

Ezekiel Chapter 28 - John Karmelich

Title: The problem with having everything we could ever want!

So far, I've been discussing Ezekiel at a several chapter per week pace! I want to slow it down to focus on the danger we all should be lectured upon every now and then: Dealing with pride! This book so far has pretty much been insulting everyone who thinks they're a good person "just as they are"! It leads to the key point of Chapter 28: The danger of trusting in anything other than God! I realize I'm preaching to the choir! If you're reading this, odds are good you're a God-fearing Christian! Those who don't care about God don't read bible studies! So why preach on the danger of turning from God? I assume we get the danger of sin, but do we think about the ultimate danger of turning from Him? I realize we all have our moments where we sin! I want to give a quick lecture on the ultimate danger of turning from God! It's a key point of this chapter. It's about the satanic power behind sin, and the consequences when our leaders turn from God. A sermon on the ultimate danger of sin is a little swallowing medicine that does not taste very good, but we know it will do wonders for our life if we take it!

This chapter has some direct references to the existence of Satan himself! It also mentions the Garden of Eden as the ultimate example of turning from God. Ezekiel 28 takes it to an extreme, to teach of the ultimate danger of not repenting! I recall years ago when my youngest daughter asked me why did God create Satan? I responded, "So God can show He's greater than any evil that exists and our trust in Him can overcome anything and everything demons throw at us!" She smiled as she got the sentiment that I was trying to express. As I studied this text, I thought about the things Satan does and I'll share as I go through this lesson. Ok, time for details:

First, remember this is the third of three chapters dealing with a city called Tyre. It was located in what is Lebanon today. There is a modern city of Tyre, but it's not located in the same spot. A quick history of this place would be helpful to lead into Chapter 28. It was a very powerful nation, that got rich by a lot of trade with just about everyone in the region. They had a powerful navy too, plus ships they used for trade! The "big gun" when Ezekiel lived were the Babylonians (based in Iraq today). They wanted to conquer the region and well, Tyre was in the way. Babylon had a powerful army but they didn't have a significant navy. Tyre survived a total destruction by moving most of its people to a nearby island off the coast. That's why Chapter 27 mentioned nations conquering them! Centuries later it was Alexander the Great who conquered Tyre as his main goal was to defeat the biggest enemy of the Greeks (Persia). He wanted to destroy Tyre as he thought they'd help the Persians. He took the centuries old debris that the Babylonians left from its war on Tyre and Alexander built a bridge to that island. This shows God kept His promise that Tyre was "going down for the count" and nations (plural) would do that!

The chapter also has a few lines about the nearby city of Sidon. That city was a religious center for the false idols that dominated Israel for centuries. It's God saying in effect, if you trust in riches and power you're going down like Tyre. If you trust in false gods like Sidon, you're going down as well. Finally, it ends with God's unconditional promises to the nation of Israel. The underlying point's trusting in things other than God are a waste of time and God will win in the end!

The first 10 verses focus on Tyre's leader. Ezekiel wrote this shortly before the Babylonians started the siege on their city. (For those who don't know a siege is about surrounding an enemy and starving them before attacking.) Again, Tyre survived this due to their navy. Still God's perfect knowledge of history made the scope of this prediction cover their entire destruction. Obviously, I'm not here to focus on the

nation that died over 2,000 years ago. The point is Tyre was an entity with lots of stuff plus had a navy to protect them. Therefore, they thought they didn't need anything. Kind of like when Jesus told a story about a rich man who complained about his lack of space for his stuff then built more space only to die after stating that (Luke 12:16-21). There is nothing wrong with being successful. The danger is to trust in that success and not God. That's the ultimate danger of "pride". It's the false view I'm good just as I am and don't need God's help, let alone anyone else to help me!

I'm also fascinated that Ezekiel lists Daniel as a source of wisdom in this section. They lived about the same time. Obviously, Ezekiel's Jewish audience would know who he is. I suspect Daniel was famous at that time for interpreting the dream of the Babylonian king (Daniel 2). Bottom line, this section has a set of warnings on trusting in wealth and not God! Remember Tyre dealt with Israel for generations, so they knew about God based on their history! As I always preach God holds us accountable for what we know about Him. I like to joke the bad news of knowing our bible is now we are accountable for that!

Anyway, after condemning the leader of that place, Ezekiel goes "one step up the ladder" and now he's focusing on the power behind that leader. Let me start by saying I never take the "devil made me do it" view on sin! Near the end of Revelation, Satan is locked up for 1,000 years. I used to wonder why it is God did it that way? I learned it's to show how sinful we are, even without Satan "pulling our strings"! We are positive Ezekiel is talking about Satan as it tells of his beauty when he was created and the fact he was in the garden of Eden. Why would God create something that powerful when He knew Satan is going to rebel against Him? To show the ultimate danger of having it all, leads to an eternal path away from Him. It is also to show God is more powerful than anything He created. So why is Satan so "hell bent" on drawing people away from God? The short version is God set it up that way, so Satan can rule the world until Jesus returns. Therefore, Satan's doing all he can to stall that event! This is here to show us the power behind those who turn from God. Satan (and his demons), encourage people to turn from God to make them think "they got it all" so who needs God? Besides that point, this section includes a bit about Satan's ultimate destruction. So, in effect this chapter is one reminder after another of what is the outcome of all who turn from God.

Then the chapter switches to a nearby city (in Lebanon today) called Sidon. They were the same group (Phoenicians) as Tyre. God picked on them next as they were the center of "Baal worship"! That was a false deity that promised prosperity if worshipped. Many Israelites were guilty of Baal worship starting when they first entered the land. It makes sense while God's "using the Babylonians for judgement" He also condemns the worship of false gods while He's condemning trusting in our wealth. The fake gods aren't mentioned by name, but it's implied they'll fall, and they'll no longer be an issue to His people.

Speaking of the Israelites, the last two verses give the promise that God is still God of Israel. One day He is going to unite Israelites in worship of Him (See Romans 11). As I say a lot, if Jesus will rule the world from Israel one day as the bible teaches, He must have a nation of Israelites believing in Him!

I know I covered a lot of this superficially. The point for you and me, is not that say making money is a bad thing or having a strong army is bad. What's the danger (besides cheating to get there) is trusting in those things and thinking one doesn't need God because one already has all that one needs. I realize this is old news for us believers. Still, when we have moments where we are doing well financially, or feel secure in our borders, we must remember not only who we worship but why: Because the best way to live life is to trust in God for guidance and live to make a difference for Him! That's why He saved us in the first place!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!