

# CHAPTER 16

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem; and very largely, in this chapter, he shows the prophet, and orders him to show the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire; in this chapter he compares it to an adulteress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed, and he must therefore show the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse are set forth,

**I.** The despicable and deplorable beginnings of that church and nation (v. 3-5).

**II.** The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them (v. 6-14).

**III.** Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent whoredom (v. 15-34).

**IV.** A threatening of terrible destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin (v. 35-43).

**V.** An aggravation both of their sin and of their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria (v. 44-59).

**VI.** A promise of mercy in the close, which God would show to a penitent remnant (v. 60-63). And this is designed for admonition to us.

## ~~266~~ EZEKIEL 16:1-5

### THE MEANNESS OF JUDAH'S ORIGIN

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon; but, as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them (Ezekiel 29), so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem,

though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another's help both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed.

**I.** This is his commission (v. 2): “*Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations* (that is, her sins); set them in order before her.” Note,

**1.** Sins are not only *provocations* which God is angry at, but *abominations* which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, ~~2440~~Jeremiah 44:4.

**2.** The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion.

**3.** Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loth *to know her abominations*; so partial are men in their own favour that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it.

**4.** It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them.

**5.** It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, *to know their abominations*, to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements, to tell them plainly of their faults. *Thou art the man.*

**II.** That Jerusalem may be made *to know her abominations*, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite that she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her bad conduct towards him; and, to magnify those favours, she is in these verses made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base-born and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection nor concern for.

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean: “*Thy birth is of the land of Canaan* (v. 3); thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite.” The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but *strangers and sojourners*, had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their *father and mother*, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the court Abraham made to the *children of Seth* (<sup>(-124)</sup>Genesis 23:4, 8), the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, <sup>(-113)</sup>Genesis 13:7; 34:30. If the patriarchs, at their first coming to Canaan, had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, this would have put an honour upon their family and would have looked great in history; but, instead of that, they *went from one nation to another* (<sup>(-145)</sup>Psalms 105:13), as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they *were but few in number*, yea, very few. And yet this was not the worst; their fathers had *served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees* (<sup>(-62)</sup>Joshua 24:2); even in Jacob's family there were *strange gods*, <sup>(-132)</sup>Genesis 35:2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry; and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity die from the womb if the knees prevent it not, <sup>(-111)</sup>Job 3:11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them; a famine drove them thence. Egypt was *the open field* into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families, no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, who had been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, was dead; the king of Egypt, who should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to *destroy this man-child as soon as it was born* (<sup>(-112)</sup>Revelation 12:4), ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work, by policies and stratagems, to preserve and nurse up their infant

states. *Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem* — So vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name. Virgil. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens, Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths had when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, *the navel-string not cut*, the poor babe *not washed*, not clothed, *no swaddled*, because not *pitied*, v. 4, 5. Note, We owe the preservation of our infant lives to the natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses towards new-born children. This infant is said to be *cast out, to the loathing of her person*; it was a sign that she was loathed by those that bore her, and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. *The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians*, as we find <sup>(1482)</sup>Genesis 43:32; 46:34. Some think that this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning: they were not only the weakest and *fewest of all people* (<sup>(1483)</sup>Deuteronomy 7:7), but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people. *God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people*, <sup>(1486)</sup>Deuteronomy 9:6. And Moses tells them there (v. 24), *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you*. They were not *suppled*, nor *washed*, nor *swaddled*; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but *so it seemed good in his sight*. And it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature. *As for our nativity, in the day that we were born* we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God. *Marvel not* then that we are told, *You must be born again*.

## <sup>(2306)</sup>EZEKIEL 16:6-14

### GOD'S KINDNESS TO ISRAEL

In these verses we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

**1.** God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt (v. 6): “*When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood, loathed and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, then I said unto thee, Live. I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death.*” Those shall live to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts towards it were thoughts of good, designing it *life, and that more abundantly*. By converting grace, he says to the soul, *Live*.

**2.** He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pitied them, but *set his love upon them*, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but *I looked upon thee, and, behold, thy time was the time of love*, v. 8. It was *the kindness and love of God our Saviour* that sent Christ to redeem us, that sends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace. That *was a time of love* indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him. *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*, <sup><280></sup>Song of Solomon 8:10.

**3.** He took them under his protection: “*I spread my skirt over thee, to shelter thee from wind and weather, and to cover thy nakedness, that the shame of it might not appear.*” Boaz *spread his skirt over Ruth*, in token of the special favour he designed her, <sup><380></sup>Ruth 3:9. God took them into his care, as an *eagle bears her young ones upon her wings*, <sup><621></sup>Deuteronomy 32:11, 12. When God owned them for his people, and sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expression of the good-will of him *that dwelt in the bush*, then he *spread his skirt over them*.

**4.** He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under (v. 9): “*Then washed I thee with water, to make thee clean, and anointed thee with oil, to make thee sweet and supple thee.*” All the disgrace of their slavery was rolled away when they were brought, *with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God*. When God said, *Israel is my son, my first-born — Let my people go, that they may serve me*, that word, backed as it was with so many works of wonder, *thoroughly washed away their blood*; and when God led them under the convoy of *the pillar of cloud and fire* he *spread his skirt over them*.

**5.** He multiplied them and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned (v. 7) before his *spreading his skirt over them*, because *their numbers increased exceedingly* while they were yet bond-slaves in Egypt. They *multiplied as the bud of the field* in spring time; they *waxed great, exceedingly mighty*, <sup>(**1817**)</sup>Exodus 1:7. 20. Their *breasts were fashioned* when they were formed into distinct tribes and had officers of their own (<sup>(**1859**)</sup>Exodus 5:19); their *hair grew* when they grew numerous, whereas they had been *naked and bare*, very few and therefore contemptible.

**6.** He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last. How she is dignified who at first had scarcely her life *given her for a prey: I swore unto thee and entered into covenant with thee*. This was done at Mount Sinai: “when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified then *thou becamest mine*.” God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his subjects and servants, which intimates their duty — his portion, his treasure, which intimates their privilege; and it is *confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation*.

**7.** He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and she is gratified with abundance of them, v. 10-13. We need not be particular in the application of these. Her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel; they had *embroidered work* to wear, shoes of fine *badgers' skins*, linen girdles, and *silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and ear-rings*, and even *a beautiful crown*, or coronet. Perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, <sup>(**1854**)</sup>Genesis 15:14. *They shall come out with great substance*. Or it may be taken figuratively for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state. In a little time they came to *excellent ornaments*, v. 7. The laws and ordinances which God gave them were to them as *ornaments of grace to the head and chains about the neck*, <sup>(**1800**)</sup>Proverbs 1:9. God's sanctuary, which he set up among them, was *a beautiful crown upon their head*; it was the *beauty of holiness*.

**8.** He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainty: *Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil* — manna, angels' food — *honey out of the*

rock, oil out of the flinty rock. In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, <sup><REF></sup>Deuteronomy 32:13, 14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the spirit. *The hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.*

**9.** He gave them great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable, acceptable to their friends and allies and formidable to their adversaries: *Thou didst prosper into a kingdom* (v. 13), which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, *Their renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty*, v. 14. The nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, <sup><REF></sup>Deuteronomy 4:7, 8. Solomon's wisdom, and Solomon's temple, were very much *the renown* of that nation; and, if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must own that it was the most accomplished beauty of all the nations of the earth. The beauty of it was perfect; you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people but it was to be found in Israel, in David's and Solomon's time, when that kingdom was in its zenith — piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth, and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God. *It was perfect, saith God, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee*, through the beauty of their holiness, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him *for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory*. It was this that put a lustre upon all their other honours and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually. Sanctified souls are truly beautiful; they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and, whatever comeliness they have, it is that which God has put upon them and beautified them with, and he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands.

## <sup><REF></sup>EZEKIEL 16:15-34

### INGRATITUDES OF ISRAEL

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great

favours that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they should have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor, that had been in all respects as a father and a husband to her. Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they were guilty of; it began in the latter end of Solomon's time (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it), and thenceforward continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and, though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high degree impudent and barefaced. They not only worshipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery,

- 1.** Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals which are due to him alone.
  - 2.** Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is.
  - 3.** Because it debauches the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonour the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, <sup>4123</sup>Romans 1:23, etc. It is a besotting bewitching sin; and, when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare.
  - 4.** Because it is a shameful scandalous sin for those that have joined themselves to the Lord to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here,
- I.** What were the causes of this sin. How came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But,



**1.** They grew proud (v. 15): “*Thou trustedst to thy beauty, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown.*” They thought, because they were so complimented and admired by their neighbours, that, further to ingratiate themselves with them and return their compliments, they must join with them in their worship and conform to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry, to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride and particularly pride in their beauty. *Rara est concordia formae atque pudicitiae — Beauty and chastity are seldom associated*

**2.** They forgot their beginning (v. 22) “*Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, how poor, and mean, and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereby.*” Note, It should be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality to consider what we are and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God.

**3.** They were weak in understanding and in resolution (v. 30): *How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things.* Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to manage others when they are far from being able to manage themselves.

## **II.** What were the particulars of it.

**1.** They worshipped all the idols that came in their way, all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours (v. 15): *Thou pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.* They were ready to close with every temptation of this kind, though ever so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it, as a common trumpet that prostitutes herself to all comers and *multiplies her whoredoms*, v. 25. Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of such!

**1** They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high places, with the fine rich clothing that God had given them (v. 16, 18): *Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours, with the coats of divers colours, like*

Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, *and hast played the harlot* (that is, worshipped idols) *thereupon*. Of this he saith, "*The like things shall not come, neither shall it be so; that is, this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these without showing my resentments.*"

**3.** They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them (v. 17): *The jewels of my gold and my silver which I had given thee*. Note, It is God that gives us our gold and silver; the products of trade, of art and industry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in. "It is *my silver and my gold*, though I have *given it to thee*." It is his still, so that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Caesar's. Should we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, and jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that they were God's silver and his gold? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their earrings.

**4.** They served their idols with the good things which God gave them for their own use and to serve him with (v. 18): "*Thou hast set my oil and my incense before the, upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill-deities; my meat, and fine flour, and oil, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and wherewith I fed thee, thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with, hast made an offering of it to them for a sweet savour, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them: and thus it was, saith the Lord God; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. These things thou hast done.* He that knows all things knows it." See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families to honour them with, which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

**5.** They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this (see <sup>2418</sup>Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35): *Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between*

two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou hast *sacrificed them to be devoured*, v. 20. Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it: it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver and their meat: They are *my children* (v. 21), the *sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me*, v. 20. He is the *Father of spirits*, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and therefore the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a high affront to the *God of life*. But the children of Israelites were his by a further right; they were the *children of the covenant*, born in God's house. He had said to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed*; they had the seal of the covenant in their flesh from eight days old; they were to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for buying sacrifices openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices! How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God should be *sacrificed to devils*! Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children; as such, and under that character, we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for *may he not do what he will with his own*? Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made (v. 20), *Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter?* which intimates that there were those who made a small matter of it, and turned it into a jest. Note, There is no sin so heinous, so apparently heinous, which men of profligate consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spiritual whoredom, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

**6.** They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither and join with them in the worship of their idols: "*After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private, for which, woe, woe, unto thee*" (that comes in in a sad parenthesis, denoting those to be in a woeful condition who are going on in sin, and giving them warning in

time, if they would but take it), “thou hast at length arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it; thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou hast come to have a whore's forehead, and canst not blush,” v. 23-35. *Thou hast built there an eminent place, a brothel-house* (so the margin reads it), and such their idol temples were. *Thou hast made for thyself a high place, for one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way;* and again v. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but *make themselves vile*, and even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries: *Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred*, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours; much more was their *beauty abhorred* by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves that bring a reproach on their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of the loathing of others which men have made the matter of their own pride.

### III. What were the aggravations of this sin.

1. They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As,

(1.) The Egyptians. They were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most sottish senseless idolatries; they had of old abused Israel by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings — were always either cruel or false to them; and yet so infatuated were they that *they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours*, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but by entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God.

(2.) The Assyrians. They had also been vexatious to Israel: “*And yet thou hast played the whore with them* (v. 28); though they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols and their superstitious usages, and so *hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea*, hast

borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country, and hast imported them *into the land of Canaan*, enfranchised and established them there." Thus Mr. George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least,

*That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames  
By letting in them both pollute her streams.*

**2.** They had been under the rebukes of Providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them (v. 27): *I have stretched out my hand over thee, to threaten and frighten thee. So God did before he laid his hand upon them to ruin and destroy them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by less judgments. He did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread he diminished their ordinary food, but them short before he cut them off. When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be destroyed he delivered them to the daughters of the Philistines to be ridiculed for their idolatries; for they hated them, and, though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who had grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours, who changed their gods, whereas other nations did not change theirs, <sup><2420></sup>Jeremiah 2:10, 11. For this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them (<sup><4488></sup>2 Chronicles 28:18); but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, <sup><3001></sup>Amos 4:11.*

**3.** They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom: Thou *couldst not be satisfied*, v. 28 and again v. 29. When they had multiplied their idols and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still they were enquiring after new gods and new fashions in worship. Those that in sincerity join themselves to the true God find enough in him for their satisfaction; and, though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God. But those that forsake this living fountain for broken cisterns will find

themselves soon surfeited, but never satisfied; they have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still enquiring after more.

4. They were at great expense with their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries. Harlots generally had their hire; but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, v. 31-34. “In this respect *the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms*: others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee, art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee; others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, the gifts which God had graciously given thee, to thy idols; herein thou art like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain, as harlots do, but entirely for the sin's sake.” Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are often as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and, instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by their sin, are at great expense with it; such are *transgressors without cause* (~~125~~Psalm 25:3), wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? For what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea, though they have the greatest advantages to be better and do better. And the way of sin is down-hill. *Nitimur in vetitum — We incline to what is forbidden.*

## ~~126~~ EZEKIEL 16:35-43

### GRIEVOUS PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime. This notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, v. 35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, *O harlot! hear the word of the Lord*. Our Saviour preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot.

Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous. *How has the faithful city become a harlot!* Rome is so represented in the Revelation, when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here. <sup><611></sup>Revelation 17:1, *Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore.* Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

**I.** The crime is stated and the articles of the charge are summed up (v. 36) and (as is usual) with the attendant aggravations (v. 43); for when God speaks in wrath he will be justified, and clear when he judges, clear when he is judged; and sinners, when they are condemned, shall have their sins so set in order before them that their mouth shall be stopped and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are,

**1.** The violation of the first two commandments of the first table by idolatry, which is here called her *whoredoms with her lovers* (so she called them, <sup><302></sup>Hosea 2:12, because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors), that is, with *all the idols of her abominations*, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy.

**2.** The violation of the first two commandments of the second table by the murder of their own innocent infants: *The blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them.* It is not strange if those that have cast off God and his fear break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection. Their sins are aggravated from the consideration,

**(1.)** Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves: “Hereby *thy filthiness was poured out*; the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou wast thereby exposed to contempt.” God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins.

**(2.)** Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins: “*Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth*, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou wouldst have perished,” v. 43. And,

**(3.)** The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased: *“Thou hast fretted me in all these things, not only angered me, but grieved me.”* It is a strange expression, and, one would think, enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any uneasiness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as *fretting* to him. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*

**II.** The sentence is passed in general: *I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged* (v. 38), and those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death. *“Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice, but in jealousy, not only as a righteous Judge, but as an injured and incensed husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance,”* <sup>3064</sup>Proverbs 6:34, 35. He will *recompense their way upon their head*, v. 43. In all the judgments God executes upon sinners we must see *their own way recompensed upon their head*; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured. It is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

**1.** This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to public shame, v. 37. Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world. Care is here taken to bring spectators together: *“All those whom thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning and prevent their own like ruin; and those also whom thou hast hated, who will insult over thee and triumph in thy fall.”* Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered *around her*, but *gathered against her*; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians, shall now contribute to her ruin. As, *when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*, so when a man's ways displease the Lord he makes even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue shall see them stripped, and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to *see the nakedness of the land* will they come. It is added, to the same purport (v. 41), *I will execute judgments upon thee in*



*the sight of many women; thou shalt be made an example of in terrorem — that others may see and fear and do no more presumptuously.*

**2.** The criminal is *condemned to die*, for her sins are such as death is the wages of (v. 40): *They shall bring up a company* (that is, a company shall be brought up) *against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords;* so great a death, so many deaths in one, is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

**3.** The estate of the criminal is confiscated, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her (v. 39): *They shall throw down thy eminent place,* and (v. 41) *they shall burn thy houses,* as the habitations of bad women are destroyed, in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places, erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours, shall be an offence to them, and even *they shall break them down.* It was long the complaint, even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that *the high places were not taken away;* but now the army of the Chaldeans, when they lay all waste, shall break them down. If iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

**4.** Thus both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and an end put to both: *Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot;* there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall *give no more hire* because they shall have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them they shall not *give hire any more* (v. 41): “Then *thou shalt not commit this lewdness* of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking *above all thy abominations,* for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice,” v. 43. Or it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment; they shall take warning, and shall *do no more presumptuously.* The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever *from playing the harlot;* it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. And then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the *taking away of sin;* then (v. 42) *my jealousy shall depart. I*

*will be quiet, and no more angry.* When we begin to be at war with sin God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs God's jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will *make a full end* and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. *His fury shall rest upon them*, and not remove. Compare this with that doom of unbelievers, ~~485~~John 3:36. *The wrath of God abideth on them.* They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be *no more angry*, for he is *eased of his adversaries* (~~2124~~Isaiah 1:24), is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be *no more angry*, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and mercy were contesting; but now *he is quiet*, as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

## ~~2164~~ EZEKIEL 16:44-59

### THE WICKEDNESS OF JERUSALEM

The prophet here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them, and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good if we are but as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shows Jerusalem,

**I.** That she was as bad as *her mother*, that is, as the accursed devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land before her. Those that use proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*, v. 44. She is *her mother's own child*. The Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was that she *loathed her husband and her children*, she had all the marks of an adulteress; and that is the character of the daughter: she *forsakes the guide of her youth*, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought

Israel into Canaan he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of *the men of that land, who went before them* (for which *it had spued them out*, <sup><CR27></sup>Leviticus 18:27, 28), the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, would be a continual temptation to them; but they learned their way, and trod in their steps, and were as well affected to the *idols of Canaan* as ever they were (<sup><CR38></sup>Psalm 106:38), and thus, in respect of imitation, it might truly be said that *their mother* was a *Hittite* and their *father* an *Amorite* (v. 45), for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

**II.** That she was worse than her sisters Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses too, that *loathed their husbands and their children*, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, *alla-mode — quite in style*, that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and *her sisters* the prophet here enlarges, that he might either shame them into repentance or justify God in their ruin. Observe,

**1.** Who Jerusalem's sisters were, v. 45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the *elder* sister, or rather the *greater*, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel. If Jerusalem look northward, this is partly *on her left hand*. This city of Samaria, and the towns and villages, that were as *daughters* to that *mother-city*, these had been *lately* destroyed for their *spiritual whoredom*. Sodom, and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jerusalem's *right hand*, and was her *less sister*, less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria, and these were of old destroyed for their corporeal whoredom, <sup><CR107></sup>Jude 1:7.

**2.** Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sisters', particularly Sodom's (v. 49): *This was the iniquity of Sodom* (it is implied, and this is *thy* iniquity too), *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*. Their *going after strange flesh*, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known, but those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to these more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins, which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were,

**(1.)** Pride, in which the heart lifts up itself above and against both God and man. Pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the *garden*

of the Lord into a hell upon earth. It was the pride of the Sodomites that they despised *righteous Lot*, and would not bear to be reproved by him; and this ripened them for ruin.

(2.) Gluttony, here called *fulness of bread*. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves with it, ate to excess and drank to excess, and made that the gratification of their lusts which was given them to be the support of their lives.

(3.) Idleness, *abundance of idleness*, a dread of labour and a love of ease. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came easily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, which disposed them to all that abominable filthiness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an inlet to much sin. The men of Sodom, who were idle, were *wicked*, and *sinner before the Lord exceedingly*, <sup>Gen 13:13</sup> Genesis 13:13. The standing waters gather filth and the sitting bird is the fowler's mark. When David *arose from off his bed at evening* he saw Bathsheba. *Quaeritur, Aegisthus quare sit factus adulter? In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat — What made Aegisthus an adulterer? Indolence.*

(4.) Oppression: Neither did she *strengthen the hands of the poor and needy*; probably it is implied that she weakened their hands and *broke* their arms; however, it was bad enough that, when she had so much wealth, and consequently power and interest and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor, in providing for whose wants those that themselves are *full of bread* may employ their time well; they need not be so abundantly idle as too often they are. These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these were Jerusalem's sins. Their pride, the cause of their sins, is mentioned again (v. 50): *They were haughty*, with the horrid effects of their sins, their *abominations* which they *committed before God*. Men arrive gradually at the height of impiety and wickedness. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus — No man reaches the height of vice at once*. But, where pride has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded those of Sodom and Samaria; they were more heinous in the sight of God, either in themselves or by reason of several aggravations: "*Thou hast not only walked after their ways*, and trod in their steps, but hast quite outdone them in wickedness, v. 47. Thou thoughtest it *a very little thing* to do as they did; didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners and silly ones; thou wouldst be

more cunning, more daring, in wickedness, wouldst triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion: `if a man will break, let him break for *something*.' Thus *thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways*." Jerusalem was more polite, and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more absolute and arbitrary, and therefore had the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and shedding malignant influences around her, than Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple, and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that holy city, that was so dignified, so near, so dear to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has *not done as thou hast done*, v. 48. This agrees with what Christ says. <sup><4112></sup>Matthew 11:24, *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee*. The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked; and yet *Samaria has not committed half thy sins* (v. 51), has not worshipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many prophets. It was bad enough that those of Jerusalem were guilty of Sodom's sins, Sodomy itself not excepted, <sup><1142></sup>1 Kings 14:24; <sup><1237></sup>2 Kings 23:7. And though the Dead Sea, the standing monument of Sodom's sin and ruin, bordered upon their country (<sup><6812></sup>Numbers 34:12), and that sulphureous lake was always under their nose (God having *taken away Sodom and her daughters* in such way and manner as he *saw good*, as he says here, v. 50, so as that one thing should effectually make their *overthrow* an *example to those that afterwards should live ungodly*, <sup><6186></sup>2 Peter 2:6), yet they did not take warning, but *multiplied their abominations more than they*; and,

**(1.)** By this they *justified Sodom and Samaria*, v. 51. They pretended, in their haughtiness and superciliousness, to *judge them*, and in the days of old, when they retained their integrity, they did judge them, v. 52. But now they justify them comparatively: *Sodom and Samaria are more righteous than thou*, that is, less wicked. It will look like some extenuation of their sins that, bad as they were, Jerusalem was worse, though it was God's own city. Not that it will serve for a plea to justify Sodom, but it condemns Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samaria will *rise up in judgment*.

**(2.)** For this they ought themselves to be greatly ashamed: "Thou who hast *judged thy sisters*, and cried out shame on them, now *bear thy own shame, for thy sins which thou hast committed*, which, though of the same kind

with theirs, yet, being committed by thee, are more abominable than theirs,” v. 52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin (*Thou shalt bear thy shame*) or as inviting them to repentance: “*Be thou confounded and bear thy shame; take the shame to thyself that is due to thee.*” It may be hoped that sinners will forsake their sins when they begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And therefore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall lie, that they may be *confounded in all that they have done*, because they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, v. 54. Note, There is nothing in sin which we have more reason to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in that for which they must be grieved or they are undone. Another reason why they must now be ashamed is because in the day of their prosperity they had looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours: *Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of thy pride*, v. 56. They thought Sodom not worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, little dreaming that Jerusalem would at length lie under a worse and more scandalous character than Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps come to stand upon a level with those they contemn. Or “Sodom was *not mentioned*, that is, the warning designed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin was not regarded.” If the Jews had but talked more frequently and seriously to one another, and to their children, concerning *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighteousness*, it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their steps; but they kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them *rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah*, <sup>200</sup>Isaiah 1:10. Note, Those are but preparing judgments for themselves that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

**4.** What desolations God had brought and was bringing upon Jerusalem for these wickednesses, wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria.

**(1.)** She has already long ago been disgraced, and has fallen into contempt, among her neighbours (v. 57): *Before her wickedness was discovered*, before she came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, she bore the just punishment of her secret and more concealed lewdness, when she fell under *the reproach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philistines*, who were said to *despise her and be ashamed of her* (v. 27), and under the reproach of *all that were round about her*, which seems to refer to the descent made

upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and soon after another by the Philistines, <sup><485></sup>2 Chronicles 28:5, 18. Note, Those that disgrace themselves by yielding to their lusts will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable that before God brought potent enemies upon them, for *their destruction*, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, *for their reproach*. If less judgments would do the work, God would not send greater. In this *thou hast borne thy lewdness*, v. 58. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion.

(2.) She is now *in captivity*, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lewdness (v. 58), but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking (v. 59): “*I will deal with thee as thou hast done; I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant.*” This seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers at Mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flattered themselves with a conceit that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, notwithstanding their provocations, he would do so still. “No,” says God, “you have *broken covenant with me*, have despised both the promises of the covenant and the obligations of it, and therefore I will *deal with thee as thou hast done.*” Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people.

(3.) The captivity of the wicked Jews, and their ruin, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take v. 53, 55. “*When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate,*” But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remained there, whom God would *deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt*, <sup><289></sup>Jeremiah 24:9, 10. Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is *a comfort* to

those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall, together. The bad ones of both shall perish together; the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do must expect to fare as they fare. *Let my enemy be as the wicked.*

## ☞ EZEKIEL 16:60-63

### MERCY IN RESERVE

Here, in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved, for those who shall come after. As was when God swore in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt that they should not enter Canaan, “Yet” (says God) “your little ones shall;” so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria (v. 53, 55), and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotius and some of the Jewish writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned (☞ Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6), as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are, without doubt, a previous promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that *repentance and that remission of sins* which should then be *preached with success to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* Now observe here,

**I.** Whence this mercy should take rise — from *God himself*, and his *remembering his covenant* with them (v. 60): *Nevertheless*, though they had been so provoking, and God had been provoked to such a degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet “*I will remember my covenant with thee*, that covenant which I made with thee *in the days of thy youth*, and will revive it again. Though thou hast *broken the covenant* (v. 59), I will remember it, and it shall flourish again.” See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant-way, for thus the mercies of it come to be *sure mercies and everlasting* (☞ Isaiah 55:3); and, while this root stands firmly in the



ground, there is *hope of the tree*, though it be *cut down*, that *through the scent of water it will bud again*. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but *ex mero motu* — *from his own mere good pleasure*, he remembers it as he had promised. <sup><RS></sup>Leviticus 26:42, *Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land*. He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, the word *which he commanded* (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to *a thousand generations*.

**II.** How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy (v. 61): *“Thou shalt remember thy ways, thy evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, will set them in order before thee, that thou mayest be ashamed of them.”* Note, God's good work in us commences and keeps pace with his good-will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering our sins against ourselves. And if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they have been and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and, when we are so, we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

**III.** What the mercy is that God has in reserve for them.

**1.** He will take them into covenant with himself (v. 60): *I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant*; and again (v. 62), *I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee*. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all true penitents that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of the covenant, for that is inviolable.

**2.** He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them (v. 61): *“Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are found about thee, thy elder and thy younger, greater than thou art and less, ancient nations and modern, and I will give them unto thee for daughters; they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated, by that gospel, that word of the Lord, which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all,* <sup><RS></sup>Galatians 4:26. They shall be thy daughters, but *not by thy covenant*, not by the covenant of peculiarity,

not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion and subject to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion.” Or *not by thy covenant* may mean, “not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure” (such a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations); “no, they shall be thy daughters *by my covenant*, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as in *indenture tripartite*. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And, when thou *shalt receive them*, thou shalt be *ashamed of thy own evil ways* wherein thou wast conformed to them. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thy apostasy.”

#### IV. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

1. God will hereby be glorified (v. 62): “*Thou shalt know that I am the Lord*. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and thou shalt know it who hast hitherto lived as if thou didst not know or believe it.” It had often been said in wrath, *You shall know that I am the Lord*, shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, *You shall know it to your comfort*; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us that *all shall know him from the least to the greatest*.

2. They shall hereby be more humbled and abased for sin (v. 63): “*That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done* amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it and call thyself a thousand times unwise, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never *open thy mouth any more* in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive *because of thy shame*.” Note, Those that rightly remember their sins will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions, to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God does. But that which is most observable is, that all this shall be *when I am pacified towards thee, saith the Lord God*. Note, It is the gracious ingenuousness of true penitents that the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God’s being reconciled to them the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended God. God is in Jesus Christ *pacified towards us*; he is our

peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself. Now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repenting because *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The prodigal, after he had received the kiss which assured him that his father was *pacified towards him*, was ashamed and confounded, and said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee*. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy the more will our comfort in God be increased.