

MAYHEM

Finding God in the Chaos of Life

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 3: Playing the Whore | 3.11.18 | FOLLOW THE STORY ON FB @FACEBOOK.COM/THETORYHOUSTON

The purpose of this series is to learn how to persevere in hard times by growing:

- more mature in faith
- more aware of our spiritual blind-spots
- and deeper in biblical literacy (especially the Old Testament)

To achieve this purpose, we're exploring the book of Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet who lived during the time of the Babylonian Exile and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (587 BC). Ezekiel has been called the Prophet of Doom, and he occasionally referred to himself as "the funeral director," because of his gloomy proclamations. We often think of Old Testament prophets as being fortune-tellers, but keep in mind: the primary function of Hebrew prophets was not making predictions about the future! **They told the Truth about the present.**

Anytime you read the Bible, it's important to understand the *historical context*. What major historical events were taking place as Ezekiel spoke?

Where was Ezekiel living when he spoke these prophecies? How did that culture impact him?

Today we're taking a closer look at the raciest chapter in Ezekiel (ch. 16), in which God accuses the Hebrew people of *prostitution*, *whoredom*, and *adultery*. Through Ezekiel, God claims the people have been idolatrous by worshiping other gods and conforming to secular standards of morality instead of aspiring toward His holiness. Because of the people's *covenant* (or sacred marriage) with God (Genesis 9:8-17, 12:1-3, 31:44), this betrayal feels like a pattern torrid affairs that have all come to light, causing immense pain and shattering trust. God's response to this "serial cheating" is, understandably, *How could you?*

The Homeless Orphan: Ezekiel 16:1-8

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.

"Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, 'Live!' I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew and developed and entered puberty. Your breasts had formed and your hair had grown, yet you were stark naked.

“Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine.

What were the circumstances of the “birth” of the Hebrew people? What was the significance of the phrase “in your blood”?

What did it mean for a man to “spread the corner of [his] garment” over a woman (Ruth 3:9)? What is Ezekiel suggesting that God did for the Hebrew people?

How Could You? Ezekiel 16:15, 25, 32-34

“But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. At every street corner you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, spreading your legs with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband! All prostitutes receive gifts, but you give gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favors. So in your prostitution you are the opposite of others; no one runs after you for your favors. You are the very opposite, for you give payment and none is given to you.”

Can you hear the pain in God’s voice here? Have you ever been *played* or *deceived* by someone you trusted? What was your immediate reaction?

Still in Love: Ezekiel 16:59-60, 62-63

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you...and you will know that I am the Lord. Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation,’ declares the Sovereign Lord.”

What does this re-proposal tell you about the heart of God?

What are some of the ways God has chosen to overlook your past, your flaws, your rebelliousness, stubbornness, etc., even as He continues to love and look after you?

Read Matthew 4:17 (Jesus’ first words as a minister). Also, check out Proverbs 28:13. Why do you think coming to terms with our sin is such a necessary part of our relationship to God?

How have you *conformed* to social norms rather than chasing holiness and intimacy with God? Take a moment today and declare, in your heart and/or by writing it here: *More than anything else, I want to love God.*