

The Harlot's Family

(16) Ezekiel 16:44–63

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Ezek 16:44-50 – The mother & sisters of the harlot.

“Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: ‘Like mother, like daughter!’ You are your mother’s daughter, loathing husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children; your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

“Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways. “As I live,” says the Lord God, “neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

What proverb applied to Israel?

Like mother, like daughter: This **proverb** would be accurately said of Israel in Ezekiel’s day. The idea from Ezekiel 16:3 is repeated: *your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite* – and Israel acted just like those pagan nations.

How did Israel become just like any other nation?

You are your mother’s daughter...you are the sister of your sisters: God had called Israel to be *different* from the pagan nations, and instead she became just like them.

Who loathed their husbands: It is strange and shocking that Israel would be like those who hated their husbands. Spiritually speaking, Yahweh was the covenant husband of Israel, *who was a perfect husband*. This bad marriage was entirely the responsibility of one party, not both.

- Israel was weary of the best Husband while she doted on abominable adulterers

How was Samaria Judah’s elder sister?

V46 – *Your elder sister is Samaria:* Here God focused on Jerusalem and the southern kingdom it was the capital of. The city of **Samaria** was the capital city of the long conquered northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 16:24-29). Once-faithful Jerusalem had become just as corrupt as her **elder sister, Samaria**.

How was Judah even worse than her elder sister?

Your younger sister...is Sodom: It was bad enough to be identified with **Samaria**, but Jerusalem’s state was far worse than that. She was like **Sodom**, with all her infamous corruptions (Genesis 13:13, 19:1-24).

- Samaria represents those who in the past were a breakaway from Judah.
- Sodom represents the dregs of Canaanite society, and would be those who had not had any allegiance to Jehovah (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:23,24).

How did Judah surpass her sisters in corruption?

But, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways: Jerusalem’s sin had been the more heinous in that she had professed to set the standard for her sisters, whereas she had been more abominable than they.

V50 – *Neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you:*

What was the problem with Sodom?

This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: Point by point, God listed some of the sins of Sodom. The sins listed here are alluded to in Genesis, but not specifically detailed.

- Some wrongly take this to mean that God did not consider the sexual depravity described in Genesis 19:1-24 to be sin, but this is a clear and willful misunderstanding of the text.

These were sins at the root of the depravity described in Genesis 19, and in addition to that depravity.

She and her daughter had pride: Genesis 13:10 says that the land of Sodom was *like the garden of the Lord*. It was the kind of city that citizens take great pride in.

Fullness of food and abundance of idleness: Being well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord (Genesis 13:10), there was agricultural abundance in Sodom. This made them self-reliant, sinfully independent, and overly invested in entertainments and comforts.

Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy: With her great abundance, the people of Sodom should have been more generous and giving to the **poor and needy**. Yet in their selfishness and **abundance of idleness** they were not generous or helpful.

They were haughty and committed abomination: Ancient Sodom was filled with pride and terrible idolatry (**abomination**). The sexual depravity described in Genesis 19 was no doubt connected with the environment of unrestrained idolatry.

What did God do about Sodom?

Therefore I took them away as I saw fit: God brought His judgment to Sodom, and He would bring it to Jerusalem and Judah, who in many ways were *worse* than Sodom.

How is pride at the root of all sin?

1 John 2:15-16 – *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

The concept of the *pride of life*, is linked with the “*lust of the eyes*” and the “*lust of the flesh*,” appears in two significant passages of Scripture—the temptation of Eve in the Garden and the temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4:8-10).

How was Eve tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?

Eve perceived that the fruit was “*good for food*,” “*pleasing to the eye*,” and “*desirable for gaining wisdom*” (Genesis 3:6). She coveted the fruit in three ways...

- First, it was appealing to her appetite. This John refers to as the “*lust of the flesh*,” the desire for that which satisfies any of the physical needs.
- The fruit was also pleasing or delightful to the eye, that which we see and desire to own or possess. Here is the “*lust of the eyes*” John refers to.
- Finally, Eve somehow perceived that the fruit would make her wise, giving her a wisdom beyond her own. Part of Satan’s lie was that eating the fruit would make her “*like God, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:5).

How did Satan attempt these same three temptations to sin when Jesus was fasting in the wilderness?

See Matthew 4:1-11...

- He tempted Jesus with the lust of the flesh, bread for His hunger (vv. 2-3),
- the lust of the eyes, “*all the kingdoms of the world with their splendor*” (vv. 8-9),
- the pride of life, daring Him to cast Himself from the roof of the Temple in order to prove that He was the Messiah but that was not in the will of God or His plan for the redemption of mankind (vv. 5-6)

But Jesus, though He was “*tempted in every way, just as we are*” (Hebrews 4:15), resisted the devil and used the Word of God to ensure victory over him.

How is the pride of life anything that is of the world?

Anything that produces the pride of life comes from a love of the world.

- Here is the essence of the pride of life—anything that exalts us above our station and offers the illusion of God-like qualities, wherein we boast in arrogance and worldly wisdom.

How are Christians likewise tempted to sin today?

Christians have always been, and will always be, lured by the same three temptations Eve and Jesus experienced. Satan doesn’t change his methods; he doesn’t have to because they continue to be successful.

- He tempts us with the lust of the flesh—sexual gratification, gluttony, excessive alcohol consumption, and drugs, as well as the “*deeds of the flesh*” about which Paul warned the Galatians, “*sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these*” (Galatians 5:19-21).
- He tempts us with the lust of the eyes—the accumulation of “*stuff*” with and the insatiable desire for more, better, and newer possessions, which ensnares us and hardens our hearts to the things of God.
- But perhaps his most evil temptation is the pride of life, the very sin that resulted in Satan’s fall. He desired to be God, not to be a servant of God (Isaiah 14:12-15).

How does the pride of life damage relationships?

It exalts the self in direct contradiction to Jesus’ statement that those who would follow Him must take up their cross (an instrument of death) and deny themselves. It is the arrogance that separates us from others and limits our effectiveness in the kingdom.

From where does the pride of life come?

The pride of life “*comes not from the Father, but from the world.*” And, as such, it is passing away with the world, but those who resist and overcome the temptation of the pride of life do the will of God, and “*the man who does the will of God lives forever*” (1 John 2:17).

Ezek 16:51-59 – Restoration for Israel & sisters

“Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done. You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters.

“When I bring back their captives, the captives of Sodom and her daughters, and the captives of Samaria and her daughters, then I will also bring back the captives of your captivity among them, that you may bear your own shame and be disgraced by all that you did when you comforted them. When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters return to their former state, then you and your daughters will return to your former state. For your sister Sodom was not a byword in your mouth in the days of your pride, before your wickedness was uncovered. It was like the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria and all those around her, and of the daughters of the Philistines, who despise you everywhere. You have paid for your lewdness and your abominations,” says the Lord. For thus says the Lord God: “I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

How is it that Samaria did not commit half of Judah’s sins?

Since Samaria fell some 130 years before Jerusalem, Judah had much more time to do more sinning. As well, they had far more light with the presence of the temple, the institution of the priesthood, and better king. Judah was more guilty because she had more privileges from the Lord.

And have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done: Jerusalem’s heart and deeds were so bad that it made Samaria and Sodom look *justified* in comparison.

You who judged your sisters, bear your own shame also: Jerusalem and Judah proudly thought themselves better than Samaria and Sodom, but this proud judgment only

made them guiltier. Jerusalem would **be disgraced also** and **bear their own shame**.

What is the principle here that applies to us today?

Luke 12:48 – *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required*

We are held responsible for what we have. If we are blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, and the like, it is expected that we use these well to glorify God and benefit others.

- In context, Jesus had just told a parable about being ready for His return. Peter asked if the parable was for just them or for everyone. Jesus replied with another parable in which He defines the “*faithful and wise manager*” as one who gives out food and other allowances “*at the proper time.*” When the master returns and finds the faithful servant managing his resources well, he “*put him in charge of all his possessions*” (Luke 12:42–44).
- We have been entrusted with certain things, and faithfulness requires that we manage those things wisely and unselfishly.

Is it only the wealthy who have been given much?

In truth, we have all been given much...

2 Corinthians 8:9 – *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

We have been granted the abundant grace of God (Ephesians 1:3–10; 3:16–21; Romans 5:8–11; 8:14–17), the Word of God, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–21; 16:13; Romans 12:6).

- God gives us resources such as finances and time, talents such as culinary skills or musical ability, and spiritual gifts such as encouragement or teaching. We should ask God for wisdom on how to use those resources and commit ourselves to expending them according to His will so that He may be glorified.

So, does this mean the less we know about God and His gifts, the less we’ll have to do?

As evident in Jesus’ parable, we are held responsible to know our master’s will. God has plainly shown us what He requires...

Micah 6:8 – *He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

What did Jesus say was worse than what Sodom had done?

Matthew 10:14-15 – *whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!*

Those who reject the Good News of Christ will suffer a worse fate than Sodom. The destruction of Sodom was in the world which is temporal. The destruction of those who reject God's provision of salvation is eternal...

Matthew 18:8 – *If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire*

Is hell really eternal punishment or is it annihilation?

Since God is an infinite and eternal Being, the punishment for sin, death, must also be infinite and eternal. Hell is this infinite and eternal death that is earned because of sin.

- The punishment of the wicked dead in hell is described throughout Scripture as “*eternal fire*” (Matthew 25:41), “*unquenchable fire*” (Matthew 3:12), “*shame and everlasting contempt*” (Daniel 12:2), a place where “*the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:44-49), a place of “*torment*” and “*fire*” (Luke 16:23-24), “*everlasting destruction*” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), a place where “*the smoke of torment rises forever and ever*” (Revelation 14:10-11), and a “*lake of burning sulfur*” where the wicked are “*tormented day and night forever and ever*” (Revelation 20:10).

If heaven is everlasting, so too must hell be. Jesus Himself indicates that punishment in hell is just as everlasting as life in heaven...

Matthew 25:46 – *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*

We are made in the image of God... one aspect of that is people will exist into eternity (as will God). Thus, hell cannot be annihilation.

How can a loving God send someone to hell?

We must first define the term loving God. This phrase assumes some things about God, that allowing people to go to hell is an unloving act on God's part. God IS love; therefore, everything He does is an expression of that perfect love.

The second fallacy concerns the word send, which denotes an action only on the part of the sender. God has given human beings freedom to participate in their life choices and eternal destination...

John 3:16-18 – *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The entire question is wrong. A better wording is “If God is love, then why do some people go to hell?” The foundation for the answer is:

Romans 1:18-20 – *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **people are without excuse**”*

How do unbelievers suppress the truth?

People have been given enough truth to know and surrender to God, but they refuse. Self-will wants to deny God's right to tell us what to do. So, with the truth in front of them, people turn away and refuse to see it.

- Atheist Thomas Nagel has said, “It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.”

How is God's nature made clear to people?

If there is a creation, there must be a Creator... God has taken the initiative to make His truth known to everyone. History has proved this since time began, as every people group has sought some understanding of a Creator to whom they owe allegiance. Such knowledge is an integral part of what it means to be created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

How must the love of God also encompass the justice of God?

God is not only love, but He is perfect justice as well. Justice requires adequate payment for crimes committed. The only just punishment for high treason against our perfect Creator is eternal separation from Him. That separation means the absence of goodness, light, relationship, and joy, which are all facets of God's nature.

- To excuse our sin would require God to be less than just, and to allow sin-tainted humans into His perfect heaven would render that place less than perfect.

What then was the solution God provided for sinful humans?

Only the perfect Son of God could go to the cross in our place. Only His perfect blood was an acceptable payment for the debt we each owe God (Colossians 2:14). When we refuse Jesus as our substitute, we must pay the price ourselves (Romans 6:23).

How does giving people the freedom to chose our eternal destiny demonstrate God's love?

God gave us the freedom to choose how we respond to Him. If He forced us to love Him, we would be robots. To give us no option but obedience would be a violation of our free will. Love is only love when it is voluntary.

- Because God honors our autonomy, He will never force surrender or loyalty. However, there are consequences for either choice.

C. S. Lewis summarizes this truth in his classic work, *The Great Divorce*: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it."

Would God restore Samaria and Sodom as He promised to do with Judah?

V53 – *When I bring back their captives*: God promised some kind of restoration for **Sodom** and **Samaria**, and that Jerusalem would also be restored and their captives brought back. The promise to bring back the captives of Samaria is easily understood and we may see its fulfillment. The fulfillment of this promise to Sodom is more difficult to understand.

- The restoration of Sodom will pose no difficulty for the omnipotence of God; her restoration was mentioned first to do away with all boasting.

How would the restoration of Sodom and Samaria add to the shame of Judah?

That you may bear your own shame: Part of the reason God promised to restore the captivity of Samaria and Sodom was to humble Jerusalem and Judah. They would know that they were not the *unique* objects of God's favor and restoration. His love was wider than that.

How was it that Judah's sister Sodom was not a byword?

In former times self-righteous Jerusalem would not even mention the name of Sodom. Jerusalem, however, was humbled when her own wickedness was made public through divine judgment.

How is it that Judah would pay for their lewdness and abominations?

You have paid for your lewdness and your abominations: The day would come when God's season of discipline and judgment over Jerusalem and Judah would pass. In some sense cured of their previous idolatry, they could move forward in humility instead of pride.

Ezek 16:60-63 – Old covenant & New covenants

"Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done," says the Lord God."

What hope did Judah have in God's judgment?

Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth: Despite the certainty of the coming judgment, God would not forget His *covenant* with Israel. They would continue to have a special place in His plan of the ages, and therefore in His heart.

How would Israel respond to God's judgment?

Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed: The restoration would bring humility to Israel, not only toward God but also towards those they had previously despised and judged (**when you receive your older and younger sisters**).

How would God establish His covenant with Israel?

And I will establish my covenant with you: The idea is repeated again for emphasis. The coming judgment would be so great that Israel would be tempted to believe there was no more hope for them with God. Yet again and again Yahweh promised to *establish His covenant* with them again.

- God says that not only will He make good on the past covenants but He is also going to make a new covenant with them.

How is it that God would provide an atonement for the sins of Israel?

When I provide an atonement for all you have done:

Through Ezekiel, the Lord hinted at the nature of the future covenant. The idea of a God-provided *atonement* is an important aspect of the new covenant, already mentioned...

Ezekiel 11:17-20 – I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

This would be the true and ultimate restoration of Israel and it will happen during the Tribulation when God prepares Israel (and the nations) for the Millennial Kingdom.

What can we conclude about God's purpose for Israel since He will *establish His covenant with them*?

This makes it very clear that God still has a future purpose with the nation Israel.

What applications do we see in this passage?

- The pride of life is the root cause of all sin... be aware of it and guard against it.
- Hell is real and eternal... help people know they don't have to go there.
- God is not done with Israel... don't confuse the promises to Israel with the promises to the church... it is not possible to have a correct understanding of end times doctrine if you confuse Israel and the church.
- We are blessed to live in the era of the New Covenant... praise God and share the Good News!