

## Judah After Israel's Fall (725-585 BCE) *Ezekiel's Prophecies During Siege*

Readings: *Ezekiel 26:1-21; 27:1-36; 28:1-26*

### *Reflections:*

- The cities of Sidon and Tyre were both wealthy merchant ports. Tyre was originally a coastal city on the mainland but then later moved out onto a nearby island. Ezekiel's prophecy against it demonstrates God's judgment against those who are proud and greedy as they seek to amass wealth for themselves. They find themselves in league with Satan who fell because of this pride and greed.
- Ezekiel 26 spells out the way in which Tyre will be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar is called "king of kings" because of the way he is the dominant ruler over all other kingdoms. One day a new "king of kings" will emerge who will reign with grace, mercy and justice. The judgment against Tyre is simple. They were proud, greedy and self-sufficient. God is going to bring them down and their secure world will collapse. It doesn't matter how secure a person or a people feels. If God is not for them, they are completely vulnerable.
- Ezekiel 27 then moves into a lament. The laments remind us that when God judges, he does not do so with delight but with weeping. This lament shows us that God grieves when any of his creation turn away from him and come under judgment.
- In this lament, we see the beauty of human industry and creativity. God describes how beautiful Tyre was. If Tyre was submitted to God, it would have been an excellent example of the potential of humans to build something beautiful and wonderful. God's vision for humanity, stemming from the garden of Eden, was to work together as one big, happy family to make an already perfect world better. Tyre did model human potential but it was driven by greed and self-centredness.
- Ezekiel 27 also outlines all of the customers and products of Tyre. It reveals what a great business they had going. But when God's judgment falls, all of these customers will turn against them. "Now you are shattered by the sea (creation turns against them)...All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you...The merchants among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more."
- Ezekiel 28 now zeros in on the ruler of Tyre. Here we see a fascinating passage of Scripture that clearly moves beyond the immediate leader in focus and begins to give us insight into

the history of Satan. Somehow the ruler of Tyre was claiming some form of divinity and in his complete pride and arrogance, God sees a parallel to Satan himself.

- Here are the characteristics of this ruler that find parallel to Satan:
  - “In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god’”.
  - “I sit on the throne of a god” (this image is close to being seated at the right hand of God as we will discover that all Christ-followers are seated that way).
  - “You think you are as wise as a god.”
  - “By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself...because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.”
  - “Will you then say, ‘I am a god’ in the presence of those who kill you?”
  - “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and beauty.”
  - “You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone adorned you.”
  - “You were anointed as a guardian cherub.”
  - “You were on the holy mount of God.”
  - “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.”
  - “You sinned.”
  - “So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub.”
  - “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.”
  - “So I threw you to earth, I made a spectacle of you before kings.”
  - “So I made fire come out from you and it consumed you” (note that the kingdoms of Satan destroy themselves).
  - “...and I reduced you to ashes on the ground (complete humiliation and destruction) in the sight of all who were watching.”
  - “All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end.”
- This extended prophetic window into the story of Satan is the clearest summary of this part of the meta-narrative of Scripture. The story of man and woman, those made from dust with the Spirit of God in them, are raised up from complete humility to sit enthroned at the right hand of God as his deeply loved children. Satan and his demonic following were originally exalted in heaven but because he tried to enthrone himself, are going to be brought down to the dust. This drama reveals that God is a God of humility not pride and that those that

are self-centered and arrogant have no understanding of God's other-centeredness and humility. This also shows that God is a God who delights in those that are weak and lifting them up but those who delight in their own strength, no matter how powerful they are, can be brought down with no effort from God.

- Luke wrote, "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'" (Luke 10:17-20) Here we have a brief reference by Jesus to Satan's fall.
- Another clear passage about the fall of Satan is Revelation 12. It reads, "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head (this is Israel). She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth (to the Messiah). Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads (Satan pictured as a ruler over many kingdoms). His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky (most likely one third of the angels that became unclean spirits or demons) and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne (the resurrection). The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days (Israel is pictured as being protected and out of the way during the time of the Gentiles when many of the nations are being saved). And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him (this is a quick review of what happened)" (Revelation 12:1-9). The rest of Revelation 12 goes on to say that because Satan can't get at Israel right now, he turned his attention to attacking her offspring (Gentile Christ-followers). These passages give us a good view of the story of Satan and how he fits into the meta-narrative. In many ways, Satan and his fallen angels are actively engaged in the spiritual battle against the purposes of God (see Ephesians 6:10ff) but in other ways they are watching as God's will is revealed and are in a sense in the audience observing God's character of humility and grace for the weak before they are ultimately brought down and judged. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:10-11, "[God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Satan and his demons) according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- Ezekiel now turns his attention to Sidon. His prophecy is short but far from sweet. Judgment is falling on them as well. This section of judgment against these two port cities ends with a word of hope for Israel: “I will show myself holy among them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land...will live in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards...” We see again the emphasis on Israel being established in peace and safety. This hope and promise will one day be completely transformed into a spiritual metaphor for God’s people of faith living in peace within the kingdoms of this world. As we read these passages though, it is easy to see why the Israelites of Jesus day didn’t quickly understand the radical redefinition he was introducing.
- Some sixteen years later Ezekiel will return to add another thought about Tyre (see Day 250) but for now we are left with powerful images of the fall of Satan and the spiritual battle that Christ-followers must face within the drama of God’s unfolding story.