

Ezekiel 16:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

Analysis

In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire. The indictment continues: Jerusalem built gab (גַּב, "eminent place," a platform or shrine) at **"the head of every way"** (every crossroads) and ramah (רָמָה, "high place," pagan worship site) in **"every street."** This wasn't hidden idolatry but flagrant, public spiritual adultery displayed at every intersection and plaza—shameless, pervasive, ubiquitous.

The final phrase delivers the crushing blow: **"hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire."** Common prostitutes at least receive payment, maintaining some vestige of transaction. Jerusalem was worse—she paid her lovers (foreign nations/idols) for the privilege of being used! The Hebrew qalas (קָלַס, "scornest" or "despise") means to mock or make light of. She didn't even value herself enough to demand compensation. This depicts sin's ultimate degradation: not only abandoning God but despising one's own dignity, throwing oneself at idols that cannot love or satisfy, becoming less than human in pursuit of substitutes for the divine.

Historical Context

Archaeological excavations in Israel have uncovered high places, Asherah poles, and household idols throughout Judean cities, confirming Ezekiel's accusation.

Jeremiah similarly condemned altars "on every high hill and under every green tree" (Jeremiah 2:20, 3:6). The practice was so normalized that even God-fearing King Asa couldn't fully eradicate it (1 Kings 15:14). The public nature of these shrines shows how completely idolatry had infiltrated society—not fringe behavior but mainstream practice. This made the coming judgment inevitable; God would not share His bride with other lovers forever.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What idols do you pursue so publicly and shamelessly that everyone can see your divided loyalty?
2. How does Israel's willingness to pay for what should be received freely from God convict you of working for salvation/blessing rather than receiving grace?

Interlinear Text

בְּבִנוֹתַי יִרְ	גִּבּוֹר	בְּרֹאשׁ	כָּל	דֶּרֶךְ
In that thou buildest	thine eminent place	in the head	H3605	of every way
H1129	H1354	H7218		H1870
וּכְמִיתִי הִ	עָשִׂיתִי	בְּכָל	חֹרֵב	וְלֹא
thine high place	and makest	H3605	in every street	H3808
H7413	H6213		H7339	H1961
כִּי־אֵין־הָ	לְקַלֵּס	אֶתְנֶן:		
and hast not been as an harlot	in that thou scornest	hire		
H2181	H7046	H868		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 52:3 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org