

EZEKIEL

Chapter 26

Prophecy Against Tyre

In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, ‘Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken; it has swung open to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste,’ 3 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. 4 They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. 5 She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. And she shall become plunder for the nations, 6 and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD. 7 “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. 8 He will kill with the sword your daughters on the mainland. He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound against you, and raise a roof of shields against you. 9 He will direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. 10 His horses will be so many that their dust will cover you. Your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen and wagons and chariots, when he enters your gates as men enter a city that has been breached. 11 With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. 12 They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters. 13 And I will stop the music of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. 14 I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the LORD; I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. 15 “Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Will not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter is made in your midst? 16 Then all the princes of the sea will step down from their thrones and remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground and tremble every moment and be appalled at you. 17 And they will raise a lamentation over you and say to you, “‘How you have perished, you who were inhabited from the seas, O city renowned, who was mighty on the sea; she and her inhabitants imposed their terror on all her inhabitants! 18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall, and the coastlands that are on the sea are dismayed at your passing.’ 19 “For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make you a city laid waste, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you, 20 then I will make you go down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you to dwell in the world below, among ruins from of old, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set beauty in the land of the living. 21 I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more. Though you be sought for, you will never be found again, declares the Lord GOD.”

26:1–14 C 35 mi NW of the Sea of Chinnereth lay the port city Tyre, “mighty on the sea” (v 17). Together with her sister city Sidon, c 25 mi up the Great Sea’s coast, these Phoenician cities established a commercial empire unrivaled in their day. Their ships brought the merchandise of the nations into their storehouses and filled their coffers with treasures (cf Is 23). However, the amassed riches of the world did not put them beyond God’s control. On five occasions, “the word of the LORD came” to Ezekiel to announce their doom (26:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 20). (TLSB)

Although never actually conquered by Assyrian kings, by cutting Tyre's supply lines, they had forced the city into some sort of accommodation with Assyria, and this tie to Assyria continued after Nebuchadnezzar came to power in Babylon. Josephus reports that Nebuchadnezzar engaged in a thirteen-year siege of Tyre, which probably began shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. There is evidence of Nebuchadnezzar's personal presence during at least part of the siege. The ruler of Tyre at the time, Ethbaal III, even seems to have been taken captive to Babylon and a more favorably disposed monarch was placed on his throne, with a "keeper of the seal" installed to keep him in line. Thus, Ezekiel's prophecy, suggesting a breaching of Tyre's walls as was usual with cities, never came to pass literalistically in that era, but the difference was quite nominal. (CC)

The fact that Ezekiel devotes three entire chapters to Tyre (chapters 26–28)—more than any other prophet—invites an explanation. A partial answer is suggested by the gleeful "aha!" we hear in 26:2. Jerusalem's fall would enable the Tyrians to expand their commercial interests still further, especially with Transjordanian areas to the east. But this is hardly the main reason. Ezekiel understood clearly that Babylon was God's appointed agent to carry out judgment upon Israel, and any attempt to thwart that role was intrinsically at odds with the irrevocable divine decree. When Jerusalem fell in 586, the only states still resisting Babylon were Tyre and Egypt. So it is no accident that when Ezekiel is finished with Tyre, he will devote four chapters to Egypt (Ezekiel 29–32). (CC)

26:1 *eleventh year ... first day.* The number of the month is missing. The entire year dates from Apr. 23, 587, to Apr. 13, 586 B.C. The oracle must date from the end of that year, in the 11th (Feb. 13, 586) or the 12th month (Mar. 15, 586). This is the fifth date in the book (see 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1). (CSB)

Because Jerusalem was captured in the same year, the news of its fall must have quickly reached Tyre, where it was greeted with malicious glee. (TLSB)

26:2 *Tyre.* The island capital of Phoenicia, present-day Lebanon. It was involved in an anti-Assyrian coalition in 594 B.C. (see Jer 27:3). Ezekiel, more than any other prophet, prophesied against Tyre (see chs. 27–28; but see Isa 23; Jer 25:22; 47:4; Joel 3:4–5; Am 1:9–10; Zec 9:2–4). (CSB)

gate of the peoples. Because of its geographical location, its political importance and the central role it played in international trade. The anti-Assyrian summit meeting was held there (see Jer 27). (CSB)

Situated astride the corridor between the Great Sea and the desert, Jerusalem was in a position to control the overland trade routes between the nations of antiquity and to levy taxes on wares in transit through its territory. (TLSB)

26:3 *as the sea brings up its waves.* For invading armies likened to waves of the sea cf. Isa 17:12–13. Since Tyre was an island, the metaphor is especially appropriate here. (CSB)

Nations will rise against the city like a storm surge. Befitting her greater prominence at the time, Tyre bears the brunt of the denunciation. The Lord will make her a bare rock (vv 4, 14). One of the Lord's agents of destruction will be the king of Babylon (TLSB)

26:5 *a place for the spreading of nets.* Destroyed and sunk below water level so fishermen will fish over the ruins. (TLSB)

26:6 *her daughters.* Phoenician towns of lesser prominence. (TLSB)

26:7 *thus says the Lord GOD.* Repeated three times to shatter Tyre's false sense of security (vv 7, 15, 19). (TLSB)

north. The direction from which Nebuchadnezzar would descend on Tyre after first marching his army up the Euphrates River valley rather than across the Arabian Desert (cf. Jer 1:13). (CSB)

I am will bring. A clear indication of God’s sovereignty over the nations (cf. 28:7; 29:8). (CSB)

After the capture of Jerusalem, he besieged Tyre for 13 years. He destroyed the city on the mainland, but its island defenses, one-half mile offshore, held out. (TLSB)

Nebuchadnezzar. The first of four references to him in Ezekiel (see 29:18–19; 30:10). He ruled from 605 to 562 B.C., and his name means “O (god) Nabu, protect my son” or “O (god) Nabu, protect my boundary.” Jeremiah and Ezekiel both proclaimed that this pagan king would be used by God to do his work (see Jer 25:9; 27:6). (CSB)

king of kings. Hbr superlative; i.e., the greatest of kings. (TLSB)

26:8 *siege.* Nebuchadnezzar’s 15-year siege of Tyre began shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. There is no record that Tyre fell at this time. (CSB)

raise a roof of shields. Or simply, “raise shields.” The Greco-Roman *testudo* technique of joining shields to cover a group of men during an attack is not evident in Assyrian or Babylonian depictions of siege warfare. (TLSB)

26:14 *never be rebuilt.* Eventually fulfilled by Alexander’s devastating siege in 332 B.C. (CSB)

Demolished in 332 BC by Alexander the Great. Before taking the fortified rock, he had to build a causeway into the sea and out to it. Alexander’s conquest permanently altered the site, making the island of Tyre a peninsula. (TLSB)

26:15–18 Tyre’s satellites and maritime colonies will be appalled at the sudden fall of an apparently invincible power structure. Their spokesmen, called princes of the sea, will lament over the wreckage as if it were a corpse. (TLSB)

26:16 *princes of the sea.* Called kings in 27:35, they were probably trading partners with Tyre. (CSB)

remove their robes. Usually mourners tore their clothes (Job 2:12) and put on sackcloth, but cf. the king of Nineveh (Jn 3:6). (CSB)

Clothed themselves with trembling. Because of political shock waves from the fall of such a powerful city (cf. 7:27; Ps 35:26; 109:29). (CSB)

Picturesque description of mourning, as royalty shiver in sackcloth. (TLSB)

26:19–21 The dirge over Tyre’s demise is appropriate, because as the dead cannot return from the pit to the land of the living, so the city will never be found again. (TLSB)

26:19 *the deep.* The primeval, chaotic mass—the “deep” of Ge 1:2. Tyre’s collapse into the sea is described in almost cosmic terms. (CSB)

26:20 *pit.* The grave, “the earth below” (cf. Ps 69:15). (CSB)

people of old. Those long dead (Ps 143:3; La 3:6). (CSB)

not be inhabited. As Israel would (see 37:1–14). (CSB)

I will set beauty in the land of the living. A word of hope for the repentant, which heightens the contrast for the unrepentant. Life and beauty will go on without them. (TLSB)

Ch 26 The Lord speaks against Phoenicia and its principal city, Tyre. Mocking the Lord brings His retribution. People who pride themselves on criticizing and persecuting God's people will suffer His wrath here or in the grave. Yet, there is hope and beauty for the repentant. Though Tyre would sink down, those who trust the Lord will rise up in blessing. • Lord, by Your hand all nations rise and fall. Protect us by Your Holy Spirit, through Christ. Amen.