

CHAPTER 25

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges; but it must not end there, and therefore they must not. Ezekiel had finished his testimony which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watch-tower and wait the issue; and yet he must not be silent; there are divers nations bordering upon the land of Israel, which he must prophesy against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity. In this chapter we have his prophecy,

I. Against the Ammonites (v. 1-7).

II. Against the Moabites (v. 8-11).

III. Against the Edomites (v. 11-14).

IV. Against the Philistines (v. 15-17). That which is laid to the charge of each of them is their barbarous and insolent conduct towards God's Israel, for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hand. God's resenting it thus would be an encouragement to Israel to believe that though he had dealt thus severely with them yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them and plead their cause.

⌘ EZEKIEL 25:1-7

VARIOUS NATIONS THREATENED

Here,

I. The prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of *the Lord Jehovah the God of Israel*, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say, in answer to it? He is bidden to *set his face against the Ammonites*, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God *set his face against them*, for *the face of the Lord is against those that*

do evil, ^{<3896>}Psalm 34:16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore *set his face as a flint*, ^{<2007>}Isaiah 1:7. He must show his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent, and thus must show that, though he had prophesied so much and so long *against Israel*, yet still he was for Israel, and, while he witnessed against their corruptions, he adhered to and gloried in God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them, against whom their faces are set.

II. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years, and knows little of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities, v. 3. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, *Aha! so would we have it*. They were glad to see,

(1.) The temple burned, *the sanctuary profaned* by the victorious Chaldeans. This is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them.

(2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when *the land of Israel was made desolate*, the cities burnt, the country wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of *Judah went into captivity*. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them, partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion and the divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again (v. 6): *They clapped with their hands*, to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their *Plaudite* — *Give us your applause*, thinking it well acted; never was there

any thing more diverting or entertaining to them. They *stamped with their feet*, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion; they not only *rejoiced in heart*, but they could not forbear showing it, though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it, especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall (if so, they would have been the more excusable: most people are for themselves); but this as purely from a principle of malice and enmity: *Thou hast rejoiced in heart with all thy despite* (which signifies both scorn and hatred) *against the land of Israel*. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have rejoiced in Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but "cross or pile" [the toss of a halfpenny] which should be besieged first, Rabbath or Jerusalem, ^{<321>}Ezekiel 21:20. And they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their insolence against Jerusalem was to them an *evident token of perdition*, ^{<308>}Philippians 1:28. It is a very wicked thing to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in showing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, not any thing more provoking than to *help forward the affliction* when he is but *a little displeased*, ^{<315>}Zechariah 1:15.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin for this insolence which they were guilty of. God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, ^{<317>}Proverbs 24:17, 18. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore those that touch that shall be made to know that they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, ^{<328>}Ezekiel 21:28. Had they repented, that would have been revoked; but now it is ratified.

(1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them: *I will deliver thee to the men of the east*, first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the

country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem (as Josephus relates, *Antiq.* 10.181), and then to the Arabians, who were properly the *children of the east*, who, when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate, and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors. Shepherds' tents were their palaces; these they set up in the country of the Ammonites; there they *made their dwellings*, v. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country: *They shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk*; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle (v. 5): *I will make Rabbath*, that was a nice and splendid city, to be *a stable for camels*; for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbath to a better use. Rabbath had been a habitation of brutish men; justly therefore is it now made *a stable for camels* and the country *a couching-lace for flocks*, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished.

(2.) God himself acts as an enemy to them (v. 7): *I will stretch out my hand upon thee*, a hand that will reach far and strike home, which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand, nor bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them *for a spoil to the heathen*, so that all their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will *cut them off from the people* and *made them perish out of the countries*, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, ~~240~~ Jeremiah 49:1, etc. What can sound more terrible than that resolution (v. 7), *I will destroy thee*? For the almighty God is able both *to save and to destroy*, and it is *a fearful thing to fall into his hands*. Both the threatenings here (v. 5 and v. 7) conclude with this, *You shall know that I am the Lord*. For,

[1.] Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon.

[2.] Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God and be poor than be rich and ignorant of him.

VARIOUS NATIONS THREATENED

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to and triumphing in Jerusalem's fall.

I. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them (v. 8), because they said the same as the Moabites; but they were afterwards reckoned with by themselves, v. 12. Now observe,

1. What was the sin of the Moabites; they said, *Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen.* They triumphed,

(1.) In the apostasies of Israel, were please to see them forsake their God and worship idols, and hoped that in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten and the *house of Judah* would be *like all the heathen*, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink, and be run down, and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that, though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves *like the heathen*, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself *among the heathen*, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution.

(2.) In the calamities of Israel. They said, "*The house of Judah is like all the heathen*, in as bad a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this *overflowing scourge* of these parts of the world than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? Those that looked with so much scorn upon *all the heathen* are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them." Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges when they have lost their worldly prosperity, which does not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, have graces and

comforts within sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the *righteous and wicked*, yet indeed it is vastly different.

2. What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin (v. 9, 10): “*I will open the side of Moab, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it.*”

(1.) See here how it shall be exposed; the frontier-towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be *the glory of the country*, which they trusted in, and boasted of as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemies' hands, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection than that of the divine power, providence, and promise, will sooner or later see cause to be ashamed of their glorying.

(2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed: *The men of the east*, when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too. God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he gives to whomsoever he will. The Arabians, who are shepherds, and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an overruling Providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that live turbulently. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, They shall no *more be remembered among the nations* (v. 10), for they had been accessory to the murder of Gedaliah, ²⁴¹⁴Jeremiah 40:14. But of the Moabites it is said, *I will execute judgments upon Moab*; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that *they shall know that I am the Lord*, that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

II. The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, between whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1. The sin of the Edomites, v. 12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced to do them some real mischiefs, probably made inroads upon their frontiers and plundered their country: *Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance.* The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted. Amaziah severely chastised them (^{<241>}2 Kings 14:7), and for this they *took vengeance.* Now they would pay off all the old scores, and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, *Rase it, rase it* (^{<410>}Psalm 137:7), but cut *off those that escaped*, as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, v. 11, 12, etc. It is called here *revenging a revenge*, which intimates that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. “Herein he *has greatly offended.*” Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, *Vengeance is mine.* We are forbidden to *revenge* or to *bear a grudge.* Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now, in revenge for it, *to smite them secretly.* But the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old enmity when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it. ^{<621>}Deuteronomy 23:7, *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite.*

2. The judgments threatened against them for this sin. God will take them to task for it (v. 13): *I will stretch out my hand upon Edom* Their country shall be desolate *from Teman*, which lay in the south part of it; and *they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan*, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation.

(1.) They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will *lay his vengeance* upon them (v. 14): *They shall know my vengeance.* Those that will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and those that will not believe and fear his vengeance shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with *according to God's anger* and *according to his fury*, not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them.

(2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them *by the hand of his people Israel*. They suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, ^{<240>}Jeremiah 49:8. But besides that there were *saviours* to come *upon Mount Zion*, who should judge the mount of Esau (^{<312>}Obadiah 1:21), and Israel's Redeemer comes *with dyed garments from Bozrah* (^{<351>}Isaiah 63:1), this implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again to such a degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find (1 Mac. 5:3) that *Judas Maccabeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil*; and Josephus says (*Antiq.* 13.257), that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done.

III. The Philistines. And,

1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites: They have *dealt by revenge* with the people of Israel, and have *taken vengeance with a despiteful heart*, not to disturb them only, but to *destroy them*, for *the old hatred* (v. 15), the old grudge they bore them, or (as the margin reads it) *with perpetual hatred*, a hatred that began long since and which they resolved to continue. The anger was implacable: they *dealt by revenge*, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it.

2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, v. 16. Those that were for destroying God's people shall themselves be cut off and destroyed; and (v. 17) those that were for avenging themselves shall find that God will *execute great vengeance upon them*. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, Jeremiah 47. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehension of their own danger; when their neighbour's house was on fire it was time to look to their own; but their impiety and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round, and they were the less safe for being secure.