

August 26

Ezekiel 26-28

Hi, my name is Marty Barnhart and I am the Director of Ministry Expansion here at Christ Community.

Today we read chapters 26 - 28 of Ezekiel. Here we encountered the oracles delivered by Ezekiel against the city states of Tyre and Sidon. Now, I'm not going to tell you that Ezekiel 26 - 28 are among the "great chapters of the Bible", but these three chapters are very interesting, because of the way in which the prophecies made by Ezekiel came to pass.

The reason that these prophecies, especially the one related to Tyre, are so interesting is because the fulfillment of the prophecy which was staged – (that is it did not happen all at once, but in stages over a period of several centuries) -- over such a long period in fact, that it is inconceivable that anyone could have then inserted the prophecies into the text of the Book of Ezekiel, which was well known and used by the people of Israel!

In just a moment I want to note with you some of the specific aspects of this remarkable prophecy, and see how in fact, they were fulfilled. But before we do that, I want to be sure that you noted the why of all of this. Did you pay attention to why God judged Tyre? -- It might shock you a bit!! It was because the people of Tyre gloated over the destruction of Jerusalem, saying, "Now that she lies in ruins I will prosper."

Tyre and Jerusalem were both commercial cities. Tyre had not one, but two excellent harbors. Half of the city, located on the Mediterranean Sea just to the north of Israel, was on the mainland with good anchorage. The other half of the city was on an island fortress, which also had a natural harbor. The name "Tyre" came from the island part of the city. It means "rock". In times of war, if an invader threatened, the inhabitants of Tyre could sacrifice the portion of the city on the mainland and retreat by ship onto their island fortress, which they believed to be impregnable. I have no doubt that from your reading today you got a pretty good idea of the extent of Tyre's trade and commercial interests. Just about every marketable commodity in the ancient world was passing through the hands of these seagoing merchants. Tyre was rich. She dominated the sea trade on the Mediterranean.

Jerusalem had no harbor. It was not a port. But perhaps you noticed it referred to in chapter 26 as "The gate to the Nations." That was because the overland trading routes from Asia and Europe down to Africa passed through the narrow neck of land occupied by Israel. All roads to and from Egypt and Africa led through Jerusalem, the gateway to Asia and Europe. Tyre dominated the sea trade. Jerusalem controlled the overland routes. They were competitors. With the fall of Jerusalem, the overland trading route became unstable and very risky. That meant more business would travel via sea, and the profit margins of the merchant fleet of

Tyre would soar. So when Jerusalem fell, they gloated. And for that, God's wrath fell upon the great city of Tyre. Tell me something. Have you ever rejoiced over the misfortune of an individual or a group that you considered to be your competitor? Has greed ever caused you to be glad when another encountered misfortune? Be careful! That is the sin for which the city of Tyre was destroyed! Remember Proverbs 19:5b, "Whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished."

Now let's think for a moment or two about the specific prophecies that Ezekiel made here. He tells us that:

- 1) Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city of Tyre
- 2) that many nations will come against Tyre
- 3) that she will become a bare rock
- 4) that fishermen will spread nets over the site
- 5) that the debris of the city will be thrown into the water
- 6) she would never be rebuilt -- never found again.

Within three years of Ezekiel's prophetic utterance, Nebuchadnezzar came against Tyre. After a 13 year siege, (that says something about both the importance of the city and its strength,) Tyre surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, but when he broke down the gates, he found the city almost empty. The inhabitants had fled over water to the island, which Nebuchadnezzar could not touch!

In about 333 B.C., the next great conqueror, Alexander the Great, came along. By now, by the way, Ezekiel's book had wide currency among the Jews. If someone tried to change it, it would be known. Alexander got angry with the inhabitants of Tyre because they refused to use their ships to help him against Egypt. He too destroyed the mainland city, only to find that the inhabitants had fled to the island. But Alexander was more determined than Nebuchadnezzar had been, and by completely demolishing the mainland city and throwing the rubbish into the water he built a causeway one-and-one-half miles long out to the island. He commandeered a huge fleet of ships from other cities and finally he took the island. He killed 70,000 people in Tyre and made another 30,000 into slaves, and sold them to other countries!

Still the city of Tyre continued to exist, as wave after wave of conquerors came against her. A general named **Antigonus** came in 314 B.C. and so it continued right through to the time of the crusades. But then -- after waves of conquest, Tyre passed out of existence. The present day city of Tyre is built on a different site, several miles down the coast from the original site. Today there is only a fishing village -- "A place for the spreading of the nets" -- where the ancient city used to be. The fact that the ancient site has not been rebuilt is curious, because in addition to not one but two natural harbors, there is an abundant supply of fresh water at the original site.

The very last part of Ezekiel's words to the king of Tyre, beginning with verse 11 of chapter 28, sounds to me a lot like the passage directed toward the king of Babylon

that we read in Isaiah 14 -- the "son of the morning" passage that some Bible scholars think is speaking about Satan. Do you remember it? Well, all the language here about Eden and cherubs doesn't seem to easily "fit" the physical king of Tyre in the days of Ezekiel, so some students want to apply it to the spiritual king of Tyre -- "Satan." The sin for which this king has been "thrown down" by God is the sin of pride, and an attempt to establish himself as a god. -- That surely fits the case of Satan, as well as the king of Tyre in Ezekiel's day. Neither view is without its need for more study, but the language pointing back toward Genesis (and, by the way, forward toward Revelation) marks this passage as deserving of special attention as we read.

God is amazing and has a plan for his people Israel and their city Jerusalem. He also has a plan for your life. Trust him and know that we are praying for you as you continue to read in Project 4.4. The Apostle Paul's wrote, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1.3-6).

May God bless you today.