

Ezekiel 16:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

Analysis

This verse presents Not salted nor swaddled in Ezekiel's extended allegory of Jerusalem as God's bride. Abandoned and uncared for, 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. Abandoned and uncared for 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

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Not salted nor swaddled 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

וּמוֹלְדוֹתַי יָךְ	בְּיּוֹם	הוּלַדְתָּ	לֹא	אֶתְךָ	כָּרַת
And as for thy nativity	in the day	thou wast born	H853	H3808	was not cut
H4138	H3117	H3205			H3772
וְשֵׁן רֶחֱ	וּבִמַּיִם	לֹא	רָחַצְתָּ	לְמַשְׁעִי	הֶמֶל חֵת
thy navel	in water	H3808	neither wast thou washed	to supple	at all
H8270	H4325		H7364	H4935	H4414
אֶל לֹא חֵת	הֶמֶל חֵת	חֵתְלָתְּ	לֹא חֵתְלָתְּ		
H3808	at all	at all	H3808	at all	
	H4414	H2853	H2853		

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 2:3 (Parallel theme): Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.