

God's Judgment Against Tyre

Ezekiel 26

Ezekiel 26:1-6 – “*And it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²“Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’*

³“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. ⁴ And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. ⁵ It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,’ says the Lord God; ‘it shall become plunder for the nations. ⁶ Also her daughter villages which are in the fields shall be slain by the sword. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.’”

Background Notes

In Ezekiel 25-32 God pronounced judgment against the foreign nations surrounding Israel. In chapter 25 God's pronouncement of judgment was given on the nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom (to the east), and on Philistia (to the west). In chapters 26-28 God's judgment moved north to the kingdom of Tyre, a city-state of ancient Phoenicia (now part of modern Lebanon). Tyre would be judged because of her pride and because she gloated over the fall of Jerusalem.

Verse 2: “*Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’”*

Verses 4-6 are an overview of the history of Tyre and how she would be judged over the next several hundred years. This prophecy was given 586 BC, the eleventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, and the very year that Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies.

Ezekiel's message to Tyre was that Nebuchadnezzar would also conquer their proud city and many people would be killed, but Ezekiel also said that many nations would come against Tyre: “*As the sea causes its waves to come up*” (v3).

Tyre was on the coast of Phoenicia, and it was a powerful commercial port city. Shipping and sea trade routes were largely controlled by Tyre, while trade routes involving overland caravans were largely controlled by Jerusalem. Tyre gloated over the fall of Jerusalem, because she thought she would receive a greater share of the commerce of the ancient world. But God said, “I'm so sorry, Tyre! You will be brought down!” “*Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up*” (v3).

This prophecy was not completely fulfilled in Nebuchadnezzar's time. In fact, using an appropriate metaphor here, several powerful "waves" swept over Tyre until her final demise around the 14th century AD. The first "wave" to attack Tyre was Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

Doctrinal Points

1. Ezekiel prophesied the history of Tyre.

Ezekiel 26:7-14 - *"For thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, with chariots, and with horsemen, and an army with many people. ⁸ He will slay with the sword your daughter villages in the fields; he will heap up a siege mound against you, build a wall against you, and raise a defense against you.⁹ He will direct his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. ¹⁰ Because of the abundance of his horses, their dust will cover you; your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen, the wagons, and the chariots, when he enters your gates, as men enter a city that has been breached. ¹¹ With the hooves of his horses he will trample all your streets; he will slay your people by the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. ¹² They will plunder your riches and pillage your merchandise; they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water. ¹³ I will put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps shall be heard no more. ¹⁴ I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken,' says the Lord God."*

After Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar turned north and besieged Tyre for thirteen years. The great Phoenician city-state of Tyre consisted of two sections: the mainland city of Tyre and the fortified island city of Tyre, about a half mile off the coast. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the mainland city of Tyre and all her surrounding villages, as vividly described in verses 8-12. Horses, chariots, cavalry, battering rams, axes, noise, dust, breaching of the walls, bloodshed - it's all there in verses 8-12. However Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy the island stronghold of Tyre. But there's more to the prophecy.

When the Babylonian Empire declined in power, Tyre regained her independence for a while, but then the "wave" of the Persian Empire brought Tyre into submission once again. When the Greek Empire came to power, Alexander the Great came to Tyre as a "giant wave." He destroyed the mainland city of Tyre in 332 BC because it refused to submit. The people of the island city thought that they were still safe from attack, but Alexander the Great, fulfilling verses 4 & 12 of the prophecy, took the rubble and ruins of the mainland city and threw the debris into the Mediterranean Sea. Thus he built a causeway out to the island city so his army could attack by land, and the island city fell. The ruins of the mainland city had been scraped clean to build the causeway, and nothing of the once proud city was left but bare rock. It was good only for spreading fishing nets to dry (as predicted in verses 5 & 14).

By the way, if you look at a detailed map of Lebanon today, you will not find any island off the coast of Tyre. However, a “peninsula” juts out into the Mediterranean Sea at the ancient site of Tyre. This peninsula is the causeway and the island, and it still contains debris from the mainland city that was scraped into the water by Alexander the Great.

Tyre was rebuilt in the years following the Greek Empire, but it never regained its former glory and position of power. Tyre is mentioned in the New Testament, and our Lord visited Tyre during His earthly ministry. Tyre fell once again before the “wave” of the Roman Empire. It was finally destroyed by the Saracens near the beginning of the 14th century AD, and was never rebuilt

The modern town of Tyre is located on a different site than the ancient city of Tyre. The site of the ancient city is still a place where local fishermen spread and dry their fishing nets. The subsequent history of Tyre was predicted by Ezekiel.

2. Ezekiel prophesied the sure judgment of Tyre.

Ezekiel 26:15-21 - *“Thus says the Lord God to Tyre: ‘Will the coastlands not shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded cry, when slaughter is made in the midst of you? ¹⁶ Then all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, lay aside their robes, and take off their embroidered garments; they will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment, and be astonished at you. ¹⁷ And they will take up a lamentation for you, and say to you:*

“How you have perished, O one inhabited by seafaring men, O renowned city, who was strong at sea, She and her inhabitants, who caused their terror to be on all her inhabitants! ¹⁸ Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; yes, the coastlands by the sea are troubled at your departure.”

¹⁹ “For thus says the Lord God: ‘When I make you a desolate city, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring the deep upon you, and great waters cover you, ²⁰ then I will bring you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lowest part of the earth, in places desolate from antiquity, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you may never be inhabited; and I shall establish glory in the land of the living. ²¹ I will make you a terror, and you shall be no more; though you are sought for, you will never be found again,’ says the Lord God.”

In these verses, the fall of Tyre is prophesied in such sure and certain terms that the lamentation is in the past tense - as if Tyre had already fallen. Look once again at verses 17-18: *“How you have perished, O one inhabited by seafaring men, O renowned city, who was strong at sea, she and her inhabitants, who caused their terror to be on all her inhabitants! ¹⁸ Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; yes, the coastlands by the sea are troubled at your departure.”*

The vivid description of the fall of Tyre in verses 19-20 emphasizes the certainty of this prophecy. In verse 19 Tyre was appropriately pictured as an island sinking into the deep, as she was overwhelmed by great waves of the sea. In verse 20

Tyre was pictured as being buried in a grave in the depths of the earth. If these descriptions were enough to bring terror to the minds of the people of Tyre, how much more the fulfillment of this sure prophecy!

Verse 21: *"I will make you a terror, and you shall be no more; though you are sought for, you will never be found again," says the Lord God.*" Ezekiel prophesied the sure judgment of Tyre.

Practical Application

Don't become a negative example

God was going to use the fall of Tyre as an example to other peoples and powers of what can happen to a proud city when it comes under the judgment of God. Verses 15-16: *"Thus says the Lord God to Tyre: 'Will the coastlands not shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded cry, when slaughter is made in the midst of you? ¹⁶ Then all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, lay aside their robes, and take off their embroidered garments; they will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment, and be astonished at you.'"*

Back in the days of King David and King Solomon, Tyre started off well. Hiram, king of Tyre, helped God's people and the young nation of Israel. But Tyre became proud, and the city gloated when Jerusalem fell. Tyre was about to become a negative example - an example of what happens when a city comes under the judgment of God.

God's judgment upon pride can still occur today. God can judge a proud nation or a proud individual. If your life as a Christian is not a positive example, God will still use you as an example – a **negative example**. God will use you as a negative example - as a warning to show others what the discipline and judgment of God is all about.

You don't have to look too far to find present day Christians who are negative examples, and who have suffered God's discipline. Don't become a negative example!