

Ezekiel 27

Ezekiel 26, 27 and 28 are all about Tyre. Last week we read about the fall of Tyre. The Tyrians celebrated the day when the Jews were besieged by Babylon. Tyre and Judah were former business partners who were only competitors now. Both nations were in the business of buying and selling commodities. Israel was on the inland trade route crossroads. Tyre created the ocean-going hub for world trade. Not only did Tyre celebrate the fall of Jerusalem; but they also sold the captured Jews as slaves.

This chapter is a lamentation over all the lost hopes and dreams of profitable commerce all over the world when Tyre was destroyed. It is a grand illusion of fleeting wealth, not unlike how in 1849 men left their families to gain wealth panning for gold in California.

Tyre had the enviable position by being the nation who was cashing out all of the traders and providers of commodities. The world lined up for their pay day. The Tyrian fleet of ships was like a bank that paid out to all who sold goods. If you worked all year to harvest a crop, you might get one payday when one of these glorious vessels pulled into the port. Tyre had a first-class operation. This is well-orchestrated capitalism. Its ships materials and craftsmanship were the best that this world has to offer. Its crew were the who's-who at every position aboard. They were the best at their craft. Tyre had massive advantages to move over water instead of over land. This chapter is about the excitement of doing business in the big leagues. This is one aspect of the love of this world.

The church is often described as men in the same boat. You could say the Tyrian trading ships are similarly the unbelievers in their unified efforts. There is a big difference. In the church, everyone is serving and getting blessed. The traders were only making a small group of people rich. For every high-profile figure getting rich, you have hundreds or thousands of people doing the gathering and processing or rowing for a wage. The spiritual message is not about the commodity business or import - export. It is about the things that we should not be trading away to get our shot at the big leagues. It is a workaholic's dream.

When we trade away our families and morals for a few more dollars it all evaporates. You want to be considered significant; and in the end your time was

just a commodity that is now spent. You cannot redeem lost time to material pursuits.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6)

Read Ezekiel 27:1-11: Sometimes equipment used in business can create excitement. The biggest operators have the best and biggest equipment. The successful very large companies often take it to the next level of extravagance. We call that *metal mania*. Equipment salespeople love that. Seeing a string of rail cars or a convoy of semi tractors with your materials on board can be exhilarating. Large pieces of equipment can also be closely inspected at trade fairs.

The untold story here is all of the poor souls all over the world laboring like slaves to mine, harvest, tend, or process the wares being sold here. Those folks make a wage at best. Tyre was at the top of the chain. They were able to cut a lot of fat for themselves.

These trading ships were the subject of fanciful dreams and tales of great wealth. It is understandable why they needed armed guards. They must have carried a lot of money.

High end retail merchants know the importance of portraying wealth. I have a friend who works for a specialty general contractor catering to the ultra-rich. They build out Gucci and Cartier outlets and similar spaces. They bring in marble workers from Italy to hand craft the Italian marble floors and walls with great expertise.

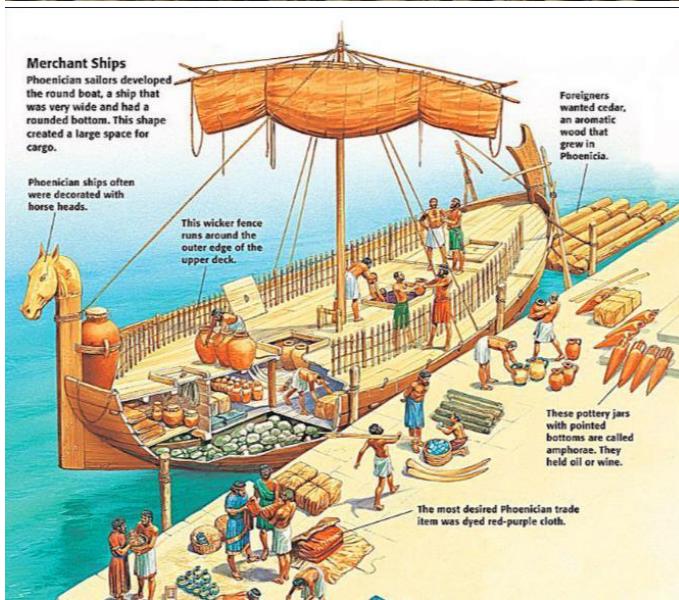
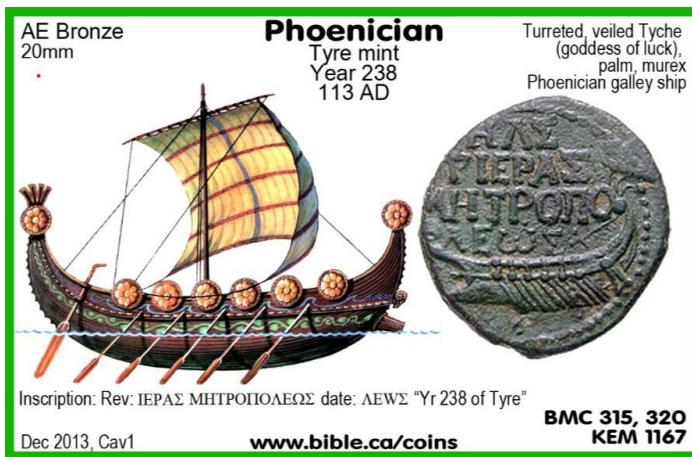
These ocean-going ships were world class vessels. They used the best lumber available, for the various parts and pieces. The decorative inlays and specially woven and colored sails made it really over the top. They used the world's best caulkers to make the vessel watertight. The crew drew the world's best at their craft for each position. The oarsmen were undoubtedly the most powerful. The

navigators were the most seasoned and savvy. The soldiers were the best mercenaries available to protect the valuables.

All businessmen aspire to play in the *big leagues*, and to be positioned to take the fat out of each deal. This is about becoming the envy of the business world with your success. This is Tyre.

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)

Read Ezekiel 27:12-24: Tyre was a market maker for so many things. Each nation and people group had their local specialty that was worth much more in faraway lands. The more wares that a marketplace can offer only increases the liquidity and value of the lesser-known commodities. You can draw traders who do not want to trapse all over the middle east to gather their items. It may not be worth the trip just to buy rope and cords, but it is if you can also buy horses and spices and saddle cloths at the same time. You could trade for coins, or you could barter with other goods. As the head of the trading, you control the money; which gives you ultimate power. In addition, land routes knock the weight gains and healthy conditioning down on livestock. Here are some of the market makers who cashed out at Tyre:



Tarshish-iron, tin, and lead

Javan, Tubal and Meshech-slave traders

Togarmah-hoses, studs and mules

Dedan-Ivory and ebony, saddle cloths and riding gear

Syria-emeralds, purple dye, embroidery, coral, linen and rubies

Judah-wheat, millet, honey, oil and balm

Damascus-luxury items, wine, and white wool

Dan and Javan-wrought iron, cane and cassia incense

Arabia and Kedar-lambs, rams and goats

Sheba and Ramah-choices spices, gold and precious stones

Haran, Canneh, Eden and Sheba- purple clothes, embroidered garments, chests of multi colored clothes, and woven cords

Read Ezekiel 27:25-36: The participants in the marketplace saw their hope go down the drain as Tyre was destroyed. Babylon is described as *an east wind that destroys*. The idea here is not only that Tyre was ruined; but there are so many who built their hopes and dreams in the Tyrian market machine. It is no different than the local loggers who lose jobs when the only mill in the area shuts down. He who controls the market ultimately controls production.

Now the remaining long caravans and desert ships would only be marginally profitable by comparison. The distance from Egypt to Syria by camel is about 1000 km. Camels travel 4 km/hr. Riding 12 hours per day would take at least 3 weeks. To go by water is only a few days to a week. Many items may have lost their market altogether over the journey.

It would be like Wall Street being shut down, or our coastal ports being shut down. God is in the business of bringing down our idols. Any unhealthy hopes that we place on our enterprise will be where the cracks form.

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; (James 4:13)