

Ezekiel 16:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

Analysis

For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. The Hebrew *bāzâ* (בָּזָא, "despised") means to treat with contempt, regard as worthless. **The oath** (*alâ*, אֶלָּא) refers to the covenant oath binding Israel to Yahweh—both God's oath to Abraham and Israel's oath at Sinai. **Breaking the covenant** (*hafer berît*, הִפָּךְ בְּרִית) means violating, annulling, treating as invalid.

This verse introduces the *lex talionis* (law of retribution): "I will deal with thee as thou hast done." Jerusalem despised covenant fidelity, so God will execute covenant curses (Deuteronomy 28). Yet verse 60 immediately pivots to grace: "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant... and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." **Even human covenant-breaking cannot nullify God's covenant faithfulness.** The tension between verses 59 and 60 encapsulates the gospel: sin deserves judgment (v. 59), but grace provides the new covenant (v. 60), ratified by Christ's blood (Luke 22:20). God's oath-keeping surpasses human oath-breaking.

Historical Context

Israel entered covenant with Yahweh at Sinai (Exodus 19-24), confirmed at Moab (Deuteronomy 29-30), and renewed at Shechem (Joshua 24). Each ceremony involved oath-taking, calling on God as witness. Covenant violations included

idolatry (first commandment), injustice, and syncretism. By Ezekiel's time, Judah had systematically broken every covenant stipulation. The Babylonian exile executed covenant curses (Leviticus 26:27-39, Deuteronomy 28:45-68). Yet even in exile, God promised an everlasting covenant based on His faithfulness, not theirs—the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34, instituted by Christ.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How have you "despised the oath" by treating God's covenant promises lightly while demanding He keep His commitments to you?
2. What does the shift from verse 59 (judgment) to verse 60 (restoration) reveal about God's character and the gospel?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֹה	אָמַר	אֲדֹנָי	יְהוָה	עָשׂוּ יָד	אוֹתָךְ	כָּאֲשֶׁר
H3588	H3541	For thus saith	the Lord	GOD	I will even deal	H854	H834
		H559	H136	H3069	H6213		
עָשׂוּ יָד	אֲשֶׁר	בָּזָה יָד	אֶל הַ	לְהַכִּי	בְרִית:		
I will even deal	H834	which hast despised	the oath	in breaking	the covenant		
H6213		H959	H423	H6565	H1285		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 24:5 (Covenant): The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Ezekiel 17:19 (Covenant): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

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