

A Lamentation for Tyre

Ezekiel 27

Ezekiel 27 – “The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, ² “Now, son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre, ³ and say to Tyre, ‘You who are situated at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, thus says the Lord God, “O Tyre, you have said, ‘I am perfect in beauty.’ ⁴ Your borders are in the midst of the seas. Your builders have perfected your beauty. ⁵ They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make you a mast. ⁶ Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; the company of Ashurites have inlaid your planks with ivory from the coasts of Cyprus. ⁷ Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was what you spread for your sail; blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was what covered you.

⁸ “Inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your wise men, O Tyre, were in you; they became your pilots. ⁹ Elders of Gebal and its wise men were in you to caulk your seams; all the ships of the sea and their oarsmen were in you to market your merchandise. ¹⁰ “Those from Persia, Lydia, and Libya were in your army as men of war; they hung shield and helmet in you; they gave splendor to you. ¹¹ Men of Arvad with your army were on your walls all around, and the men of Gammad were in your towers; they hung their shields on your walls all around. They made your beauty perfect. ¹² “Tarshish was your merchant because of your many luxury goods. They gave you silver, iron, tin, and lead for your goods. ¹³ Javan, Tubal, and Meshech were your traders. They bartered human lives and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. ¹⁴ Those from the house of Togarmah traded for your wares with horses, steeds, and mules. ¹⁵ The men of Dedan were your traders; many isles were the market of your hand. They brought you ivory tusks and ebony as payment. ¹⁶ Syria was your merchant because of the abundance of goods you made. They gave you for your wares emeralds, purple, embroidery, fine linen, corals, and rubies. ¹⁷ Judah and the land of Israel were your traders. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet, honey, oil, and balm. ¹⁸ Damascus was your merchant because of the abundance of goods you made, because of your many luxury items, with the wine of Helbon and with white wool. ¹⁹ Dan and Javan paid for your wares, traversing back and forth. Wrought iron, cassia, and cane were among your merchandise. ²⁰ Dedan was your merchant in saddlecloths for riding. ²¹ Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your regular merchants. They traded with you in lambs, rams, and goats. ²² The merchants of Sheba and Raamah were your merchants. They traded for your wares the choicest spices, all kinds of precious stones, and gold. ²³ Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Assyria, and Chilmad were your merchants. ²⁴ These were your merchants in choice items—in purple clothes, in embroidered garments, in chests of multicolored apparel, in sturdy woven cords, which were in your marketplace.”

Background Notes

In Ezekiel 26, the prophet Ezekiel began his prophecy of judgment about the Phoenician city-state of Tyre, one of the great commercial port cities of the ancient world. She controlled a large part of the shipping on the Mediterranean Sea. But in her pride, Tyre gloated over the fall of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians conquered the kingdom of Judah. As a result, God said that He would judge Tyre. Ezekiel 26:2-3: *“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.’”*

The judgment of Tyre took place in different stages of history as we saw in Ezekiel 26. It was as if several overwhelming waves broke over this great coastal city. First came Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, and then the Persians. Then there was Alexander the Great and the armies of Greece that scraped the ruins of the mainland city of Tyre into the Mediterranean Sea to form a causeway out to the island city of Tyre. This was all in direct fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy in chapter 26.

Ezekiel continued his pronouncement of judgment on the kingdom of Tyre in chapter 27. In this chapter Tyre was likened to a beautiful ship, the pride of the Mediterranean. But in the second half of the chapter, the beautiful ship was shipwrecked – broken apart and sunk, to be seen no more.

The whole chapter is a lamentation over Tyre. The Lord instructed Ezekiel to write it (v1-2). Most Bibles show that part of the chapter was written in prose and part in Hebrew poetry. The poetic parts of the chapter were actually written in the traditional Hebrew rhythm of a funeral dirge. The judgment and end of the kingdom of Tyre was so sure that the funeral dirge was already written.

Doctrinal Points

1. The glory of ancient Tyre was portrayed as a beautiful ship.

There's nothing quite as majestic as a beautiful “tall ship” sailing vessel under full sail. The figure of a beautiful Phoenician ship was the perfect picture to illustrate the pride of Tyre, in her prominence as the maritime power of the ancient Mediterranean world. She was built of the best and strongest wood. Her mast was from a tall cedar of Lebanon, her oars were made of oak, and her deck was inlaid with ivory (v5-6). Her sail was from the finest linen of Egypt (v7).

Some of the large ancient Phoenician ships had as many as two hundred rowers with two or three banks of oars on each side of the ship. The ship that represented Tyre had the best rowers and pilots and marine engineers on board (v8-9). And Tyre was not just a commercial power. They were strong militarily, with elite mercenary forces (v10-11). As to Tyre's

commercial leadership, verses 12-25 indicate that she was known for her trade in all kinds of valuable products, including precious stones and metals, and even slaves. And even in that day they had drug dealers.

Tyre's commercial power extended throughout the ancient world – well beyond the Mediterranean Sea to nations bordering the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. So Tyre was a major player in the ancient world. The glory of ancient Tyre is portrayed as a beautiful ship.

2. The judgment of ancient Tyre is portrayed as a sinking ship.

Ezekiel 27:25-36 - ²⁵ *"The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise.*

You were filled and very glorious in the midst of the seas.

²⁶ *Your oarsmen brought you into many waters, but the east wind broke you in the midst of the seas.*

²⁷ *"Your riches, wares, and merchandise, your mariners and pilots, your caulkers and merchandisers, all your men of war who are in you, and the entire company which is in your midst, will fall into the midst of the seas on the day of your ruin.*

²⁸ *The common-land will shake at the sound of the cry of your pilots.*

²⁹ *"All who handle the oar, the mariners, all the pilots of the sea will come down from their ships and stand on the shore.*

³⁰ *They will make their voice heard because of you;*

They will cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; they will roll about in ashes. ³¹ *They will shave themselves completely bald because of you, gird themselves with sackcloth,*

and weep for you with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

³² *In their wailing for you they will take up a lamentation and lament for you:*

'What city is like Tyre, destroyed in the midst of the sea?

³³ *'When your wares went out by sea, you satisfied many people;*

You enriched the kings of the earth with your many luxury goods and your merchandise.

³⁴ *But you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst.*

³⁵ *All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you; their kings will be greatly afraid, and their countenance will be troubled.*

³⁶ *The merchants among the peoples will hiss at you;*

You will become a horror, and be no more forever. ""

Verse 26 pictured the beautiful ship of Tyre running into a violent storm on the high sea. The wind was so strong that the beautiful ship, in all its glory, broke up and sank into the sea. The east wind here certainly represented the great wave of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians that from the east that and took Tyre down (chapter 26).

All would be lost in the sinking ship – including the merchandise, sailors, pilots, and military men on board. The sea-faring community and commercial world would be appalled and astonished - and fearful that such a beautiful and well-built ship

could sink and everything be lost. The effect would be similar to the sinking of the Titanic. The world was awed and astonished and shocked that such a great and proud ship could - and did - sink! What an apt comparison with the fall of the once proud kingdom of Tyre.

It is similar, by the way, to the description of the fall of commercial Babylon in the last days that is described in Revelation 18. The judgment of ancient Tyre is portrayed as a sinking ship.

Practical Application

Don't lose your soul in order to gain the world!

In Matthew 16:26 the Lord Jesus said, *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

The very things that the proud kingdom of Tyre had accumulated for itself - power, prosperity, and possessions – are the very same things that modern nations and individuals (including many Christians) seek to accumulate for themselves. They want power and prestige, and they want to be acknowledged as a major player in this world. Unfortunately, in the process, they lose their souls. Like a sinking ship, in the end they gain nothing – and **lose everything**. Don't lose your soul in order to gain the world.

In the context of Matthew 16:26, the Lord was not talking about salvation. He was talking about **discipleship**. He spoke those words in the context of denying self in order to take up the cross and be a committed disciple.

It is possible, as a believer, to lose your soul! Not your salvation, but your soul. You can lose out on serving the Lord here and now. You can lose out on coming to know what the meaning of life is all about. You can lose out on the joy of soul now. You can lose out on reward and depth of joy later.

Remember ancient Tyre! ***Don't lose your soul in order to gain the world.***