

Review

Over the last 15 studies, we have examined the first 24 chapters of the book of Ezekiel. In those chapters, God was warning the Jews in captivity that the rest of their brethren who remained in the land of Judah were going to face judgment if they did not repent.

As you know, they did not repent, and chapter 24 showed us that King Nebuchadnezzar surrounded Jerusalem and put it to siege. This would be the third and final attack on Jerusalem by Babylon. The judgment would be total and complete.

Now, Ezekiel's prophetic focus takes a turn. The rest of the book will focus on two basic areas, very different from what we've seen. They will be:

- 1) The judgment of God which will come upon the nations that were all around Israel, and
- 2) Israel's future blessings.

25:1-7 Prophecy Against The Ammonites

The first of the seven nations to be spoken against is Ammon. The Ammonites were Israel's neighbor to the northeast. They were distant relatives of Israel, dating back to the days of Lot, who was the son of Abraham's brother Haw-RAWN. This made him Abraham's nephew, the cousin of Isaac, and the second cousin of Israel.

You probably remember the story, though you probably would also like to forget it. After the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah, Lot and his two daughters took refuge in a cave. The women decided that he was the only one who was left to father children and said,

Gen. 19:32 "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

The end result of that terrible thought was a deviant act:

Gen. 19:36-38 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And as for the younger, she also bore a son, and

called his name Ben-am-MEE; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

What is interesting to me is that the prophetic condemnation upon the Ammonites has nothing to do with their disturbing beginning. As a matter of fact, God was merciful to them. He told the Israelites when they were on their way towards the Promised Land...

Deut. 2:19 'When you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor provoke them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.'

However, they were forbidden from entering the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). This was...

Deut. 23:4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Indifference towards Israel, and active hostility. Either one of those practices will bring about a curse. Remember God's promise to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob:

Gen. 12:3 ...I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse...

But now in Ezekiel's day, they have really brought the condemnation of God down upon themselves as a nation. When they heard Jerusalem was attacked by Babylon, they danced in the streets.

Do you remember how offensive it was to us as Americans when we saw a similar sight? On September 11th, 2001, Palestinian television played the footage of the planes slamming into the World Trade Center. In response, Palestinians looked into the CNN news camera and cheered, jumping up and down, dancing in the streets, shouting for joy, and firing guns in the air. Similar scenes were repeated throughout the Arab world, in places like Beirut, Bagdad, and Indonesia.

As angry as that made me, I can only imagine how God felt when the same behavior was demonstrated on the day His chosen people were slaughtered and Jerusalem was laid low.

God vows prophetically that they will be given to the sons of the east. Rab-BAW, their capitol city, would become pasture land. Sure enough, it was just five years later that the Ammonites were attacked by the Babylonians.

25:8-11 Prophecy Against The Moabites

Looking a little further south, God focuses on the Moabites, who - on the map - were beneath the Ammonites, to the east of Israel.

The Moabites came from that same terrible union between Lot and his daughters. But they became the enemies of Israel when they partnered with the Midianites, trying to hire the prophet Balaam to curse them (Num. 22). When he was unable to pronounce a curse, they listened to his plan for causing Israel to stumble. They would tempt Israel's men into idolatry and immorality with their women.

In Judges 3, the Moabites (under the rule of King Eg-LAWN), oppressed the Israelites for 18 years.

Even into Saul's reign, Moab had been an enemy of Israel (1Sam. 14:47).

But now, the Moabites have incurred the wrath of God with intensity. He says of the Moabites (and Mount Seir, which is in Moab), that their judgment will ultimately be because they said of Judah, "they are like all the nations."

There are at least two ways that we could read that statement. Certainly, it could mean that they viewed Judah like all the other nations, in that they would fall at the hands of the Babylonians. The Moabites certainly partnered together with Babylon in attacking Judah (2Kings 24:2).

But I think it is more of a general statement. I think the Moabites' attitude was, "Judah is just like any other nation. Their God isn't above anyone else's gods. They don't deserve special recognition or treatment, and they certainly shouldn't expect our respect."

But God has singled out the Jews as being His chosen people. Our blessing or cursing depends on how we view and treat the Israelites. Because Moab didn't view Judah as anything special, God says, "I am going to deprive the flank of Moab." This means that He is going to open their

side, make them vulnerable to attack. The Moabite cities of Bayth Hah-yesh-ee-MOTH, Bah-al Meh-ONE, **and** Keer-yaw-THAH-yim will fall to Babylon, just like the Ammonites.

25:12-14 Prophecy Against The Edomites

God's prophecy of judgment is moving in succession southward, having started with the Ammonites in the northeast, moving to the Moabites in the east, and now moving downward to the Edomites in the southeast.

The Edomites were about the closest relatives that the Jews had. Just as the people of Israel had come from Jacob, the Edomites came from Jacob's brother Esau. Esau was nicknamed Edom, and his descendants were the Edomites.

Esau's children came from his two wives, both of whom were Hittites (Gen 26:34-35), the people groups that descended from Ishmael. The Edomites proved to be a real thorn in Israel's side. For example, we read in Numbers 20...

Num. 20:14-21 From Kadesh Moses then sent messengers to the king of Edom: "Thus your brother Israel has said, 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us; that our fathers went down to Egypt, and we stayed in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians treated us and our fathers badly. But when we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out from Egypt; now behold, we are at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or through vineyard; we will not even drink water from a well. We will go along the king's highway, not turning to the right or left, until we pass through your territory.'" Edom, however, said to him, "You shall not pass through us, or I will come out with the sword against you." Again, the sons of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if I and my livestock do drink any of your water, then I will pay its price.

Let me only pass through on my feet, nothing else.” But he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against him with a heavy force and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

And so when Moses and all the Israelites arrived at the border of Edom, they expected that this nation who were blood relations would allow them to pass through. To clarify, Moses sent message saying, "We're not going to trample your fields, eat your food, or drink from your wells. We'll just take the direct road straight through."

But the king of Edom said, "If you try and pass through, I'll fight against your people with my army." And, after a second appeal, he did bring out his army. But this was not the last of their offenses.

In the days of King David, the Edomites were conquered and made servants of Israel. They had a deputy appointed to rule over them, but no king (1Kings 22:47). But during the reign of King Jehoshaphat, they rebelled and raised up a king (2Kings 8:20).

To make matters worse, the Edomites were buying Israeli slaves from both Tyre and the Philistines (Amos 1). And when Babylon put Jerusalem to siege, the Edomites attacked Judah with a vengeance.

As a result, God promises to take vengeance upon the Edomites, from Tay-MAWN to Ded-AWN. But notice: God's vengeance on Edom will be by the hand of Israel. This prophecy was fulfilled during the days of the Maccabees, when Judas Maccabbeus...

1Mac. 5:65(NRSV) ...and his brothers went out and fought the descendants of Esau in the land to the south. He struck Hebron and its villages and tore down its strongholds and burned its towers on all sides.

25:15-17 Prophecy Against The Philistines

The fourth of the seven nations to be spoken against is on the other side of Israel, to the west. Today, this area is called the "Gaza Strip." There, the Philistines dwelt. The Philistines were direct descendants of Noah's son Ham (Gen. 10:6, 10:13-14).

It is not difficult to recall many of the times the Philistines made themselves the enemies of Israel. Certainly, Joshua, Samson, Saul, and David all faced the Philistines in battle over the years.

Like the Edomites, the Philistines had also attacked the Jews with a vengeance when they were suffering at the hands of Babylon. For this, they will be destroyed.

All four of these nations had a common denominator - they were Israel's neighbors who cursed the Jews instead of blessing them. And as a result, they will suffer God's vengeance. How vitally important it is that we as a nation continue to stand with Israel in blessing.