only an adulterous wife but a brazen harlot who ran after many foreign gods. She defiantly offered to the idols the material things God had given her, but the greatest atrocity was in sacrificing the children whom God had given her (16:20-21, 36; 20:26, 31; 23:37; 2 Kings 21:6; Lev. 18:21; 20:2ff; Deut. 12:31). The Lord stressed the fact that proud Jerusalem was worse than her heathen sisters (the surrounding nations; 16:46-52). In her wanton behaviour, Jerusalem never found satisfaction (16:28-29); the only place where true satisfaction could be found was with her husband, the Lord. Marriage is a covenant relationship, instituted by the Lord, which demands that the partners be true and faithful to one another until death parts them. The Old Testament Law demanded the severe penalty of death for those guilty of adultery in breach of their covenant. With such a portrayal of Jerusalem, the people could understand the seriousness of her offences against God and the justice in her destruction.

After her humiliation and the period required for her punishment, the Lord promised to remember the covenant He had with Jerusalem, and He would once again show her His grace and mercy. He promised to bring back her captives (16:53) and restore her (cf. Is. 54:6-8). The "everlasting covenant" is the covenant that the Lord will establish with the New Jerusalem, and it will be in this cleansed and truly holy city that Jerusalem will remain forever humble. She will welcome the heathen nations (her older and younger sisters) to come to her, not because of Jerusalem's covenant with God (16:61), but because those Gentiles had themselves entered into the New Covenant of Jesus' blood.

In chapter 17, we find yet another allegory that gives a reason for the well deserved destruction of Jerusalem and for Zedekiah's captivity. Ezekiel made use of the popular method of riddles to get the people thinking so that they might come to understand that the Lord does not bring judgment without cause. Since they did not understand the riddle, the Lord told Ezekiel to explain it (17:12). The first eagle is Nebuchadnezzar, who transplanted Jehoiachin of the house of David (the tall cedar) in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar provided for the people of Judah and he set up a vassal king, Zedekiah, who took an oath (made a covenant) in the name of the Lord to be subservient to Babylon, for only then would Judah live and thrive, as Jeremiah had stressed. An oath taken in the name of God was a very serious and binding agreement for which punishment was due if broken (17:15; cf. Ecc. 5:2-6; Num. 30:2). Zedekiah sinned against the Lord when he broke the covenant with Nebuchadnezzar by rebelling and looking in vain for help from the second great eagle, the Egyptian Pharaoh (17:7, 17; historical background for the events of this chapter are recorded in 2 Kings 24:8-20; 25:5-7; Jer. 37:5-10; 52:1-11).

As well as prophesying events that were to be fulfilled very soon, such as Zedekiah's treason and capture (17:20-21), Ezekiel also prophesied of the exaltation of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus (17:22-24). The Lord preserved the tender twig (Jesus Christ) from the high cedar of the house of David. He dried up that proud tree, but then through Jesus He made it flourish again, thus establishing the enduring Davidic dynasty, just as He had promised David (2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 11:1; 53:2). In the Messiah's kingdom (under His mighty boughs) all kinds of people ("birds of every sort") will find safety and refuge, and every family on earth ("all the trees of the field") will know that He is Lord of all.

## **Prayer**

Thank You, Lord, that You reveal Your majesty and splendour so beautifully in the earth and in all Your creation. We pray that many will come to know You personally as they enjoy nature and all the works of Your hands.