

CHAPTER 26

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar; this, being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prediction of the destruction of Tyre. We have “the burden of Tyre,” ²³⁰¹Isaiah 23. It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, ²³⁰²Isaiah 25:22; 27:3; 47:4. But Ezekiel is ordered to be copious upon that head. In this chapter we have,

I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 2).

II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold.

- 1.** The extremity of this destruction: it shall be utterly ruined (v. 4-6, 12-14).
- 2.** The instruments of this destruction, many nations (v. 3), and the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army (v. 7-11).
- 3.** The great surprise that this should give to the neighbouring nations, who would all wonder at the fall of so great a city and be alarmed at it (v. 15-21).

²³⁰³EZEKIEL 26:1-14

THE BURDEN OF TYRE

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and *in the first day of the month*, but it is not said what month, some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, which was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here,

I. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem (v. 2): “*Aha! she is broken, broken to pieces, that was the gates of the people, to whom there was a great resort and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account and some upon another, and I shall get by it; all the wealth, power, and interest, which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre, and so now that she is laid waste I shall be replenished.*” We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary as the Ammonites and Edomites had, or were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews. They were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation, and therefore were not so bigoted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls that lived retired and knew not the world. All their care was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promised herself that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade a commerce, that now she shall have Jerusalem's customers, and the great men from all parts that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of themselves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in those parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which, being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem, and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that does most easily beset us, but is not thought to be such a bad thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break or fall into disgrace, “We shall be *replenished* now that they are *laid waste.*” But this comes from a selfish covetous principle, and a desire to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*, as if we grugged that any should live by us. This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourselves which the law of God so expressly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happiness which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects

of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of others; and we see they are often disappointed.

II. The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus. Tyrus was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might have continued so if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities and sent her an address of condolence; but when, instead of that, she showed herself pleased with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God says, *Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus!* v. 3. And let her not expect to prosper long if God be against her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her: *Many nations shall come against thee*, an army made up of many nations, or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God against them may expect all the creatures against them; for what peace can those have with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in as *the waves of the sea*, one upon the neck of another, with an irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them — *Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings*, that had many kings tributaries to him and dependents on him, besides those that were his captives, Can 2:37, 38. He is that *head of gold*. He shall come with a vast army, *horses and chariots*, etc., all land-forces. We do not find that he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by sea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find ^{29:18} Ezekiel 29:18, where it is called a *great service which he served against Tyrus*. He shall besiege it in form (v. 8), *make a fort, and cast a mount*, and (v. 9) shall *set engines of war against the walls*. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, v. 10. They shall make a noise that shall even *shake the walls*; and they shall shout at every attack, as soldiers do when they *enter a city that is broken up*; the horses shall prance with so much fury and violence that they shall even *tread down the streets* though so ever well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution.

(1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall *destroy the walls* and *break down the towers*, v. 4. For what walls are so strongly built as to be a fence against the judgments of God? Her *strong garrisons shall go down to the ground*, v. 11. And the walls shall be broken down, v. 12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last.

(2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed: *Her daughters who are in the field*, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother-city, the inhabitants of them *shall be slain by the sword*, v. 6. The invaders begin with those that come first in their way. And (v. 11) *he shall slay thy people with the sword*; not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers, shall be *put to the sword*, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long.

(3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror (v. 12): They *shall make a prey of the merchandise*. It was in hope of the plunder that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are *kept for the owners to their hurt*; they entice and recompense thieves, and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who are thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief.

(4.) The city itself shall be laid in ruins. All the *pleasant houses* shall be *destroyed* (v. 12), such as were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away *the stones and the timber*, and shall *lay them in the midst of the water*, not to be recovered, or ever made use of again. Nay (v. 4), *I will scrape her dust from her*; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid *in the midst of the water*, v. 12. The *foundation is in the dust*; that dust shall be all taken away, and then the city must fall of course. When Jerusalem was destroyed it was *ploughed like a field*, ^{<382>}Micah 3:12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried further than that; the very soil of it shall be scraped away, and it shall be made *like the top of a rock* (v. 4. 14), pure rock that has no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place *for the spreading of nets* (v. 14); it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon and mend them.


(5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy (v. 13): *I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease*. Tyre had been a joyous city (^{<321>}Isaiah 23:7).; with her songs she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade. But now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport. *Lastly*,

It shall be *built no more* (v. 14), not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence, nor built any more in the same place, within the sea, nor built any where for a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be *no more*. For *God has spoken it* (v. 5, 14); and when what he has said is accomplished *they shall know* thereby that *he is the Lord*, and *not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent*.

EZEKIEL 26:15-21

THE BURDEN OF TYRE

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are exceedingly affecting.

1. See how high, how great, Tyre had been, how little likely ever to come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great aggravation of their present disgrace and poverty. Tyre was a *renowned city* (v. 17), famous among the nations, the *crowning city* (so she is called  Isaiah 23:8), a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her. She was *inhabited of seas*, that is, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the *abundance of the seas* and the *treasures hidden in the sand*. She was *strong in the sea*, easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible, fortified by a *wall of water*, which made her impregnable. So that *she* with her pomp, *and her inhabitants* with their pride, *caused their terror to be on all that haunted* that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians and was afraid of disobliging them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, v. 19, 20. This *renowned city* is made a *desolate city*, is no more frequented as it has been; there is no more resort of merchants to it; it is *like the cities not inhabited*, which are no cities, and having none to keep them in repair, will go to decay of themselves. Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which *cover* it, and upon which the *deep is brought up*. As the

waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be *brought down with those that descend into the pit*, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with *Sodom and Gomorrah*, that lie in the bottom of the Dead Sea. Or, she shall be in the condition of those who have been long buried, of the *people of old time*, who are old inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground and quite forgotten above ground; such shall *Tyre be, free among the dead, set in the lower parts of the earth*, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be *like the places desolate of old*, as well as like persons dead of old; it shall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall *not be inhabited* again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that *it shall be no more*; The Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre: *Thou shalt be sought for, and never found again*. New persons may build a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call *Tyre*, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best-fortified and best-furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were here which now our antiquaries scarcely know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence than Roman urns and coins dug up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in (v. 15): *There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee*, many slain, and great men. It is probable that, when the city was taken, the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword. Then did *the wounded cry*, and they cried in vain, to the pitiless conquerors; they cried *quarter*, but it would not be given them; the wounded are *slain* without mercy, or, rather, that is the only mercy that is shown them, that the second blow shall rid them out of their pain.

4. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to show how astonishing it should be.

(1.) the *islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall* (v. 15), as, when a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which they are afraid

they shall lose. Or, when they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus *the isles*, which thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyrus fall, shall *tremble and be troubled*, saying, “What will become of us?” And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands in the Mediterranean Sea shall feel themselves sensibly touched by the destruction of Tyre, it being a place they had so much knowledge of, such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with.

(2.) The *princes of the sea* shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands. Or the rich merchants, who live like princes (²²³⁸Isaiah 23:8), and the masters of ships, who command like princes, these shall condole the fall of Tyre in a most compassionate and pathetic manner (v. 16): *They shall come down from their thrones*, as neglecting the business of their thrones and despising the pomp of them. They shall *lay away their robes of state, their broidered garments*, and shall *clothe themselves* all over with *tremblings*, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or they shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble upon this occasion; they shall *sit upon the ground* in shame and sorrow; they shall *tremble every moment* at the thought of what has happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall *take up a lamentation for thee*, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, v. 17. *How art thou destroyed!*

[1.] It shall be a great surprise to them, and they shall be affected with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last (v. 21): *I make thee a terror*. Note, It is just with God to make those a terror to their neighbours, by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment, who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power. Tyre had *caused her terror* (v. 17) and now is made a terrible example.

[2.] It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow (v. 17); they shall *take up a lamentation for Tyre*, as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, there were no such

lamentations for it; it was *nothing to those that passed by* (^{<2012>}Lamentations 1:12); but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men.

[3.] It shall be a loud alarm to them: *They shall tremble in the day of thy fall*, because they shall have reason to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall, who can stand? *Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedar be shaken*. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. The death or decay of others in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain *stands strongly and shall not be moved*.

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink *when I shall set glory in the land of the living*, v. 20. Note,

(1.) The holy land is the *land of the living*; for none but holy souls are properly living souls. Where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there *the land of the living* is; there David hoped to *see the goodness of the Lord*, ^{<1973>}Psalm 27:13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the *land of the living*.

(2.) Though this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again *set glory* in it; the glory that had departed shall return, and the restoration of what they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the glory of the lands that are the lands of the living.

(3.) It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the land of the living. When the rich man was himself in torment he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the land of the living.