

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 123

Ezekiel 16

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### Episode Summary

Ezekiel 16 is known for being the most sexually explicit chapter in the Bible. Some scholars even consider it pornographic. The prophet casts the city of Jerusalem as a whore when articulating why God has condemned it and marked it for destruction. This episode explores the portrayal of spiritual apostasy as wanton whoredom in all its ugliness—and God’s amazing ability to forgive in spite of it.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 123: Ezekiel chapter 16. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

**MH:** Good. How are you, Trey?

**TS:** Not too bad. My cowboys beat your Packers, so everything is right in the world. (laughter)

**MH:** Yeah, everything's right in the world. Let's not even talk about that. It's just horrible.

**TS:** There's not many things I can hold above you and this is one of them, so I'm going to do it. (laughter) It's payback from last year with the Dez Bryant catch at the goal line...

**MH:** Was that last year or was it two years ago?

**TS:** Two years ago. It seems like yesterday. It still hurts.

**MH:** Let it go, Trey.

**TS:** I can't! It hurts. (laughter)

**MH:** Either way, let it go.

**TS:** Well, I'm excited about chapter 16. You were telling me this could be just as bad as the Corinthians one.

**MH:** Yeah, it might be worse. It just depends. I don't want to tone it down too much because people will kind of miss what's there in the text. It's Scripture. We're dealing with the text, so I'm not going to obscure it. But I don't want to go crazy, either. Trust me, there are things in here where you could just kind of go off the deep end. It's pretty bad. It's pretty explicit. Let's just put it that way.

**TS:** Well, don't tone it down too much for us.

**MH:** Oh, no, we won't. It would just sort of lose the intended effect. We're big here on context, so the intended effect was to shock and that's what it did, and I'm sure that's what it's going to do, at least for a lot of listeners.

So Ezekiel 16 is a long chapter. It's the longest (I think) in the whole book: 63 verses. As our custom is, we're not going to go verse by verse through the whole thing, but we will go verse by verse through a good bit of it because every verse just seems to have something in it. We'll try to group things here and there as we can, but just to give you a flavor for how scholars look at this, I want to open with a quotation from Dan Block's commentary. He writes this:

. . . The chapter is held together by its unique vocabulary and style. [MH, (laughing): That's a nice academic way of putting it, Dan.] Distinctive forms of expression include shocking imagery . . .

This impression is further reinforced by the root *znh*, “to commit harlotry, to practice illicit sex,” . . . The verb and other derivatives occur twenty-one times in this description of Jerusalem’s unrestrained nymphomaniacal adventures with her lovers. . . .

. . . Given the covenantal basis for the marriage metaphor, one might have expected the verb *nā'ap*, “to commit adultery,” to be used to describe Israel’s infidelity to Yahweh. The present preference for *zānâ* may be attributed to several factors: (1) the use of the participle *zōnâ* to describe a professional whore suggests that habitual, iterative activity is implied in the verb *zānâ*; (2) the motive of personal gain (cf. 16:33–34) places the offense in the realm of prostitution, rather than adultery; (3) the involvement of multiple partners (cf. 16:17, 25–29) is more appropriate to *zānâ*; (4) in contrast to *nā'ap* [MH: the typical adultery verb], which refers to illicit sex by both genders, the verb *zānâ* is used exclusively of females. Since Israel assumes the female role in the relationship with Yahweh, it is appropriate that the verb used in the metaphor should be strictly associated with

female activity. Consequently, although the root *nā'ap* is more fitting to describe Israel's covenantal infidelity, *znh* offers a more forceful rhetorical tool. The innocent young woman, graciously elevated to the status of queen, has become a whore. . .

. . . the semi-pornographic style is a deliberate rhetorical device designed to produce a strong emotional response. For the translator whose aim is equivalent impact, the line between appropriate shock and offensive lack of taste is extremely fine."

So I think that does a nice job of capturing in academese what in the world we're jumping into here. I should say this is not an episode for the kids, so you might want to usher them out of the room or do whatever you think is appropriate, because there's a lot of stuff in here you probably won't want them hearing.

5:00

Let's jump into the passage. Ezekiel 16 begins this way:

**Again the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations...”**

Those are the first two verses. "Abominations" should be a familiar term to our listeners because it's the same word that you would get in Leviticus for things that are abominable. Things that just are so offensive that God cannot tolerate those offenses. And in many cases (if you remember back in the Leviticus series), it had to do with sexual transgression or some sort of idolatry or apostasy—something grotesque. And so that's what we have here:

**<sup>2</sup>“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations...”**

And boy—is he ever going to make them known! (laughing) God is, of course, going to give him the verbage here. In verse 3, we continue:

**<sup>3</sup>...and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.**

We'll stop there. That might sound a little odd. People will get a gold star if they remember in the things I've written where they might have read this verse before. That was in my novel, *The Portent*. I used this verse for a fictional angle. But here, since we're not doing fiction (we're doing exposition), what's going on here is God is basically having Ezekiel tell them, or remind them, or disabuse them of a certain notion about their origins. We tend to think (and many Israelites apparently thought) that their origins began with Abraham. So they viewed themselves as this sort of pristine

people—detached from the world, detached from the horrible Canaanites. Well, God had to call Abraham out of somewhere! So Ezekiel is saying, "Your origins really aren't pristine. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite." What does that mean? Well, it counters the assumption of this sort of mythical purity—these pure beginnings that Israelites had for themselves. For instance, in Deuteronomy 26:5, which reads:

**<sup>5</sup>“And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number...**

This whole notion that the descendants of Israel were somehow detached, they were from an innocent place, they originated outside of Canaan where those awful Canaanites and their horrible practices were so prevalent, and then they had to go into the land... these kinds of behaviors, this kind of apostasy, this kind of whoredom (both literally and spiritually)... "We don't have that background." And Ezekiel is saying, "Well, you actually do because your ancestors came from somewhere. The Israelites (the descendants of Abraham) aren't any holier than anybody else."

What about Abraham? He wasn't a Canaanite proper, but the reference to Amorites and Hittites does make good sense in light of Abraham's Ur. Now, a lot of you are thinking, "Well, isn't Abraham's Ur—Ur of the Chaldeans—isn't that like southern Mesopotamia near Babylon?" The answer is no, it's not, even though that's probably what you've heard. If you want a couple of good articles on this by Cyrus Gordon (a very famous scholar who is no longer living), I blogged this. You can just go up to [drmsch.com](http://drmsch.com) and put in Abraham and then "Ur" and you're going to get the blog entries and the articles that go with them. Abraham's Ur is actually northwest Mesopotamia. It's actually near Haran. Remember with Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham has his servant go find a wife for Isaac? This is where he goes—to this region in northwest Mesopotamia—Haran. There's actually another Ur there. *Ura* in the language of the day. There are references to this place in other Ancient Near Eastern texts. This makes much more sense out of the biblical storyline, especially where Abraham views his descendants as living than the traditional near-Babylon location for Ur. Let me just read you a few things from the Anchor Bible Dictionary in regard to this whole Amorite and Hittite thing. It will make sense as you get some of the context in your head.

10:00

The term *amurru* [MH: which is what gets translated “Amorite”] first occurs in Old Akkadian sources as the general designation of “the West,” referring to the W wind, and to the geographical area lying to the (N) W of Mesopotamia. The most frequent usage of the term refers to the population of that W region as an ethnic designation. Its semantic equivalent, Sumerian MAR.TU was used already in the mid-3d millennium B.C. even at Ebla in an ethnic or cultural sense, designating the

population of the “West” that was recognized to be foreign to the population of Mesopotamia proper by culture as well as by language.

Cyrus Gordon (in one of the articles you can find on the website) says this:

... the Biblical evidence is by itself conclusive in placing Ur of the Chaldees in the Urfa-Haran region of south central Turkey (NW Mesopotamia). . . Genesis 11:31 relates that “Terah took Abram ... and they went out ... from Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.” Then Terah died (Genesis 11:32) and Abram went on to Canaan (Genesis 12:15). This means that Haran was en route from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan. By no stretch of the imagination would anyone go from Sumerian Ur (in southern Mesopotamia) to Canaan via Haran. . . . Sumerian Ur is never called “Ur of the Chaldees” in any of the numerous references to Ur in the cuneiform tablets. . . .

An Akkadian cuneiform tablet from Ugarit which is of special interest to this discussion mentions a city spelled *Ura* in Akkadian, but which would come into Hebrew as *Ur* without the final vowel. This tablet, published by Professor Jean Nougayrol in his important collection of Akkadian tablets from the south palace of Ugarit, is a letter from a Hittite king (Hattusili III, c. 1282–1250 B.C.) to his Ugaritic counterpart. The tablet mentions merchants of the Hittite king who have come from the city of Ura. The Hittite kingdom was of course centered in Anatolia. We learn that Ura was a city that specialized in foreign trade.

So the point is that if you locate Abraham's point of origin in northwest Mesopotamia where the Amorites are (which also happens to overlap with south-central Turkey, which in antiquity was the territory of the Hittites), then this verse (Ezekiel 16:3) makes complete sense. “Your origin and birth are of the land of the Canaanites. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.” Again, those places are right on the border of Canaan. They're literally right next door. And so you have the right context for this now. As far as the reference to Canaanites in the verse, in Hebrew (if you know a little bit of Hebrew this will make sense to you) the term used here for Canaanite has what's called a “gentilic ending.” In other words, it refers to the people groups. So Ezekiel 16:3 isn't really focusing on the geography of Canaan so much as it is focused on the people of Canaan, the culture of Canaan. What God through Ezekiel is pointing out to them is, “Look, you are no more holy than anybody else here. You're of the stock of the Canaanites, essentially. Your mother was a Hittite, your father is an Amorite. This is where you come from. You come from the place, the region, that is no holier than any other place. In fact, I brought your ancestor into this land. Back in those days it wasn't anything special. I chose this land to give to your people to your heritage, your inheritance, your descendants, and your job was supposed to be to drive out and expel the native populations so that we could make this plot of earth my kingdom—Yahweh's kingdom.” Again, to kick-start the Edenic idea,

going back to things that we've discussed in earlier episodes, and of course quite frequently in *Unseen Realm*. So this comment in Ezekiel 16:3 makes complete sense in context. It just doesn't read well to us because we're thinking of the Sumerian Ur in southern Mesopotamia—which, again, just doesn't make a whole lot of sense. But that's what the tradition has been. Let's continue on in verse 4:

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**<sup>4</sup> And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. <sup>5</sup> No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.**

Now these things... You can read books like de Vaux's *Social Institutions* or some other book on Israelite culture or Ancient Near Eastern culture, for that matter. These are things that you would normally do for a newborn baby. You'd rub them with salt. You'd obviously cut the cord. You'd wrap them up tight. Typically, they would wrap infants tight for weeks or even a couple months to make sure that their limbs would turn out straight, that sort of thing. We think these practices are kind of strange, but we don't have modern medicine, we don't have some of the practices going on that we know today that we would think, "that makes much more sense, it's so much better." Well, this is a different culture and different time. The point of the passage here is that instead of doing what's normal for a newborn, Jerusalem's "parents"—the Amorites and Hittites—just threw her out in the field to die. The Amorites didn't want these people. The Hittites didn't want these people. They don't want anything to do with them. They were alone. So the point is, nobody wanted Abraham's descendants, especially after this crazy guy started talking about Yahweh of Israel and abandoning the gods of his fathers. Nobody wanted them. God is using this as an analogy for the fact that this person who the Lord chose to be the point of origin genealogically for his people... they were not wanted in their own context. In verse 6, God is again talking about the history of his bride, essentially, says this. We'll read an extended section here:

**<sup>6</sup> "And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' <sup>7</sup> I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.**

**<sup>8</sup> "When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. <sup>9</sup> Then I bathed you with water**

**and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. <sup>10</sup> I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. <sup>11</sup> And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. <sup>12</sup> And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. <sup>13</sup> Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. <sup>14</sup> And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord God.**

This is a metaphor for the various stages of God's relationship to Israel. He's the one who has compassion on her. The people around her don't want her. So he takes her to himself, does all these wonderful things for her, and eventually she becomes his queen, his bride. We're familiar with this metaphor applied to Israel elsewhere in other passages, so this isn't surprising language here to read it in Ezekiel 16. Again, God has done everything for this woman, who is personified or analogized through the metaphor and is really speaking of the nation of Israel. We get this. It's sort of familiar. So God is using Ezekiel to remind them that this was their past. But when you hit verse 15, you get a transition to what the situation became and really what it is at this point in their history.

**<sup>15</sup> "But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his.**

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So here in verse 15 and all the way through at least the next 20 or 30 verses or so, we really have a description of the whoredom of the bride. And it begins this way: "You played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby." In other words, there's no commitment to the husband—to Yahweh—who had rescued her when no one wanted her. She's completely self-absorbed. She could have the life she wanted, she'd get what she wanted through her own beauty. She would prostitute herself. It's kind of interesting that the same wording ("trusting in your beauty" and this whole sense of arrogance and pride) is actually used in Ezekiel 28 (right around verse 17) of the Prince of Tyre. Of course, this is drawing on the myth of divine rebellion back in the Garden of Eden. The verse says, "Your heart was proud because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor... I cast you to the ground, I exposed you before kings to feast their eyes on you." We're familiar with that passage because I discussed it a good bit in *Unseen Realm*. It's really interesting that you get the same kind of language in another place in Ezekiel (chapter 28) used of the Prince of Tyre for divine rebellion. Here we get a human rebellion. So one is as bad as the other. The rebellion of this divine being, this

Satan figure that eventually comes down to us both in Scripture and in the way we talk about this as the Satan figure of Eden... This divine rebel is described the same way as God's own people in rebellion! One is no worse or no better than the other. God views them the same way. Rebellion is rebellion. It doesn't matter what the point of origin is or what the context is—divine or human—it is what it is. Verse 16:

**<sup>16</sup> You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be.**

Here we start to get into a bit of the coarse language. The garments that God had given her... Again, she's naked, she has nothing, she's all bloody—just cast out. God cleans her up and puts the best of clothes on her. And God says, "You took that stuff—some of your garments, the fine and luxurious clothing that Yahweh had given to you—and what did you do with it? Well, you decked out your bed to play the whore. You used it to decorate the shrines." Again, this is a reference to cultic apostasy.

So what we're going to see here is a mixture of sexual transgression language and really course sexual behavior and language blended with the language of apostate worship. And that's the point: Israel is guilty of spiritual whoredom, spiritual adultery. We're going to describe that through the literal, physical, sexual acts that a whore would do. So that's what's going to ensue in the rest of the chapter. This is a reference to the cultic shrines where the Israelites had been attracted to, where they'd commit their own spiritual adultery. Elsewhere (in Ezekiel and outside), these shrines are called "beds of love." Ezekiel 23:17:

**<sup>17</sup> And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. And after she was defiled by them, she turned from them in disgust.**

So you get these references to these places with "bed" metaphor, sexual metaphor. Isaiah 57:7 is another one:

**<sup>7</sup> On a high and lofty mountain  
you have set your bed,  
and there you went up to offer sacrifice.**

So there's a nice blending of the sexual notion (the bed) with sacrifice—again, blending the apostate religion with the sexual metaphor. Proverbs 7:16-17:



- <sup>16</sup> I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen;**  
**<sup>17</sup> I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.**

That passage refers to the idea of using tapestries and decorative things—certain kinds of cloth—to prepare (in this case with Proverbs) the general bed or the marital bed. This is how the place where you're going to have sex (the bed) is typically described. And so Ezekiel borrows this language to start to get into his subject matter. So now what he says is this. He keeps going:

- <sup>17</sup>You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.**

25:00 Now, remember all the stuff that God said he had given her (the necklaces, the bracelets, the jewelry) to make her beautiful. God says, "You took all that stuff and you made yourself images of men and with them played the whore." Apparently, they had melted down the gold and silver and the jewelry that they had received and, of course, made idols. Now, you have to wonder here how much of this is... He's going to use graphic language here to describe spiritual apostasy. He's describing how Israelites had basically made idols using gold and silver and jewelry and what-not. It hearkens back to what had happened at Mount Sinai with Aaron the priest in that story. You get a lot of the same flavor here. Here it specifically says that they had been recast into male images. *Salme zachar* is the Hebrew: images that are male, images of male-ness. The gender here is expected, since Jerusalem is the woman in the story. So the male counterpart for the idols is kind of expected because Israel is cast as a woman.

The question is, are these phallic symbols, phallic objects? (Phallic, of course, referring to the penis.) Scholars are divided on that question. This is me now (just my view here). Yes, scholars are divided on this, but in light of the phallic imagery that follows and the phrase in this verse when Ezekiel says (in the ESV), "with them you played the whore"... Literally it's "upon them you played the whore." I think in light of that phrase, the phallic idea is pretty likely. It could be either some idolatrous object in the shape of a penis, or male idols (an idol that's male in form) with an erection. The latter might be preferable, given the next two verses, which talk about dressing them up. I'll read those two verses:

- <sup>18</sup> And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. <sup>19</sup> Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the Lord God.**

Basically, what you get in verses 17 and 18 is Jerusalem is cast as a whore pleasuring herself, squatting on these male phallic idols that had been made from things that Yahweh had given to her for her own beauty. Again, she's screwing herself with these idols. That's basically the point he's trying to convey here. Isaiah 57:8 is considered a parallel to this. It reads:

**<sup>8</sup> Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, [MH: There's the bed imagery again] you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them [MH: These other gods], you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.**

It's this idea of sexual activity being used as a metaphor for spiritual adultery. Ezekiel is much more graphic with it, but you get the same idea in Isaiah 57. [Back to Ezekiel 16], verse 20:

**<sup>20</sup> And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter <sup>21</sup> that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? [MH: to these other gods] <sup>22</sup> And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood.**

We'll stop there at verse 22. The point here is fairly obvious: Jerusalem's children (the Israelites, the people) who had been born to Yahweh (ostensibly they were supposed to be followers of Yahweh, Yahweh's earthly family) were being sacrificed to foreign gods. Now the question is, is this metaphorical? Is it a reference to how Jerusalem's idolatry abstractly resulted in Israelites being consumed by apostasy? Or is it a reference to child sacrifice of Israelite babies (who are also obviously potential followers of Yahweh) being sacrificed in fire? A lot of scholars (and I would be in this group) would say that the latter (a literal human sacrifice here) is likely because of the traditional sacrificial language used in these verses that all has parallels in the Torah and specifically Leviticus. You have *tizbahi*, "sacrificed" (the verb there), you have "eating" language ("to be devoured"). The verb there is *'kl*. It's a normal word for consuming food. So you have this idea of sacrifice being a food for the gods, that sort of thing. "Slaughtered" in verse 21 is *sht*, a verb used elsewhere for sacrificial slaughter. "Delivered them up as an offering by fire." Block has a good, appropriate quote here where he says this:

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...The writer is here "conflating two idioms for sacrifice: *nātan mizzar'ô lammōlek*, "to devote his offspring to Molech," and *ha'ābîr*, an abbreviation for *ha'ābîr 'et-bēnô wē'et-bittô bā'ēš lammōlek*, "to pass one's son and his daughter through the fire to Molech.

In a footnote, Block adds this:

The language drawn from Leviticus and a few other places: “The first idiom occurs three times in Lev. 20:2–5 [MH: where you have that as a reference to Ezekiel’s association of child sacrifice with spiritual apostasy], which underlies Ezekiel’s association of child sacrifice with spiritual harlotry. This text interprets such practices as *līznôt ’aḥrê hammōlek*, “playing the harlot after Molech.” The full form of the second idiom occurs only in 2 K. 23:10. Cf. *ha’ābîr ’et-bēnêhem wē’et-bēnôtêhem lammōlek*, “to pass their sons and their daughters to Molech,” in Jer. 32:35. *ha’ābîr bā’ēš* occurs elsewhere in Deut. 18:10; 2 K. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chr. 33:6...

Block’s point is that this language elsewhere is used in contexts where it seems pretty clear that this was actually going on (this literal sacrifice) and Ezekiel is drawing on this language for what he describes here. Block elsewhere notes:

To pass someone/something through the fire” means to submerge it completely in flames, causing it to be consumed.

He has a footnote reference to Numbers 31:22–23:

... *ha’ābîr* is applied to metallic spoils of war that are passed through fire and water for purification. In Ezek. 23:37–39, “Their sons they passed over to them [their idols] for food to be consumed.”

His point is that this language is used in other contexts that seem to clearly indicate an actual burning, an actual putting something into the fire. I think that’s an argument that can be made well. So back here in verses 20–22, God is saying, “Look, first you were a whore and now you’re doing this! It’s like you weren’t even satisfied by playing the whore. Now you’re slaughtering your own children—*my* own children—to these other gods. And the point, of course, is that this is Canaanite behavior. And it points again to Jerusalem’s Canaanite ancestry. God is basically saying, “You people are not above this. This is what you come from. This is what I delivered you out of, and now you’re right back in it.” Again, this whole notion of, “Who are you to think that I’m going to look at you as something special in terms of your holiness? You don’t understand what I took you out of, what your circumstances are. Or you’ve willfully forgotten it.” In verse 23 he keeps going:

<sup>23</sup> **“And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! declares the Lord God), <sup>24</sup> you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square.<sup>25</sup> At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring.**

That's the end of verse 25. We'll stop there.

Jerusalem is basically portrayed here as a nymphomaniac. "Vaulted chamber" (the Hebrew word *geb*) refers to a covered bed, covered bed chamber—kind of an ornate bed chamber. It's kind of like an exposed tent—you can see into it but it has a top to it. The point is that it's visible. If you put one out in the street and God says, "You did this on every square, every street corner. You set up your bed here. It's visible for onlookers to see." "Lofty place" (Hebrew is *ramah*) refers to a raised platform or a stage. You played the whore like it was on stage, for everybody to see. He's describing Israel's behavior as a prostitute who sets up business on every street corner so that everybody can watch.

35:00

The Septuagint caught this pretty clearly. It translates all of this as "house of prostitution" (specifically *geb*), but the idea is pretty clear. This is a stage show. It's a porno film. This is what you are. This is what you did. The language here of the ESV: "offering yourself to any passerby"... This isn't like what we would see on TV, where the TV's depict prostitutes and they walk up to the cars and they try to solicit men or what-not. That's tame. But that's what you get in the translation. What you have here is that as men pass the visible brothel set up on a stage... As they pass the set where the porno film is being film (and is going to continually be filmed) Ezekiel says to Jerusalem, "This is what you've done: you've offered yourself to every passerby." Literally. In Hebrew, it's "you're spreading your legs." That's literally what it says. "You spread your legs to any man, anyone who passes by. There you are spreading yourself. I'm done with one, now I need another one." This is the nymphomaniac idea. She's insatiable. And it's public. It's on display. Again, the closest we can sort of approximate this to is pornography. From what she had been... The innocent bride had done nothing. She'd been abused, not taken care of, rejected, hadn't done anything wrong... God takes her and makes her a queen and all this sort of stuff, and instead you want to be a porn star. That's what you're dealing with here in this chapter. Again, that's our closest approximation. He continues on in verse 26:

**<sup>26</sup> You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. <sup>27</sup> Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion [MH: Isn't that an interesting phrase?] and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. <sup>28</sup> You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. <sup>29</sup> You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.**

**Block writes:**

Driven by an insatiable lust, Queen Jerusalem intensified her harlotrous activity, setting her sights on three specific targets: the sons of Egypt, the sons of Assyria, and the Chaldeans. Harlotry has obviously now become a metaphor for political and military alliances; instead of putting her trust in Yahweh, Jerusalem flirted with the world powers. The order in which these nations are named reflects the history of Israel's contacts with them.

The translation tries to soften the language. In verse 26, "You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors." (laughs) "Your lustful neighbors is delicate language for something that really does border on the pornographic. The Hebrew is *skēnay ik gidle basar*—literally, "your neighbors who are large of flesh." It's an idiom for "the Egyptians, your neighbors, who had huge penises." That's what it means. The use of "flesh" (*basar*) for the male organ is fairly common in the Old Testament. You get it later in Ezekiel 23:20. We're going to get this kind of language again. We'll come back to that verse in a moment. You get it in chapter 44, you get it in Genesis 17:11; 17:14, 23-25; Exodus 28, Leviticus 15:2-19, so on and so forth (again, talking about covering yourself and other points of transgression or appropriate behavior, whichever it applies to). Ezekiel 23:20, though, is particularly graphic. Same author talking about the same situation: the Egyptians. I'll throw verse 19 in to get some context here:

**<sup>19</sup>Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt <sup>20</sup>and lusted after her lovers there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses.**

In less disguised terms, Ezekiel describes Judah's Egyptian lovers as having the penis size of a donkey and the ejaculation like a horse. It's very graphic. But again, the point is that he's just going over the top with the language to convey the insatiable whore-like activity of Jerusalem. And despite the size of the Egyptians—despite all of that talk—she's not satisfied because she has to move to the Philistines and move on to the Assyrians and move on to the Chaldeans. She cannot be satisfied.

40:00 Now, in the present passage, the Philistine cities... The phrase used here (and this is common elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible) is "the daughters of the Philistines." This is how the Philistine cities were described: "daughters of the Philistines." Because they're Philistines and they're apostate and all that stuff, they're cast as sort of whore-rivals to get Egypt's favors. But even the Philistine whores are shocked by Jerusalem's behavior! They're being outdone. They can't compete with this particular whore. They're not going to get the Egyptian guys—Jerusalem is, because of what she's doing. The Egyptians can't satisfy her. The

Philistines are shocked. She moves onto the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, and Ezekiel actually says it very plainly: "Even with them you were not satisfied." She's insatiable. Again, think of the metaphor. It basically means that God looks at Jerusalem and the description is this: "You went looking for every foreign god that you could to worship other than me. You offered yourself as a supplicant, as a worshiper, as a devotee, of basically any god that was in the picture at all. And when you were done with them, when you put those notches on your belt (so to speak), when you committed spiritual apostasy with them, you went looking for another one. You're just the worst." (laughs) Verse 30:

**<sup>30</sup>“How sick is your heart, declares the Lord God, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, <sup>31</sup> building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square. [MH: Again, set up the set for the next porno film—every street corner so people can watch.] Yet you were not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment. <sup>32</sup> Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! <sup>33</sup> Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings. <sup>34</sup> So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore [MH: No one had to coax you to do this with payment—you were there! You not only volunteered, but you paid them!], and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.**

This is a reference (and this isn't just me, this is standard scholarship here)... We need to be reminded again that part of Israel's apostasy was political—these alignments. Swapping Yahweh as her protector for the protection of other nations, other armies. Here, cast respectively as Yahweh was her proper husband and then you have these other lovers (or strangers) being chosen instead of the husband—not only for the sexual relationship, but also in the sense of protection. Loyalty. Protection. Israel not only gives the foreigners sexual favors (referring to worshiping them instead of Yahweh), but instead of receiving payment, pays them—which is a likely historical reference to Jerusalem paying tribute money to these foreign powers in exchange for their protection. They were put under tribute by these other countries instead of trusting that God would take care of them militarily. There's lots of examples of this in the Old Testament, so that should be pretty familiar. But Ezekiel uses the metaphor to describe that (paying tribute) as like a prostitute who pays other people instead of taking payment. "You're even worse than the normal prostitute!" Verse 35:

**<sup>35</sup>“Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>36</sup> Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your**

**whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them,<sup>37</sup> therefore, behold...**

45:00 We'll get to verse 37 in a moment here, but verse 35-36 again are delicately translated, and frankly, it obscures what you'd read literally in the text. The reference to whoring after idols here in verse 36 kind of reinforces the earlier thought about using idols of men (idols made to be male) and actually, again, referring to Israel pleasuring herself on or with these idols, using the sexual imagery. That's kind of reinforced here by the reference to committing whoredom with your lovers with all your abominable idols. So given that, we have a couple things in verse 36 that are very sexual, very graphic in nature, that the translation obscures. For instance, [00:45:01] "your lust was poured out." This is an innocuous translation of something very explicit if you just read the literal text. Block has a short description of this. He says:

*...your passion was poured out* [MH: "your lust was poured out"] (*hiššāpēk nēḥuštēk*). The meaning of this difficult expression is illuminated by the Akkadian cognate to *nēḥōšet*, *naḥšātu*, "abnormal female genital discharge," from *naḥāšu*, "to overflow." However, Ezekiel has changed a pathological expression [MH: an overflowing abnormal genital discharge for a woman] into an erotic image, referring to female genital fluid produced at sexual arousal.

Again, without being crude, "You get more aroused (you get 'wetter') than the normal relationship here. When you saw an idol, you didn't just want a normal religious relationship with it. You wanted it to the nth degree." And so Ezekiel actually uses the female fluid arousal and just goes off the charts with it in this verse. "Your passion was poured out" is how Block renders it, but it's a reference to *that!* And again, it's very graphic to make the point that you're craving... You're like a whore that has an abnormal craving to be a whore. Transferring it to the religious realm, "You can't wait. You're eager—you're *beyond* eager—to align yourself, to link yourself, to hook up with other gods."

Second phrase: "your nakedness uncovered in your whorings." This is another reference to what we saw earlier about self-exposure. Literally, "You're exposing your genitals to everybody that you can see." "Hey, I'm over here!" It refers and takes us back to the spreading of the legs to every passerby. It's over-the-top kind of language. Every person is an opportunity. "There she is!" This is how Jerusalem is being described. This insatiable nymphomaniacal whore.

Because you've done all this and because of the blood of your children, he continues in verse 37:

**<sup>37</sup>...therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against**

**you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. <sup>38</sup>And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. <sup>39</sup>And I will give you into their hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places. They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare.**

There are a lot of things going on here. Basically, it's like, "You think you've pleased all of these other lovers, like they're going to be on your side or they're going to be nice to you, or whatever. But I'll show you what's really going on here. I'm going to take everything away from you. I'm going to expose what you are to them. And they're going to destroy you. They're not going to have their way with you because you've already done that. They're going to destroy you. They're going to take away your wealth and your jewels. They're going to destroy your vaulted chamber."

In other words, they're going to have none of you anymore. They're just not going to do it. They're going to destroy you and treat you like an ordinary criminal or captive. Basically, God says, "I will judge you as women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged. What you've done is a capital crime. What you have done is a death penalty offense, and you're going to be judged accordingly. You're going to be destroyed. That's it." Jerusalem will be executed for adultery, which is (to say the least) unbelievably wanton adultery. No question that she deserves it with the way she's being described: "the instruments of her self-pleasure," "the places where she played the whore will be torn down." And she will be put to death. That's it. End of story. Verse 40:

50:00

**<sup>40</sup>They shall bring up a crowd against you, and they shall stone you [MH: capital punishment] and cut you to pieces with their swords. <sup>41</sup>And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women. I will make you stop playing the whore, and you shall also give payment no more. <sup>42</sup>So will I satisfy my wrath on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you. I will be calm and will no more be angry. <sup>43</sup>Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things, therefore, behold, I have returned your deeds upon your head, declares the Lord God. Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?**

You're over the top. There's no question that you deserve what you're going to get. And what you're going to get is the punishment for a capital crime. Block adds here:

Block: "Even as the spreading of a garment over a woman by a man represented a nonverbal gesture of marital commitment in the ancient Near East (cf. v. 8), so



the public stripping of one's wife symbolized a divorce, a custom alluded to in Hos. 2:4–5

Remember, Hosea is the other big chapter where the wife and the whore metaphor is a big deal. And Hosea 2:4-5 (in English it's verses 2 and 3) we read [continuing Block's quotation of the NRSV]:

Plead with your mother; plead—  
for she is not my wife,  
and I am not her husband—  
that she may put away her whoring from her face,  
and her adultery from between her breasts,  
or I will strip her naked,  
and expose her as in the day she was born,  
and make her like a wilderness,  
and turn her into a parched land,  
and kill her with thirst (NRSV).

In the light of these and analogous extrabiblical texts, Yahweh's actions are intended not only to shame Jerusalem but also to declare her destitute condition when divorced from him.

He is getting rid of her. Basically, divorce by death. The language of response on God's part is just as extreme as the language of what she (Jerusalem) has been doing. Verse 44:

**<sup>44</sup>“Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’ <sup>45</sup>You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. <sup>46</sup>And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. <sup>47</sup>Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. <sup>48</sup>As I live, declares the Lord God, your sister Sodom 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 pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. <sup>50</sup>They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. <sup>51</sup>Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. <sup>52</sup>Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because**

**of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.**

That's through verse 52. You get the point that, "You're worse than your sister Samaria." Samaria was the Northern Kingdom—the ten tribes who went after Jereboam after the death of Solomon and who set up alternative sites to worship Yahweh instead of the temple. Of course, that became Baal worship and lots of other stuff under the Omrides (under Ahab, especially). The Northern Kingdom/Samaria became axiomatic for idolatry. We've looked at this before in other episodes of the podcast and in other passages. But here, God tells Jerusalem through Ezekiel that "You're worse than your sister Samaria." And then he has this thing about your younger sister to the south of you being Sodom with her daughters. We'll get to that in a moment. Let's read verses 52 onward. We'll pick up a little bit more with Sodom here and some of the other things he's talking about:

55:00

**<sup>52</sup>Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.**

**<sup>53</sup>"I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst, <sup>54</sup>that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. <sup>55</sup>As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state.**

It's kind of amazing that in the midst of this family portrait of wickedness, God is still talking about not ending them and ending the whole plan totally. Again, it's kind of amazing.

**<sup>56</sup>Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, <sup>57</sup>before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you have become an**

**object of reproach for the daughters of Syria** [MH: Some manuscripts have “daughters of Edom” there. If you go back to our Obadiah lessons, that’s going to matter because Edom is paradigmatic of Babylon—of all that’s wrong in the world. “You’ve become an object of reproach for even them.”] **and all those around her, and for the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you.** <sup>58</sup>**You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, declares the LORD.**

That's the end of verse 58. A couple of items here. There's this whole ancestry question. You can see the relationship to Samaria, the Northern Kingdom—Jerusalem and Samaria being the two kingdoms of the divided monarchy, but what's up with the thing about Sodom? And then what about this reference to either Syria (or some manuscripts have Edom)? What's up with that? Well, Block writes this... I think he has a good summary here:

Ezekiel’s reference to Samaria as Jerusalem’s sister is understandable, given their sibling status as descendants of Jacob/Israel and their common rank as capital cities of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, respectively. But Sodom is a different matter. According to the biblical record, this city was destroyed almost a millennium before Jerusalem was established as the capital of Judah (Gen. 19:23–29). Moreover, Sodom was occupied by Canaanites, who were of totally different genealogical stock than Israel and Judah—or were they? To be sure, Abraham forbade his son Isaac from marrying a Canaanite wife (Gen. 24:3–4), but two generations later the sons of Israel/Jacob were less inhibited about mixed marriages (Gen. 38). [MH: That was Shechem and Hamor—their women with the sons of Israel becoming one people back in Genesis 38... apparently that was okay for Jacob and his sons then.] Centuries later, during the period of settlement, despite Mosaic prohibitions about having any relations with them (Deut. 7:1–5), Israelites and Canaanites had learned to coexist. Jerusalem itself was originally a Jebusite city, and the plot of land on which the temple stood David had purchased from Araunah, a Jebusite. There must have been many more like him who lived side by side with the Israelites and in the course of time intermarried with them. There is therefore a kernel of truth in Ezekiel’s reference to Jerusalem’s parents as Hittites and Amorites and her sister as Sodom.

So Block is taking this as a reference to people who became part of Jerusalem through intermarriage, using Sodom as sort of the place name. On the one hand, it shouldn’t have been that way and there’s something wrong about it. But on the other hand, that’s the reality of it. He’s saying, “They’re better—that whole situation is better—than what’s happening in Jerusalem.” Again, he’s trying to just capture both the badness of it and the reality of it.

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Now I want to take a little bit of a rabbit trail here. When it comes to the sin of Sodom, I think we need to take this rabbit trail. This is going to get us a little bit off the track here, but we'll come back on it. I don't want to spend too much time on it. When it says in verse 49:

**<sup>49</sup>Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.**

1:00:00 There are some commentators, in an effort to get around the homosexual context of Genesis 19 (the behavior of the men of Sodom), who will argue that Ezekiel here in this verse (verse 49), gives us the *real* sin of Sodom and why it was judged, and that homosexuality had nothing to do with it. That's flawed. It's sort of both true and untrue. Therefore, it's a flawed perspective. What I mean by that is on one hand, we shouldn't assume that the larger indictment of Sodom in Genesis 18:20... Let me read that for you:

**<sup>20</sup>Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave..."**

I'm going to go destroy it. We shouldn't assume that the outcry against Sodom is only a reference to homosexuality. The text never says that, but that's typically the way evangelical interpreters look at Genesis 18:20—that God decided to destroy it because they've got a bunch of homosexuals in there. The problem is much bigger than that. Ezekiel tells us that apparently this outcry (he uses the same kind of terminology) was prompted by pride, excess of food, prosperous ease, and abuse of the poor and needy. So apparently Sodom had more problems than homosexuality, if you want to say it that way. We shouldn't just zero in on that. Ezekiel basically gives us the full picture.

That doesn't mean, though, that what happened in Genesis 19 (or what almost happened to the two angels there) shouldn't be taken at face value. The language of Genesis 19 is very clearly sexual in nature, and it's men to men. I'll just read it to you—Genesis 19:4:

**<sup>4</sup>But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup>And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." <sup>6</sup>Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, <sup>7</sup>and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly."**

Hey, if they just wanted to meet them, "meeting people" isn't wickedness. It's very clear what's going on here.

**<sup>8</sup>“Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”**

Twice we get this verb "know." The men say, "We want these men out here so we can *know* them," and then Lot says, "I have two daughters who have not *known* any man." It's the same term. Obviously, Lot can't say that his daughters had never encountered (never met) a man. He's a man! It's not about intellectual knowing or meeting. This is the standard (like in Genesis 4 and other verses where it says "so and so knew his wife and she conceived") term for sexual intercourse—this is sexual contact.

But back to the rabbit trail here. It's illegitimate to use Ezekiel 16:49 and say the sin of Sodom had nothing to do with homosexuality. That's just a flawed approach and a flawed argument. Yes, we can say that Ezekiel gives us the real—the whole—picture. Again, they were abusing the poor and the needy and all this stuff, and basically living it up and what-not—living lavish lifestyles. We can say they had bigger problems. But that is not an argument against reading Genesis 19 in an obvious, transparent way. Ezekiel 16:49 doesn't somehow legitimize homosexual sex or take it off the table of things that the Scripture would be against (would consider abominable). In Jude 7 (New Testament), it talks about the men of Sodom going after "strange flesh." There's no indication that the men of Sodom knew the men were angels when they wanted to know them, so we can't argue that, either. This is, again, homosexual contact.

Now you could argue that what was wrong with the sexual advances in Genesis 19 against the two men that were with Lot was that the sex wasn't wanted. In other words, Genesis would have been describing homosexual rape. So there are some who would say the problem here is the involuntary nature (the rape part), not the homosexuality part. You could argue that better, but then you have another problem. There are very clear commands in the Torah against homosexuality, and also in the New Testament. You're never going to see anything in the Bible that legitimizes that. It's a poor hermeneutic to use Ezekiel in this way. End of rabbit trail.

That brings us to verse 59 here in Ezekiel 16. To me, this is the most amazing part of the passage. God has already hinted that Jerusalem is worse than Samaria, it's worse than Sodom, but "I'm going to remember your fortunes" and all these hints that it's not all over and that he can still be merciful. Then you get to verse 59 and it becomes very transparent:

**<sup>59</sup>“For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done [MH: Remember he had just said earlier, “I will treat you as a woman who has committed adultery or a woman who has shed blood. It’s a death penalty offense.], you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, <sup>60</sup>yet I will**

**remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. <sup>61</sup>Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. <sup>62</sup>I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, <sup>63</sup>that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord God."**

That's the end of the chapter. It's astonishing after all of that—the pornographic language, the graphic language of it all, trying to communicate and trying to shock the reader with how bad God says it was, using the sexual metaphor for Israel's spiritual apostasy and the idolatry—after all that... Think of your spouse as Israel. Use the metaphor in your own head. Would you be able to say as in verse 60:

**<sup>60</sup>yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth...**

And not only that: "I'll remember what I did for you in the past, but I'll establish for you an everlasting covenant. I'm going to take you back and it will be forever." Can you even think in those terms? Well, God *does*. God *does* think in those terms. Again, I think the grace of God is something that... It might sound crazy, but in light of the graphic nature of the passage, you still get a clear lesson about the grace of God. Maybe that's what we need because, again, all the sexual stuff... When that happens in a relationship, it's so hurtful and damaging. It's like the worst thing that you can imagine—for most people, anyway. You need to have something that bad happen to appreciate the magnitude of the grace of God on the other side. Maybe that's what actually is needed. We're familiar with the New Testament. The New Testament uses this metaphor, too, in a number of places, but James 4:1-5 is probably the clearest, where James writes:

**What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup>You adulterous people!**

He's speaking to believers at large. This is a general epistle. And probably a lot of Jewish believers—they're going to know the metaphor. Trust me. (laughs) They're going to know it.

**Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity [MH: hatred, an adversarial stance] with [MH: or "against"] God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you suppose it**

**is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?**

1:10:00

We are God's. We are his bride. The Church is now the Bride. And that includes Jew and Gentile. The spiritual adultery metaphor (this is kind of interesting in and of itself) shifts from Israel's whoring (this one country) with Ancient Near Eastern countries around her to violate her marriage to God... it shifts from that to believers generally. Jew or Gentile whoring after the world, not just the known countries at the time. Believers whoring after the world to violate their marriage to God, because they're the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ is the people of God in the New Testament. It's all believers. It's not tied to the Jewish question, but the metaphor is still the same. In context, "friend of the world" is *philos* in Greek—a term of affection or intimacy, which can be used of a paramour or a lover. If you're going to be intimate with the world, if you're going to give the world your favors and your loyalty, if you're going to ask the world for your protection, then you're an enemy of God. James uses this metaphor and really encapsulates it in a couple of verses. All these things we saw Jerusalem guilty of and the way she was portrayed because of spiritual apostasy (again, using the metaphor of a whore)... James basically does the same thing with God's bride now: "Do not be a paramour, a lover, with the world."

Again, that means all sorts of things, as we've seen here in Ezekiel 16. So again, as graphic and as awful as the chapter is, look at what we get! We get the grace of God. In the New Testament, we get the same warning. James 4:5 says God is jealous over us because the Spirit dwells in us. I didn't read verse 6, but I'll add it now:

**<sup>6</sup>But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

Again, we get the same solicitation and the same metaphor in the New Testament. I think there's a lot to take away here, despite the nature of the whole passage.

**TS:** Well, Mike, that's a lot to digest there. (laughing)

**MH:** It's bad! (laughing) But that's what it was supposed to be. They wanted it to be graphic to get the effect. But again, you're not going to get this in church. But it's there! This is Scripture. The prophets had no qualms about writing this way. As we saw, it's not just Ezekiel. Ezekiel is the most graphic example, but other prophets use this kind of language, too.

**TS:** Sometimes you need those graphic details to really hit home, it seems. I'm big on that. I think people need to see the evil and the horror to make it more real. This definitely accomplishes that.

**MH:** If you dress up the ugliness, it's going to look less ugly.

**TS:** Yeah, you can't sugar-coat it or it doesn't have the same effect.

Well, all right, Mike. For the sake of time here, next week we're going to go into chapter 17, maybe 18?

**MH:** Yep. I'm still thinking about doing one or two. We'll see.

**TS:** All right, Mike. We appreciate it. That was another good one. This is probably going to be one of our more popular ones, I bet.

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