

Ezekiel 16:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

Analysis

Thine elder sister is Samaria—the Northern Kingdom destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC for covenant unfaithfulness. **At thy left hand** (northward from Jerusalem) positions Samaria geographically and theologically. **Thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom** (southward)—the archetypal city of judgment destroyed by fire (Genesis 19).

This geographical-moral mapping creates a shocking tableau: Jerusalem stands between two destroyed cities representing God's judgment on apostasy and moral corruption. The Hebrew kinship terms *achot* (אחות, sister) implies shared character, not just proximity. By calling Sodom her 'younger sister,' the text suggests Jerusalem had even less excuse—Sodom lacked Jerusalem's revelation, temple, prophets, and covenant privileges. This verse sets up the devastating comparison in verses 47-52.

Historical Context

Samaria fell to Assyria in 722 BC for idolatry and covenant unfaithfulness (2 Kings 17). Ezekiel's audience (circa 590 BC) had witnessed this judgment. Sodom's destruction circa 2000 BC (Genesis 19) was legendary. Positioning Jerusalem between these judged cities would shock hearers—the holy city now morally aligned with history's most notorious examples of divine wrath.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does greater spiritual privilege bring greater accountability for faithfulness?
2. What modern 'Samarias' and 'Sodom's' serve as warnings that we ignore at our peril?

Interlinear Text

וְאָחוֹתֶיךָ	הַגְּדוֹלָה	שָׁמְרוֹן	הִיא	וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ:	הַיּוֹשֵׁבִים בָּת
sister	And thine elder	is Samaria	H1931	and her daughters	that dwell
H269	H1419	H8111		H1323	H3427
עַל	שְׁמְאֹלֶיךָ	וְאָחוֹתֶיךָ	הַקָּטָנָה	מִמֶּנִּי	הַיּוֹשֵׁבִים בָּת
H5921	at thy left hand	sister	and thy younger	H4480	that dwell
	H8040	H269	H6996		H3427
מִיְמִינִי	סֹדֶם	וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ:			
at thy right hand	is Sodom	and her daughters			
H3225	H5467	H1323			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 23:4 (Parallel theme): And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.

Ezekiel 16:51 (Parallel theme): Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

Ezekiel 16:61 (Parallel theme): Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

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