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Ezekiel 28 "The King Who Would be God"
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Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Ezekiel Chapter 28.

Ezekiel was a 25-year-old from a priestly family who was violently taken by the Babylonians 700 miles away to work in a farming community where the captives out of Jerusalem were being kept by Nebuchadnezzar. For five years he labored as a farmer, and then one day the Lord came to this priest and said, "I want to use you to be My mouthpiece to My captive people." And for the next 23 years or so, Ezekiel became that man.

For 24 chapters in the book we've been going through the prophets a little bit, looking at some lessons out of them. The first 24 chapters of this book, Ezekiel devotes himself to speaking to God's people: The sureness of their fall in Jerusalem, which had not happened yet; the confidence that they could have that the Lord was with them; and though they needed to be in captivity to learn to not be idolaters, that God would care for them; that if they walked with Him, they could have an easy life of it in captivity, but that they were going to be there for 70 years; and that they should stop listening to the false prophets, who were more and more raising their voices.

Throughout those 24 chapters, God laid out very clearly to the people their idolatry issues, the long-term unfaithfulness, the corruption and the immorality that the idolatry had brought, had led them to this place, if you will, but God assured them that mercy was waiting for them; that if they would just turn to Him, He would keep them.

At the end of 24 chapters, though, the Lord said to Ezekiel, "I'm not going to tell you any more to tell my people until you get word that Jerusalem has fallen." That was in 588. It would take 18 months for Jerusalem to be completely overthrown. Until Chapter 33 there would be a man coming and saying to Ezekiel, "Jerusalem has fallen," and then God would again speak to the people.

But in between, from Chapter 25 through 32, there are words from the Lord, not to Israel, but to the people around Israel that had an effect on His people. 16 nations in all, beginning with Ammon and Moab and Edom and the Philistines, and continuing on. In Chapter 26 and 27 and 28 God speaks specifically to two cities, Tyre and Sidon.

If you were with us last Sunday morning, we spent the whole morning looking at a phenomenal word from the Lord regarding the future of Tyre as a city and its fall. The prophecy was given in 586, the year that Jerusalem would fall, and God spoke to this city to tell them that they were going to be destroyed. They were a rich, powerful, commercial center. They were the kings of the oceans. The Phoenicians, they ruled the ocean. There was very few that could have defeated them at any place along the way.

Nebuchadnezzar tried to go against them the year that Jerusalem fell, but because Tyre was built on the coast, there were walls that went and continued out in the ocean. For 13 years Nebuchadnezzar tried to get in and couldn't. Tried to fight on some boats, and that was a disaster. After 13 years, he was finally able to build enough ramparts and all to get over the walls, but by then this king had led his entire nation or city a half a mile offshore to an island. In his anger, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the place and left it in rubble, and then left.

For the next several hundred years that place just looked like rubble, and God had said that the city's dirt would be pushed into the sea. That hadn't happened. And yet when Alexander the Great came to power in 322 BC, he wanted to go after the Phoenicians, but thought, "Boy, I can't leave my back exposed to Tyre," He went after them first. And because he couldn't get to them, he pushed every bit of trash and dirt and rubble out into the ocean and created this half-mile long isthmus that he walked over, and pretty much the city of Tyre was destroyed and its people. Took 247 years, but we talked about how God's word is always, you can count on it; right? If he says it, count on it.

Well, that was last week, Chapter 26. Chapter 27, which we're skipping over, is an address from the Lord to the merchants in Tyre who are so upset when their dominance of the market goes away, if you will, and the judgment of the Lord meets them in wrath and they lose their gain.

Which brings us to the chapter you're on this morning. I'd

like to at least take you down to verse 19 or so. This is a word from the Lord to the king. Certainly, the first ten verses to the king who was in charge at the time; verses 11 through 19 to the king behind the king, or to Satan's influence behind the king. "The king who would be God," that's really the title of this message, but also I think of the chapter. We need to be aware of our enemy and his ways.

Verse 1 says this: "The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 'Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus saith the Lord God:'"

If you have had a chance to just sit and read through the prophets, you'll be surprised at how often you hear the words "thus saith the Lord," or the Lord spoke to me again. And I suspect that you are here this morning because you want to hear from the Lord. I know there's football games on, and maybe you're here so you can catch the first one. I don't know. But I'm assuming the best of all of you: That you are here because you want God to speak to your heart, to lead your life, to be the Lord of your life. And certainly you find that to be so in these prophecies through the prophets. God wants to speak to His people, and if you don't learn anything else, you learn that God is doing a lot of speaking, if you will.

Speak to the prince of Tyre. In most ancient governments, almost all of them I would say, the prince or the king, and the words are oftentimes interchangeable, is a monarch. No one elected him. He didn't get in through legislation. He was an absolute power who took over by force. No checks, no balances. You just kind of ruled the way that you wanted, and so you're not subject to anyone other than your own whims. Because of that, absolute power corrupts absolutely. You certainly find a lot of that in ancient history, and this guy was no exception.

God now speaks to this king, reveals to him who will have the last word in his life, before turning to the power behind the king's throne.

History tells us that the people of Tyre at this time loved their leader. From what we can gather from what is written, he was a man who symbolized their accomplishments. The city got rich as a result of his leadership. Their expectations were fully met. He was the guy who led them offshore when they were under a certain death attack by Nebuchadnezzar. He saved an entire generation.

When we read in verse 2 the Lord saying to them, "Because your heart is lifted up, because you say, 'I am a god, and I sit in the seat of the gods, in the midst of the seas,' you're a man, you're not a god, though you set your heart as if you are a god." And then in parenthesis, "behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There's not a secret that could be hidden from you! With your wisdom and your understanding, you've gained riches for yourself, gathered gold and silver into the treasuries; by your great wisdom in trade you've increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches."

Historically, the name of this king was Ithobaal II. Baal is the name of the fertility God of the ancient world. It literally Ithobaal means Baal is with me, if you will. God is bringing to judgment this man who thought that he was a god because of his success. And like I said, every historical understanding point to the fact that he was very successful, and he brought the city a lot of gain, and himself, according to verse 5.

Notice in verse 3, 4, and 5, this is an opinion of himself. It modifies, if you will, what is written in verse 2, that he had set his heart to be like a god, and then saw himself as wiser than anyone.

Do you remember when Herod, in the book of Acts, came to Caesarea, that it was the people from Tyre, this city, who were very dependent at the time upon Herod and his leadership for their food, for financial support, for even military aid. When he came to speak there in Acts Chapter 12, all of the city of Tyre showed up, and Herod couldn't have been happier. He went out to that place that if you ever go to Israel with us, it's the first place that we stop; out into the amphitheater, and he met with all of the folks, and he was dressed like Elton John. Everything glowed in the sun. But as he began to speak, the people of Tyre said to him, "Oh, my goodness. These aren't the words of a man; this is a voice of God." A god. He liked it a lot, but the angel of the Lord did not, which we read in Chapter 12 of Acts, that he didn't give God the glory, and so he was eaten by worms and he died. Not good to take God's glory. The very next verse, by the way, in Acts Chapter 12 verse 24 says, "But the word of the Lord grew and multiplied."

But here was a guy that thought he was God. Apparently, those in Tyre were good at just trying to deify people around them,

but turns out that Herod was not a god after all.

He was apparently, though, this king of Tyre, a brilliant man. If you read verse 3, Daniel was already known in Babylon as an interpreter of dreams. When we get to the book of Daniel, we'll take a look at a couple of the things that we can learn there, but Daniel was already established in Nebuchadnezzar's court for wisdom. He had interpreted some very unsettling dreams in Nebuchadnezzar's life. He had been moved to a position of high authority even though he was a captive Jew. Well, here's the prince of Tyre, he's also being given kind of supernatural insights, but these came from the devil. And whatever he had been given as a gift he used for his own purposes, for his own self-gain and service. Because it's in parenthesis, this is a modifier of his opinion of himself, "I'm wiser even than Daniel," who everybody knew about.

I think that there is certainly a veiled reference to the enemy behind the scenes pulling the strings, this fallen angel working in a wicked heart, turning a heart to greed and self and all. This guy wants to be God. Notice what he said, in verse 2, I'm God. I'm God. Well, the Lord doesn't think He's going to gain the whole world, and then he's going to lose his soul.

I was wondering about that today. I was just reading in the paper a couple of things this last week or actually online paper. We don't really have papers much anymore about how many people are worshipped in our society simply because of their success. And I kind of stood in amazement thinking just because an actor makes \$20 million in a movie, does that really mean I have to listen to his political views, because he's some kind of god now? Or the guy that can dribble a basketball and slam it 10 feet high over the net, and do I need to listen to his view of the world? Does that make him wise? Or wiser than I us? Or the musician with the 80 million followers on Instagram who can make \$5 million just by putting a product placement in their 30-second commercial and promoting something? That's the society we live in. Those are the people we worship. Well, I don't. I hope you don't. But it's hard to make 80 million followers unless you're doing something that everyone seems to want to hear. They're not gods; they're lost. There's only one God. And if you gain the world and you lose your soul, that's not good.

Here's a guy that had everything that the world could give him, and even in times of great distress seemed to make great

decisions. But ultimately he has to face the Lord's words to him and they're words of judgment.

I love how I read through the Bible about Peter. Peter God used so mightily, but God goes out of his way to convince us how weak Peter was. He really had a lot of struggles, didn't he? But he never forgot who he was. He never got out of line, I don't think, with the Lord once he came to know Him and was saved. And I think that should be our outlook as well. God wants to use us, but God wants the glory. When Peter ran into that lame man at the beautiful gate there in Acts Chapter 3, he said to him, "I don't really have any money, but I'll give you what I have," and then he talked to him about Jesus and His ability to heal, and he took him by the hand and pulled him up, and this man was healed. He stood up. Miraculous work of God.

You read there, though, in Acts Chapter 3 that as soon as that happened, all of the people in Solomon's porch there gathered in amazement, and they began to go after Peter, who he was, and, "Oh, you must be somebody special." And he said, "Men of Israel, stop. Why are you marveling at this? Why are you looking at us so intently as if somehow by our power or godliness we made this man to walk? It's not us. It's the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Father who glorified His Son. That's how He stands before you whole." And Peter was able to walk away from that push to make him a god, or Godlike, if you will; to begin to honor him that way.

Years later Paul was in Lystra, saw a man sitting lame from birth in the audience, and was compelled by the Lord to reach out to him, and said, "Walk. Rise and walk." And again, God miraculously intervened. He was healed and delivered, and the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices there in Acts 14 verse 11, and in their own language they began to say "The gods have come to us in the form of humans!" And they couldn't wait to go run to Zeus's temple to bring out the offerings so they could worship Barnabas and Saul, who ran out of the place tearing their clothes, trying to say, "Stop! Stop!" And then you read there in Acts 14 that they could scarcely stop the crowds from worshipping them. However, when they finally convinced them they weren't gods, it was the Lord, the people got angry and embarrassed. And then they turned and grabbed Paul and dragged him outside of the city and tried to stone him to death. And they weren't even very good at that apparently. But they left him to die.

If you're going to listen to the worship of the people, make sure that you listen carefully. It can change fairly quickly. Have a bad year pitching, drop a few passes, have a lousy album. You're no God, you're a man.

The prince of Tyre wanted to be a god, and he looked at his accomplishments and was convinced by Satan's lies and influence that he really was more than he was. The Lord now speaks to him in verse 6 and He says to him, "'Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, behold, therefore I'll bring strangers against you, the most terrible of nations; they'll draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor. They'll bring you down to the Pit, and you'll be slain in the midst of the sea. Will you then still say before him who slays you, 'I'm a god'? But you shall be a man, not a god, in the hand of him who slays you. You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of aliens; I have spoken,' saith the Lord.'"

Very deliberate and very clear, hey, that's what I have said. I said it, I mean it.

Now, let's see who's really God, you or me. I say you die. You say you're a god. I'll accept the challenge. You're going to die before your enemies, and emphatically I've said it.

Now, Tyre would eventually fall, and during that 13-year Babylonian siege, as they moved the entire island temporarily to another place half mile offshore, this king died, was drowned. I, the Lord, have spoken. Again, better you listen to the Lord.

With this wicked king's demise, in verse 11 the Lord then turns to a very prophetic kind of powerful address to look at the power behind the throne, to look at Satan: His fall, his sin, his future, his present evil work of drawing men after himself, and of his ambition, because like the king of Tyre wants to be God, so did Satan want to be God. It really runs in the family, if you will: His ambition and how it was overthrown and the eternity that he now has to face.

This portion of scripture is graphic, informative. It is, along with Isaiah 14, the only insights that we really have into the fall of the devil; into where that whole thing started and the demise that would follow.

Here's what we read in verse 11: "Moreover, the words of the

Lord came to me, and said, 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, say to him, "Thus saith the Lord, 'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. You were in the Eden, the garden of God; where every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, and topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and your pipes were prepared now on the day that you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of the Lord; and walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones. And you were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you have been filled with violence within, and you have sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; and I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities of your trading; therefore I brought fire from the midst; and it devoured you, and I turned to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples as they are astonished at you; that you've become a horror, and you shall no more be forever.'"

The Lord now speaks of the enemy. Created by God. A cherub. A cherub is a higher form of the angels. We find them in a couple of places, cherubim and seraphim. They are angels that God created. A rank of angels, if you will.

Notice from what we read here that the enemy was created to be a worship leader. Lucifer sang. He had pipes and timbrels. He was able to worship the Lord and to lead in worship. He had great access to the Lord. He was on God's mountain, verse 14, though he was also in the garden of Eden. He walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones, a graphic description of that place before the Lord, this sea of glass in Revelation that we read about in Chapter 4. The sea of crystal. This place before God. Lucifer was made a chief angel, a chief worship leader. He had a place and gifts and accomplishments and was given tremendous privilege. He was perfect in all of His ways, verse 15. All of those stones, nine of the 12 that you'd find in the priests' ephod later on.

It's hardly a sinister picture. What a great hope that he

had, what great blessing he'd been given. But when we go to the garden of Eden, he's no longer there worshipping the Lord; he is there in corruption and deceit and lying and deceiving, and he hates God and he hates His people. But before then, verse 14 and 15, he was given tremendous honor, until verse 15, because at some point he, as well as every angel, was given a choice whether they would now worship God or would follow this Lucifer becoming Satan his name will be changed who wants to be God and wants to be worshipped as God.

I'll read to you in a few minutes out of Isaiah 14 the five "I wills" of the devil that drove him. We do know from Revelation Chapter 12 verse 4 that one-third of the angels that were created on this day of judgment and of decision-making followed Satan. It would appear from all that we know from the Bible that there are literally millions upon millions of angels. A lot of defectors, if you will, but two-thirds who stood faithful.

What I cannot tell you is how long Lucifer obeyed faithfully in heaven before his fall. And I also can't tell you when he rebelled except to say to you that it happened before man was created. Before you and I were made by the Lord, this event took place in glory. Any other information beyond that is not in the Bible. You can speculate all you want, but we just don't know.

When Job got tired of complaining and the Lord in Chapter 38 began asking Job questions, designed with only one purpose: To convince him that God was God and Job was not, one of the things he said to Job was, "Where were you when I hung the earth upon nothing? And where were you when I created the angels?" And for every question Job just had to say, "You're the Lord, I'm not. I don't know what I'm talking about. I should have kept my mouth shut."

There are lots of things we don't know about the Lord, but we do know that by the time you and I were created and we find Adam and Eve in the garden, there are two kingdoms now in the world, not just one. It isn't just the kingdom of God and light and goodness. There is a kingdom of now Satan, darkness, and judgment. One of those kingdoms will be destroyed one day. The other will last forever.

We read in verse 16 and 17 and 18 and 19 that when that sin was found in the devil, that he was put out, that he was sent packing, that he was corrupted, and he was put out of the sanctuary and his wicked words began. You will read in

Isaiah 14 that the Lord will say of him in his day of judgment they will look upon him and gaze at him and say, "Are you the man that made the earth to tremble? Are you the one that shook kingdoms, and made the earth like a wilderness and destroyed cities, who wouldn't even open the doors to the prisoners? That's you?" And they will stand in amazement at the destruction when he finds it.

The word of God in judgment to the king of Tyre focused on the attitude about himself. In his pride he thought he was more than he was. Stimulated and encouraged by a devil who worked behind the scenes, he found himself facing judgment.

From the very first time we meet the enemy, we find him wanting to be God. You remember when Adam and Eve were in the garden and that temptation befell them, the serpent said to the woman, "Has God really said that you can't eat, you can't touch the fruit?" She said, "No. He said if we eat we're going to die." And the serpent said, "You won't die, because God knows that in the day that you eat of this fruit, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God. You'll be able to tell good from evil. But you'll be like God." That has always been his temptation, and it is certainly the temptation to this day that drives him against you. The great temptation is, don't let God be the God of your life, the Lord of your life. Run your life yourself. Do it without his help.

What do you think this tremendous move in our society today for teaching human potential comes from? It really is the enemy's work. This is the God of this world; right? Just be your own person. Your life the way you desire. You live your life. You go ahead, but you're going to have to answer to the Lord like the king of Tyre.

Where do you suppose this whole motivation from the Mormon church comes to teach its followers that they have the potential one day to be gods themselves and rule their own planets? Does that sound like a biblical premise to you?

Or even this whole heretical teaching that if you have enough faith, and you exercise it properly, if you speak the right words with the right heart, you can get what you want. You can speak your reality into existence. Just name it and claim it. As if somehow God is just a genie in a bottle. If you rub it well enough by faith, He's going to have to give into all of your whims and all of your desires. He's obligated to grant your every spoken word, because you have

faith. And yet I see Jesus for hours struggling with His task at hand, "Father, nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done."

That's the battle. There's nothing new about this temptation to be like a god. It took out the devil, the father of lies, it took out the prince of Tyre. It'll take you out, and me, if we desire to just be our own gods and not bow our knees to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Isaiah records the Lord speaking, "How have you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How have you been cut down to the ground, you who have weakened the nations!" And then it says this: "Because you said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, and I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;" or the angels of God, if you will. "I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I'll ascend into the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." That was his declaration. And the Lord says, "You'll be brought down to Sheol, and to the lowest parts of the Pit."

When God created you and I, He created us in His image and according to His likeness. The temptation from sin is that you then become God yourself. A successful line that Satan has sold to every generation through a variety of messengers, just run your own show, be your own man, be the captain of your own ship, make your own destiny.

As a believer, God wants to make us more like Him in love and in mercy. But that's a far cry from trying to sit in His seat. He'd like to give us His heart and His love, His insight, His goodness, His provision, but you're no God. You're just a man, or a woman. We need Him.

Isaiah will write that the Lord says to His people, "Don't fear. Have I told you from that time, and declared it? You're my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? There is no other rock; I don't know of one." And literally ten verses later, "I am the Lord, there is no other, there's no gods besides me."

We have the Lord, don't we? We have His word. We have His spirit. We have His will. We know His desire. The danger is always going to be what you see here for this king. God is going to give you a blessing, He's going to take care of your life, and rather than honoring Him, you're going to take credit yourself, or you're going to separate yourself from that desire to be dependent.

Kids have that weird thing; right? They get to be junior highers and they think they can go without their parents till they have to buy shoes, and then they figure out different. But then you get a little older and you go, "I'm independent." And then somehow when you grow up you realize the dependency that you have and the provision that was given to you. Same thing with the Lord.

The Holy Spirit wants to work in you to make you more like Jesus, but you're no God. And I love what the Lord said to the king of Tyre: "When you're dead and standing before me, we'll see who's who."

The decision even to work your way to heaven is that same temptation. I can do it myself. Can you? Here are the two choices: You do it yourself, or God brutally murders His Son for us. You pick. Whatever one you'd rather. If that was a choice, God wouldn't be good.

"Father, if there's any other way that this cup can be taken from me." And the angels came and ministered to His Son. There is no other way. The gospel said we're lost in sin and helpless and doomed, and without a savior, we've had it. Deny yourself, pick up your cross, follow Me.

The king of Tyre discovered that God was right. There's only one God. It's Him. But we should know that behind that persona is always a spirit of an angel that fell who's got millions of angels to help him, fallen angels whose world this is, who are going to organize one more religion to stand against God before He returns. But return He will, and He will say to you and to everyone else, "I am God and there's no one like Me."

Here's my thought for you: Pick the winning side now. Stand with the God that can deliver your soul. But be careful, because there's an enemy who started his fall by desiring to be like God and whose greatest message to you now is the same: Just be your own God, take care of your own life, do as you feel you need to do. The problem is, as the Lord says here in verse 6 and 7 and 8, "When you stand before me," and then in verse 9, "Will you really think you're still a god and not a man? I'm the one who slayed you. You're the one who has to answer to Me. I have spoken."

I just want to be sure my knee is bent and my head is bowed and He's the Lord of my life. Do I rebel? All the time. But

I hate it. Is He your Lord? That's all that matters. Amen?