

Ezekiel – Study 10

Would Ezekiel have stood a better chance of success in our churches today?

Ezekiel chapter 25

King James Version of the Bible throughout

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From the last study we said we would look at some of the heathen nations that were instrumental in Israel's downfall. Israel was and still are God's chosen people, set apart to show the world that with God as their King they would show the rest of the world what it is like to live a victorious sin free life and be the envy of your enemies. Satan used these heathen nations to tempt Israel away from their trust in their God by way of intermarriage, worshiping idols and sinning against the laws of God.

With all that the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob had done for Israel since coming out of Egypt you would think Israel was firmly set on worshiping that God and not any other. But slowly and surely the god's of the heathen nations were brought back to the tents of Israel and disobedience set in.

Seldom would a born again Christian decide one morning to go directly back into sin and leave their love for Jesus. Satan will use many instances that distract him or her from walking the straight and narrow way. It might start with being shown a girly magazine at the office or a person at work showing too much interest, "come out for a coffee, or what about lunch" etc. That is the way Satan works, it did for Israel and slowly but surely the rot sets in and all of a sudden they find themselves far from God.

God was very displeased with these nations and told Ezekiel to prophecy against them.

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Ezekiel Chapter 25. The Ammonites.

Verse 2

Set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them. 3, and say unto them. Hear the word of the Lord God; because you have said Aha against My Sanctuary when it was profaned and against the Land of Israel when it was desolate and against the land of Judah when they went into captivity 4. Behold therefore I will deliver you to the men of the East for a possession and they shall set their palaces in you and make their dwellings in you, they shall eat your fruit and they shall drink your milk.

5. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks and you shall know that I am the Lord.

The people of Ammon came from the Children of Lot and whose capital was Rabbah which means The Great, but because they had ridiculed the weakness of Israel, God said He would make this great capital a stable for camels! It bordered Israel to one side and mountains and the Jordan desert on the other. Ammon was linked to Babylon in the fall of Jerusalem. If you look at a map of the area of Jordan today it now borders Iran and is under Iran's influence its power and glory has gone. God said He would give this prosperous nation to the men of the East being desert, sheep rearing, and camel producing Arabs according to the prophecy of verse 5.

Now they humiliated Israel in her downfall. Verse 6 tells how they clapped their hands and stamped their feet, meaning they danced for joy at Jerusalem's humiliated position and God was displeased with their perpetual, relentless persecution against Israel.

Psalms 83 and 137 and Amos 1, verse 11 should be read in connection to this chapter.

Along with Ammon two other nations contrived to mock Israel in her troubles, they were Moab and Edom. All three lands were joined together stretching in one line from north to south along the river Jordan.

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Verse 8

Thus says the Lord God; because that Moab and Seir do say, behold the House of Judah is like unto all the heathen, therefore I will open the side of Moab from the cities...which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim.

The Lord noticed the comment from these heathen nations that they considered Israel no better than they were. They knew they were heathen as opposed to Israel, they knew they were not God's chosen people, they knew there was something different about Israel when God was their King but now they were saying "The house of Judah is like unto the heathen" or in other words "they are no better than us"

I am thankful as I listen to some preachers of today confirm that they believe the church is in a very poor condition and I am aware that not every believer is of that view, but we do not give the Spiritual lead we should give in our nations. When laws are passed that support wrong thinking and sinful behaviour and lead to great problems for our hospitals, clinics, doctors and support institutions we have to ask the question where is the Spirit filled Church? The lack of prayerful intervention causes the world to say "you see you are no better than us" thank God for His mercy towards us.

The region of Moab was richer than that of Ammon, it was known as the richest in the area and they were the descendants of Lot who chose the best over Abraham. Moab was called the glory of the country and boasted three main cities; Bethjeshimoth which means the city of desolations, Baalmeon so called from the worship of Baal, and Kiriathaim called the double city. These three cities were the pride of Moab.

God said He would open up the side of Moab which means the desert side to the invasion of the men of the East to enter and take possession because they all laughed at the Jews plight.

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Today God's word still remains true, He has not changed His mind concerning His people. Although Israel rebelled continually against her God He still had mercy towards her, He still loved her with a love that all the heathen gods put together that were now in many of the homes of Israel could not give. His banner over them was and is love, and He says even today He who blesses Israel will be blessed and he who curses Israel will be cursed.

In the UK we have recently seen a documentary on the lead up to the birth of the Jewish Nation in 1948. We were shown film footage of the British depriving the Jews any arms to defend themselves from the Arabs who were waiting fully armed down the road for the British to pull out and go home. As the British flag came down and the Israeli flag was erected and the last army patrol disappeared in a cloud of dust over the hill, the very next morning the armies of the Arabs, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq descended on the Jews with all the fire power they could muster. The Jews had to fight for their lives with only a few rifles and one aeroplane, it was very evident that God was fighting with them, how they survived was undoubtedly a miracle.

It was very sad to note that our own then Secretary of State Mr Bevin flatly refused to let as few as 1500 Jews per month into Britain as they were sailing from Germany to country to country trying to seek refuge with overloaded boats now full of sick people. Bevin would not help in any way at all as the British pulled out of Jerusalem with many soldiers crying at the unfair plight of the Jews. Even some of our UK Members of Parliament likened Bevin to Hitler himself. I for one was ashamed to be British when I saw that documentary and film and cannot wonder at the wicked and fallen state of our nation today in the light of what God said about cursing those who treat Israel badly. Think about it reader we cannot play fast and lose with God's word and certainly not His people.

If any nation today wants to prosper in every way all they have to do is bless Israel. God said so!

Verse 12 Edom

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Thus says the Lord God; because that Edom has dealt against the House of Judah by taking vengeance and has greatly offended and revenged himself upon them.

Although they were two nations of brothers the Holy Spirit uses language that depicts the heathen by calling Edom “that” Edom. Edom descended from Esau the twin brother of Jacob who robbed him of Isaac’s blessing. Edom’s revenge was an unrelenting, deep rooted pride, fuelled by jealousy when Edom saw the younger branch (Israel) rise to pre-eminence and blessing from God which Edom thought should have belonged to him, he seemed to forget he gave that birthright away for a bowl of soup! This story is found in Genesis 25. Now after very many years that family feud was still very much alive and because Israel had rebelled against her God as we have seen in the last 8 studies, she was far from God and His protection and open to the onslaught of Satan and his helpers in the form of Edom Moab and Ammon.

Keep close to The Lord, talk to Him daily, read His Word and don’t let the enemy take control of any part of your life he will ruin it if you do.

A similar story of inherited anger and ill feeling was that of Ishmael the son of Hagar Sarah’s hand maiden from which the nation of Ishmaelite came, this is now the nation of Arabs the half brother of Israel who have quarrelled ever since.

Isn’t it best to follow after righteousness and truth than go our own way which brings bad feeling and heartache amongst our fellow man?

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Verse 15

Thus says the Lord God; because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart to destroy it for the old hatred.

The Philistines and Israel had been enemies for centuries and hatred and jealousy had been a part of both their lives. It is from the name Philistine that the modern name Palestine is derived and God said He would stretch out His hand upon them and cut off the Cherethims and destroy them. The Cherethims excelled in archery and were very valuable in a battle. God was going to destroy their security and their trust in earthly reliance. Palestinians are not descendents of the Philistines they are from Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

It is thought that David chose his bodyguard from among these archers see 2 Sam: 8.18: 15.18.

God says in verse 17:

*I will execute **great vengeance** upon them with **furios rebukes** and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.*

History has shown the outcome of God's "great vengeance" and "furios rebukes" God took away their might. What an awful thing to come under God's furios rebukes, if you do be sure you will not win. Sin will rob us of Spiritual Power and unless we subject ourselves to the authority of God and to His delegated authorities here on earth we cannot expect to be victorious in our personal lives and our ministry for Him will also be diminished.

These four enemies of Israel will know the wrath of God upon their nations and people and would know the power and authority of the God of Israel and that He will not tolerate sin, jealousy, rebellion, wickedness, revenge and anything that separates us from what God has planned for His creation from before the beginning of time.

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Moreover He will not tolerate nations, or individuals for that matter treating His people unjustly. Canaan, now Israel was purchased by David under God's instructions centuries ago and Jerusalem was given by God as HIS dwelling place where HIS Temple would be. Other nations have also claimed that place as their Holy Place and conflict over that mount has become aggressive ever since.

These four nations would get to know that the God of Israel did exist and was all powerful. History has proved to us that He kept His word.

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Chapter 26 v 2. Tyre

*Son of man because that Tyrus has said against Jerusalem AHA she is broken
that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me I shall be replenished
now she is laid waste.*

The king of Tyre rejoiced at the weakness of Jerusalem who once was the centre of trade and commerce. All business was done at the gates of a walled city, all travellers stopped at the gates to trade, catch up with the news, and get provisions for an onward journey. The king's vision was that all that activity at the gates of Jerusalem would be his and he would become even more wealthy when Jerusalem was laid waste.

King Solomon worked very closely with King Hiram of Tyre thought to be a relative of the king of Tyre, in the building of the first great Temple. Tyre is located in Lebanon north of Acre but south of Sidon and Beirut. Lebanon was famed far and wide for its cedar trees; they were very tall trees thick and strong also cypress wood in abundance both used in the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem. Lebanon's cedar trees were so highly prized and sort after throughout the Middle East that today only very small clumps have survived high in the Lebanese mountains.

Tyre was the most important of the ancient Phoenician cities and according to excavations of its ruins it is thought to be founded in 2150 BC. These excavations also show findings of Crusader, Byzantine, Arab, Greco-Roman remains which confirm that Tyre was a very great city frequented by most of the trade travellers of that time.

Tyre was also famed for a sea snail which produced a highly sort after purple die. It was difficult to produce but the rich colour of this die was coveted by Royalty and merchants everywhere. Of course Solomon purchased large amounts of this beautiful purple to use in the Temple. As a result of the king of Tyre laughing at Jerusalem's plight, which in effect was laughing at God at least four generations of people all strangers and enemies trampled all over this once beautiful and powerful city over the next few hundreds of years.

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The commodity that Tyre did not have was wheat and barley and not much agriculture but Israel had this in abundance so if you read 2 Chronicles chapter 2 you will read the letters sent back and forth from king Solomon and king Hiram in the arrangements of provisions of trees, wood, gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, purple, blue, fine linen, crimson, engravers in all kinds of skills, in exchange for wine, oil, wheat, barley, by the bath load.

It would appear that these two were almost bosom pals working together to build a Temple for the God of Israel but with supplies and skilled men from a heathen nation!

The reason I am giving so much information about Tyre is that the Lord uses this splendid beautiful successful city as a symbol of Satan himself, so I want us to know and understand that God cannot abide pride, which Tyre had plenty of, we will see more of that in the next study. Also Tyre and Israel were once friendly and prosperous nations able to work and trade together supplying each others needs. But one became rebellious to their God, the other became puffed up with the pride of their success, one flirting with other nations and worshiped their gods in disobedience to the one true God, the other jealous of Israel's success having the God of Abraham Isaac and Joseph on their side, one gaining support of many nations all around against Israel, the other knowing her refuge is in God and being reminded of this by Ezekiel's prophecy's for many years but completely ignoring him and going her own way and finding herself alone amongst her enemies, the other getting ready to pounce as soon as possible!

Very often it would seem that the world is prosperous and abundant in this world's goods. In spite of recession there is a lot of money being given to those who do not really need it. As I write this we are told some of the UK's footballers getting salaries of over £150,000 per week, yes a week! We have had our Members of our Parliament cheating on their expenses to the tune of millions of pounds, and in spite of the tax payer bailing out our bank's bad practises to the sum of many Billions the Bank Staff are still getting bonuses also running into Billions!

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Ungodly stewardship of finances and distribution of wealth is very prevalent.

The Bible tells us to store up treasure in Heaven where moth and rust will not destroy because that which we cling onto here on earth will become dust and ashes. Our money, cars, houses, jobs will all mean nothing when we meet Jesus and we spend eternity in heaven with Him, or in hell without Him.

The King and people of Tyre felt safe in their fortified city; they laid up treasure on earth but Josephus tells us that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Ammon Moab Edom and Tyre in the 5th year after the fall of Jerusalem no doubt as a part fulfilment of God's prophecy here. But the overthrow of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar was the first link in a long line of evil that fell on Tyre. Verse 11 speaks of "he" and "his" proclaiming Nebuchadnezzar, the "they" of verse 12 include among others, Alexander's soldiers the two invasions were separated by some 150 years.

Old Tyre was on the main land some miles from the sea, and a short space from the main land was an island of rock and dust. Alexander the Great in 332 BC did what no one else had thought of and filled in the sea between the island and the main land. Then took rubble, stones and earth from the Old City of Tyre which he had destroyed on main land, and dumped it in the sea to make a causeway to the island of rock. He did this in about 7 months. On the island he built palaces and houses but also made it an island fortress.

At this point I would like to acknowledge that there are many Archaeologists and secular historians that differ with the dates and individuals of the Bible at this time. Some even doubt that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege at Tyre at all. Some have written articles and books to express their views without once referring to the Bible. Our aim in these studies is to believe the Bible and what God said; notes from other manuscripts are used only to support the Bible.

Verse 3

*Therefore says the Lord Behold I am against you O Tyrus and will cause **many nations** to come up against you, as the sea causes his waves to*

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*come up. And **they** shall destroy the walls of Tyrus and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it says the Lord God and it shall become spoil to the nations.*

This verse is particularly significant in Tyre's history. Ezekiel saw in his vision one nation after another come against Tyre like one giant ocean wave after another crashing onto the beach. The persistent pounding of a wave will wear down a rock and after time make it smooth. God said He would scrape her dust from her and make her like the top of a rock. Even after all the reclaiming of land, building of palaces, houses, roads, shops etc making this island a spectacle of glory and wonder, God acted upon their gloating over Jerusalem's downfall and returned their splendour back to what it was originally flat and bare rock. This will not happen with one wave and so Ezekiel was prophesying that nation after nation would come against Tyre over many years and one nation, under Nebuchadnezzar would be a part of that process. God said that many nations would come against Tyre and as history shows the Persians, Macedonians, Ptolemies, Seleucids and Romans all occupied Tyre in turn and over many centuries.

A visitor to Tyre in the 1800's made this observation: "The Island, as such, is not more than a mile in length. The part which projects south beyond the isthmus is perhaps a quarter of a mile broad and is rocky and uneven. It is now unoccupied except for a few fishermen used to spread and clean their nets" (Thompson)

It is a great shame that man and women today will put too much store in earthly things that are, in the light of eternity wood hay and stubble. Jesus warns us not to rely on material goods, but man somehow wants to gain power, gain wealth, be the manager then the boss, get a bigger car, then a bigger one still, and move to a better house in a better area and so on and so on. The real issue is do we own possessions or do they own us? There are some well grounded testimonies of ministries who have blessed others with cars or valuable watches, blessing those who are in need. We are

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told to hold onto the things of the world lightly and have a heart to bless others where ever we can. Jesus told us about man's greed in Luke 12 18. The man Jesus spoke about was already rich but he planned to pull down his barns to build bigger and produce more. He planned to increase to the point he could say to himself, Soul you have much goods laid up for many years take your ease, eat drink and be merry. God called him a fool and that night he died!

What good were his bigger barns to him now? When you are dead all these things are of no use to you at all!

Not only did Israel live this way but so did Tyre. Yes Tyre was rich in beautiful palaces, houses, great security being on the peninsula built on rock with a powerful reputation. Then along comes God and tells them because they mock Jerusalem, God's Holy city and His chosen people they will be visited by many nations who will destroy all they proudly worshipped and also her daughters, referring to the many neighbouring towns that relied on Tyre for support. Verse 4 says;

I will also scrape the dust from her and make her like the top of a rock.

We are told that Tyre means Rock so what God did over many years was to reduce the Rock City Tyre back to its original state. Even the dust was removed, the man made island was no more. I will include some of the comments from people who have either visited or excavated Tyre:

Katzenstien describes some of the marine archaeological research of the massive harbour installations that are now under water (1997)

Aubert mentions that Tyre lay at the centre of a line of reefs that made up the harbour, which are now under water due in the main to erosion, human intervention and rise in the sea level. (1993)

Gibson and Negev When excavations are undertaken it is as if the Tyre of Ezekiel's day never existed (1971)

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Tyre was finished, the pride of the Phoenician coast line reduced to nothing under the power and authority of Almighty God.

We will finish our study on Tyre next time, perhaps you have noted that God spent 17 verses on the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and Philistines but 76 verse on Tyre.

God bless you.