

Ezekiel 26

The Tale of Two Wealthy Trading Nations

This was written a year before the second and biggest siege of Babylon against Judah. God has already shared with us that he raised up Babylon and Alexander the Great of Greece to put some things in order. It ultimately comes back to Israel, but it involves many players.

You might ask why there are chapters dedicated to all of these unbelieving nations surrounding Israel. God went after these co-conspirator nations as well. They were happy about Judah's demise. God is tapping them on the shoulder and interrupting their entertainment and letting them know that they are next.

Tyre was in the business of buying and selling. Judah was also in this trading business as it was in the middle of the major trade routes.



In a sense, this judgement on Judah was eliminating competition for Tyre. Tyre made the mistake of celebrating the downfall of the Jews.

This chapter is about the ancient super wealthy island/coastal nation Tyre. It was an import/export trading and shipping powerhouse. It included a coastal port, and an offshore island. The second part was on an island just under a kilometer from the shoreline. The island city of Tyre was blessed with not one but two separate harbors which faced opposite sides of the island. The north harbor (also called the "Sidonian Harbour") which is still in operation today was one of the best natural harbors on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea. Having two excellent 200' deep sheltered harbors gave the city great advantages and enabled

Tyre to become a major destination for merchant ships hoping to trade and practice commerce with the people of the eastern Mediterranean. Tyre became very wealthy and the island portion of the city over time became heavily fortified. The city on the mainland was the secondary part of the city and principally served to supply the island with water and supplies. One might think of the mainland portion of the city as being the “suburbs” while the island was the home of the wealthy and those of noble birth. The island also served as the city’s religious center and the principal location for trade and commerce. Long before oil and gas and the financial markets, the mega wealth had to do with trading and shipping.

We should always look for applications to ourselves in scriptures. Where are we in this story? Tyre was an ally of convenience with Israel as are we. They turned into an opponent. We should look to Genesis 12 to always bless the Jews; and not shift our support based on their political actions. Secondly, our origins have some similarities to Tyre.

Lucifer the Master Trader Amidst the Nations

Read Ezekiel 26:1-6: Prophecy can have multiple fulfillments. Tyre was a real place, but it also serves to symbolize how Satan is this world’s master trader. The King of Tyre’s character is expanded to include aspects of Satan. Tyre was the world’s headquarters for shipbuilding and sea trading and merchandise. It was the foremost commercial marketplace. It also was unparalleled in sea navigation.

This tale of wealth and doom is laid out specifically against the King of Tyre and Satan in Ezekiel 26, 27 and 28. The Devil takes your valuables (family, peace, health and faith), and gives you a seat on the Titanic. Wealth building can become intoxicating.

Nations are compared to rivers, which act as national boundaries with distinct features. The sea is any place where the nations mix and have unified control. The unsettled sea is compared to all of the Gentile nations; while Israel is compared to the unmoving land. The sea is dangerous because it moves violently with the prevailing winds (demonic influences). When nations combine in any endeavor it can be extremely dangerous. God keeps moving men apart into countries and kingdoms and nationalities to avoid ungodly unification and centralized control. Tyre is the place where all of the worldwide wealth changes hands. Somebody is the beneficiary of all of this activity.

Fame and power and beauty and popularity are not the only ways that men are snared. Success in business is a massively successful tool used against men since the days of Adam and Cain. I know that my own dad got a hook in his jaw, and got pulled out away from home...a little further and a little further. The business deals were a little further away. That next rainbow is so close; until one day you have gone so far that you are disconnected from your family altogether. It's a natural progression for all businesspeople.

The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you! With your wisdom and your understanding You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasures; By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches)," Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, The most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, And defile your splendor. They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas. (Ezekiel 28)

These chapters give us insight into how Lucifer fell from heaven. He began to direct traffic and attention to benefit himself. The other angels were in awe. He was one of the most impressive angels. To the contrary, Michael's name means: Who is like God?" There is a big difference between getting excited about God verses your own kingdom.

Old Mega Wealth and World Trade Comparisons

Massive wealth of the import/export trade and worldwide shipping is a somewhat foreign concept to us today. But this is what originally established the United States as a dominant world economy. If you drive through Rhode Island and see other old eastern seaboard old mansions you will find evidence of the US's history of shipping and international trading. Today, we hear about the wealth gained in the financial markets or oil and gas or real estate. That is more of a modern phenomenon.

The United States transitioned from a surviving economic outpost as it became the world supplier of tobacco, rice, indigo, cotton fur and lumber. Our God-given resources are what we had to offer the world. America imported finished goods from England and Europe, while supplying natural resources and raw materials.

Elias Derby was America's first millionaire (1739-1799). The equivalent of 1 million dollars today is 80 million dollars. Elias was a merchant and sea trader in Salem, MA. Robert Morris (1734-1806) was a sea trader who personally financed the American Revolution. John Hancock (1737-1793) was a tea trader who became the wealthiest man in America.

Here are some interesting early American seagoing trade statistics that may surprise you; to draw some comparisons with ancient Tyre:

- Tobacco was a primary cash crop in early America. It accounted for 27% of all exports. Tobacco served as currency. Today tobacco only accounts for ½ % of US exports.
- Rice was a main export of the southern colonies. Rice shaped all of our trading networks. It was twice as big a part of US exports than it is today.
- Indigo (Blue gold) served as a fabric dye exported worldwide that does not even really exist today.
- US Cotton supplied the textile industry worldwide.
- US Furs was a major economic force and major economic driver. It is nonexistent today.
- Lumber was a world-dominating US export in the 1700s. Bangor, Maine exported 8.7 billion board feet in the 1700s! Lumber was a major export along the eastern seaboard.

The Great Fall

You could compare Tyre to the import/export successes of Amsterdam or Singapore. Tyre fell from untold wealth when it turned its back on Israel. King Solomon had a strong business relationship with King Hiram of Tyre. He bought a lot of cedars, that were felled and floated on the sea to build the temple and his home. Later on queen Jezebel from Tyre, brought death to Israel with her import of Baal and Ashtoreth worship when she married King Ahab. She was a well-known as a mass murderer of all saints. When Judah fell, Tyre provided a ready market for all of the enslaved Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre the coastal city, but it survived. It transferred its people and its wealth to its offshore island. It took a while to make a full comeback.

The **siege of Tyre** was waged for 13 years from 586 to 573 BC by **Nebuchadnezzar II** of Babylon. The siege of **Tyre**, in **Phoenicia**, has a significant connection to the **Book of Ezekiel** which in chapter 26 announces that the city will soon fall to the Babylonian forces, while chapter 29 states that the siege was partially unsuccessful.

Many years after Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great ended the remaining offshore island of Tyre, by building a causeway way out in the sea. The siege of Tyre was orchestrated by Alexander the Great in 332 BC during his campaigns against the Persians. At first, the Macedonian army was unable to capture the city of Tyre, which was a strategic coastal base on the Mediterranean Sea, through conventional means because it was on an island that was 1 kilometer off the coast of Modern day Lebanon (at the time Phoenicia) and had walls right up to the sea. Alexander responded to this problem by first blockading and besieging Tyre for seven months, and then by building a causeway and placing siege towers with catapults built on top at the end after his soldiers discovered that they could not extend it any further due to a steep drop under the surface of the water. This allowed him to breach the fortifications.

The burden against Tyre. Wail, you ships of Tarshish! For it is laid waste, So that there is no house, no harbor; From the land of Cyprus it is revealed to them. 2 Be still, you inhabitants of the coastland, You merchants of Sidon, Whom those who cross the sea have filled. 3 And on great waters the grain of Shihor, The harvest of the River, is her revenue; And she is a marketplace for the nations. 4 Be ashamed, O Sidon; For the sea has spoken, The strength of the sea, saying, I do not labor, nor bring forth children; Neither do I rear young men, Nor bring up virgins. ” 5 When the report reaches Egypt, They also will be in agony at the report of Tyre. 6 Cross over to Tarshish; Wail, you inhabitants of the coastland! Is this your joyous city, Whose antiquity is from ancient days, Whose feet carried her far off to dwell? 8 Who has taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, Whose merchants are princes, Whose traders are the honorable of the earth? 9 The LORD of hosts has purposed it, To bring to dishonor the pride of all glory, To bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth. 10 Overflow through your land like the River, O daughter of Tarshish; There is no more strength. 11 He stretched out His hand over the sea, He shook the kingdoms; The LORD has given a commandment against Canaan To destroy its strongholds. 12 And He said, “You will rejoice no more, O you oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon. Arise, cross over to Cyprus; There also you will have no rest.” 13 Behold, the land of the Chaldeans, This people which was not; Assyria founded it for wild beasts of the desert. They set up its towers, They raised up its palaces, And brought it to ruin. 14 Wail, you ships of Tarshish! For

your strength is laid waste. ¹⁵Now it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot: ¹⁶“Take a harp, go about the city, You forgotten harlot; Make sweet melody, sing many songs, That you may be remembered.” ¹⁷And it shall be, at the end of seventy years, that the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth. ¹⁸Her gain and her pay will be set apart for the LORD; it will not be treasured nor laid up, for her gain will be for those who dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for fine clothing. (Isaiah 23)

The 70 years mentioned in Isaiah is the time between Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the mainland nation...and the time required to transfer over and return to glory on its offshore island. After the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, it remained desolate until the close of the Babylonian monarchy. Then a new city was built on the island, that soon rivaled the former in magnificence. That new city was besieged and taken by Alexander the Great, on his way to the conquests of the East.

“Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; ⁵Because you have taken My silver and My gold, And have carried into your temples My prized possessions. ⁶Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem You have sold to the Greeks, That you may remove them far from their borders. (Joel 3)

Once Tyre rebuilt and returned to glory they had to deal with a different political situation. They had a temple dedicated to Hercules. Alexander the Great (Greece) and Persia were at war. Alexander requested to come out to the island of Tyre to offer sacrifice to Hercules (in the temple of Melkart/Hercules) in Tyre. Alexander saw himself as a descendant of Hercules; and became incensed when he was turned down.

The Tyrians continued to refuse Alexander. Further envoys from Alexander were murdered. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar two centuries earlier, Alexander was not content to simply wait and starve the Tyrians into submission. Nebuchadnezzar did not have the imagination to do what Alexander would do next. Alexander had empires to conquer and the island of Tyre was in his way. Delay was intolerable! Further, if he let Tyre alone, the Persians could safely harbor their fleet there and

Alexander would continue to have an enemy at his back as he ventured east. Though the sea barred his path Alexander was able to see past this obstacle. True to his word, he would turn the island of Tyre into mainland.

Alexander Builds A Causeway

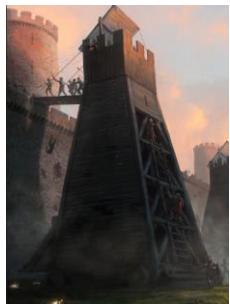
Demolishing the ruins of mainland Tyre (“Old Tyre”), Alexander had the stones thrown into the sea at the point where the distance between the mainland and the island of Tyre was the shortest. His forces began to build a massive causeway (also called a “mole”) to the island. Alexander’s soldiers became engineers and construction workers. Their material was timber from the famous cedar forests of Lebanon and the abundant stone and even soil from the old city of Tyre that had lain in ruins since its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar over two centuries before.

As the water deepened, the progress of the causeway began to slow. At this point, the efforts of Alexander’s men invited only mockery from the Tyrians. The men of Tyre would approach the workers in boats so that they would be close enough to be heard but far enough away to avoid danger. They would shout scorn and reproach at Alexander’s men. “Was this work for proud soldiers? Did you imagine when you enlisted that you would be carrying baskets of rock and dirt on your backs? Do you imagine that Alexander is greater than the god of the sea?”

Labor on the causeway continued and before long included tens of thousands of men drafted into service from neighboring cities and towns. Only now did the men of Tyre begin to awake to the danger.

As the causeway progressed, it came within range of the archers on the walls of Tyre. Although ancient accounts of their height may be exaggerated, there is no doubt that the walls of the island fortress were unusually high and formidable. Arrows and other projectiles hurled down on the Alexander’s workers killing and wounding and making further progress all but impossible. Alexander countered by building two of the tallest siege towers in ancient history and then had them moved to the end of causeway. These wooden towers were covered in rawhide to protect the frame from burning arrows. These towers sheltered Alexander’s workers from enemy fire and allowed them to continue working. Further, the towers also served

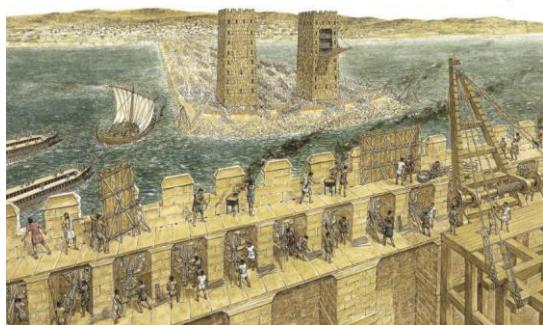
as artillery platforms. Catapults and archers at the top of the siege towers were able to return fire at the soldiers on the walls of Tyre.



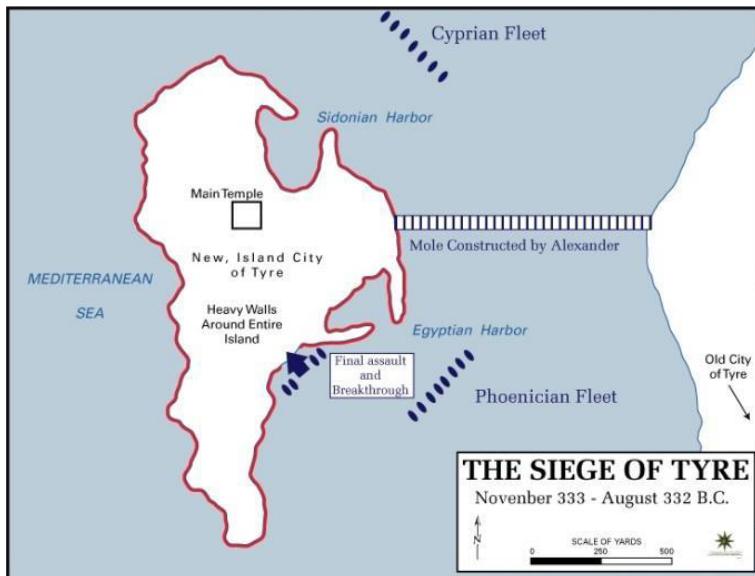
This prompted the Tyrians to devise a very clever counter-attack. Taking an old transport ship, they filled it to the gunwales with highly combustible materials. They hung cauldrons of oil from the masts and then two galley ships towed the fireship to the end of the causeway and ran her aground. Tyrian soldiers quickly set the vessel aflame and the inferno spread to Alexander's siege towers and other siege equipment. Tyrian soldiers in boats landed on the causeway to kill or drive back those of Alexander's soldiers and workers that would try to douse the flames. The gambit was a complete success. The towers were destroyed and work on the causeway came to a halt.



The setback was short-lived. Alexander would not let the same strategy work twice. He realized he would need a navy. Fortunately the other cities of Phoenicia which had surrendered to him largely without a fight possessed fighting ships. Further, the king of Cyprus wished to be allied to Alexander and sent 120 of his fighting ships. Another 23 fighting ships came from the Greek city-state of Ionia. In total, Alexander now had a navy of 223 ships which was more than Tyre possessed and more than enough to blockade the island city.



Finding themselves outnumbered, Tyrian ships could be contained in Tyre's two harbors where the best they could now do was guard against entrance into the city. The blockade was complete, the Tyrians were now cooped up inside their city, unable to harass Alexander's men or resupply the city from the sea. The humor that the Tyrians found in Jerusalem's siege had fallen on them. Now the inconceivable happened, and this island was under siege by 223 war ships.



Work resumed on the causeway. Alexander ordered that it be widened further and the siege towers rebuilt. As the causeway was being completed, his new navy tested the city's defenses at various points and attacked the entrances to the harbors. Many ships were sunk at the mouths of the harbor but the defenders were able to keep Alexander's ships at bay. Some of Alexander's ships were mounted with battering rams and they tested the city walls in a number of locations. Other ships were strapped together so they could support a siege tower tall enough to

reach the top of the city walls. Finally, one of the battering ram equipped ships succeeded in punching a small breach through the walls.

The Fall Of Tyre

To split the Tyrian's attention, the Greek forces launched a number of diversionary attacks on various points of the island's walls and the navy bombarded the city from all sides with projectiles. With Tyre's forces fighting on all sides, two ships approached the breached wall. From a tall siege tower, Alexander personally led some of his elite soldiers onto the walls of Tyre and they forced their way into the city. The thoroughly demoralized defenders of Tyre were now in a panic and Alexander's forces were now able to punch through other areas of the city including through its harbors. The fighting inside the city was fierce but relatively short-lived.

In 332 BC Tyre the island fell. Some citizens of Tyre sought shelter in the Temple of Melkart (Melqart), where Alexander had wanted to sacrifice to Hercules. The city became a slaughterhouse. 6,000 of the Tyrian defenders died in battle while reportedly, only 400 of Alexander's men died in the final fight for Tyre. Even if those numbers are exaggerated the disparity was surely great. 30,000 of the citizens of Tyre were subsequently sold into slavery while 2,000 soldiers who had survived the downfall were forced onto the beaches of Tyre and hung or nailed by the hands onto trees, posts and rudimentary frames until they were dead. It is ironic that those who laughed and cheered and sold the Jews into slavery, themselves fell prey to the same fate. The Roman empire would later famously employ this form of slow public execution called in Latin, "crucifixion". In the end, the god of Tyre did not protect them. Alexander pulled down every structure and threw the rocks into the sea, making this a notable place in the ocean, where it was just a scraped off rock where you could spread out and mend your nets.

Read Ezekiel 26:7-21: Everything pertains to the children of Israel. The Tyrians wanted to see their trading competition gone; so they cheered when Babylon sieged Jerusalem. In poetic justice, God turned Nebuchadnezzar to Tyre to do the same to them. The inconceivable just happened to Tyre. God called the King of

Babylon the King of Kings, as he was raised up to take down a number of countries...which we are reading about in these chapters.