



Sermon Series Weekly Devotionals

Week of February 18, 2018

READ ch. 25, Judgment on the Neighborhood Bullies

REVIEW. We begin a section of 8 chapters called “Prophecies Against the Nations.”

Sounds boring, huh? It wasn’t to Israel, hanging on every word. For these were the

neighborhood bullies. Since some of them were even blood relatives of ancestors Abraham (Lot: Moab) and Jacob (Esau: Edom), God had told Israel to play nice with them. But they had become mean bullies and anti-semites (25:6, 8, 12, 15). So God says their time has come.

It’s a bit of good news Israel needs right now, for the Babylonian siege of their hometown has begun (24:1-2). Three years later (586 B.C.) Ezekiel will tell them that the siege has ended with Jerusalem’s total wipeout (33:21). In the 8 chapters between, God encourages his depressed people with the news that his plan to make Israel the head of the nations is still good—the nations will be judged, too.

It’s significant that Ezekiel mentions seven nations (as do Jeremiah & Amos). Seven is the “number of completion,” dating back to the seven day creation. By using the symbolic 7, God is telling us that he will judge all nations hostile to Israel!

Geography trivia: the four nations in ch. 25 go clockwise from 3:00 to 9:00. The original nations are extinct; today’s residents call themselves Arabs and are Muslim.

MEDITATE. Your attitude toward Israel and the Jews is one of the most revealing things about you. While the world grows more and more anti-semitic—consider the U.N., Europe, even America’s college campuses—evangelicals have become Israel’s best friend. Ezekiel 25 is a reminder that God will blast the haters of Abraham’s seed, but bless those who bless Israel. How do you “bless Israel”?

PRAY. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).

READ ch. 26, a sparkling example of fulfilled prophecy.

REVIEW. Tyre was no small, obscure village. A hundred miles north of Jerusalem, it was a great Phoenician seaport and a world capital for over 2,000 years. It actually consisted of not one but two cities: a commercial center on the Mediterranean shoreline, and an impregnable military center on a rocky island 1/2 mile offshore. Yet, in the prime of its power, God had the audacity to forecast its violent destruction, because it was gloating over Israel's fall (26:2).

Ezekiel predicted that many nations would come in waves against Tyre (26:3); that Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar would be the first wave (v. 7); that Tyre's walls and towers would be broken down (vv. 4,9); that the stones, timbers, and debris of the city would be thrown into the sea (v. 12); that its location would become a bare rock and a place for the drying of nets (vv. 4-5,14); and finally, that it would never be rebuilt to its former glory (v. 14).

History bears testimony to the fact that this is precisely what happened. Many nations did come against Tyre — the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Muslims, the Crusaders. And Nebuchadnezzar was indeed the first of these invaders, who—after a 13 year siege—broke down the walls and towers of mainland Tyre, thus fulfilling the first of the prophecies. Nebuchadnezzar massacred all of Tyre's inhabitants except for those who escaped to the island fortress a half mile offshore.

Centuries after Ezekiel's body had decomposed in his grave, Alexander the Great fulfilled a major portion of the prophecy. In order to conquer the island fortress of Tyre (not having a navy), he used the stones from the Old Tyre demolished by Nebuchadnezzar to build a causeway 200 feet wide, 1/2 mile long, out to the island, where his siege engines knocked down the walls. He destroyed Tyre down to the bare rock, throwing the stones and rubble into the sea (v. 12). Prophecy fulfilled!

MEDITATE. "Why do you think the Bible is inspired? Is it even true and accurate?" we are asked. This objection strikes no terror in the heart of the Christian who is aware of fulfilled prophecy. The prophetic evidences for the Bible's trustworthiness are so overwhelming that anyone with a truly open mind will be compelled to consider the Bible's central message: redemption in Jesus Christ.

PRAY. Thank God for a Book that is true and accurate and reliable for salvation, and proves it by its hundreds of fulfilled prophecies!

READ ch. 27, a funeral song for the sinking of the great ship Tyre.

REVIEW. Tyre was one of the most wealthy and beautiful cities—and seaports—in the world. It was to the sea what mighty Babylon was to the land. Tyrians looked in the mirror and grew proud. “I hate pride and arrogance,” says God (Proverbs 8:13). No wonder. For he has made us to be dependent on him, while pride puffs us up and away from him to ourselves, sufficient in our own ability, beauty, and power.

Not even heaven disputed that “the great merchant ship Tyre” was beautiful and mighty (27:1-11). What a commercial empire she ruled (27:12-24)! But shockingly, she was headed for shipwreck (27:25-36). Any ship can be sunk by the Master of the Seas, and God used a great wind from the east (Babylon) to sink Tyre (26-27). This would cause all her merchants and trading partners to weep and wail (28-34), and fear for themselves (35-36). If the great city Tyre can fall, what about us?

MEDITATE. Can you think of anything more relevant to us in beautiful, wealthy, mighty America than the story of the fall of proud, beautiful Tyre? God has made us to be dependent on him. We work hard to become more wealthy, more beautiful, more self-sufficient. Not wrong, but perilous, because it can lead us to pride and independence from God. Take stock of your life. How dependent are you on God?

PRAY. *Whatever it takes, Lord, decrease my proneness to wander from you by keeping me desperate for you.*

READ ch. 28, the Bible museum's exhibit of "pride goeth before a fall."

REVIEW. Review the comments about the Tyre's beauty in ch. 26 and ch. 27 above. The charge leveled against Tyre in vv 1-11 is blunt: "your heart is proud" (2, 5, 17). The prince of Tyre claimed to be divine, to have divine authority, and to have divine intelligence (all true, historically). Starting in v. 11, God calls him the "king of Tyre" and compares him to the magnificent cherub-angel who guarded Eden's garden, in the beauty, glory, and status that God had given him. But he couldn't handle being so much more brilliant and beautiful than everyone else. His glory went to his head, and bent his mind. He lost his perspective, forgetting he was just another human being, frail and foolish. Seeing him strut like a peacock, God hurled him down like an idol to the ground (17). The adoring world was shocked at the fall of their star.

MEDITATE. How hard would it be to keep your head (humility) if you were a "prince (or princess) of Tyre"? Think of a few princes and princesses that people adore in today's world of entertainment and sports. In a famous Kansas saying from long ago, someone suggested that a proud state politician be given this epitaph:

Up was he stuck,
and in the very upness
of his stucktitude
he fell.

PRAY. Lord, save me from being good-looking, if good looks will make me proud. Keep me from being smart, if intelligence would make me independent of You. Preserve me from wealth, if money and possessions will cause me to forget You. Deliver me from being known and admired, if I would fail to give glory to You.