

**“HIM WHO DISHONORS YOU I WILL CURSE”**

**I. Introduction**

- A. As we move into a new section in the book of Ezekiel, we see a clear shift in focus.
  - 1. While the previous twenty chapters contained oracles of judgment about Jerusalem’s impending destruction, chapters 25 through 32 contain oracles of judgment against other nations.
  - 2. One of the things that this demonstrates is that all the peoples of the earth are under the Lord’s dominion and are thus accountable to him.
- B. In the chapter that we are studying today, we see how the Lord took notice of the ill treatment that Israel received at the hands of her neighboring nations.
  - 1. Interestingly, there is no evidence that these oracles were ever delivered to these nations.
  - 2. Though their subject matter has to do with the fate of these nations, these oracles were meant for the people of God.
  - 3. In giving these messages to his people, the Lord assured them that, in spite of their sin and the devastating consequences that it brought upon them, they were still his people.
  - 4. In these verses we see the Lord being faithful to what he said when he established his covenant with Abraham: “him who dishonors you I will curse.”

**II. Those Who Take Delight in the World’s Victories over the Church**

- A. The first part of the chapter contains a message about the Ammonites.

1. Ammon was Judah's neighbor to the northeast.
  2. The Ammonites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot.
  3. There was a long history of conflict and hostility between Ammon and Judah, though in the years leading up to the Babylonian invasion Judah and Ammon were briefly united in an alliance against Babylon.
  4. We saw back in chapter 21 that when Nebuchadnezzar entered the region of Palestine, he used divination to decide whether he should attack Jerusalem or the Ammonite city of Rabbah.
  5. This resulted in a decision to attack Jerusalem.
  6. The Ammonites certainly would have breathed a sigh of relief when they learned about this.
  7. But they also poured scorn on the Israelites when they saw the devastation that came upon them.
  8. This is what provoked the Lord to hand Ammon over to judgment.
  9. As we see in verse 3, God decreed their destruction because they said, "Aha!" over the desecration of God's sanctuary, over the destruction of the land of Israel, and over the deportation of its population.
- B. It is still the case today that the world rejoices when it sees itself triumphing over the church.
1. One of the ways we see this is in a phenomenon that journalist Rod Dreher describes as "the law of merited impossibility."
  2. Dreher uses this phrase to describe how moral progressives have responded to the contention that special expansions of civil rights for LGBT people will result in a violation of religious liberty for those who are morally opposed to the LGBT agenda.

3. Initially, the progressives say something like this: 'It is utterly absurd to suggest that the expansion of civil rights for LGBT persons will have any negative impact on anyone's religious liberty.'
  4. But later, when cases emerge in which the religious liberty of specific individuals and groups is threatened due to their refusal to affirm the LGBT ideology, the progressives say something along these lines: 'Well, they deserve it because they are so bigoted.'
  5. At first, it is deemed impossible.
  6. Then, when the impossible actually happens, it is deemed to be merited.
- C. This "law of merited impossibility" is a good example of how the world loves to gloat over the suffering that the church experiences.
1. The world hates the church because it hates God.
  2. It loves to see the church suffer because it sees this as evidence that it is succeeding in its project of setting itself against the Lord and against his Anointed.
  3. The world judges by appearances.
  4. When it sees the church losing its cultural influence and being marginalized, it assures itself by taking this as proof that what the church professes to believe is not really true.
  5. Yet God's people can take comfort in the fact that the words that the Lord spoke to Ammon in response to her gloating over Israel's downfall were fulfilled.
  6. Less than a decade after the fall of Jerusalem, the Ammonites were utterly wiped out.

### III. Those Who Point Out the Church's Conformity to the World

- A. We turn now to the second part of this oracle against Israel's neighbors, which begins in verse 8.
1. Here the Lord pronounces judgment on Moab, Judah's neighbor to the east.
  2. The Moabites were also descended from Lot, and they too had a long history of conflict with Israel.
  3. You will note that another nation is named alongside Moab in verse 8, the nation of Seir.
  4. As you can see by the footnote in the ESV, there is a textual question about whether or not this word was part of the original text.
  5. Some of the ancient manuscripts do not include Seir, but some of them do.
  6. Many scholars conclude that it was not original because Seir is consistently associated with Edom elsewhere in the Old Testament and because there is no mention of Seir in the rest of this oracle.
  7. It is possible that the name was inserted in some of the manuscripts due to a copyist's error.
- B. The complaint that the Lord brings against Moab is that when they saw what happened to Jerusalem they said, "Behold, the house of Judah is like all the other nations."
1. In other words, Moab looked at Israel's corruption and determined that her claim to elect status was false.
  2. Now, the interesting thing about this is that the Lord himself has made essentially the same point repeatedly throughout this book of prophecy.

3. It was because of Israel's failure to maintain their distinction from other nations that the Lord handed them over to the Babylonians.
  4. While this was true, Moab was wrong to draw the conclusion that there was no distinction between Israel and all the other nations.
  5. In spite of how the Israelites were living, the Lord had set them apart as his own.
  6. Their failure to maintain holiness did not change the fact that they were set apart as God's covenant people.
  7. This is why Moab's mockery of Israel provoked the Lord to execute his judgments upon them.
- C. The world still looks at the church in the same way that Moab looked at Judah.
1. It points to the many scandals involving church leaders.
  2. It calls attention to the hypocrisy of individual believers.
  3. It concludes that Christians are no different than everyone else in the world.
  4. To a certain extent, the world is correct about this.
  5. For one thing, there are people in the church who are not truly born again, and their unregenerate condition gets manifested in a variety of ways.
  6. For another thing, even true Christians sometimes fall into grievous sins and bring disgrace upon the name of Christ.
  7. And then there is the fact that even the most faithful Christians do not always conduct themselves in a perfectly upright manner.

8. Nevertheless, the Lord still marks out his church as the people whom he has set apart as his very own.
9. That being the case, anyone who holds the church in derision because of its frailty and impurity will one day have to answer to God.

#### IV. Those Who Act Vengefully Against the Church

- A. This brings us to the last two parts of the chapter, where the Lord speaks messages of judgment against Edom and Philistia.
  1. Edom was Judah's neighbor to the south.
  2. The Edomites were descended from Jacob's bother Esau.
  3. Other Old Testament passages tell us that the Edomites took advantage of the fall of Jerusalem by making incursions inside Israel's boundaries and seizing land.
  4. As for the Philistines, they occupied five coastal cities to Israel's west, the region that is known today as the Gaza Strip.
  5. The Israelites had numerous conflicts with the Philistines, dating back to the days of the judges.
  6. Here in Ezekiel, the Philistines are confronted for the same reason that the Edomites are confronted: for acting vengefully against the house of Israel.
- B. While the Lord punished Judah for her covenant unfaithfulness, he was still in covenant with her.
  1. We see this in verse 14, where he still refers to them as "my people."
  2. Because of the covenant bond between God and Israel, the vengeful assaults that the Edomites and Philistines waged against the

Israelites were taken by the Lord as assaults against him.

3. The Lord takes notice when the world sets itself against his covenant people.
4. God contends with those who contend with us.
5. He puts to shame all who rejoice at the calamities that befall his church.

## V. Conclusion

- A. Christians sometimes struggle with the things that the Bible has to say about the judgment that will come upon those who persist in their opposition to God and his church.
  1. What we have to remember is that the judgment that lies in store for the world is inextricably connected with our salvation.
  2. When the kingdom of God comes in its consummated form, it will break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world and bring them to an end, and then God's kingdom will stand forever.
- B. Of course it is true that until Christ comes again at the end of this age, the church is called to announce the gospel's offer of salvation to all the peoples of the world.
  1. But the day will one day come when that offer will be withdrawn and the fate of the world will be sealed.
  2. John Calvin offered a helpful perspective on this when he said, "We ought to pray that this man, and that man, and every man, may be saved, and thus include the whole human race, because we cannot yet distinguish the elect from the reprobate; and yet, while we desire the coming of the kingdom of God, we likewise pray that God may destroy his enemies." [cited in Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor*, 150-151]