

Ezekiel Chapters 25 to 27 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is "How God judges nonbelievers". I'm not going to discuss this title until near the end of the lesson. Hopefully you'll read the whole lesson instead of jumping to the end.
2. This lesson begins the second half of Ezekiel. Congratulations for making it this far and know that (in my opinion) the second half of more Ezekiel has much more present day application.
3. Let's start by remembering what is happening historically at this time:
 - a) At the time of the message of Chapters 25 through 27, the siege of Jerusalem had already begun and by now the Jews living in Babylon (who Ezekiel is preaching to) are well aware Ezekiel's prediction came true.
 - b) I'm guessing that up until this chapter, most of the local Jews living in Babylon thought of Ezekiel as a source of entertainment. Now that the destruction of Jerusalem has begun, my guess is at that people are taking Ezekiel a lot more seriously.
 - i) That also means they will pay more attention to what he has to say from now on.
 - c) Also remember that Ezekiel's wife died in the past chapter. I'm convinced one of the reasons God took away the love of his life, is so Ezekiel could personally know the pain the other Jewish citizens would feel over the loss of their country. It is one thing to preach about someone else's pain. It is another when it "hits home".
4. This leads us to Chapter 25. From Chapters 25 through 32, we are going to read about the fall of seven groups of people surrounding Israel. As I've stated in the past few lessons, it answers the question, "Yes, Lord I know that we are bad, but what about those guys over there?"
 - a) This leads to my next question: Why these seven nations? The places listed are all neighbors of Israel. There is one nation conspicuously missing from this list: Babylon. That means we are going to read of the fate of seven places that surround Israel, but as to the actual nation that caused their fall, there is no mention of Babylon, why is that?
 - i) The most likely answer is that Ezekiel realizes that Babylon is "God's chosen instrument" to cause the fall of Israel along with other surrounding nations. Therefore, the focus is not on the fate of all gentile nations. The focus is on nations judged by God through Babylon.
 - ii) By the way, that does not mean Babylon is spared punishment. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah spend several chapters each on the fall of Babylon. The point here is the destruction of Babylon does not fit Ezekiel's theme of "other nations being judged by God via the conquests by Babylon".
5. OK John, so, 2,500 years ago, God used Babylon not only to destroy Israel, but also to do a lot of damage to the places surrounding Israel. Why should I care? How does this affect me?
 - a) The answer is to look at why they were cut down: The reason is these groups were all happy about the fall of Temple in Jerusalem and fall of the nation of Israel.
 - b) God specifically says over and over again (in so many words) that each of these places was happy about the fall of Israel and they will now suffer for their attitudes.
 - c) Even though God needed to punish Israel for their sins, God still needed to prove to the surrounding world that He is still the only true God that existed. God needed to prove that although He allowed Israel to fall, He and He alone is still in charge and still rules.
 - d) OK John, I know God is in charge. You still haven't told me how to apply all of this.
 - i) For starters, remember that God cares about His name and judges people based on what they should know about God and how they reacted to that information.

- ii) Next, I believe strongly that the world should not mess with modern Israel. Many (primary non-Evangelical) Christians argue that modern Israel is not part of God's eternal plan. There are those that think since Christianity is established, the modern state of Israel has nothing to do with God's eternal plans.
 - a) Most Evangelical Christians (including myself) argue the opposite: If Jesus is going to literally rule the world one day from Jerusalem, well then, Jerusalem and Israel need to exist as a Jewish state. What about the fact that most Jews don't believe in Jesus as the Messiah? That is a whole separate lesson of study, but the short answer is God one day, will make it obvious to the Jewish nation that Jesus is the promised Messiah.
 - b) This does not mean everything modern Israel does is perfect. It does mean that since they are God's chosen people, we should let God deal with them as a nation if He chooses to bless them or cause them to fall again.
 - iii) In the meantime, the next seven chapters deal with nations who suffer tremendously (all but one are completely wiped out) all because they refuse to acknowledge the God of the Jews as "the" God of the world.
 - iv) Personally, I don't want to make the same mistake as these nations. Even if I'm dead wrong about modern Israel, I wouldn't want to "test God" and find out if I'm right or wrong. These seven nations all suffered for condemning Israel. I don't want to take the chance of possibly making the same mistake! ☺
 - e) To summarize, the key point is as Christians, we are to stand up and support the Jewish people for the existence of Israel as their homeland. It doesn't mean we support everything they do, but we do support their right to exist and flourish as a nation. In other words, I'm "pro-Israel" because the God I worship is "pro-Israel". End of story.
6. This leads us to chapters 25 through 27. In these chapters, we deal with five of the seven nations (or "city-states") specifically listed and condemned by God. All five of these nations will eventually die out as unique entities and will be absorbed by other countries.
- a) Chapter 25 focuses on the fate of four small nations surrounding Israel.
 - b) Chapters 26 through 28 mainly focus on the fall of Tyre. The City of Tyre was a powerful nation state that had great influence over the Mediterranean. It is one thing for small relatively insignificant nations to fall. It is another when a powerful, worldwide force like Tyre falls and that is one reason God spends so much time on the fall of Tyre.
 - i) When we get to the judgment of Egypt in a few lessons, the reason God spends so much time on Egypt is like Tyre, Egypt is a powerful entity at this time and their fall requires more discussion.
 - c) OK, we have a lot of verses to cover. It's time to stop rambling and get rolling! ☺
7. Chapter 25, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them.
- a) Chapter 25 begins with the Ammonites. When Ezekiel last discussed the Ammonites in Chapter 21, the point then was about the fact they turned their back on helping Israel. Here in the first seven verses, the point is now about their "inevitable fate". That is because they made an alliance with Jerusalem to oppose the Babylonians. When the Babylonians decided back in Chapter 21 to spare the Ammonites and specifically focus on attacking Jerusalem, the Ammonites forgot about their deal with Jerusalem and cheered the fact they were spared judgment and that Jerusalem would suffer.
 - b) Notice Chapter 25 is the beginning of new prophecy. This one is not dated, but based on other prophetic dates given in Chapter 26 it was soon after the fall of Jerusalem.

- c) Notice God tells the Ezekiel to prophesy against the Ammonites.
 - i) That does not mean Ezekiel is walking around looking for Ammonites to point his finger at! ☺
 - ii) What it meant was Ezekiel is to preach against their fate and further, to write down what God told Ezekiel to say. When what Ezekiel says comes to pass, it will help validate Ezekiel as a prophet of God not only based on what he says about Israel, but about what Ezekiel said about other nations as well. That same pattern is going to apply to all seven groups Ezekiel is to preach to in these 8 chapters.
8. Verse 3: Say to them, `Hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you said "Aha!" over my sanctuary when it was desecrated and over the land of Israel when it was laid waste and over the people of Judah when they went into exile,
- a) The first thing Ezekiel has to say to the Ammonites is "Here is what the Sovereign Lord says". In other words, the first thing Ezekiel has to say to the Ammonites is that the God of Israel is not just some local god, but the God that controls the world.
 - b) The key word in this verse is translated "Aha". In other words, the Ammonites were happy when Judah was destroyed and when the sanctuary was destroyed.
 - c) There is no date given for this prophecy. The only clue we have is that Ammonites were happy when the temple was destroyed (past tense), so it was written after that time frame.
 - d) So why were the Ammonites so happy? I suspect that they thought the Israelites were "smug" in thinking their God was the only God. The fact the Jewish temple got destroyed was interpreted as a sign to the Ammonites that the God of Israel is not that powerful.
 - i) Here comes the application: Non-believers in Jesus look for opportunities to say, "Well, look at those Christians. They think they have a monopoly on God. Now that they are in trouble that is proof that they were wrong about God!"
 - ii) Non-believers wrongly think that just because we believe in the true God that our lives should never have problems. Chapters like this are reminders that just because true believers deal with difficulties and problems, does not mean that God has abandoned believers. Further, the eternal judgment of non believers is far greater than anything we can suffer in this lifetime.
9. Verse 4: therefore I am going to give you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their camps and pitch their tents among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk. ⁵ I will turn Rabbah into a pasture for camels and Ammon into a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD.
- a) One has to remember that the Ammonite nation has existed for many centuries. Their borders were a bit vague, but they always existed just east of Israel. There are a number of biblical references to this group and they date back to the days of Abraham and Lot.
 - i) Here, God is describing the end of Ammon as a nation. Further, somehow this group will know that the "God of the world" was behind their destruction.
 - ii) Amos 1:13-15 and Jeremiah 49:1-5 are good parallel passages to Ezekiel and also describe the fall of Ammon as a nation.
 - b) Even though Babylon is not mentioned here by name, they are the nation that brought about the destruction of Ammon. The people of Ammon got absorbed and relocated within the Babylonian Empire.
 - c) One of the main cities of the Ammonites was called "Rabbah". The prediction is that the city would be so leveled that it would be a pasture land for camels. That literally came true and the location of that city is today, an animal pasture land.
 - d) Remember that the Ammonites cheered a few chapters back when the Babylonians choose to avoid conquering their land and went after Israel instead. Now, a relatively short time later, we read of the Babylonians choosing to go back and bring to an end of this nation.

10. Verse 6: For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart against the land of Israel, ⁷ therefore I will stretch out my hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the nations and exterminate you from the countries. I will destroy you, and you will know that I am the LORD.' "
- a) This is the last thing that Ezekiel has to say about the Ammonites. Ezekiel repeats the key point that because the Ammonites were happy about the destruction of Israel and its Temple is the main reason for their death as a nation.
 - b) As I stated in the introduction, if you want a reason to be "Pro-Israel", look no further then reading your bible. Again, some liberal Christians debate as to whether or not modern Israel is part of God's eternal plan. For me personally, I read here about people who cheer on the destruction of Israel and read about their fate. Therefore, I wouldn't want to test God and find out if modern Israel is part of His plan or not. It's bad for our health. ☺
11. Verse 8: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: `Because Moab and Seir said, "Look, the house of Judah has become like all the other nations," ⁹ therefore I will expose the flank of Moab, beginning at its frontier towns--Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon and Kiriathaim--the glory of that land. ¹⁰ I will give Moab along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, so that the Ammonites will not be remembered among the nations; ¹¹ and I will inflict punishment on Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD.' "
- a) Verses 8 to 10 focus on the next nation which is Moab. Ezekiel is working clockwise beginning with the easterly direction from Israel. The land of Moab is south of Ammon.
 - i) Both of these nations existed since before the Israelites entered the land.
 - ii) Both the Ammonites and the Moabites resented the fact that the Israelites thought they were the "people of God". These verses essentially say that Israel has become like the other nations. (That is: Destroyed by Babylon and therefore, they must not be special in God's eye!) The nations that surround Israel wrongly thought that just because they were being punished, that God does not care about their fate.
 - iii) I suspect that is true today of the nations that surround Israel. The one thing all the nations that surround Israel today have in common is that they all can't stand the fact that Israel exists as a nation and wants it dead.
 - b) History records that the Babylonians conquered the Moabites about five years after the fall of Jerusalem. That was essentially the end of this nation, although there were a few recorded instances of their existence after this time frame.
 - c) There are three towns mentioned by name. All three were historically destroyed. Again, while the Babylonians were not mentioned by name, they did the destruction.
 - d) Think about history this way: How many Moabites and Ammonites have you met in your lifetime? Compare that to the history of the Jewish people. No other ancient group of people have been conquered, scattered and came back together again as a country, except for Israel, which did it twice in human history. Even if you forget how each of these nations died, the one thing we can learn by looking back at history is how God kept his hands on the Jewish people, while other nations fell into judgment.
12. Verse 12: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: `Because Edom took revenge on the house of Judah and became very guilty by doing so, ¹³ therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill its men and their animals. I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword. ¹⁴ I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign LORD.' "
- a) Now we get to the third nation that no longer exists today: Edom. To make it short, this nation was conquered by the Babylonians to the point where their main districts: Teman and Dedan came to a physical end.

- b) Let's carefully read what their sin was: "Edom took revenge on the house of Judah and became very guilty by doing so". While the Ammonites and the Moabites were guilty of being happy that Israel fell as a country, Edom took it one step further in that they were somehow guilty of "taking revenge". Scholars debate what that means, but somehow they personally benefited from the destruction of Israel or they were involved in the downfall.
 - c) Notice Verse 14 says that God will take revenge against Edom "by the hand of my people Israel". In other words, Edom will not be destroyed by the Babylonians but by the Israelites themselves! OK, time for a little more history:
 - i) While the Babylonians attacked Edom, it was not destroyed as a nation. About four hundred years later, when the Greeks ruled over this area, there was a period of time when the Israelites personally conquered the Edomites during the Maccabean revolt (168 - 135 BC). During the time when the Greeks dominated this part of the world, there was a revolt by the Jews and as part of that revolt, they attacked and subdued the Edomites.
 - ii) An interesting side note applies here. When the Edomites became subject to the Jews, many of the Edomites converted to or learned about Judaism. When you read about Herod the Great in the New Testament, he was an Edomite. He was trained in Judaism due to the fact the Israelites ruled over Edom. Herod rose up as a local leader and sided with the Romans as they conquered this area. As a reward to the Romans, Herod was made king over the Israelite area. Herod's sons were also rulers, but mainly in name only, as the Romans then put a governor (Pontius Pilate) over the Israelites.
 - iii) Meanwhile, Ezekiel is still predicting some grievous sounding destruction. ☺
13. Verse 15: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: `Because the Philistines acted in vengeance and took revenge with malice in their hearts, and with ancient hostility sought to destroy Judah, ¹⁶ therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Kerethites and destroy those remaining along the coast. ¹⁷ I will carry out great vengeance on them and punish them in my wrath. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I take vengeance on them.' "
- a) Ezekiel finishes this chapter with a few words about the Philistines. If you know your bible, the Philistines have been around since at least the time of Saul and David. That was many centuries earlier. This was not a big group, but for centuries, they controlled a handful of sea-towns on the coastline in Israel. They are a traditional enemy of Israel.
 - b) Jeremiah 47 is a good cross-reference here. Apparently, between Egypt destroying the Philistines (see Jeremiah 47) and the Babylonians as described by Ezekiel, this brought an end to a group of people that have harassed the Israelites for centuries.
 - c) One thing that I wonder about is how did these people know that God was behind their downfall when it was caused by other gentile nations? Apparently, I'm not the only person who wondered about this question. Verses like these imply that there is going to be a "Messianic judgment" one day of these nations. This is a good time to bring up the concept of judgment in the bible.
 - d) The Book of Revelation, Chapter 20 speaks of 2 judgments: One for believers and one for nonbelievers. In the Gospels, there is a reference to another judgment: The judgment of nations (see Matthew 25: 31-46). God will judge nations based on how they treated Israel. How that judgment fits in with the Revelation 20 judgments is a classical debate. All we know for sure is that the Bible speaks of the two judgments in Revelation Chapter 20 and a "judgment of the nations" in Matthew Chapter 25.
 - i) These nations (as listed here in Ezekiel) will know that God is behind this judgment in some final period of judgment when God will judge them on how they treated Israel.

14. Before I move on to Chapter 26 and the judgment against Tyre, understand that I summarized a lot of human history in a few pages. I could give a long and detailed history of what happened to each of these nations and how Ezekiel's predictions literally were fulfilled.
- a) My goal here is to give enough history to explain what is happening, but not to go into great detail. There are lots of good bible commentaries that go into this history. My goal is to explain enough to understand the passage and then focus on the applications.
15. Chapter 26, Verse 1: In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,'"
- a) Chapters 26 through Chapters 28 focus on the city-state of Tyre. This is a city that was the headquarters of the "Phoenician" people. This city-state was dominate for many centuries and was a powerful sea-faring group that got rich off of trade.
 - b) So why did Ezekiel only spend one chapter on Israel's traditional enemies in Chapter 25, and then spend 3 chapters on Tyre and then 4 chapters on Egypt (coming up)? The answer is that these two places (Tyre and Egypt) were the main powers of that region that rivaled Babylon. God is describing through Ezekiel how Babylon is God's chosen instrument to bring about His judgment on the nations surrounding Israel.
 - c) To understand the predictions against Tyre, first one has to understand that Tyre became a rich city through trade. If you know anything about Middle East geography, the main land trading route from Africa up to the European continent was through Israel. To walk from Africa (via Egypt) to the European continent, required going up the "King's Highway", which is a natural and ancient road route through Israel.
 - i) As goods past through Israel, the Israelites probably charged some sort of tax for its passage through the land. The fact that Israel died as a nation was a source of happiness to Tyre as the Israelites were no longer a factor in this trade route.
 - ii) That is what is behind the reference to "doors have swung open to me" in Verse 2.
 - d) In other words, Tyre was happy for the fall of Israel, but not because they were a traditional enemy of Egypt like all the nations listed in Chapter 25. They were happy about the fall of Israel because now Israel was a non-factor in the trade routes.
 - i) This leads to a whole discussion of those who turn from God because they have a lot of wealth. I'll discuss this issue throughout this lesson.
 - e) The application is it doesn't matter why one turns against the God of Israel. If one was against Him because they were from a rival country or against God for "money making" reasons, either way, one is in big eternal trouble. That's a key lesson against Tyre.
 - f) In the prediction against Tyre, we have a date stamp. The text gives the year. By the way, the 11th year refers to the 11th year of captivity of Israel by Babylon.
16. Verse 3: therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.
- a) Notice Verse 3 says that God will bring up many nations against you. Babylon did a lot of damage to Tyre, but it did not end it as a unique entity. Alexander the Great centuries later brought an end to the ancient city of Tyre. Later the city was rebuilt on a new spot, and the "new" Tyre eventually became part of the Roman Empire. Tyre did not come to a complete end until the 12th Century AD. In summary, Tyre existed from roughly the 13th Century BC to about the 12th Century AD. The point is God said in these verses that "many nations" will be involved in the destruction of Tyre. That is true.
 - b) Notice the reference to "like the sea casting up its waves". Remember that Tyre was a sea-town. It made its money mainly by sea trading and being a dominant player among those that traded by sea. My point here is that Chapters 26 through 28 will use a lot of "sea-town" references. The text goes out of its way to use "sea" type of references when describing the fall of Tyre.

17. Verse 4: They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.⁵ Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations,⁶ and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.
- a) When the Babylonians attacked Tyre, they surrounded that city and completely destroyed it. Many of the residents of Tyre survived by moving to an island right off the coast of Tyre. The Babylonians were unsuccessful in defeating the island city.
 - b) When Alexander the Great came along centuries later, he took the rubble from the old city of Tyre and used it to build a land bridge to the island city. From there He defeated the island city of Tyre. Alexander had help from other nations that fought off Tyre's ships.
 - c) The point is between the Babylonians and the Greeks (lead by Alexander), Ezekiel's prediction came literally true. When the old city of Tyre was destroyed, the broken pieces of the city were used to build the land bridge to the island city. Therefore, the old city was completely ruined. The text says it was a place to spread fishnets. If you travel there to this day, the ground of the old city area is still used as place to spread out fishnets.
 - d) Once again we have the statement that once this is done "then they will know that I am the Lord". Just how they knew God was behind it probably refers to the Messianic judgment that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 26 (that we talked about earlier in this lesson) when He will judge the nations.
18. Verse 7: "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army.⁸ He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you.⁹ He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons.¹⁰ His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the war horses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through.¹¹ The hoofs of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground.
- a) Through all of my mentions of Babylon so far in these studies, I've yet (I don't believe) to bring up their king by name, which is Nebuchadnezzar. This is the same guy that is prominent in the book of Daniel as Daniel became the king's "right hand man". The spelling of his name in Ezekiel is slightly different than in Daniel. That is because Ezekiel pronounced his name as the Babylonians would (Hebrew letter equivalent) while Daniel pronounces his name as a Jewish person would, and the spelling is slightly different.
 - b) The point of all this text is that Tyre is a powerful city with lots of wealth and controls the destiny of lots of places via their navy and their trading ships. Think of Chapters 25 and 26 this way: It would be one thing for God to predict the downfall of a handful of small countries, but it is another for God to predict the immediate downfall of a big and powerful nation. That is what we are reading about here in Chapter 26.
 - c) In these verses, Ezekiel gets specific so that once the survivors of Tyre read about their history they will know God predicted it. The text mentions that Nebuchadnezzar will come with a great army and a large number of horses and chariots. The text emphasizes the battering rams that will be used to knock down the walls and the number of horses used. All of this is included as the Babylonians had a reputation for being fierce and cruel in their destructive techniques of the people they conquered.
 - d) OK John, this is all interesting ancient history. What should I get out of this text? It comes back to God is in charge and God can raise up or destroy powerful nations!
 - i) It also validates "God as God" as details of history are written in advance.

19. Verse 12: They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. ¹³ I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. ¹⁴ I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- a) Remember that Tyre was a wealthy city-state and trusted in their wealth for their protection. In Verse 12, God is stating that Babylon will take away their "stuff".
 - i) There is a point for us to consider: Tyre trusted in their wealth. Tyre thought they were something special because they were wealthy. One of the reasons God spends three chapters on Tyre is to teach us that God is not impressed by wealth, especially when we trust in our stuff over Him.
 - ii) Understand that God is neither for nor against being financial successful. The danger is when we trust in that wealth and not in God. Think about all the people of human history who focused their lives on making money to a point of ignoring God and what God expects of our lives!
 - b) Meanwhile, back in Tyre. ☺ The text also mentions the end of "their noisy songs". This is probably a reference to entertainment within Tyre. Places that are financially successful tend to spend a lot of money on entertaining themselves since they don't have to worry about money or enemies. God does not have a problem with entertainment as long as one keeps it in the proper perspective. One can be a strong Christian and be in the entertainment industry. The question is always where one's heart is. Does one give one's heart to God as opposed to primarily focusing on money or entertainment?
 - c) The last few lines give another reference to the spreading of fishnets. The text also mentions that the city will never be rebuilt. Again, this came literally true a century or two after Babylon destroyed the city. Alexander the Great used the rubble to make a land bridge to the island section of Tyre, about 600 yards off the coast. That ancient city of Tyre was never rebuilt on the same grounds again. That location is still "flat" today.
20. Verse 15: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Tyre: Will not the coastlands tremble at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan and the slaughter takes place in you? ¹⁶ Then all the princes of the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and take off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled at you. ¹⁷ Then they will take up a lament concerning you and say to you: "How you are destroyed, O city of renown, peopled by men of the sea! You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens; you put your terror on all who lived there. ¹⁸ Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the islands in the sea are terrified at your collapse."
- a) Verses 15 through 18 are written in a way (in the original Hebrew) so that it can be sung. There is a rhythm to these verses that was commonly used in funerals. In other words, we are reading a "funeral dirge" in these verses.
 - b) Again, stop and consider the fact that many cities around the Mediterranean were controlled by Tyre in that this city organized trade and became rich by that trade. From what I've read Tyre had a reputation for being ruthless, but at the same time brought organization and control to the trade routes along the Mediterranean.
 - i) I state this as Verse 15 says the "coastlands will tremble at the sound of your fall." That is a reference to the other cities that dealt in trade with Tyre. The point is the fall of Tyre will affect the prosperity of many trading partners.
 - c) If one knows the book of Revelation, there is a "parallelism" with some of these verses. Chapters 18 and 19 of Revelation describe the fall of the "ultimate" Babylon, which may or not be literal Babylon. These two chapters of Revelation focus on both the fall of the commercial aspects of Babylon as well as the false religious aspects of Babylon.
 - i) I point that out here as there are noticeable parallels between the fall of the commercial aspects of Babylon with the fall of Tyre here.

- ii) Revelation 18:19 says, "They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!
 - iii) This verse of Revelation is describing the quick fall of the commercial aspects of Babylon. The verses here in Ezekiel are describing the "quick fall" of Tyre.
 - d) The reason I'm making such a big deal about this is that "Tyre" becomes a synonym for places that depend upon their wealth for happiness and survival. God brings this to a sudden end, just as God does to Babylon in the "final days" in Revelation.
 - i) When we discuss the fall of Egypt in a few chapters, I will take this analogy one step further. Egypt was the "start" of the multi-god system that spread to Babylon, then the Greek and Roman Empires. In other words, just as Tyre will represent one's dependence upon "things" instead of God, so Egypt represents one's dependence upon other gods. In the final days God will destroy both "false dependencies" as described in Revelation Chapters 18 and 19.
 - e) This does lead us back to this "funeral dirge" in Ezekiel. The verses are about other princes (leaders) of other cities that financially benefited from Tyre. The dirge is about the fall of Tyre (written in advance before it happened) and how the other leaders who benefited from the success of Tyre will mourn of its death.
21. Verse 19: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I make you a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited, and when I bring the ocean depths over you and its vast waters cover you,²⁰ then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place in the land of the living.²¹ I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD."
- a) These are the last verses of Chapter 26. It talks about the ultimate destruction of Tyre.
 - b) These verses have a double reference in that they describe the end of Tyre as a city, but also describe the fact that residents are also going to be in hell. Notice the word "pit" in Verse 20. That is a classical biblical reference to hell itself.
 - c) Remember that chapters 25 to 27 deal with the judgment of the nations surrounding Israel. While Tyre is not a traditional enemy of Israel, they were guilty of obsessing on wealth. Tyre was close enough in proximity to Israel that God held them accountable in that He expected Tyre to understand that there is a single God that governs the world and that God is more important than riches. This nation will be judged and found guilty out of a failure to acknowledge God.
 - i) I gave that little speech as it ties to the text of Ezekiel here. The text says the "ocean depths" will cover this city, it will be brought to ruin and its inhabitants will go down to the pit. This refers to the end of Tyre as a nation, as a central source of power and more importantly, eternal damnation for those who trusted in the wealth of Tyre over God.
22. Chapter 27, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me:² "Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre.³ Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, `This is what the Sovereign LORD says:
- a) Notice the word "lament" in Verse 2. All of Chapter 27 is a poetic lament over the fate and fall of Tyre. That leads to an important point about God: He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God laments over their fall because they were more interested in their own wealth than in caring about the God that rules over the world. Tyre was close enough to Israel that they should have cared about a single God and what that God wants for their lives. Instead, their god was that of material success.

- b) The text of these three verses also calls Tyre "the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts". Remember that Tyre was a center of trade for many places and they were a powerful "city-state" that controlled the destiny of a lot of people.
- c) The opening of this dirge also emphasizes the fact that this is what "God" says. Like I said early in this lesson, I don't think Ezekiel went walking around looking for citizens of Tyre to preach to. I believe Ezekiel just talked to the local crowd and wanted "word of mouth" to carry his message to the nations near Israel. As Babylon conquered Tyre, which happened a few years after these prophecies, hopefully some survivors of Tyre then realized there is a single God, He does work through Israel and Ezekiel is His prophet.
23. Verse 3 (cont.) "You say, O Tyre, "I am perfect in beauty." ⁴ Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection.
- a) At this point in the poetic dirge, God is not saying anything that residents of Tyre and much of the surrounding world don't already know: That Tyre was a dominate player due to its trading and control over the seas. I'm sure Tyre had a lot of beautiful buildings and great man-made objects they got as benefit from their business dealings.
- b) What one can sense even this early in the dirge is how God is putting down Tyre because they believed they had everything they needed even though they rejected God.
24. Verse 5: They made all your timbers of pine trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.⁶ Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, inlaid with ivory.⁷ Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah.
- a) In these verses we read of the materials used to make their ships. The point is the materials used came from different places around the Middle East and the Mediterranean.
- b) God is emphasizing their physical beauty by stating that they had the best materials of the world brought to them to make their sailing ships. The text is emphasizing different types of wood and the best linens used to make their sails and their ships.
- c) The underlying point is that Tyre was blessed due to their success and did not honor the God of the world that allowed their success to happen.
25. Verse 8: Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, O Tyre, were aboard as your seamen. ⁹ Veteran craftsmen of Gebal were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for your wares. ¹⁰ "Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendor. ¹¹ Men of Arvad and Helech manned your walls on every side; men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty to perfection.
- a) In these verses, the poetic dirge switches from sailing materials to people. In other words, Tyre not only brought the best of materials for making their goods, but the best people worked for them as sailors, soldiers and traders.
- b) Tyre was known for hiring mercenary solders to defend their ships and their cities. A mercenary solder is one who is not a natural citizen of that country, but one who is willing work as a hired solder for money. The idea is that Tyre was so wealthy that it could afford to hire mercenaries for protection. These verses named soldiers from different cities and territories that were hired.
- c) A repeated phrase in this text is the idea of "They brought your beauty to perfection." It is stated in Verse 3 and Verse 8. One can see where this is leading and it is not good: The idea that Tyre became rich from its trade and Tyre gave no credit to God, but because they were so rich, they were relying upon their own resources for their protection. The fact that God brings down Tyre is a sign to them and the world that there is a God and He is greater than any wealthy place in the world.
- d) Remember that the sin of Tyre was not about having wealth. The sin was trusting in their wealth for their protection and their eternal destiny.

26. Verse 12: "Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. ¹³ "Greece, Tubal and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged slaves and articles of bronze for your wares. ¹⁴ "Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your merchandise. ¹⁵ "The men of Rhodes traded with you, and many coastlands were your customers; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony. ¹⁶ "Aram did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your merchandise. ¹⁷ "Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, oil and balm for your wares. ¹⁸ "Damascus, because of your many products and great wealth of goods, did business with you in wine from Helbon and wool from Zahar. ¹⁹ "Danites and Greeks from Uzal bought your merchandise; they exchanged wrought iron, cassia and calamus for your wares. ²⁰ "Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you. ²¹ "Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats. ²² "The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold. ²³ "Haran, Canneh and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Asshur and Kilmad traded with you. ²⁴ In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted.

- a) In these 12 verses, we have a list of cities and locations that traded with Tyre. Seeing all of these verses together gives one an idea of the power of Tyre and who worked with them. It gives one a sense of how vast was their power and influence.
- b) These verses show how Tyre got rich by trading with lots of places and nations.
 - i) Some of these names will be important in Chapter 38 and 39 and I'll deal with that issue when I get there.
 - ii) I could impress you with my "history trivia" knowledge and explain what happened to these places. The question is, is that information relevant to us today? The answer is no, which is why I'm not going into Middle East history.
- c) Notice in the middle of this list is "Judah and Israel". That is the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. At the time Ezekiel wrote this, both of those countries are now dead.
 - i) A point here is that Tyre has been doing this trading for a long time, including the time frame both Judah and Israel were alive and thriving.
 - ii) It also shows the Israelites benefited from these tradesmen like all the other places mentioned in this text. It also shows that the traders of Tyre were exposed to "the" God of the world and had an opportunity to learn of God.
 - iii) In the sense that Tyre was exposed to God is that they are now accountable to know better and realize that there is a single God that controls the world and their wealth is not enough to protect them or control their fate.
- d) This is a good spot to again compare these verses to Revelation 17 and 18. Again, in those two chapters, we read of the destruction of Babylon, which ruled the world in commercial trade and in terms of gods to be worshipped. Whether or not the Babylon of Revelation is the Babylon of this time era is a classic debate in Christianity. My point here is that there is a great comparison between Tyre who ran the world in trade at this time and Babylon that will run the world in trade during the end times.
 - i) Revelation 18:11 says, "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more — ¹²cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; ¹³cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men."

- ii) The items listed in Ezekiel 27 and Revelation 18 are not identical. The point is both nations controlled the world of goods and dealt in everything conceivable that is a tradable commodity. The traders ignored God to get rich off of trade.
27. Verse 25: "The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea. ²⁶ Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas. But the east wind will break you to pieces in the heart of the sea. ²⁷ Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck. ²⁸ The shorelands will quake when your seamen cry out. ²⁹ All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the seamen will stand on the shore. ³⁰ They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes. ³¹ They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning.
- In these verses, the tone changes. It is no longer about the positive benefits of the trade. It is about the sorrow that those who traded with Tyre will feel once Tyre is destroyed.
 - I stated some pages back that God uses a lot of "sea terms" in describing Tyre. Yes Tyre got wealthy by its ability to control the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, Ezekiel spoke in sea-faring terms that Tyre could "relate to". One can sense that all through this text.
 - Again, one can see a blatant comparison of Revelation 18 to this chapter. Let me repeat the opening line of 18:11 again: "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more". Compare that line to these verses here in Ezekiel 27.
 - Here in Ezekiel we read of the destruction of Tyre not in terms of a battle, but in terms of the seamen who got rich from trading with Tyre. In case you are wondering, when both the Babylonians and the Greeks attacked Tyre, they defeated the ships of Tyre so that their armies would not be attacked from the sea.
 - The text has a strong sense of mourning. The point is the seamen will feel a tremendous sense of loss at the fall of Tyre.
 - Let's finish the text and then I'll discuss the relevance to us:
28. Verse 32: As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: "Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?" ³³ When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth. ³⁴ Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you. ³⁵ All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you; their kings shudder with horror and their faces are distorted with fear. ³⁶ The merchants among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more. "
- The idea of these final verses is that Tyre was responsible for controlling a world-wide economy of that day. Now (speaking in future terms to Tyre) that Tyre has fallen, the physical beauty of Tyre will be brought to nothing. Remember that the Babylonians were successful in destroying the coastland city of Tyre. That also means the Babylonians took home with them all of their valuable possessions, as well as destroying the city.
 - The text is emphasizing the merchants and kings of other countries that are looking at the horror of the fallen city of Tyre. The idea is these other leaders who got rich off of trading with Tyre will now think, "OK, Tyre is no longer there. Now how do we make a living?"
29. OK John, I get the idea that Revelation 18 and Ezekiel 27 are similar. What is your point? I'm so glad you asked. ☺
- Stop and think about all the people we know that put making a living as a priority over worshipping God. Think about all of us who are dependant upon our economic system for our own survival and prosperity. This is a not so subtle reminder that there is a God, He is in charge and our dependence is upon Him and not any system of trade that we as a people have set up for ourselves.

- b) I want to go back to my opening theme. It was "How God judges nonbelievers"?
 - i) In Chapter 25, we had the judgment against the traditional enemies of Israel and those places around Israel who had knowledge of God and how He operates.
 - ii) In Chapters 26-28, we are spending time on those who are more focused with the material world than any interest in God.
 - iii) In Chapters 29-32, we are going to focus on Egypt, which was the other great major power in that area at that time. Egypt is considered the original home of the "multiple god" system of worship.
 - iv) Therefore these seven chapters summarize all the reasons people turn from God: Either they 1) They hate God's chosen people and rebel against them, 2) They are more interested in making a buck than carrying about God or 3) They are interested in worshipping everything and anything other than the true God.
 - v) There, I just summed up why those who turn from the true God are going to hell. Yes, it's a little more complicated than that, but one gets the general idea.
 - c) The key to reading these chapters of Ezekiel is to realize Ezekiel took the leading powers of his time (Tyre and Egypt) and showed them how they are going to be judged for turning against God. Ezekiel is taking the enemies of His people and showing how they are going to be judged for turning their collective backs on God.
 - i) Does this mean that Tyre did not worship false gods? No. Does this mean that Egypt did not engage in trade? No. It does mean that from Ezekiel's perspective of time, when one thinks of trade, one thinks of Tyre. When one thinks of the center of worship of multiple gods in Ezekiel's day, one thinks of Egypt.
 - ii) By the way, when Egypt gets conquered by the Babylonians, it is said the priests of the multi-god system simply moved to Babylon. More on that later.
 - d) In the next lesson, we still have one more chapter on Tyre. I'm going to spend the next lesson solely on Chapter 28. It speaks of the leaders of Tyre and the demonic spiritual forces that are behind the human leadership of Tyre. To explain all of that requires a single lesson on Chapter 28.
 - e) In the meantime, what do you say we thank God for counting us worthy to be saved and help us not to fall into one of these three categories (enemies of God's people, more focused on money than God and more focused on other gods than the "true God").
30. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, Thank You for counting us worthy of your salvation. Thank You for calling us out of the world to serve You. Help us to live to glorify You in all that we do. Help us to make a difference for Your kingdom with our lives. Help us to be a good witness to the world around us which is heading down one (or more) of these three wrong paths. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.