

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## EZEKIEL 16-17

In 1956, a musical comedy debuted that became an American classic, "[My Fair Lady](#)." It's the story of a young street urchin. An ill-mannered, uncultured little lass, named "[Eliza Doolittle](#)." Eliza is taken off the streets by a British phonetics professor and taught the mores, the speech, the etiquette of the upper-class.

Professor Higgins instills in her a sense of nobility.

Eventually Higgins and Eliza fall in love and the professor marries the graceful product of his creation.

The musical, "[My Fair Lady](#)," illustrates the storyline of the first 14 verses of Ezekiel 16. God takes the people of Jerusalem, once uncouth, rebellious, and pagan, off the streets (*so to speak*) and refines them.

He breeds into these ill-mannered people dignity and beauty. *God's Eliza* blossoms into a lady and God takes her as His bride. He lavishes blessing upon her.

God and Jerusalem have the makings of a classic love story, *except one...* except for a happy ending...

For when God looked upon His "[My Fair Lady](#)" He couldn't say she was "[mine](#)," or "[fair](#)," or "[a lady](#)." The Jews of Jerusalem stopped being *a faithful wife*, and became *a rebellious whore*. The Jews broke their vow, and played the harlot. She became a slut, not a lady.

And those harsh words are not an over-statement. This is exactly how Ezekiel 16 describes the Jews.

Harry Ironside once wrote, "God used the method... here, as indelicate as it may seem... to portray the filthiness of such sin and iniquity as that of which this nation had been guilty. No carefully chosen words or guarded expressions can make wickedness any less repulsive than it really is in the sight of a holy God."

In fact, there's not a more vivid *description* and *denouncement* of sin in all the Bible than in Ezekiel 16.

If chapters were given ratings this would be an **R**.

A rabbi, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, wrote in the Jewish Mishnah that Ezekiel 16 was not to be read or translated in public... Yet God is not as sheltering...

He wants to shock us with the realities of sin, so that we don't repeat the mistakes of His people of old.

Chapter 16, "Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations..." *Implied is they didn't know...* Sin is like BO or bad breath. You don't know your own stink.

"And say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite..." Here God is speaking to the city of Jerusalem not the nation, or the Hebrews as a whole. Israel had a godly heritage, rooted in the faith of father Abraham.

But Jerusalem had been a Canaanite city-state, controlled in the past by the Amorites and Hittites. Jerusalem had an evil, idolatrous, pagan pedigree.

Verse 4, “As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut...” No one even clipped the umbilical cord. “nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.”

Jerusalem was like the newborn deprived of post-natal care. No one even washed off the blood and mucous, or rubbed its tender baby-skin with antiseptic.

Newborns were usually wrapped in warm, tight bands of cloth to simulate the security of their mother’s womb, but not Jerusalem. She never knew swaddling clothes. Jerusalem was an unwanted child. Tossed out into the open field by her parents - left there to die.

Imagine God speaking what’s next, “And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’” God said, “*Live, yes live!*”

God was *FOR* Jerusalem from the beginning. He was pulling for her to *survive* - helping her to *thrive*.

Verse 7, “I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful.

Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. “When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love... In other words, *when she had come of age...*

“So I spread My wing over you...” This was the Hebrew equivalent of a marriage proposal. This is how Boaz proposed to Ruth. He took her under his cloak.

“And covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.” Evidently, the city said, “Yes!” God and Jerusalem became husband and wife. They entered a covenant of loyalty and trust.

And God began to bless His bride. “Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk.” Their badger-skin shoes were sandals that didn’t wear out for forty years. They had supernatural attire.

“I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose (apparently, God approves of nose-rings), earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty.

Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” says the Lord God.”

Under David and Solomon Israel reached its apex. A golden age saw Jerusalem as a global capitol. The Temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

During Solomon's reign representatives from foreign governments came to behold his wealth and wisdom.

In 1 Kings 10:7 the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw it with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard." She goes on to praise the God of Israel.

But here is where "*My Fair Lady*" ends, and "*Girl gone Wild*" begins. Eliza becomes consumed with lust. She betrays her vows. And she breaks God's heart.

God says in verse 15, "But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it." On a list of The Recording Industry Association Of America's top songs from the 20th century #34 is a country classic, Hank Williams' "*Your Cheatin' Heart*." Here's a little sample of a great song...

My dad is a huge country music fan, and his favorite singer was Hank Williams. When I was growing up, there were nights when he would pull out his guitar and sheet music, and practice, "*Your Cheatin' Heart*."

I grew up singing "*Amazing Grace*" on Sundays, and "*Your Cheatin' Heart*" on Monday. What a combination!

But that's the contrast we find in Ezekiel 16. The first 14 verses are all about *God's amazing grace*, but the rest of the chapter is about *Jerusalem's cheating heart*.

And it was her prosperity and prominence that helped cause her cheating heart. Verse 15 says, "*You trusted in your own beauty... because of your fame... (you) poured out your harlotry...*" Because of God's benevolence, Jerusalem rose to such heights, yet she took His grace for granted - took the credit for herself.

She figured she didn't need God anymore!

Success and prosperity can be a blessing or a curse.

It can go to my head. Pride sets in. I start reading my own press clippings and think it was due to my efforts. I forget what God has done, and how much I need Him. And this is the attitude that leads to a cheating heart.

Dorothee Solle was a German, feminist author who rejected the concept of original sin and derided the faith of the Reformers. She once wrote, "*We do not have to sit around all year singing, with Luther, 'Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing.' We are strong; we can accomplish things. The most telling argument against our traditional God is not that He no longer exists or that He has drawn back within Himself, but that we no longer need Him.*"

This was the attitude of the people of Jerusalem.

They didn't deny God, they just no longer considered Him necessary... and they chased after other gods.

There once was a Spanish knight who had no food.



He scavenged for his next morsel. But every evening he'd walk through the town square picking his teeth, as if he'd just finished a feast. This is picture Ezekiel paints of Jerusalem. They denied their need for God.

And this is what's happened to our modern world. A little technology has gone to our heads. Since we're able to put a man on the moon; *who needs the Son!*

*Yet families are falling apart. City streets are a war zone. Our youth have no morals. Perversions are applauded and protected. Women are exploited. Children are abused. And we don't think we need God!*

And this is the attitude that even invades some churches. Rather than glorify God, our prosperity is chalked up to our own genius, or a pattern, or abilities.

Like the church in Laodicea, "You say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..." When there's pride in the heart, success goes to the head. And as in the case with this church, it created a lukewarmness toward God.

It eventually produces a cheating heart!

Verse 16, "You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be." As we've mentioned before, God considered *idolatry* to be spiritual *infidelity* or *adultery*.

Jerusalem's idolatry was her having multiple lovers. It betrayed her husband. It broke God's holy heart.

Isn't it interesting how many country songs are about cheating hearts. Ever hear the riddle, "What happens when you play a country music song backwards?"

Answer, "A guy sobers up, gets rehired at the factory, his dog stops howling, and his wife comes home."

Here's a collection of actual lines from country songs that will help describe for us *a cheating heart*...

"You're out doing what I'm doing here without."

"Does my ring hurt your finger when you go out at night?"  
"Where are you spending your nights these days?" "I was flushed from the bathroom of your heart."

"If fingerprints showed up on skin, wonder whose I'd find on you?" "You're so cold, I'm turning blue."

"Loving here, living there, and lying in between." "There ain't no queen in my king-sized bed." "It's sad to go to the funeral of a good love that has died."

"She got the goldmine, I got the shaft."

"You're a hard dog to keep under the porch."

These are all songs God could've sung about the Jews of Jerusalem. **They had a cheating heart.**

Always remember, idolatry is not *a statue*, but *a state of heart*. It happens when I allow other things to crowd God out of His rightful place in my life. Suddenly, He's no longer the primary reason I'm doing what I'm doing.

And this wasn't just the warning of OT prophets to Israel. The NT writers shared this concern for us...



James 4:4 tells us, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” The last verse in 1 John reads, “Keep yourselves from idols.”

As people betrothed to God it's our responsibility to remain internally loyal to Him. If we flirt with the world, and pursue its thrills and lusts, we're betraying our allegiance to God. He wants to be the love of our life!

Again He confronts His people, “You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them. You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. Also My food which I gave you - the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you - you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was,” says the Lord God.”

There's another country song God could've sung regarding Jerusalem. The line goes, “I bought the shoes that just walked out on me.” That's what God is saying here. They took the gold, clothes, oil, incense, and food that He gave them... and gave it all to idols.

“Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured.” This was a reference to the child sacrifices that were offered to the ancient idol, Molech.

People would place their babies in the idol's hot, glowing arms - while the drums of the pagan priests drowned out the

baby's screams. Today, Molech has been replaced by the abortion mills - and the deafening drums by pro-choice rhetoric. But it's the same sin...

Babies are being sacrifice to the gods of career and convenience - hedonism and selfishness and privacy.

In the US, the number is 58 million and counting... A generation of Americans have been lost to abortion.

And God asks, **“Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire?”** *Did you think this was this a trivial matter? That I just ignored it?* Not hardly, God was very concerned.

Verse 22, **“And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood.”** Jerusalem could've easily been aborted. Now she was doing to others, what she had been spared.

**“Then it was so, after all your wickedness - ‘Woe, woe to you!’ says the Lord God - that you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street.”** Remember, **“high places”** were raised platforms dedicated to various gods. Pagans thought the higher you were in elevation the closer you were to your god. So idolatry was practiced on the high places.

**“You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry.”** Everywhere you turned there was an idol. Every city street

was dedicated to a different idol. Idolatry had permeated life in Jerusalem.

The imagery in verse 25 is graphic. The NAS captures the tone in the Hebrew, “You made your beauty abominable; and you spread your legs to every passerby - to multiply your harlotry.” They were willing to jump in the bed with any new idol that appeared on the scene. They’d traded in the *tried and true God*, for idols that were *novel, and exotic, and mysterious*.

*And what about you... when you’re desperate for companionship... or strapped for cash... or entangled in a problem with no way out... do you wait on the Lord, or run to whatever promises to ease your pain?*

*Are we committed to letting God see us through...*

Verse 26, “You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbors, and increased your acts of harlotry to provoke Me to anger.

“Behold, therefore, I stretched out My hand against you, diminished your allotment, and gave you up to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior.”

It’s pretty bad when the behavior of God’s people is so wicked even the pagan’s blush and are ashamed!

Because of their idolatry, God allowed the Jews to lose land to the Philistines - their mortal enemies.

“You also played the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; indeed you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied.

Moreover you multiplied your acts of harlotry as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then you were not satisfied. “How degenerate is your heart!” says the Lord God, “seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot.” She was a spiritual slut.

What if someone said of a woman, “Well, she’s been to bed with the guy next door, the man three doors down, and the fellow in cul-de-sac.” You’re thinking, this is *the neighborhood hoe*. She’s got no respect for herself or anyone else. She’s a home wrecker.

Yet this was Jerusalem. She’d committed adultery with the gods of Egypt, Assyria, and now Babylon. She’d gone to bed with all her surrounding neighbors.

She acted like a harlot, but she was worst than even a prostitute. Verse 31, “You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment.” Obviously, God isn’t saying there’s any virtue in prostitution. *There’s logic perhaps, but no virtue.* A woman can become desperate - to survive an excruciating situation she sells her body for a price.

Yet, the behavior of the Jews made no sense!

She was playing the prostitute, but not getting paid. Jerusalem was a slut for no good reason. Even if you wanted to emphasize, or have pity on her, you couldn’t.

Ezekiel writes, “You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and

hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry.” She was a john, not a hoe. Like a horse in heat she was driven by illogical lust.

“You are the opposite of other women in your harlotry, because no one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment was given you, therefore you are the opposite.” Jerusalem wasn’t a regretful spouse who got caught in temptation... or even a working girl... she was a slut, driven by raw lust, wanting to get laid by the latest stranger in town.

It reminds me of another country song, “You must think my bed's a bus stop, the way you come and go.” And that’s exactly what God thought of the Jews.

Verse 35, “Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: “Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them, surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy.” Jerusalem had slept around. Now she’ll receive the adulterer’s punishment.

“I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They

shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare.

They shall also bring up an assembly against you, and they shall stone you with stones and thrust you through with their swords. They shall burn your houses with fire, and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; and I will make you cease playing the harlot, and you shall no longer hire lovers.” The penalty for adultery under the Law of Moses was death by stoning. And this is the punishment that will befall Jerusalem. She’ll be stripped, shamed, and stoned.

And this is exactly what happened to Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonian army. In 586 BC the city was invaded, the stone walls were thrown down, and their Temple and houses were burned to the ground.

And this is what will one day happened to the whole world. In the Revelation we’re told that in the last days an Antichrist will require that the world worship him.

They’ll reject the true God and take his evil mark.

And what is God’s response? In Revelation 16, the seventh bowl of judgment is poured out from heaven, and 100 pound hailstones pound the Earth. *What is God doing?* He’s stoning the Earth for its idolatry.

Verse 42, “So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more.” Once sin is punished, and what’s right is settled, God no longer harbors a grudge.

God does gets angry, but He doesn’t remain angry forever - either *we repent or justice is served.*



Verse 43, “Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me with all these things, surely I will also recompense your deeds on your own head,” says the Lord God. “And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your abominations.

“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.” Jerusalem had a family resemblance. Her parents were pagan, and her sisters were notorious... She had two...

“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.” Her sisters were Samaria and Sodom. Samaria was known for idolatry - Sodom for immorality.

Often people talk about the brotherhood of all men, and the fatherhood of God. As if God is everyone’s father and we’re all brothers in the same family. *Not so!*

Here, God makes it clear that Jerusalem was not of His bloodline. Her parents were pagan nations, and her sisters were wicked, evil, idolatrous cities.

Remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do...” So much for all men being bros, and the universal fatherhood of God! No one is born into God’s

family. To have God as father and the church as family, you've got to be born again.

Verse 47, "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." God's holy city, Jerusalem, became more corrupt than *idolatrous Samaria* or *immoral Sodom*.

"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."

Usually, Sodom is associated with homosexuality. We even call unnatural sexual practices, *sodomy*.

But the sin of Sodom went much deeper than sexuality. Here Sodom is accused of pride, selfishness, idleness, and an unwillingness to help the poor and needy. Apparently, God is not just concerned about *sexual perversion*. He also cares about *social injustice*.

Christians can be quick to condemn homosexuality, while we're guilty of pride and self-centeredness. We talk about sexual perversion, but do nothing to help the poor and needy. *Who's acting most Sodom-like?*

Verse 51, “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.” Samaria and Sodom were not as guilty as God’s city, Jerusalem.

“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.” One day, all three sisters will be restored. And it’s to Jerusalem’s shame that she’ll need to be...

“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.”

Even in her pride, Jerusalem never looked down on Sodom. Perhaps, she realized she was just as guilty.

“For thus says the Lord God: “I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.” Even though Jerusalem despised their marriage covenant with God, He would never forsake His promises to them.

God will remember His covenant with the Hebrews. He will pardon their sin, and give them a new heart. They will be His people, and He will be their God.

“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.”

This predicts a political alignment that’s yet to occur.

Perhaps, in the last days, God will unite these three sisters in an alliance - [Samaria](#), [Sodom](#), [Jerusalem](#).

“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.”

It’s the New Covenant that makes atonement. God and sinful men are reconciled by Christ and Him alone!

Chapter 17 is a parable that relates to the political situation in Jerusalem at the time of Ezekiel. In 597 BC the Babylonian

king, Nebuchadnezzar, conquered the city, and took King Jeconiah back to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar selected a successor, Jeconiah's Uncle Zedekiah - and made Zedekiah take an oath of allegiance to Babylon. Jeremiah said Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument of judgment, and the Jews could show their repentance by surrendering to Babylon.

He warned Zedekiah if he resisted the Babylonians it would bring about the final destruction of Jerusalem.

Here Ezekiel echoes Jeremiah, in a parable. The first 10 verses tell *the story*, the next 11 *the interpretation*.

Verse 1, "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel, and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "A great eagle with large wings and long pinions, full of feathers of various colors, came to Lebanon and took from the cedar the highest branch."

The "*great eagle*" is Babylon. Check out Daniel 7:4, Jeremiah 48:40, and 49:42. The same imagery is used.

The "*large wings*" are the army. "*Feathers of various colors*" are banners under which this army marches.

The "*highest branch*" is the Davidic successor. The heir to the throne, King Jeconiah. The pinions of the eagle clip off the top branch. He dethrones Jeconiah.

"He cropped off its topmost young twig and carried it to a land of trade; He set it in a city of merchants..." This "*land of trade*" and "*city of merchants*" is Babylon.

“Then he took some of the seed of the land and planted it in a fertile field; He placed it by abundant waters and set it like a willow tree.” Willows grew on the banks of the Euphrates River in Babylon. This is where the Jews relocated. They lived in exile 70 years.

“And it grew and became a spreading vine of low stature; its branches turned toward him, but its roots were under it. So it became a vine, brought forth branches, and put forth shoots.” The vine was a symbol of Israel. The imagery was used in Chapter 15.

“But there was another great eagle with large wings and many feathers; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him, and stretched its branches toward him, from the garden terrace where it had been planted, that he might water it.” The other great eagle was the rival power in Ezekiel’s day. There were two superpowers at the time, *Babylon in the east* and *Egypt in the west*.

And instead of being loyal to Babel, the vine broke his oath, and stretched out toward the Egyptians.

“It was planted in good soil by many waters, to bring forth branches, bear fruit, and become a majestic vine.” If Zedekiah had remained loyal to Babylon the Jews in Jerusalem would’ve prospered. But because Zedekiah courted the Egyptians, and paid for protection that never came, the vine will be uprooted.

Zedekiah was destroyed because he never accepted God’s verdict on his sin. He broke his oath, trusted in Egypt, and inflamed the ire of King Nebuchadnezzar.



The Jews never surrendered to the will of God.

You can always tell if a person is truly repentant of their sin by how they react to its consequences.

*Do they accept the shame their sin has caused - or agree with the restitution - or submit to the rebuilding that's now required? Or are they just resentful, and can't understand why their life has gotten harder?*

Verse 9, "Say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots, cut off its fruit, and leave it to wither? All of its spring leaves will wither, and no great power or many people will be needed to pluck it up by its roots. Behold, it is planted, will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind touches it? It will wither in the garden terrace where it grew.'" The east wind - the hurricane - was the Babylonian army.

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying (God interprets the parable), "Say now to the rebellious house: 'Do you not know what these things mean?'

Tell them, 'Indeed the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princes, and led them with him to Babylon.'" Remember Ezekiel had been part of this deportation. He was one of the princes of Judah.

"And he took the king's offspring, made a covenant with him, and put him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land, that the kingdom might be brought low and not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might stand. But he rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and many people. Will he

prosper? Will he who does such things escape? Can he break a covenant and still be delivered? 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king (that is, Babylon), whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke - with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

Nor will Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company do anything in the war, when they heap up a siege mound and build a wall to cut off many persons."

Egypt had promised Jerusalem protection, but it never came. The pharaoh was too afraid of Babylon.

Verse 18, "Since he (Zedekiah) despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and in fact gave his hand and still did all these things, he shall not escape."

Therefore thus says the Lord God: "As I live, surely My oath which he despised, and My covenant which he broke, I will recompense on his own head. I will spread My net over him, and he shall be taken in My snare.

I will bring him to Babylon and try him there for the treason which he committed against Me." In a sense, Zedekiah's treaty had been with Nebuchadnezzar, but in another sense his treaty had been with God.

"All his fugitives with all his troops shall fall by the sword, and those who remain shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken." Jerusalem will fall and Jews will be scattered.

"Thus says the Lord God: "I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out. I will crop off from

the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain.” In the parable the great eagle took the top twig and cropped it off. But here God does the same.

Nebuchadnezzar chose Jeconiah and took him back to Babylon, but God chooses to take another twig.

God’s choice is a younger, taller, higher, more tender twig. God will also take an heir of the Davidic dynasty and replant him on the mountains of Jerusalem.

Recall that many of the Hebrew prophets foresaw Messiah as “the Branch of David.” Isaiah 53:2 envisions Him, “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.”

Here Ezekiel says God will plant Him on “a high and prominent mountain.” Everest is the tallest mountain on Earth in terms of altitude. But in terms of prominence the tallest mountain is just outside the walls of Jerusalem, north of the city. It’s called Mount Calvary.

And it’s here that God will plant the Messiah. He’ll attach Him to a stake - a cross. And through His death fruit will sprout all around the world. The lives of millions upon millions of people will be transformed.

In John 12:24, Jesus said of Himself, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” Jesus was speaking of Himself. Yet this was also Ezekiel’s message.

Verse 23, “On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell.” Here’s a foreshadowing of Matthew 13 - the parable of the mustard seed. God’s Kingdom begins as a tiny seed, but grows into a tree in which birds nest.

From a human perspective, God’s Kingdom couldn’t have had a more humble, inauspicious beginning - an unknown carpenter from Nazareth and a rag-tag bunch of fishermen. Yet the Jesus movement is spreading and it’ll one day encompass all the nations. The last 2500 years have seen Ezekiel’s parable come to pass.

“And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish; I, the Lord, have spoken and have done it.”

God continues to turn the tables on human wisdom and power. Rome was a high tree that God cut down. Whereas, Jesus is a low tree that He exalted. Even today he exalts the humble, and pummels the proud.

A dry tree flourished when Jesus rose from the dead.

Remember when God found newborn Jerusalem in the field, He said “*Live, yes live!*” And that’s what He said to us. The world left us for dead - but God found us, fed us, nurtured us. And now takes us as His bride!

He’s clothed us in robes of His righteousness. And adorned us with blessing. He’s done all this for us...

But have you been faithful? Do you love God supremely? Is yours *a loyal heart* or *a cheating heart*?