

Israel's Neighborhood

(22) Ezekiel 25:1–27:36

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Why was Israel so infatuated with the idols of the nations around them?

They wanted to be like the other nations who seemed to be doing just fine not being accountable to the Creator-God. That is why they originally wanted a king...

1 Samuel 8:4-5 – *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”*

For the same reason Christians want to be like unbelievers in the world...

- To be more accepted by others
- To avoid persecution

How did God regard the idol-worshipping nations tempting Israel to rebel against Him?

They too were deserving of judgment

Why would God hold Gentile nations accountable to worship Him since they were not the people to whom He had revealed Himself?

But He did reveal Himself to them... that is why He set Israel apart to be His representatives on earth...

Genesis 12:3 – *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

And everyone has evidence of the Creator in the creation...

Romans 1:20 – *since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*

And everyone also has a basic understanding of God's Law...

Romans 2:14-15 – *for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*

Ezek 25:1-7 – Proclamation Against Ammon

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them. ³ Say to the Ammonites, ‘Hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God: “Because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity, ⁴ indeed, therefore, I will deliver you as a possession to the men of the East, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. ⁵ And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels and Ammon a resting place for flocks. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” ⁶ For thus says the Lord God: “Because you clapped your hands, stamped your feet, and rejoiced in heart with all your disdain for the land of Israel, ⁷ indeed, therefore, I will stretch out My hand against you, and give you as plunder to the nations; I will cut you off from the peoples, and I will cause you to perish from the countries; I will destroy you, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

What people did God judge here?

Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites: Though God had a first and proper focus on the sins of His people, He had not forgotten and would not neglect the judgment of the pagan nations surrounding Judah and Jerusalem.

- The **Ammonites** on the east side of the Jordan River, north of the Moabites. Their lands are included in what is today Jordan, and the capital of Jordan is named *Ammon* because of this connection.
- The Ammonites were descendants of Lot who had drunken relations with his younger daughter after the destruction of Sodom.

Why did God judge these people?

Because you said, “Aha!” against My sanctuary when it was profaned: The Ammonites felt no pity for the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

- This may be understandable in terms of political or national rivalry, but they should have mourned the desecration of the **sanctuary** of the true God, the creator of heaven and earth.

And against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when it went into captivity: The sins of the Ammonites against the people of Israel went back a long time. They did not sorrow and instead rejoiced when Israel was conquered more than 100 years before, and did the same when Judah later **went into captivity**.

What would God do in Judging the Ammonites?

Therefore, I will deliver you as a possession to the men of the East: Babylon would come to take the riches of their land and they would occupy their cities of **Rabbah** and **Ammon**.

I will cause you to perish from the countries: As a nation, the Ammonites would pass into history, even though individual Ammonites would have a future through their descendants.

- Jeremiah 49:3 promised some kind of eventual restoration for the Ammonites.

What does God think of those who rejoice over the misfortune of others?

Whatever the motive for gloating, we must do our best to avoid it...

Proverbs 24: 17 – *Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice.*

It also exposes the damage caused by envy: "*A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*" (Proverbs 14:30). True love, "*does not delight in evil.*" (1 Corinthians 13:5-6).

Why shouldn't we be thrilled when an enemy gets what they deserve?

Perhaps the person easiest to gloat over is an enemy. When those who hurt us suffer in some way, it is tempting to enjoy their pain.

- Jesus' command to love your enemy is not easy to obey. Yet we can find strength to obey when we recall that God loved us when we were his enemies.
Romans 5: 8, 10 – *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.*

Ezek 25:8-11 – Proclamation Against Moab

Summary:

By ancestry, the people of Moab and Seir were cousins to Israel. The ancestor of **Moab** came from the incestuous pairing of Lot and his older daughter (Genesis

19:37). **Seir** was a notable city of the Edomites, who were also cousins to Israel, being the descendants of Jacob's twin brother Esau.

Look! The house of Judah is like all the nations: This was the mocking claim of the people of Moab and Seir. Sadly, the people of **Judah** gave them reason to say this by acting **like all the nations**.

- Still, their *joy* in the decline and fall of God's people made them guilty.

To the men of the East I will give it as a possession: The fate of Moab and Seir would be the same as that of the Ammonites. They would be conquered and occupied by **the men of the East**.

Ezek 25:12-14 – Proclamation Against Edom

Summary:

When Nebuchadnezzar came against Judah, the Edomites not only approved, they helped, and did so with **vengeance**.

- Mentions of this are found in the short book of Obadiah, in Psalm 137:7, and Lamentations 4:21.

God brought judgment to Judah first, but would **also** bring it to Edom and their cities (**Teman** and **Dedan**). The judgment would be great, affecting both **man and beast**.

Ezek 25:15-17 – Proclamation Against Philistia

Summary:

The Philistines were ancient enemies of Israel, populating many of the seacoast cities in the land of Canaan. There was **old hatred** between them and Israel, and when the Babylonians invaded Judah, they added as much misery on them as they could.

God promised to bring His judgment against them, and as with the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites, God would reveal Himself to these pagan, disobedient nations through His judgment.

- God's purpose was always greater than just judgment or vengeance; there was and always is a strong purpose of His self-revelation.

Ezek 26:1-6 – Proclamation Against Tyre

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’ ³ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. ⁴ And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. ⁵ It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,’ says the Lord God; ‘it shall become plunder for the nations. ⁶ Also her daughter villages which are in the fields shall be slain by the sword. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.’

It came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month: This time marker indicates that Ezekiel received the prophecy about **Tyre** a little more than 14 months after the siege of Jerusalem began.

What do we know about Tyre?

This was the great and ancient city of the Phoenicians on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel (in modern-day Lebanon). **Tyre** and her sister city Sidon (about 20 miles or 32 kilometers north of Tyre) were important seaports for the whole region.

Why did God pronounce judgment on Tyre?

She is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste: Tyre was happy at the fall of Jerusalem because it was good for her trading business. In some way the kingdom of Judah was a competitor or hindrance to the economy of Tyre.

- Blind with greed, Tyre had no spiritual sense or values, only material and economic values. If destroying God’s city, temple, and people were good for business, then it made Tyre happy.

Why do people think it benefits them to tear others down?

It makes them feel better about themselves when they highlight to faults of others.

What does God think of talking bad about others?

He does not like it...

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up*

Gossip may make you feel like one of the in-crowd but it harms relationships...

Ephesians 4:29 – *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

Followers of Christ should be known as people who speak encouraging words, not those who tear others down...

Romans 14:19 – *So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*

How should we regard competition... is it helpful or something to be eliminated?

Competition is good... it improves the products and services of all parties...

Philippians 2:3 – *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

Our attitude should not be to destroy the competition but to differentiate enough from them so that all parties benefit; that is a Win-Win perspective and not a zero-sum win-lose perspective that those out to destroy they competition have

Proverbs 27:17 – *As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

What would God do about Tyre?

Will cause many nations to come against you as the sea causes its waves to come up: Tyre was famous for its remarkably secure defenses, especially because when under attack they could retreat to a seemingly unconquerable portion of the city that was an island.

- Nevertheless, God promised that one day **many nations** would come against them as unstoppable as the **waves** of the sea.
- God was faithful to bring **many nations** against Tyre in successive waves of conquest and destruction:
- Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for 13 years and eventually conquered them (about 586-573 bc).
- The Persians conquered and brought Tyre to submission around 525 bc.
- Alexander the Great destroyed the city and took the island in just the manner described in 332 bc
- Even Rome conquered and subjugated Tyre.

They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers: Despite her strongly defended position, God promised that Tyre would indeed be destroyed. Through history **many nations** would come and continually crash against her like the **waves** of the sea. The destruction would be so complete that the city would be bare **like the top of a rock**, and a **place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea**.

Also her daughter villages which are in the fields: The many villages and small cities allied with Tyre would also be destroyed. Her colony cities scattered around the broader world would be crippled. Judgment would be complete.

Why did Jesus mention Tyre and Sidon?

Jesus mentions Tyre and Sidon in Luke 10:13–14 (see also Matthew 11:20–24), comparing them to several cities in which He had performed miracles...

Matthew 11:15 – *Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.*

These cities of Israel had been blessed with Jesus' presence, preaching, and power, yet they had not repented. Jesus pronounces woes on them, stating that Tyre and Sidon, given the same opportunity, would have turned from their wickedness and been saved.

What is the principle here that applies to us in the church today?

Jesus, in essence, shamed Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—they, who were supposed to be God's representatives on earth, refused to listen; yet pagan cities would have quickly repented. Jesus' comments demonstrate the importance of responsibility and stewardship...

Luke 12:48 – *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked*

Ezek 26:7-11 – The destruction from Babylon

Summary:

God promised that the same king who destroyed Jerusalem would also attack and subdue Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar would bring much death and destruction, complete with **battering rams** and **axes** to break down towers.

- The army of Nebuchadnezzar would be so massive that their horses would kick up a cloud of **dust** big enough to cover the city.
- The whole city would **shake** at the **noise of the horsemen, the wagons, and the chariots** of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against the mainland portion of Tyre for 13 years and conquered that part of the city, subjugating all of Tyre under his rule.

Ezek 26:12-14 – waves of invaders

Summary:

There is a subtle but significant change here... in the prior the destruction is described as the effect of a *he* – that is, Nebuchadnezzar. Starting here, the destruction comes at the hands of **they** – that is, the succeeding waves of many nations of invaders and conquerors mentioned in Ezek 26:3-6.

- In the centuries after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Tyre, many other nations came against her like the waves of the sea prophesied in Ezekiel 26:3-6.
- When Alexander the Great came against Tyre, most of the people retreated to the island portion of the city which even Nebuchadnezzar could not conquer.
- Alexander's armies took the rubble of the mainland city and built a causeway out to the island part of the city to conquer it – *just as Ezekiel prophesied:*
Ezekiel 26:14 – *I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets*

Ezek 26:15-21 – The nations lament over Tyre

Summary:

The fall of the great city of Tyre would be a horror and a warning to the other cities on the Mediterranean coast. The **princes** of those other cities on the Mediterranean coast would be in great fear that the same destruction would come to them.

Ezek 26:19-21 – Tyre brought down to the pit

Summary: God promised more than just physical destruction; to bring them down to **the Pit** of God's eternal judgment:

I will make you dwell in the lowest part of the earth: This wasn't speaking of geography, this speaks of the realm of the dead, where the lost are judged.

- The judgment God would bring upon Tyre would bring fear and **terror** into the heart and mind of all who heard it.
- When Tyre had served this final purpose in God's plan, then they would **be no more**. Their destruction would be so complete that archaeologists would do their work with difficulty: **though you are sought for, you will never be found again.**

Ezek 27:1-11 – The glorious ship of Tyre

Summary:

God comments on the prosperity and pride of the city of Tyre on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. They saw themselves as a city without limits and full of beauty.

Tyre was pictured as a mighty, beautiful, well-run ship with the best crew imaginable. The **wise men** and **elders** **watched** over the ship, and they had the best soldiers on board (**those from Persia, Lydia, and Libya were in your army**).

- The description of such a magnificent ship made its shipwreck described here all the more of a disaster.

Ezek 27:12-24 – Tyre's trade with many nations

Summary:

The distant city of **Tarshish** (likely in southern Spain and was Jonah's intended destination, Jonah 1:3) was a trading party for Tyre.

- Tyre sold them **luxury goods** and bought **silver, iron, tin, and lead** from them.

The list of trading partners for Tyre was long – at least 20 mentioned in these verses.

- Though small in territory it was mighty in commerce and in many ways the trade of the world came through Tyre.

Among the long list of goods bought and sold was this tragic entry – human slaves.

- Though a kind of slavery called bond-slaves in ancient Israel, it had nothing to do with the practices of man-stealing and human trading that marked the institution of slavery in many other places.
- Treating human beings like property and mere tools for economic profit was contrary to God's law and the dignity of all humanity created in His image.

How do we know that God condemns slavery?

God's opposition to the kind of slavery that was practiced even in the USA up until the Civil War is codified in His Law...

Exodus 21:16 – *Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.*

Lest anyone dismiss this as O.T. Law that only applied to Israel, it is also repeated in the N.T.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 – *the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine*

Ezek 27:25-36 – The sinking of the ship of Tyre

²⁵ *"The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise. You were filled and very glorious in the midst of the seas. ²⁶ Your oarsmen brought you into many waters, but the east wind broke you in the midst of the seas.*

²⁷ *"Your riches, wares, and merchandise, Your mariners and pilots, Your caulkers and merchandisers, All your men of war who are in you, And the entire company which is in your midst, Will fall into the midst of the seas on the day of your ruin.*

²⁸ *The common-land will shake at the sound of the cry of your pilots. ²⁹ "All who handle the oar, The mariners, All the pilots of the sea Will come down from their ships and stand on the shore. ³⁰ They will make their voice heard because of you; They will cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; They will roll about in ashes; ³¹ They will shave themselves completely bald because of you, Gird themselves with sackcloth, And weep for you With bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.*

³² *In their wailing for you They will take up a lamentation, And lament for you: 'What city is like Tyre, Destroyed in the midst of the sea?*

³³ *'When your wares went out by sea, You satisfied many people; You enriched the kings of the earth With your many luxury goods and your merchandise.*

³⁴ *But you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters; Your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you; Their kings will be greatly afraid, And their countenance will be troubled. ³⁶ The merchants among the peoples will hiss at you; You will become a horror, and be no more forever.*

What kind of ship was the ship of Tyre?

You were filled and very glorious in the midst of the seas: The scene of a full, **glorious** ship in the **midst of the seas** was an appropriate picture of the city-kingdom of Tyre. They were happy and successful, sailed by their **oarsmen** into **many waters** (the cities and kingdoms mentioned earlier in Ezekiel 27:12-24).

her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

What broke the ship of Tyre?

But the east wind broke you in the midst of the seas: Even the best and strongest of ships is vulnerable to the power of the **wind** and the **seas**. Everything was fine for Tyre *until it wasn't*. All her material prosperity could not help her when **the east wind broke**.

- All human effort is eclipsed by a single act of God.

The entire company which is in your midst, will fall into the midst of the seas: When Tyre eventually sank, everyone and everything would go down with the ship.

- The day of ruin for Tyre would ruin all those who proudly boasted of her glory, wealth, and strength.

What grand human effort underway today will fail by an act of God?

The collective human effort to build a global empire as the solution to global warming, the global pandemic, economic imbalances, wars, and other problems too big for any one nation to resolve.

Who will mourn the destruction of Tyre?

All the pilots of the sea will come down from their ships: The sailing men of the world would **stand on the shore** and loudly mourn the destruction of Tyre.

- They would display all the traditional signs of mourning (**dust, ashes, going bald, and sackcloth**).

You are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters: In the midst of her prosperity and commercial success, the ship of Tyre would be **broken** and sink, losing all **merchandise and the entire company**.

All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you: The world would be **astonished, afraid**, and horrified at the judgment God brought upon Tyre.

What is the difference in the world's response over the judgment of Judah versus Tyre?

The world celebrated Judah, they mourned Tyre...

- God's people are hated because they did not want to be accountable to their Creator.
- Tyre was mourned because it represented the worldly success to which they aspired.

What does this lamenting over Tyre foreshadow?

The lamenting of the world over the demise of Mystery Babylon...

Revelation 18:17-19 – *Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of*

Is Mystery Babylon an actual city?

It is probably the capital city of the Antichrist. The description of Mystery Babylon in Revelation 17 & 18 makes it clear that Mystery Babylon is a symbolic term representing the religious-economic-political system of the Antichrist.

What city is represented by Mystery Babylon?

This is sort of just speculation this side of the Antichrist coming to power but it can be educated speculation...

- Some take it literal and say the ancient city of Babylon in Iraq will be rebuilt... but that would be a herculean effort.
- Some say Rome because of the idea that the Antichrist will come from the revived Roman Empire... but Italy is hardly a hub of world trade
- Another good possibility is NYC... home of the United Nations and center for worldwide finance. The USA also fits the description for the "daughter of Babylon" in Jeremiah 50, 51.

What applications do you see from our discussion today?

- God despises idol worship whether it be by Israel or Gentiles
- God does not like rejoicing over the misfortune of others... don't do it!
- God does not like our tearing others down... don't do it!
- Competition is good... embrace it!
- God condemns slavery
- Human efforts where God is ignored will fail
- It is not wise to root against Israel