

## EZEKIEL 25

## AGAINST FOUR HEATHEN NATIONS

Here, for the present, Ezekiel ceases from his labors that were particularly for the good of his own people. He has disclosed the people's sins, and revealed the Lord's judgments. He has done all that could be done to impress upon their minds the necessity and the nearness of the Divine retribution; and he has opened out, on every side, the purposes of God in connection with it. Now, therefore, he must cease from this activity, until the Lord gave him a new series of communications to give his people; and then he would yet do for them the part of a faithful friend and comforter, in the time of their greatest desolation, after the city of Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians. In the meantime, however, the prophet was not to be left idle. This chapter and the seven that follow it are filled with delineations of guilt and warnings of Divine judgment against the heathen nations that were neighbors to the land of Judah. The prophet made it abundantly clear that if the covenant-people fell under the stroke of Divine justice, their fall – so far from being the gain of the world – was only the sure forerunner of its doom.

The first of the heathen neighbors of God's people that was to receive a word from the prophet was the land of Ammon. The feelings attributed to the Ammonites in verses 1-7 are evidently those of bitter hostility toward the Lord's covenant-people. In Psalm 83, we find this feeling ascribed to them in its most offensive form, where the combined enemies of Judah – headed by Ammon and Moab – are represented as saying: "Let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." Now, for a short time, this impious wish was granted – causing them to clap their hands and shout their huzzas over their subdued and captive foe. And from 2 Kings 24:2, it also appears that they took an active part, along with the Babylonians, in accomplishing the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, the Ammonites were – in the strictest sense – enemies of God. And it is expressly on this account that judgment is here denounced against them.

The next word of judgment goes out against the land of Moab (verses 8-11). It may be confusing at first to find Moab here mixed up with Seir and Ammon. But Ammon, Moab, and Seir were all adjoining countries, stretching from the land of Gilead in the north, in an unbroken line to the shores of the Red Sea. And all three of these peoples acted very much in concert in their hostile feelings and operations toward God's covenant-people. Therefore, it was unavoidable that the same destroying wave which swallowed up the one nation would also

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord's words of judgment against the land of Ammon – verses 1-7
- ❖ The Lord's words of judgment against the land of Moab – verses 8-11
- ❖ The Lord's words of judgment against the land of Edom – verses 12-14
- ❖ The Lord's words of judgment against the land of the Philistines – verses 15-17



sweep over the others. Of the precise manner and time of the accomplishment of this prophecy of destruction, we have no record; but long before the time of Christ, all traces had ceased of Moab's existence as a nation.

The land of Edom also came in under Divine judgment (verses 12-14). The specific sin that is here charged against Edom was not simply a hatred or opposition to the covenant-people, but it was a deep-seated implacable vengeance. It was the hereditary spirit of wickedness which descended from their father Esau. When the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, the Edomites supposed that their objective of revenge was forever gained. They encouraged the ruthless Babylonian conquerors to complete the work of destruction, and they kept watch to strike down the poor Jewish fugitives who fled from the enemy to seek safety in other lands. (See Psalm 137, Amos 1:11, and Obadiah 11.) But the vengeful spite of Edom could not defeat the purposes of God; for according to the Lord's Word, the Jews returned from Babylonian exile to occupy their former habitation. And from their comparatively small beginnings, they rose again to the position of a formidable power. After many hostile encounters between the two peoples, the Edomites were finally subdued by the Maccabees, who compelled them to be circumcised, so that they might be incorporated among the Jewish people. In this external subjection of the Edomites to the power and dominion of Jacob's descendants, there was a fulfillment of the original promise given to Rebekah: "The elder shall serve the younger." But it is only in a limited and imperfect measure that we see such external victories and forced compliances as the fulfillment of this and similar predictions. These were only the shadow and symbol of what would be accomplished when the Lord's covenant-people became the New Testament Church of our Lord Jesus, for Christ has given His Church authority and power and dominion in this world. Viewed in respect to that elevated position, all Edomite rivalry and spite – all worldly opposition and counter-dominion – is doomed to give way! For in Christ, His people rule as the governor among the nations; all must serve Him, and the nation which does not serve Him *must* perish!

Judgment upon the Philistines is spoken of in verses 15-17, and little requires to be said upon this part of Ezekiel's prophecy. Their hereditary enmity to the Lord's covenant-people is sufficiently known. After the days of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:8), we hear nothing more of them in the historical books of Scripture; but since they still retained their enmity to the cause and people of God, they were made the subject of severe denunciations in the sermons and writings of the prophets.

*Lord, we repent of times when we have had a spirit of jealousy and envy against our brothers and sisters in Christ, as Esau did against Jacob. We pray for grace that we may live together in brotherly love and friendship! Amen.*

