

Ezekiel 28-33 • Chapter Study

INTRO

Beginning in ch. 26, Eze embarks on a long section where he announces the judgment of God on the kingdoms **bordering** Judah.

These had been part of the rebellious alliance against Babylon.

A brief recap

Babylon had already conquered the entire region & made them vassals.

Only Egypt & Tyre were yet unconquered; but everyone knew the Babylonian king Neb II would eventually launch a campaign to rein them in as well.

Zedekiah, the Babylonian-installed king of Jerusalem, at the prompting of some political fools, sent emissaries to Egypt & the other neighboring kingdoms and forged an alliance to refuse sending the annual tribute to Babylon; which was in reality an insurrection.

Zedekiah assumed when the Neb heard all these kingdoms stood united against him, with the backing of Egypt, he'd give up an plans of further conquest.

But rather than give up, Neb saw this as the excuse to go & finish off the Egyptians he'd been wanting to face off with anyway.

So the Babylonians marched back into the region, and much to chagrin, Egypt stayed home.

They were more than happy to betray their allies if it meant the Babylonians ranks would be **thinned** before they got to Egypt.

And besides, it would take them a while to besiege the capitals of Judah & the others and give Egypt longer to prepare their defenses.

So last week in ch. 25 we saw Ezekiel's proclamation of judgment on Ammon, Moab, Edom on Judah's eastern border, then Philistia on the west. [map]

Chs. 26 & 27 deal w/the powerful Phoenician city-state of Tyre, which the Babylonians conquered after the fall of Jerusalem.

By way of summary, Tyre was the heart of a far-flung & hugely wealthy trading civilization called the Phoenician Empire.

Tyre had planted literally hundreds of colonies all over the Mediterranean, as far away as the coast of Spain on the Atlantic.

The huge & powerful city of Carthage which would later give Rome so much grief, began as a Tyrian colony.

Though most reviews of world history give little mention of the Phoenicians, they really ought to be numbered among the great empires of the ancient world.

And the **center of it all was Tyre**, along w/her sister city of **Sidon**, just up the coast a few miles.

During the days of Kings David & Solomon, there was an alliance between Israel & Tyre.

But a coup in Tyre installed a new dynasty that was rabidly devoted to the Phoenician gods Baal & Astarte.

The new Tyrians king Ethbaal married his daughter Jezebel to Israel's wicked king Ahab.

Jezebel then embarked on a campaign make Baal & Astarte the sole gods worshipped in Israel.

She killed the priests of Yahweh & tore down His altars.

This is where the prophet Elijah comes on the scene.

He marched in before Ahab & announced there'd be no more rain and famine would come.

Sure enough – a deadly drought ensued; which stirred up the people against the king & his corrupt wife.

Then Elijah challenged the priests of Baal Jezebel imported to a duel on Mt. Carmel.

In short – God won & Jezebel lost face before all the people.

There was a brief return of the people to faith in God, but the infection of idolatry Jezebel & Ahab had brought was never really rooted out.

It grew over the following decades & led to the fall of the kingdom to the Assyrians.

The point of all this is that **Tyre was partially guilty** for what happened to Israel.

She embarked on a campaign to infect Israel w/the abominations of Baal worship.

Chs 26 & 27 which we looked at last week announce God's judgment on the city.

Now Ezekiel turns to declare **judgment on Tyre's ruler**.

¹ The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, ² “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because your heart *is* lifted up, and you say, ‘I *am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,’ Yet you *are* a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god.

Tyre was ingeniously situated.

The mainland city was huge & built on the shore, protected on the land side by a massive wall.

But any wall can eventually fall, so they’d built the center of the city on an island a half mile off shore.

They carved out 2 harbor to base their massive navy that literally ruled the entire Mediterranean.

So if the mainland city did fall, they could retreat to the island & outlast any siege because no one could defeat their navy.

It left the king of Tyre feeling invincible.

And being the ruler of such a vast territory, sitting in the midst of seemingly unlimited wealth, he fancied himself a god.

³ (Behold, you *are* wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!

⁴ With your wisdom and your understanding you have gained riches for yourself, and gathered gold and silver into your treasuries;

⁵ By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches),”

The **arrogance** of the king of Tyre was an amazing thing to see & hear.

This guy really did think of himself as **inherently superior** to others.

⁶ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, ⁷ Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, the most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor.

⁸ They shall throw you down into the Pit, and you shall die the death of the slain in the midst of the seas. God says, “You NOT invincible! And I’m going to prove it.

You think you can’t be dragged off your throne & ide like everyone else?

You’re about to be disabused of such foolishness.”

⁹ “Will you still say before him who slays you, ‘I *am* a god’? But you *shall be* a man, and not a god, in the hand of him who slays you. ¹⁰ You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of aliens; For I have spoken,” says the Lord God.’ ”

This is a great image God sets before him.

As you lie on the ground under the foot of some low-rank soldier whose sword tip is pressed against your throat, are you going to arrogantly bluster then, ““You can’t do this to me! I’m a god!”

When that tip splits your skin and the blood flows, your mortality will be clear to you and all.

But now things turn really odd.

God tells Ezekiel to shift from the **proclamation** of the King of Tyre’s **doom**, to a **lament** over his lost potential.

When Hiram was King of Tyre, there was an alliance between Tyre & Israel.

Hiram was a friend to David & Solomon.

And it seems David’s faith in Yahweh moved Hiram toward faith in God.

That may have been why the rebel **Ethbaal** staged the coup that removed Hiram and set up a new dynasty; Hiram was forsaking the ancestral gods of the Phoenicians.

So the throne & ruler of Tyre went from great promise utter abomination.

What we find here **points past** the human actors & the drama carried out in the palace of Tyre to the **spiritual entities** working behind the scenes.

¹¹ Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹² “Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You *were* the seal of perfection, Today we’d say “the SUM of perfection.”

full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God;

What? When was the king of Tyre in Eden? This is a reference to Creation.

The King of Tyre may have been old, but not **THAT** old.

Today we **make fun** of someone by saying they're as **old as dirt**.

This says the Tyrian king is **OLDER** than dirt.

Clearly this isn't the actual monarch who sat on Tyre's throne.

This looks beyond him to someone else.

Well, let's inventory who we **KNOW** was in Eden.

God – Adam – Eve - Satan.

So, let's figure out which of these it is.

It's not God because He's speaking to and about someone **else**.

It's neither Adam nor Eve because they're long gone.

It's gotta be Satan. As we read on, we realize yep; that's who's in view here.

Every precious stone *was* your covering: The sardius, topaz, & diamond, beryl, onyx, & jasper, sapphire, turquoise, & emerald with gold.

He was clothed in a glorious garment of dazzling multi-hued brilliance.

Visually – he was stunning!

The workmanship of your timbrels & pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.

Timbrels & pipes are musical instruments.

The idea here is that his **voice** was rich & melodic.

¹⁴ “You *were* the anointed cherub who covers;

Anointing means being assigned & equipped to fulfill a special function.

To cover means to be set in a position of authority.

And the **cherubim** are a small, select group of spiritual creatures who act as a kind of ceremonial bodyguard to God's throne.

This creature was the **head/lead cherub**.

God says -

I established [created & set] you; You were on the holy mountain of God;

Mountains are idiomatic in the Bible for the place of power & rule.

Many scholars believe this speaks of the place in heaven where God's throne rests & where God sits to receive the worship of the angels.

You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

Since there isn't another passage in the Bible that describes someplace in heaven as possessing “fiery stones” we ought to understand it this way –

These are the **same stones** referred to in v. 13.

The emphasis here isn't on the stones but the phrase “**You walked back and forth.**”

IOW – this was his **regular practice**. He had **free rein** in heaven.

His role, whatever it was, meant free access to all of heaven & everywhere he went, his beauty was seen & heard.

¹⁵ You *were* perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

There was no flaw in him from the moment of his creation, until sin arose from within him.

This is crucial.

Though this creature **went bad**, there was nothing in it that **WAS INHERENTLY** bad that **made the badness inevitable**.

God can't be held responsible for Lucifer's fall.

For you see, that's who we're looking at here.

Among the cherubim was one named Lucifer who was their leader.

He was perfect when created; no flaw.

And part of that creation included the power to choose.

His appearance was glorious; his voice beautiful.

That it's described her by musical instruments has moved Bible scholars to conclude he was responsible for leading the angels in worship of God.

It seems that of all creation, he was highest, with only God as Creator being higher.

¹⁶ “By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.

Lucifer's many privileges, beauty, & authority all conspired to convince him he was **more** than he actually was.

He then moved **contrary** to God's **will**; the essence of sin.

God then removed him from his place.

The glory he once possessed, along w/his heavenly access, were revoked.

So, what was the iniquity that sparked all this?

¹⁷ “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.

Satan's fatal flaw was **pride**; the elevation of self to a place not appointed by God.

This is made clearer in Isa 14 where we read –

¹² “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

By combining Isa 14 & Eze 28, a picture emerges of what happened with the devil = **Unholy Ambition**.

Lucifer was 2nd only to God.

Being so close to God's throne & seeing all the worship & adoration He received, Lucifer didn't just want to **lead** it, he wanted **to be the object** of it.

His free access of all of heaven saw his influence spread far & wide; & his beauty & wisdom were impressive.

He began to build a case among sympathetic ears that it was time for a change.

But what beef did Lucifer have with God that would gain any attraction with the angels he persuaded to join his rebellion?

I mean, if it was just a choice between God & Lucifer – the choice was obvious.

God is God. Lucifer is just 1 of his creations.

As glorious as he was, he was still **ONLY A CREATED BEING**.

Let me be clear – the Bible doesn't tell us what Lucifer's complaint was.

But there's a interesting hint in Jewish folklore.

Orthodox Jews have long said Lucifer fell he learned of **God's plan to make man**.

That God was going to create something **lower** than spirit, something **physical** called **matter**.

Then he was going to shape it into a body, and impart a spirit to it that was in God's own image.

This creature, having such a humble origin, literally created from dirt – would then grow in relationship with God, going from ignorance to wisdom, and would one day become God's eternal companion, thereby supplanting Lucifer as second to God.

Furthermore, this dirtball elevated to glory would rule over Lucifer and the angels and it would be Lucifer and the angels job to serve the dirtballs while they were still dirty!

That was too much for Lucifer and a third of the angelic host which staged an unsuccessful coup in heaven.

Lucifer fell to become satan.

The angels that joined him became the demons.

And forever after, the object of their special rage is, guess who – Human beings!

Because we bear the image of God, and because of our God-ordained destiny.

Satan lost his bid for glory – so he’s determined to keep as many of us from it as he can.

Think about the temptation in Eden when he came to Eve.

What did he promise her – She could be as God; the very thing he aspired to – to elevate himself to God’s throne.

Hey, it had worked to deceive himself, he knew it would work on her.

It’s the same lie people have believed throughout history and will be THE lie the antichrist uses in the last days to deceive the world.

So it’s no wonder it’s the lie the King of Tyre buys – and ends up falling by.

The devil is referred to in 2 Cor 4:4 as the **god of this world** & in Eph 2:2 as the **prince** who works in the children of disobedience.

Sometimes demons will influence a leader to accomplish some strategy they’ve cooked up.

Satan himself was the spiritual power guiding the King of Tyre, just as he will one day empower the antichrist.

V. 17 marks a transition **back** to the actual human king of Tyre while at the same time looking beyond him to the spiritual entity empowering him.

That carries on in the next 2 vs as well.

¹⁸ “You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. ¹⁹ All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, and *shall be* no more forever.” ’ ’ ”

While this applies specifically to the ruler of Tyre who was brought low, **first** by the Babylonians, then later wiped out by the Greeks under Alexander,

It also points to satan’s ultimate destruction when God finally ends his shenanigans & confines him to the Lake of Fire.

Vs. 20-24 are the announcement of Sidon’s doom.

She was Tyre’s sister city abt 20 miles up the coast. Neb wiped her out as he laid in the siege on Tyre.

Vs. 25 & 6 are a much needed promise of Israel’s future restoration & blessing under the good ness of God.

²⁵ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. ²⁶ And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God.” ’ ’ ”

That will get a much fuller treatment when we get to ch. 36.

This is just a little teaser to stir our hope in God.

Ch. 29-32

This is a long section dedicated to Egypt.

29:1-16 are Ezekiel’s proclamation that the time of Egypt’s judgment has come.

¹⁷ And it came to pass in the 27th year, in the 1st month, on the 1st day of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁸ “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to labor strenuously against Tyre; every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder rubbed raw; yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the labor which they expended on it.

Neb’s siege of Tyre lasted for 12 years!

The Babylonians wore their helmets for so long it resulted in baldness and they had to carry so many loads of dirt & debris to make the ramps to breach the city walls, their shoulders were rubbed raw.

Then, when they finally did defeat the mainland city & the island fortress eventually surrendered, they found that the Tyrians had shipped off all its wealth.

To Egypt!

Pharaoh Hophra had made an alliance with Tyre.

The Egyptians shipped them food and supplies during the siege, while the ships returned to Egypt

loaded with the city's wealth.

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Surely I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he shall take away her wealth, carry off her spoil, and remove her pillage; and that will be the wages for his army.

²⁰ I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labor, because they worked for Me,' says the Lord God. The Babylonians were the agents of God's judgment on all these wicked kingdoms.

Their pay was the loot of Egypt, which fell to Neb in 567 BC.

²¹ 'In that day [when Egypt fell] I will cause the horn of the house of Israel to spring forth, and I will open your mouth to speak in their midst. Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord.' "

The long foolishness of the Jews was their dependence on Egypt.

Even after Jerusalem fell, the Jewish exiles held out hope Egypt would break the Babylonians dominion and that would crack open the door for their return to rebuild.

God says that when Egypt falls, he will begin to stir the exiles in Babylon toward their eventual return.

But it can only begin when the false hope in Egypt is finally shattered.

God will start by stirring up new leaders among the exiles.

And **Ezekiel's ministry** will find a new level of anointing.

Ch. 30

In vs. 1-19, God announces the defeat of Egypt & her African allies.

In vs. 20-26 He speaks against the Pharaoh whose actively resisted God's plans by propping up nations God determined to judge.

Chs. 31-32

In ch. 31 Ezekiel likens Egypt to a mighty tree that is cut down.

Ch. 32: 1-16 are a lament for Pharaoh & Egypt.

Then in vs. 17-32, Ezekiel gives a long pronouncement that Egypt will not, contrary to its long held view of itself, escape God's judgment.

Because they've used **violence & deceit** to take advantage of other peoples, they'll suffer the same fate as those who used the same means to take advantage of others.

They too will be dragged down into the pit of death.

As were, and they're all mentioned here –

The Assyrians, Elamites, Hittites, Edom, the north countries, & Phoenicians.

Ch. 33

Since we covered vs. 1-11 Sunday, we'll jump to v. 12 & leave it to you to get the CD/DVD if you missed it.

¹² "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of *his righteousness* in the day that he sins.'

The point of this section is the **fairness of God's judgment**.

The idea here isn't a **tally** of evil or good acts; as though a person is judged on whether their good outweighs their bad, or vice versa.

The issue is the person's heart.

The righteous **are** righteous **because they look to God** & trust in Him.

The wicked reject God & don't care about **being** or **doing** what's right;

Only what's fun, feels good, or gets them what they want.

¹³ When I say to the righteous *that* he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins which he has committed

shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

This amplifies what we just saw.

God judges us based on what we ultimately trust in, Him or self.

But – and this is crucial – What that is, WILL BE SHOWN by how we live and the moral choices we make.

It's simply not true that a person can love & trust God & sin as if there was no tomorrow.

Just as it's impossible for someone to have a corrupt, selfish heart, & live a morally pure & righteous life.

What we *really* are will always out.

¹⁷ “Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. ¹⁹ But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. ²⁰ Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.”

²¹ And it came to pass in the 12th year of our captivity, in the 10th month, on the 5th day of the month, *that* one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been captured!”

²² Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute. In ch. 24:26-27, Ezekiel foretold a fugitive from Jerusalem’s destruction would come report the city’s fall to the Exiles.

This is the fulfillment of that prophecy.

He arrived in January, 585 BC.

As we saw last week, ever since ch. 3, Ezekiel had been unable to speak unless he was uttering a divine oracle.

Now his power of regular speech is restored after 7½ yrs.

²³ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ²⁴ “Son of man, they who inhabit those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one, and he inherited the land. But we *are* many; the land has been given to us as a possession.’

Back in Judah, though Jerusalem is a pile of smoking ruins, once the Babylonians marched away, many Jewish refugees who’d fled to the hills & across the Jordan, returned.

They found their villages & towns rubble.

But they tried to put a good face on their situation, saying – “We started with just 1 guy – Abraham; back when there was nothing here.

“Look at us now; there’s lots of us & at least we have stones to rebuild with.”

²⁵ “Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You eat *meat* with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land? ²⁶ You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and you defile one another’s wives. Should you then possess the land?” ’

While the survivors talked a good game as far as their determination to rebuild – they were still DOING the stupid things that had caused them to lose everything in the first place; ***the still worshiped idols.***

²⁷ “Say thus to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “As I live, surely those who *are* in the ruins shall fall by the sword, and the one who *is* in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who *are* in the strongholds and caves shall die of the pestilence. ²⁸ For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. ²⁹ Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.” ’

The refugee-survivors will not be able to make a go of it.

The land will swallow them & become desolate – which is exactly what history tells us the land became during this time.

Vs. 30-33 will be our text Sunday.