

THE FOUNDLING AND THE HARLOT BRIDE

By Paul Penno

February 6, 2008

C. H. Spurgeon said of Ezekiel 16: “A minister can scarcely read it in public”! If the sermons preached in our churches were movies, what rating would the distributors give them? In many churches, every sermon would rate a “G” (“General Audiences”). There is nothing in them to offend anyone, young or old, seeker or convert alike. Like the seeker-sensitive church I mentioned earlier, we are eager to present people with “a delightful, thought-provoking hour.”

The presence of Ezekiel 16 in the pages of Scripture urges us, at least in some situations, to pull off the kid gloves and present sin in its full ugliness. Sin is ugly, offensive, and depraved, and people need to hear that side of the Christian message too.

“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.” Eze. 16:3. What’s the Lord saying? You have no pedigree that’s worth a hoot. Your ancestor’s were heathen. I didn’t accept you or call you or love you because you have a thrilling ancestry.

Abraham and Sarah were Chaldeans. Canaan was cursed by Noah. Gen. 9:25. They were so wicked that Abraham caused his servant to swear he would not take a wife unto his son of the daughters of the Canaanites. Gen. 24:3. The Amorites were of Canaan, the son of Ham. Gen. 15:15, 16. They were bitter enemies of the Israelites. The Hittites sprung from Heth the son of Canaan. The Canaanites, Amorites, and Hittites were exceeding wicked; and the Jews at Jerusalem were so degenerate, that they were as if they dwelt amidst Canaanites, and were the offspring of cursed Amorites and Hittites.

This chapter is a continued allegory, setting forth the state of the Jewish church, under the consideration of a woman in her birth, education, marriage, adultery, repudiation, and re-entertainment. "And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born" (vs. 4). The birth time of Israel was from God's calling Abraham to their going out of Egypt.

“Thy navel was not cut.” Eze. 16:4, 5. The navel is the principal thing whereby the children is supported and strengthened in the womb. As a tree by the roots is fastened to the earth, the little shoots draws nourishment from the earth, so is it with a child in the womb; the navel fastens it to the mother, and by the veins and arteries in the

navel, it draws in nourishment and spirits. As a child Israel drew from the nations that were her parents: Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Chaldeans, Egyptians; the nourishment of many wicked nations.

A child whose navel is not cut, must perish. They were in a lost and desperate condition. Abraham was an idolater when the Lord took him. When called took them out of Egypt they were ignorant, perverse, and superstitious people. Ps. 106:7.

“Neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee.” When an infant is born, first the navel is cut, and then they use to wash it with warm water. But they were not washed and stood in their pollutions and corruptions which made them unlovely and unsightly.

“Thou wast not salted at all.” An ancient custom was to mingle salt with the water in which they washed them. They had no fear of God, no true grace, no salt to cure their wounds, to keep them from putrefying, but were weak and feeble.

“Nor swaddled at all.” Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes. Children were swaddled to strengthen their bodies, and to keep their limbs straight. This shows how destitute of all help this people were.

“None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee.” Eze. 16:5. It is something, in misery, to be pitied, but to have none to pity, all to be without compassion, is sad.

“To have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field.” It was a custom among the heathens, if they were poor, and could not bring up their children, or if the children were deformed, to lay them in the fields to die. Especially were the females done this way. It would perish either by hunger, exposure to weather, fowls, beasts or vermin, if it was not taken up.

“To the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.” Eze. 16:5. Man’s condition by nature is very deplorable. David wrote, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Ps. 51:5. Naturally, man is filthy, void of all beauty. He is stiff in wickedness, and has nothing to supple him. Man is naked in his natural state. A newborn is feeble indeed. It cannot do one thing for itself. Such is man in his natural condition. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom. 3:12. He lies senseless in that condition, and exposed to a thousand dangers, he perishes if not taken up.

How did God deal with this Israelite metaphorical infant? “And when I passed by thee.” Eze. 16:6. As if God, like some great man, were upon a journey, and in the way should spy a poor infant thrown out naked under a hedge, ready to perish, and should take pity on it; so

did God towards this Israelite infant. This was no casual, accidental act of God. He knew the condition of this infant. He purposely set out to relieve the misery of this child.

“And saw thee polluted in thine own blood.” Blood is diffused throughout the whole being. Sin is not in some one part, but in every part of the being. Blood defiles. “The land was polluted with blood.” Ps. 106:38.

“I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” Eze. 16:6. God breathes into dust the breath of life. God found Abraham in his blood and bestowed on him a life of faith, for he was the father of the faithful. Abraham believed God. God gave him a life of holiness, for he walked before God, and was upright.

The whole world is dead. John 6:51. Christ said He will give his flesh “for the life of the world.” 2:1 And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).” Eph. 2:1-5.

“I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great.” Eze. 16:7. God had made a promise to Abraham that he would make of him a great nation. Gen. 12:2. His seed should be as the stars of heaven. Gen. 15:5. His posterity increased so abundantly, that they filled the land. When they came into Egypt they were about 75 souls. When they went out of Egypt they were 603,550 men twenty years and older not counting the Levites, women or children.

“And thou art come to excellent ornaments thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.” Eze. 16:7. You grew to maturity.

Here is the third mercy which the Lord bestowed upon this metaphorical infant, grown up to womanhood. The Lord married her. “Now when I passed by thee,” time lapsed. The Lord gave life. The Lord gave ability to grow and to mature. God is resembled to a traveler, going from place to place, referring to their estate in Egypt.

“And looked upon thee.” Not that God was ignorant of them and their condition, but that God intended some special mercy towards

them, to do some remarkable thing for them, and that was the calling and sending of Moses to be a deliverer unto them.

“Behold, thy time was the time of love.” Now He uses the imagery for girls entering maturity, becoming of marriageable age. “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,” unto Pharaoh, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.” Ex. 5:1. It is the time for wooers to be wooed. A time for the wooers and wooed to let out their affections one to another, and to declare their mutual delights in each other. The man gives himself to and for the woman, and the woman herself to and for the man.

“He loved thy fathers, (Dt. 4:37), said Moses. The Lord manifested singular love unto them, in redeeming them from the house of bondage, in taking them, in a peculiar manner, to be his people. He loved them in remembering His promise. Love in causing the midwives to spare their children. Love in sending Moses and Aaron. Love in working such wonders for them, Love in giving them the Egyptians’ jewels and raiment. Love in bringing them out of the house of bondage. Love in leading them through the Red Sea, and drown their enemies in it.

“And I spread my skirt over thee.” This was a marriage rite. When they were to be espoused or married among the Jews, it was a custom to spread their garment over them; just as Boaz did to Ruth. Ruth 3:9. This rite implies protection, defense, safety. The wing of any fowl, spread over its young, is a safety unto it. Isa. 31:5.

The Lord brought them out with a strong hand, and stretched-out arm, his power, mercy, wisdom, goodness. He tells them, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians (I have sent plague after plague upon them, and in the midst of all, you were preserved,) and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” Ex. 19:4. The eagle, when her young ones are in danger, or ready to go from the nest, she takes them upon her wings, and carries them away with strength, speed, safety, in open view: so did the Lord by this people. He carried them from their nest, the house of bondage, being in danger to be devoured by Pharaoh. Upon the wings of His power and goodness and strength, they hasted out of the land. Cp. Dt. 32:11, 12.

“And covered thy nakedness.” The Divine robe of righteousness is that by which God marries us to Himself. When God takes a people to be his, he will protect them in a special manner, and cover their nakedness and shame. He took this Israelitish woman, spread his

skirt over her, and covered her nakedness; He protected her forty years in the wilderness, against enemies and evils that threatened to ruin her. And when God loves a people, and takes them to be his, he covers their sins.

Then He says, “Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee.” Eze. 16:8. Now the oath God swore to Abraham, was by Himself. Gen. 22:16. This covenant which the Lord entered into, was that at mount Sinai. Ex. 19:5, 6, 8.

A new covenant relationship, “saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” Eze. 16:8. In marriage, There is a special union. “They two shall be one flesh.” Two that were mere strangers before, by marriage become one: so here, God passed by this people, cast his eye upon them, the time of love was come, he betroths and marries them to himself, and so makes a near and dear union between himself and them.

So the Lord looked at Israel and he said, You were a useless, unwanted, foundling. Dumb, dirty, disheveled, cast into an open field. I saw worth in you. I gave you power to live. I gave you power to grow. I wooed you. I married you. I entered into a covenant relationship with you and you became mine.

“Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.” Eze. 16:9. “By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land.” Heb. 11:29. Their sin was washed away. As blood diffuses throughout the whole man, defiling and making loathsome; so does sin. The washing of water by the word and the power of the Spirit—the oil of gladness—the gift of the Spirit.

Proceeding in the allegory of this metaphorical woman, the Jewish state, The Lord upon the marriage and enjoyment of her, having washed away her blood and filthy with water, He also anoints her with oil, so she may be the more acceptable and delightful unto him. The external washing was in the Red Sea, so they were all washed. There is another washing which is internal by the blood of Christ, signified by the outward washings. “I will cleanse them from all their iniquity.” Jer. 33:8. That cleansing is washing them away in the blood of Christ, and pardoning them “and I will pardon all their iniquities.”

The following verses hold out more of God’s bounty towards this woman; like a loving husband newly married, He makes great provision for her. “I clothed thee also with broidered work [the robe of righteousness], and shod thee with badgers’ skin [the sandals of

distance and power], and I girded thee about with fine linen [I girded up the loins of your mind.], and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.” Eze. 16:9-12. So the neck that carries the head, the hands that did the work, the forehead that did the thinking, the ears that did the hearing, the crown, God made everything beautiful.

“Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.” Eze. 16:13. Here is the call, the growth, the lives, the flowering of the mission of Israel.

This righteousness by faith was “renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.” Eze. 16:14. God puts His beauty. He invests His loveliness upon His people. Now while Ezekiel is applying this to the nation of Israel it can apply just as well to the people of God today, for if we are Christ’s, then are we Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. And all the promises as well as all the threatenings of God apply to the church. God has found each of us. We have no pedigree. We were heathen, filthy, unwanted, lost. He waited till the time was ripe. Then He entered into a new covenant. He clothed us with His righteousness. Like the prodigal son, He gave us the ring, the check-writer of eternity. He made is beautiful through His beauty which He put upon us.

Verse 15 begins with one of the tragic words of the Bible “but.” The Lord does all this “but” “thou didst trust in thine own beauty.” He has already spent fifteen chapters showing Israel that they were no longer true to Him, that they were characterized by sin and rebellion. Now He continues His analysis of their character by saying “thou trusted in your own beauty, “and playedst the harlot.”

Harlotry in Israel, harlotry in Babylon, harlotry in the sign language of the Scriptures, indicates the unfaithfulness of the Christian who leaving the allegiance to the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, accepts other lovers. It’s equivalent to idolatry. And the Lord speaks of Himself as a jealous God, a jealous husband, who sees the bride, who should have been immaculate and holy and pure and dedicated to the one husband, accept other lovers.

Now what did they do? Thou “pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was” (Eze. 16:15). Rather than letting God, rather than praising God, rather than honoring God, the people of God turned to the ideals of the world.

“And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, and tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devored. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?” Eze. 16:16-21.

All the blessings that God had given to Israel, all the blessings that God gives to His church were taken by the apostates and invested in idols. The end result, the destruction of children. And this is not a small matter.

“And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;) that thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.” Ezek. 16:22-25.

Now how did they commit whoredoms? He lists.

First, “Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable [It could not be satisfied.]; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet

couldst not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith." Eze. 16:26-29.

Again, the historical background stretches the allegory almost to the breaking point. As a description of a woman, it is beyond the reaches even of the fevered imagination of the tabloid press. Yet as a picture of Judah's political strategy, it fits perfectly. Judah had a history of looking for love in all the wrong places, seeking security not in the Lord but in the arms of a foreign power. In the days of Ahaz, it was Assyria (2 Kings 16:7). In the days of Hezekiah, it was Babylon (20:12-19). In the days of Zedekiah, it was Egypt Jer. 2:36; Ezek. 17:15). These alliances were frequently costly to Judah, for accepting a major power as overlord carried with it a substantial price tag. The suzerain invariably expected to receive silver and gold as tribute in exchange for protection (2 Kings 16:8). Even then, only rarely did they deliver the hoped-for help.

But far more expensive in the eyes of the Old Testament prophets was the cost in religious terms. An overlord may or may not have forcibly imposed his state religion on the vassal state, but religious effects on the vassal nation were nonetheless real. Behind every act of international diplomacy stood the gods of the nations as guarantors of compliance. For this reason, such international cooperation inevitably involved a measure of recognition of the existence and power of the gods of the nations, along with an implicit affirmation that trusting in the Lord alone was not effective. The temptation to appeal to the gods that had apparently made the other nation great was powerful.

It was therefore not a coincidence that Ahaz introduced Syrian-style innovations into the Jerusalem temple immediately after meeting with Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, in Damascus (2 Kings 16:10-16). What may have seemed to politically oriented kings merely a good, if expensive, insurance policy, a means of covering all the bases, seemed to the biblical prophets guarantors of compliance. For this reason, such international cooperation inevitably involved a measure of recognition of the existence and power of the gods of the nations, along with an implicit affirmation that trusting in the Lord alone was not effective. The temptation to appeal to the gods that had apparently made the other nation great was powerful.

It was therefore not a coincidence that Ahaz introduced Syrian-style innovations into the Jerusalem temple immediately after meeting with

Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, in Damascus (2 Kings 16:10-16), was the sincerest form of blasphemy.

We read in Revelation 14:8 that Babylon made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. As we are well aware this wine is the unlawful union of church and state. The fornication of Israel was the unlawful affiliation, affinity, in business and in political union with foreign countries. God's people were unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

And today, the members of the church can commit fornication just the same way. In business, in social contracts, in all sorts of arrangements made with those who do not believe, members of God's remnant church can break their loyalty and their pure dedication to the Lord.

Then the Lord continues. You have done more than the harlot does. "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. But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD." Eze. 16:31-35.

Now in this attitude we see a strange perversion in Israel. They go out of their way to form alliances and business and political affiliations with the heathen. They pay for the heathen to join with them. Now the Lord lifts up this picture and addresses this foundling whom he has married and has played false as the harlot. And I have a feeling as the chapter closes that through Israel's apostasy the prophet is given a view of a greater apostasy by the church. And the harlot that here is described is the harlot that is described in Revelation 17—the great Harlot. And the Lord then sends a diatribe against the harlot Israel, and the harlot Babylon.

"Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved,

with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness." Eze. 16:36, 37.

We get a picture of this in Revelation 17. The ten kingdoms that supported the harlot when they see the end results of their deception will turn against her and eat her flesh.

"And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones [just as a harlot is stoned], and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more." Eze. 16:35-41.

Why? "Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth [He reminded them of this in verse 22.], but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations." Eze. 16:44. As I read this I think of the warning of Ellen White. "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us and his teaching in our past history." *Life Sketches*.

"Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter." Eze. 16:44. Now in Rev. 17 we read of the mother and we read of her daughters.

"Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 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. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters." Eze. 16:45-48.

In addition, Jerusalem has a family resemblance to her natural sisters, Samaria and Sodom, who are the primary focus of this section. Samaria, the former capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, is described as her older sister—"older" (16:46) refers to her size rather than age. She stands for the larger, northern kingdom, while Sodom, the "younger" (or "littler") sister, is physically smaller. Samaria lives to the north of Jerusalem with her "daughters," that is, overfed, and untroubled by the cares of life, while neglecting the needs of the poor and needy (16:49). She is the epitome of social sin.

Samaria's history of cultic sin was too well known to require further elaboration by Ezekiel. Ever since Jeroboam introduced his golden calves to the national shrines at Bethel and Dan and allowed a non-Levitical priesthood to preside over them (1 Kings 12:28-33), the northern kingdom had been regarded as theologically suspect. Samaria too had been judged by God for her aberrations and destroyed by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:3-23).

Yet according to Ezekiel neither of these twin icons of sin could match Jerusalem's record. She did more detestable things than either of them, making them seem (comparatively) righteous (16:51). In comparison to the pot, the kettle is barely scorched! The conclusion is inescapable: If God judged Sodom because of her sin and if he judged Samaria because of her sin, how will Jerusalem escape from his wrath (cf. 2 Kings 21:13)?

However, if the similarity between Jerusalem and her sisters serves to justify further God's action in completely destroying her (Ezek. 16:58), that is not the only focus of attention here. Rather, the purpose of this comparison with her sisters in crime is designed to evoke a sense of shame on Jerusalem's part (16:52). Just as in her pride Jerusalem once scorned Sodom for her sin, so now that Jerusalem's sin has been uncovered, the surrounding nations scorn her (16:57). Now, instead of looking down her nose at Sodom and Samaria as beyond redemption, she will herself only be redeemed alongside them (16:53). Paradoxically, it is in that redemption itself that shame will be experienced as the inhabitants of Jerusalem realize how much worse they have been than the bywords of iniquity, Sodom and Samaria.

Now Jesus Christ in His day in talking of the city said that if all the miracles had been done in Nineveh or in Sodom and in Gomorrah as were done in Capernaum or Sidon, those ancient cities would have still survived.

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Eze. 16:49. What a message these three words bring to us today. Pride, fullness of bread, idleness, were the besetting sins of Solomon’s time. They are the besetting sins of our time. Abundance of idleness, what are we going to do with leisure? When we get a three-day work week, a two-day work week, what are we going to do with all that leisure time that we have? Pride, self-sufficiency, fullness of bread, all that we need, and as a result—

“They were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. 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. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.” Eze. 16:50-55.

The Lord says this kind of behavior inevitably brings about punishment that is unchangeable. But those never did. As Jude pointed out, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain are examples of the unpardonable sin.

“Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD. 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.” Eze. 16:57-59.

Now what is the Lord saying? I was married to you. I gave you my covenant, but you have despised my covenant promise. In spite of what you have done, He says—

“Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” Eze. 16:60. Defined in human terms God neither remembers nor forgets. Remembering is an act of recollecting things long forgotten. Forgetfulness is a separation of the understanding from the reality which brought the circumstances about. But neither of these conditions apply to God.

When God remembers He has regard for us. “The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us.” Ps 115:12. “The Lord hath made known His salvation: his righteousness hath He openly showed. He hath remembered His mercy and truth.” Ps. 98:2, 3.

God’s covenant is His everlasting covenant, not their old covenant promise which led them into all this transgression. When this people had so grievously sinned, as to be in a great part ruined, and the rest sent into captivity, to outward view God seemed to have no people; the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that in their seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, seemed to be void, and the covenant made between God and them wholly dissolved; but however things appeared, it was otherwise. God minded his covenant, and would establish it with the remnant of them. His covenant is to be found in Jer. 31; and Heb. 8:10-12. I like these words. I did this, but you did that. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant. For it’s an everlasting covenant. God never changes. His bride, like a prodigal daughter, may go out into a far land, but He, the loving husband, will wait. When He sees her returning from a long way off, He runs. He falls on her neck. He kisses her.

“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 [This is their old covenant promise.]. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.” Eze. 16:61-63.

What a precious appeal the Lord makes here to His people, the parable of the filthy foundling, of the harlot wife, of the apostate, all

indicate not the sin and rebellion of God's people, but the infinite compassion and loving heart of God Himself.