

Ezekiel 25

- Welcome to chapter 25 and to the second half of Ezekiel and the third major division of the book
 - Up through chapter 24, we've followed the circumstances of the prophet Ezekiel living in exile in Babylon with his fellow Jews
 - Ezekiel joined the exiles following a second invasion by Nebuchadnezzar's army
 - He's been in the land for several years already, prophesying to the people of Israel
 - And his message during those years has been one of unrelenting judgment
 - As the Lord directed, Ezekiel told the nation over and over again that their nation was about to suffer a great destruction
 - The nation's centuries of misdeeds have now come home to roost, and God's wrath upon was about to be poured out on His people
 - The nation would experience one final destructive siege and defeat by Nebuchadnezzar
 - The people in exile heard Ezekiel's warnings and refused to accept their circumstances
 - They ignored him, mocked him and gave excuses
 - They dismissed the warnings
 - And then after nearly a decade, the date of judgment finally came
- As the battle commenced, Ezekiel narrated events to the exiles in real time
 - As the Babylonian army advanced on the city some 500 miles to the west, Ezekiel told the exiles the day of judgment had finally arrived
 - The siege on the city began on January 15, 588 BC, and lasted three years until January 8, 585 BC
 - And during that time the people of Israel suffered unimaginably

- And as the city fell for the final time and the remaining Jews were either killed or enslaved, Israel's enemies celebrated
- For all who witnessed these events, the end of the nation seemed at hand
 - Who could recover from such a devastating defeat?
 - How could the people of Israel survive much less regain their place in the land?
 - Certainly, that's what Israel's enemies thought and it's also what many of the exiles believed as well
- As the reader reaches the end chapter 24, we're also left wondering for the fate of the nation?
 - The prophet has set up the prospect of Israel's end at the hands of an angry God
 - Yet he's also alluded to future glory according to the promises made in the covenants
 - So which will it be? Devastation or glory?
 - As it turns out, the answer is both: *devastation then glory*
- But because the battle last three years, the prophet spends that time speaking prophecies against Israel's enemy's who mocked her judgment
 - That's the section we enter into now, and it runs from chapters 25-32
 - It's a bridge between the messages of judgment and visions of Israel's glory in the Kingdom to come
 - And it answers a fundamental concern for the Jewish people
 - How can God deal with His own people in this way while leaving Israel's enemy's untouched?
 - So to fill the time between the beginning and end of Israel's destruction, Ezekiel reassures the exiles that Israel's enemies won't escape
 - As the Lord was at work enforcing the terms of Israel's covenant, He was also fulfilling His covenant to Abraham
 - Specifically, the Lord told Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that He would curse those who cursed Israel

- In fact, the Law itself promises that as God brings Israel out of exile and into glory, He will also move against Israel's enemies

Deut. 30:4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.

Deut. 30:5 And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

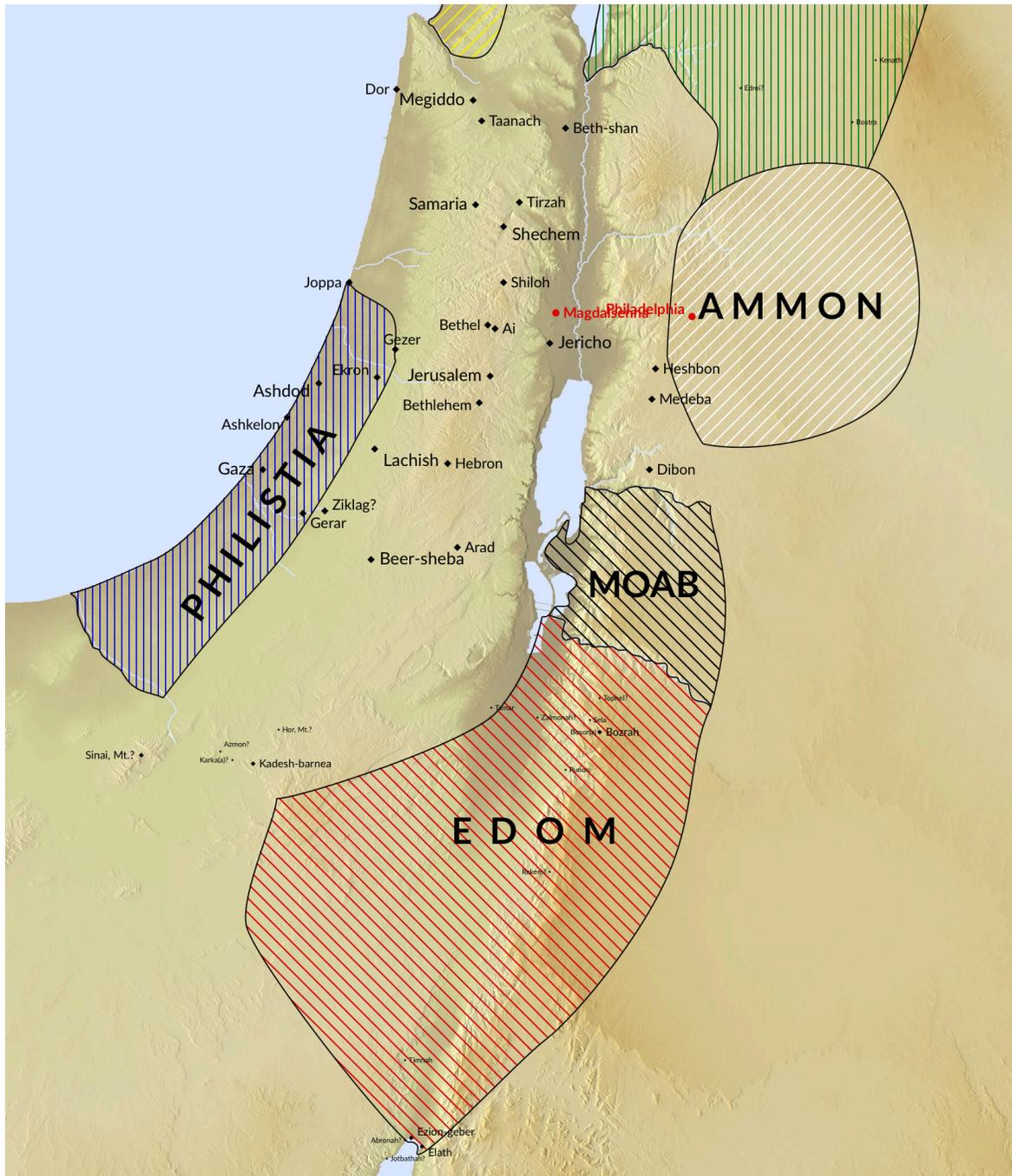
Deut. 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Deut. 30:7 And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.

Deut. 30:8 And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today.

- So the Lord connects three major events in His plan for Israel
 - First, the nation will be regathered into her land
 - Secondly, the entire nation of Israel will – for the first time – have hearts that perfectly obey the Lord
 - And thirdly, the nation will live in peace and prosperity having seen all its enemies conquered
 - All of these things happen at a point in time and bring to fulfillment all of God's promises
- Overall, the Bible lists 11 nations or people groups who were enemies of Israel and will be judged for their role in opposing God's people
 - Those nations were Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Damascus, Babylon, Ethiopia, and Assyria
 - Ezekiel speaks against six of these, while the rest are covered by other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, or minor prophets
 - In fact, of all the prophets in the Bible, only Hosea says nothing about Israel's enemies
 - So God's promises to deal with Israel's enemies is a major part of prophecy

- Ezekiel and Jeremiah each prophesy against Israel's enemies, though each deals with only seven of the 11
 - That makes sense when you remember that the number 7 in Scripture is the number for completeness (i.e., 100%)
 - So by listing seven, the Lord promises He will judge 100% of Israel's enemies
 - Interestingly, Ezekiel's treatment of Israel's enemies differs somewhat from other prophets
- First, Ezekiel doesn't speak a prophecy against the most obvious enemy of his day: Babylon
 - Why didn't the Lord give him a prophecy against the country holding Israel captive at the time?
 - Perhaps it was meant to protect God's people
 - Speaking a prophecy of judgment against Babylon while in captivity might have been dangerous for the exiles
- Secondly, Ezekiel doesn't mention any opportunity for future repentance and redemption for the people of these nations
 - But we know from other Scriptures this does happen
 - The Lord will save some people out of all these nations and in many cases the nations are re-established in the Kingdom
- In the first chapter, the Lord hands out judgment to four of the seven nations
 - Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia are mentioned in order, which is a clockwise pattern around Israel proceeding from east to west
 - The remaining three nations – Tyre, Sidon and Egypt – get substantially more text in chapters 26-32
 - These differences in treatment in the text generally reflect the relative importance of each enemy in corrupting Israel
 - The corruption of Egyptians and the Philistines were far more damaging to Israel than that of the Ammonites or Moabites
 - See Map attachment...



- Turning to chapter 25, each of the four nations judged in this chapter follow a consistent pattern
 - Each has an introduction, the Lord's charge or indictment, a declaration of punishment and the result of the judgment
 - And the list begins with Ammon

Ezek. 25:1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

Ezek. 25:2 “Son of man, set your face toward the sons of Ammon and prophesy against them,

Ezek. 25:3 and say to the sons of Ammon, ‘Hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile,

Ezek. 25:4 therefore, behold, I am going to give you to the sons of the east for a possession, and they will set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk.

Ezek. 25:5 “I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and the sons of Ammon a resting place for flocks. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.”

Ezek. 25:6 ‘For thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel,

Ezek. 25:7 therefore, behold, I have stretched out My hand against you and I will give you for spoil to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and make you perish from the lands; I will destroy you. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.”

- You may remember back in chapter 21 Ezekiel gave an earlier judgment against Ammon when he spoke about the sword of the sword
 - That chapter explained how the destruction of the city was not a random act of Israel’s enemies
 - Rather it was the conscience choice of Israel’s God to bring judgment against His people
 - It was as if His sword was falling on them
 - And at the end of the chapter, the Lord added that it would also fall on Ammon for their part in rejoicing over Israel’s fall and plundering the land
 - That oracle of judgment was added to the text of 21 because of the Ammonite’s unique connection to the fall of Jerusalem
 - They were standing by in the midst of the city’s destruction to pick up the pieces
 - And so they were the first nation judged by God
 - The Lord says they said “Aha” against the sanctuary of God
 - Their statement is one of trump and gloating

- It suggests opportunity for the Ammonites to gain from Israel's loss
- And so the Lord says in their desire to profit from Israel's misery, the Lord would take away the nation altogether
- The Lord says this nation will be overrun by the sons of the east, referring to the Babylonians
 - Sure enough, the Babylonian army destroyed the nation in the course of Nebuchadnezzar's reign
 - Leaving it to Bedouins to settle, as the Lord describes in v.4
- In fact, the Jordanians who occupy the territory today are the descendants of those Bedouins
 - The capital of Jordan, Amman, is located on the site of ancient Rabbah, mentioned in v.5
 - And in the centuries after Israel captivity, the city of Rabbah lay in ruins and was nothing more than pasture
 - In these things, the survivors of Ammon in Ezekiel's day could say that Israel's God is the Lord
 - The nation became spoil for other nations
- Now there is more to be said about Ammon historically, because though the nation was destroyed in Ezekiel's time, the nation will return again
 - In a show of mercy to the Ammonite people, the Lord tells us in Jeremiah that He will bring a remnant into the Kingdom

Jer. 49:3 "Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai has been destroyed!

**Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah,
Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament,
And rush back and forth inside the walls;
For Malcam will go into exile
Together with his priests and his princes.**

Jer. 49:4 "How boastful you are about the valleys!

**Your valley is flowing away,
O backsliding daughter
Who trusts in her treasures, saying,
'Who will come against me?'**

Jer. 49:5 “Behold, I am going to bring terror upon you,”
 Declares the Lord GOD of hosts,
 “From all directions around you;
 And each of you will be driven out headlong,
 With no one to gather the fugitives together.

Jer. 49:6 “But afterward I will restore
 The fortunes of the sons of Ammon,”
 Declares the LORD.

- After the destruction that Ezekiel describes, the Lord alludes to a time when the fortunes of the Ammorites will be restored
- The Lord says a similar thing about Ammon and others of Israel’s enemies in Jeremiah 46

Jer. 46:25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says, “Behold, I am going to punish Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt along with her gods and her kings, even Pharaoh and those who trust in him.

Jer. 46:26 “I shall give them over to the power of those who are seeking their lives, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of his officers. Afterwards, however, it will be inhabited as in the days of old,” declares the LORD.

- Notice again the Lord says “afterwards” the people of Amon (along with others) will return as in the days of old
- That is a reference to the Kingdom, in which Israel lives in the land as do the countries that were formally her enemies
- Moving on the next enemy, Moab

Ezek. 25:8 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’

Ezek. 25:9 therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim,

Ezek. 25:10 and I will give it for a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the sons of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations.

Ezek. 25:11 “Thus I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD.”

- The Moabites lived directly east of Israel on the other side of the Jordan in present day Jordan
 - The destiny of Ammon and Moab are linked in Scripture

- Both originated from the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters
- Both opposed Israel from the beginning, and here we see them sharing a similar fate
- Their offense in this case was in viewing Judah as no more important than any other nation
 - When Judah fell, they didn't get the message that the Lord had acted against His own people
 - They simply concluded that Judah was a victim of Babylon like the rest of the world
 - Like Ammon, they took delight in Judah's downfall
- Yet they of all peoples (Ammon, Moab and Seir which is Edom) should have appreciated better than anyone else that God's people were unique
 - Because these three people groups were unblessed branches of Abraham's family
 - Edomites came from Esau while Ammon and Moab came from Lot
 - Yet they refused to see how the Lord took pride in Judah as His people
 - So as judgment, the Lord takes away the pride of their Moabites, which were their cities on the border with Israel
 - Beth-jeshimoth lay in the Jordan Valley and guarded the eastern ascent to the Medeba Plateau
 - Baal-meon stood farther to the east and south in northern Moab
 - Kiriathaim, meaning glory of the land, was another northern town on the Medeba Plateau
 - Notice the Lord used similar words in v.9 to mock the Moab's pride and to confirm to this nation that Yahweh is the Lord
- Like Ammon, this prophecy was fulfilled during the time Israel spent in exile
 - Babylon also wiped out the nation of Moab, while Bedouins took their place

- And like Ammon, this nation will too return to the land in the time of the Kingdom

Jer. 48:46 “Woe to you, Moab!

The people of Chemosh have perished;
For your sons have been taken away captive
And your daughters into captivity.

Jer. 48:47 “Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab

In the latter days,” declares the LORD. Thus far the judgment on Moab.

- The nation of Moab will see it’s fortunes restored in the Kingdom
 - What people will inhabit these nations?
 - In many cases, it will be Jews because these lands are actually within the borders of Israel in the Kingdom
 - In other cases, the lands fall outside the borders of Israel, in which case the lands will be occupied by Gentile believers
 - Those Gentile believers may include those believers who once lived in the land during their lifetime
 - Or perhaps the Lord will populate the land with other Gentiles based on His rewards for those individuals
 - We’ll come back to that question in later chapters dealing with the Kingdom
- The next nation the Lord judges is Edom, the nation that descended from Esau

Ezek. 25:12 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them,”

Ezek. 25:13 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword.

Ezek. 25:14 “I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance,” declares the Lord GOD.

- Edom is located southeast of Israel in present-day southern Jordan
 - The Edomites have the longest history of any enemy of Israel, going all the way back to Esau himself who opposed his brother Jacob

- Later, the nation of Edom joined in the battle with the Babylonians to fight against Judah
 - Notice in v.12 Ezekiel says they took vengeance which is a reference to fighting Israel when it was already down
 - Amos describes it this way

Amos 1:11 Thus says the LORD,

**“For three transgressions of Edom and for four
I will not revoke its punishment,
Because he pursued his brother with the sword,
While he stifled his compassion;
His anger also tore continually,
And he maintained his fury forever.**

Amos 1:12 “So I will send fire upon Teman
And it will consume the citadels of Bozrah.”

- Amos says the Edomites pursued their “brothers” with the sword
 - Here again, the Edomites should have been sympathetic to Judah since they had a blood relationship through Isaac
 - That made their treachery all the worse
 - And their sin of pursuing Judah with the sword was also more grievous than the Ammonites or Moabites who merely gloated
- So the Lord says He will cut off all living things from this land, both man and beast
 - This is a different judgment than the first two we’ve seen
 - In the case of Ammon and Moab, the nations were destroyed but Bedouins took over the land
 - Yet in the case of Edom, nothing would inhabit the land again
 - It would become a desolate wasteland
 - This judgment has yet to happen, which tells us that it remains in the future
 - And when we consult other Scriptures, we come to find that this punishment will be handed out in the Kingdom

- That is this land will be uninhabited in the time of the Kingdom...no man nor beast shall live there...only demons

Jer. 49:17 “Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds.

Jer. 49:18 “Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors,” says the LORD, “no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it.

- Once again, the context of Jeremiah 49 is speaking of the times of the end of the age
- So this is a prophecy of the nature of these lands in the time of the Millennial Kingdom
- Isaiah 34 gives us the details to explain how the land is judged in that day

Is. 34:1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.

Is. 34:2 For the LORD’S indignation is against all the nations,

And His wrath against all their armies;

He has utterly destroyed them,

He has given them over to slaughter.

Is. 34:3 So their slain will be thrown out,

And their corpses will give off their stench,

And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.

Is. 34:4 And all the host of heaven will wear away,

And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;

All their hosts will also wither away

As a leaf withers from the vine,

Or as one withers from the fig tree.

- Clearly the chapter opens speaking of the events of the last days and the end of this age, specifically the end of Tribulation
 - Corpses everywhere (v.3), mountains drenched in blood
 - In v.4 the sky will be rolled away, the hosts of the sky (sun, moon, stars) wither
 - These are details that confirm that the timing of judgment God promised for Edom is at the end of Tribulation

- This is when the judgments previously promised come to pass

Is. 34:5 For My sword is satiated in heaven,
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom
And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.

- Then we read descriptions of what the land will be like in that day

Is. 34:8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

Is. 34:9 Its streams will be turned into pitch,
And its loose earth into brimstone,
And its land will become burning pitch.

Is. 34:10 It will not be quenched night or day;
Its smoke will go up forever.
From generation to generation it will be desolate;
None will pass through it forever and ever.

- The land itself resembles descriptions of Hell itself
 - Non-stop burning, unquenched day and night
 - Smoke going up forever, remaining desolate
 - And none passing through it, meaning none can leave
- Finally, Isaiah says there are inhabitants in that land, but they are neither man nor beast

Is. 34:14 The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,
The hairy goat also will cry to its kind;
Yes, the night monster will settle there
And will find herself a resting place.

Is. 34:15 The tree snake will make its nest and lay eggs there,
And it will hatch and gather them under its protection.
Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,
Every one with its kind.

- At first it sounds like the land does have animals after all

- But remember other Scripture tells us that this is not the case, so we must reconcile these two passages without contradiction
- In this case, the Hebrew words Isaiah uses helps us solve the riddle
- Isaiah mentions hawks, wolves, hairy goats, a “night monster,” and a snake in a tree
 - Three of these animals have clear links to demons
 - First, the Hebrew word for “hairy goat” actually means demons in goat form literally translated
 - And it’s no coincidence that satanist worship a symbol of a hairy goat with horns
- And the word translated night monster could be translated night demons also
 - Finally, the tree snake seems like an allusion to Satan himself, brooding over his demon angels
 - The other references to wolves and hawks could like likewise be seen as symbolic for demons that hunt for prey though we have no confirmation of this
- Since we know that there will be no “beasts” in the land, these animals must refer to Satan and his demons
 - This makes sense because we know that Satan and his agents will not have free reign during the Kingdom

Rev. 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev. 20:3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

- At the beginning of the Kingdom, the Lord binds Satan (and by extension, his demons) in a place called the Abyss
- The Abyss is located in the earth like Hell, and also like Hell, the Abyss is a place of confinement

- The Abyss is the place the Lord confines especially wicked demons while they await their final day of judgment
- Just as Hell is the place God confines the spirits of unbelievers until the day of their judgment
- The devil and his demons will be set free for a short time at the end of the Millennial Kingdom
 - And therefore, the Abyss will have some channel or portal on the earth giving passage for the devil to exit the Abyss
 - That passage way will vent smoke, Isaiah says, throughout the time of the Kingdom, pointing the way to the Abyss
- And Revelation confirms that detail
 - At a point in time near the middle of Tribulation, the Lord allows some of the demons confined in the Abyss to exit
 - As the Abyss is opened, we see smoke rising just as Isaiah described

Rev. 9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

Rev. 9:2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

- So based on Revelation's and Isaiah's descriptions, the location for the entrance to the Abyss during the Kingdom will be in ancient Edom
 - And in that place we find the home of demons and no one else
 - The initial destruction of the land takes place at the hands of the Jewish people in armed conflict
 - This has never happened in history, so it must refer to a moment in Tribulation at the Second Coming of Christ
- Finally, the fourth peoples to be judged: Philistia or the land of the Philistines

Ezek. 25:15 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because the Philistines have acted in revenge and have taken vengeance with scorn of soul to destroy with everlasting enmity,”

Ezek. 25:16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, even cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast.

Ezek. 25:17 “I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes; and they will know that I am the LORD when I lay My vengeance on them.””

- The area of Philistia occupies the Mediterranean coast in an area today called the Gaza Strip and a little north to the port of Joppa (Jaffe today)
 - The Philistines originated in Crete and were known as Cherethites
 - They settled along the coastal plains and occupied five key city-states
 - They were a warring people and drove the Israelites out of that region leaving Israel to hold the shephalah foothills and mountains of Judea
 - They tormented Saul and David and were responsible for causing the Danites to migrate north
 - They effectively cut off half of Israel by barring access to the sea coast for
 - So the Lord says he will cut them off from the land, which is a play on words with their name
 - The root of the word Cherethite means to cut off
 - As the Lord promised, the Philistines went extinct
 - There is no record of them after the second century BC
 - Only the names of their cities remain today, include Gath and Ashdod and Ashqelon, all modern Jewish cities
 - There is no mention of them in the Kingdom, because their lands lay entirely inside Israel’s land
 - So they can have no territory in the Kingdom
- The Lord says He does all these things to demonstrate He is the Lord to these peoples
 - Ultimately, that demonstration will be known in eternity

- Both those under the judgments and those who receive mercy will see the impact of the Lord's work
- Obviously, those who suffered His judgment will have no choice but to acknowledge that the Lord is God and they are under His wrath
- And those who receive His grace will see evidence of His judgment in the geo-political boundaries of the Kingdom
- Even the rising smoke in Edom will remind us of their ultimate judgment
- So what do these judgments teach the nations of *our* world, especially as it relates to our treatment of the nation of Israel?
 - Obviously, the Lord take note of how any group of Gentiles approaches God's people, Israel
 - These certain nations have been singled out in Scripture for their historical relationships to their neighbor
- But in light of God's words spoken to Abraham, it would make sense to conclude that the same principle is at work in the world
 - That those who respect Israel, who mourn when she mourns and rejoice when she rejoices, are pleasing God's heart
 - And if we respond otherwise to the plight of the Jewish people, we risk incurring the wrath of God as well
- But it's also important to distinguish between Biblical Israel and the current political state of Israel
 - Biblically speaking, the nation of Israel are all Jews in general, wherever they live
 - And certainly that includes Jews living in the modern political state of Israel
 - But by the same token, the modern political state does not define what supporting the Jewish "nation" means
 - Supporting God's Israel does not necessarily mean supporting every political decision made by those who govern the state of Israel today
 - That's especially true if political compromise decided to return Jewish land to Arabs, etc.

- We know the Lord will eventually bring all Israel into the land and give His people what He promised
- In the meantime, we should solidarity with the Jewish people in the same way that Rahab comforted the spies
- And in the way Ruth attached herself to the future of Israel
- Obviously, those who have faith in Christ receive no condemnation, regardless of how they behave toward Israel
 - But we still must consider our treatment of the Jewish nation as part of our Christian testimony
 - I believe most (if not all) who believe in Jesus will find love in their hearts for the Jewish nation
- But as the Lord made clear in His testimony tonight, He will make those who oppose His people into testimonies one way or another
 - He wants the world to know that the One true God is the God of Israel
 - Let us be testimonies of obedience to His word by our love for the Jewish people rather than as testimonies of God's wrath