

Ezekiel 16:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

Analysis

This verse presents Thy birth and nativity in Ezekiel's extended allegory of Jerusalem as God's bride. Jerusalem's shameful origins, illustrating God's grace in choosing, rescuing, and elevating Israel from nothing to covenant partnership. The imagery depicts the foundational gospel pattern—God's initiative in salvation, not human merit or initiative. Israel contributed nothing to her election; God chose, rescued, cleansed, and covenanted with her purely from grace.

The allegory's power lies in contrasting God's gracious actions with Israel's subsequent unfaithfulness (developed later in the chapter). This establishes that Israel's judgment isn't arbitrary but betrayal of extraordinary grace. God lavished love on her, making her betrayal through idolatry (spiritual adultery) particularly heinous. The metaphor of marriage communicates covenant intimacy and the personal nature of sin against God.

From a Reformed perspective, this passage illustrates the doctrines of election and sovereign grace. God chose Israel not because of her attractiveness or merit but purely from divine love (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Similarly, believers' salvation originates entirely in God's gracious choice and initiative (Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:1-5), not human worthiness or decision. This humbles pride and grounds assurance in God's character rather than our performance.

Historical Context

The chapter 16 allegory addresses Jerusalem's history from Canaanite origins (v. 3 —'thy father was an Amorite, thy mother a Hittite') through David's conquest, Solomon's glory, and eventual spiritual prostitution through idolatry and alliances with pagan nations. Jerusalem's shameful origins within this historical retrospective explaining how a nation so blessed fell so far. The imagery would resonate with Ezekiel's audience, conveying both the magnitude of God's grace and the enormity of Jerusalem's ingratitude. Archaeological evidence confirms Jerusalem's Canaanite origins (the Jebusites) before David's conquest, supporting the allegory's historical foundation.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Thy birth and nativity illustrate God's initiative in salvation versus human contribution?
2. What does this allegory teach about the seriousness of spiritual unfaithfulness after experiencing God's grace?
3. In what ways does understanding salvation's origin in divine grace shape Christian humility and assurance?

Interlinear Text

מְכַרְתִּי יְיָ	לִיר וְשָׁלָם	יְהוָה	אֲדֹנָי	אֱמֹר	כֹּה	אֱמֹר
Thy birth	unto Jerusalem	GOD	the Lord	And say	And say	And say
H4351	H3389	H3069	H136	H559	H3541	H559
הָאֱמֹרִי	אָבִי יְיָ	הַכְּנַעֲנִי	מֵאֶרֶץ	וּמִלְּדֹתַי		
was an Amorite	thy father	of Canaan	is of the land	and thy nativity		
H567	H1	H3669	H776	H4138		
חֲתִיתִי	וְאִמִּי					
an Hittite	and thy mother					
H2850	H517					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 16:45 (Parallel theme): Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

Nehemiah 9:7 (References God): Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

Deuteronomy 20:17 (References God): But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

Isaiah 1:10 (References God): Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

John 8:44 (Parallel theme): Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Genesis 15:16 (Parallel theme): But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Luke 3:7 (Parallel theme): Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Ezekiel 21:30 (Parallel theme): Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity.

1 Kings 21:26 (References Lord): And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

1 John 3:10 (References God): In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

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