

Ezekiel 25 • They Will Know God's Vengeance

Introduction

The first 24 chapters of Ezekiel are directed to the Jews during a kind of final judgment leading to the whole of Israel being taken into captivity, the conquest of the land, and the destruction of both the Temple and Jerusalem. For the next 8 chapters beginning in chapter 25 there is a kind of "silence" wherein God does not talk to Israel directly but instead pronounces judgment on the rest of the world. As Peter says,

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

1 Peter 4:17-18

In this chapter God pronounced judgment against the first four of seven nations covered in chapters 25-32. An important difference to keep in mind is that while Israel's ruin was but temporary, these nations' was to be total, complete, and permanent.

*"O Jacob My servant, do not fear," declares the LORD,
"For I am with you.
For I will make a full end of all the nations
Where I have driven you,
Yet I will not make a full end of you;
But I will correct you properly
And by no means leave you unpunished."
Jeremiah 46:28*

¹And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, set your face toward the sons of Ammon and prophesy against them, ³and say to the sons of Ammon, '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 made desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile, ⁴therefore, behold, I am going to give you to the sons of the east for a possession, and they will set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk. ⁵I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and the sons of Ammon a resting place for flocks. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."⁶For thus says the Lord GOD, "Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel, ⁷therefore, behold, I have stretched out My hand against you and I will give you for spoil to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and make you perish from the lands; I will destroy you. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."

[Read v.1-7]

Q: Who exactly is Ammon and the Ammonites?

A: They are descended from Lot's son Ben-Ammi. (Gen. 19:30-38) Their land was located to the north and east of Moab on the other side of the Jordan/Dead Sea and its capital (mentioned in v.5) was Rabbah. (The name of the modern-day capital of Jordan "Amman" is a continuing use of the ancient name.) In other words, these were remote relatives of the Israelites.

The Mosaic Law specifically prohibited Israel from associating with Ammonites (Deut. 23:3) and tensions grew over the centuries between them. Time and again they would align themselves with enemies of Israel if they saw an opportunity to take Israel's possessions for themselves. Archeological evidence suggests that the Ammonites existence came to an end in approximately 600 BC. In Psalm 83 they are specifically mentioned as one of the nations who desire Israel's annihilation:

*They have said, "Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation,
That the name of Israel be remembered no more."
Psalm 83:4*

Q: What does God highlight about their particular crimes?

A: They don't just rejoice over the fall of the nation or its people, but they take exceptional delight in the destruction of God's Temple. Notice how they first rejoiced in Israel's destruction at the hand of Assyria ("*against the land of Israel when it was made desolate*") and then again when Judah was overtaken by Babylon ("*and against the house of Judah when they went into exile*"). This speaks of a very long and continuing hatred

culminating at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Q: What is ironic about the nature of their punishment?

A: Because they took such joy in what happened to Israel, basically the same things will happen to them: they will be conquered by the same enemy and both their land and capital will be completely destroyed and forever uninhabited. Notice how in v.6 it is said, “*you have clapped your hands*” and in v.7 God’s response is, “*I have stretched out My hand against you*”.

Q: Did these events ever come about?

A: Historically, as recorded by Josephus, these events took place approximately 5 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is important to note that God still gave them time to repent between His pronouncement through His prophets and actually carrying them out.

Q: What is the problem for people like the Ammonites where v.7 is concerned?

A: They had every opportunity to “*know that I am LORD*” in a meaningful and positive way, but because of their continued and willful disobedience only came to know this for certain at the moment of their destruction when it is too late.

Point: *These were people to whom God gave their own land and their own opportunities to reconcile with Him. Instead they schemed at every opportunity to take away what was rightfully given to their neighboring cousins Israel. In the end they became so corrupted in following false gods that they were particularly happy when the Temple of the One True God was destroyed. They thought Israel’s destruction in some way justified their own false beliefs.*

⁸Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’ ⁹therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim, ¹⁰and I will give it for a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the sons of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations. ¹¹Thus I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD.”

[Read v.8-11]

Q: Who is Moab and the Moabites?

A: They are the other son of Lot by an incestuous relationship with his daughter (Gen. 19:37) who occupied land along the eastern border and southern half of the Dead Sea. Ammon, Seir, and Moab occupied the land to the east of the Dead Sea all the way from Israel to the Red Sea. Because the tribes of Reuben and Gad settled the northern part of Moab’s territory there was a perpetual state of animosity between them.

It was Balak, then king of the Moabites, who joined with the Midians in hiring the prophet-magician Balaam to curse Israel. When that failed, Moab enticed Israel into a form of idolatry involving sexual immorality that resulted in God’s judgment against Israel. (Num. 25:1-9) In other words, Moab became one of Israel’s worst spiritual enemies and are mentioned in Psalm 83 as well as desiring Israel’s total destruction.

Q: Who is Seir?

A: Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, lived in Seir.

Q: What does God highlight about their particular crimes?

A: Their assertion, “*Behold the house of Judah is like all the nations*” is a way of stating that their faith in the One True God shows that it is no more special or powerful than any of the gods worshiped by the rest of the nations. Whereas the Ammonites rejoiced over the destruction of God’s Temple – His house, the Moabites rejoice over what they perceived as the end of God’s influence on earth when His “Chosen

People” fell.

Q: What does it mean when God says, “I will deprive the flank”?

A: The word for “*flank*” could be translated as “shoulder”. It is a way of stating that the very place where Moab believes itself to be strongest is going to be the way by which they fall. It’s a way of stating in the language of the time that pride is going to be their undoing.

Q: Why would the city of Beth-jeshimoth be held up as an example of “the glory of the land” of Moab?

A: This city formerly belonged to the tribe of Reuben so from a “*glory*” point of view would represent their belief they were superior to Israel. Its literal meaning “house of desolation” may indicate the greater spiritual representation that their glory in the flesh would lead to their total earthly and spiritual destruction.

Q: Why would the city of Baal-meon be held up as an example of “the glory of the land” of Moab?

A: It too formerly belonged to Reuben and in fact was the birthplace of Elisha. Literally meaning “lord of the habitation” it had strong connections with Baal worship and other false gods. It would represent what they thought was their ultimate victory over Israel to not only possess their land but to completely corrupt their spiritual relationship with the One True God.

Q: Why would the city of Kiriathaim be held up as an example of “the glory of the land” of Moab?

A: Literally meaning “the double city” and also once belonging to the tribe of Reuben, the name implies that Moab took exceptional pride in its own strength and accomplishments. It is important to note how throughout Scripture the chief repeated characteristic of Moab is its intense problem with pride.

*We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride;
Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury;
His idle boasts are false.
Isaiah 16:6*

Q: Given these clues about the true nature of Moab, why is God’s pronouncement upon them particularly fitting?

A: He addresses this issue of pride by stating they “*will not be remembered among the nations*”. They will never obtain the very thing their pride continually strived for, to elevate themselves above everyone else.

Q: What is the problem for people like the Moabites where v.11 is concerned?

A: They had every opportunity to “*know that I am LORD*” in a meaningful and positive way, but because of their continued and willful disobedience only came to know this for certain at the moment of their destruction when it is too late.

Point: *Whereas Ammon was happy to see the things of God destroyed or rendered ineffective, Moab exhibited the pride of Satan desiring to replace God with something else. They thought Israel’s destruction created a void they could step in and themselves fill.*

¹²Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them,” ¹³therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword. ¹⁴I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance,” declares the Lord GOD.

[Read v.12-14]

Q: Who is Edom and the Edomites?

A: These are the descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau who traded away his birthright. Whereas Ammon and Moab were sons of Abraham’s nephew Lot, Edom was actually a direct descendant of Abraham. Edom is alternately referred to in Scripture as Seir as well.

Q: What does God highlight about their particular crimes?

A: God specifically holds them accountable for “*taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them*”.

Q: What is particularly significant about this?

A: This describes something much deeper than simple hatred, a kind of deeply rooted grudge increasing with intensity over time. It began with Jacob robbing Esau of Isaac’s blessing (Gen. 25:23; 27:27-41) and entrenched itself in the character of his offspring over the centuries. Edom always viewed Israel as occupying its own rightful place in God’s economy. When Jews fled Israel in the wake of Babylon’s invasion, Edom actually intercepted and killed the fugitives as well as took Jewish land as far as Hebron.

Q: Why does God mention the cities of Teman and Dedan?

A: These are the major cities, Teman in the south and Dedan in the north, which is a way of identifying the whole country. It would be like our saying, “From New York to L.A.”.

Q: What is ironic about the nature of God’s punishment of Edom?

A: They exercised vengeance on Israel so God in turn exercises vengeance on them. They do not merely experience “judgment” but specifically experience “*My wrath*”.

Q: How did v.14 come about that God’s vengeance on Edom would come “by the hand of My people Israel”?

A: This happened during the Intertestamental Period when the Maccabees would conquer Edom. So complete it was that when the Romans conquered that part of the world that they were considered an integrated part of Israel from whom the Herods were actually descended.

Q: What is the problem for people like the Edomites where v.14 is concerned?

A: They had every opportunity to “*know that I am LORD*” in a meaningful and positive way, but because of their continued and willful disobedience only came to know this for certain at the moment of their destruction when it is too late.

Point: *Whereas Ammon was happy to see the things of God destroyed or rendered ineffective, and Moab exhibited the pride of Satan desiring to replace them with something else, Edom sought to return to what they believed to be their rightful place occupied by Israel.*

¹⁵Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because the Philistines have acted in revenge and have taken vengeance with scorn of soul to destroy with everlasting enmity,”
¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, even cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast. ¹⁷I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes; and they will know that I am the LORD when I lay My vengeance on them.””

[Read v.15-17]

Q: Who is Philistia and the Philistines?

A: Unlike the previous groups they had no blood connection to Israel. They occupied land completely opposite of the other groups to the West of Israel along the seacoast from Joppa to Gaza. This was a group with whom constant war and friction never seemed to cease. It is because of the Philistines that Israel decides it needs an earthly king to bind them together against the threat instead of continuing to rely solely on God.

Q: What does God highlight about their particular crimes?

A: They act “with scorn of soul to destroy with everlasting enmity”. Whereas the previous nations mentioned wanted to supplant Israel in some way, Philistia desires their utter, permanent, and total annihilation. Their desire is for Israel to completely cease to exist.

Q: So what is ironic about how God deals with Philistia?

A: They were so utterly destroyed that it wasn't until modern archeological discoveries which proved that they once existed.

Q: What is the problem for people like the Philistines where v.17 is concerned?

A: They had every opportunity to “know that I am LORD” in a meaningful and positive way, but because of their continued and willful disobedience only came to know this for certain at the moment of their destruction when it is too late.

Overall Application

These four nations represent four different types of enemies of God's people, applicable both to literal Israel and to the church in general:

- **Ammon** is someone who merely wants to see God's people rendered ineffective. It is enough for them that the external things of God employed by God's people are brought to an end. They are a third party who stands by and does nothing to help God's people but don't necessarily act directly against them.
- **Moab** is someone who wants to see God's working itself rendered ineffective. They have the pride of Satan which seeks to replace the very nature and standing of God Himself with another in His place. They take every opportunity to undermine God's people directly.
- **Edom** is someone who although they have forsaken a right relationship with God want to regain it by some other means, usually by destroying and replacing those with a right and proper relationship with Him. They take overt action to not just undermine the relationship of God's people with Him but if possible to replace it completely.
- **Philistia** is the out and out enemy who are not just content to influence or undermine God's people, but will not rest until they are literally destroyed and obliterated.

Point: All cults and false religions act in character with one of these nations. Although they may not literally exist as nations today, they all exist as spiritual strategies at work in the world at large.