

CHAPTER 27

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter we have,

I. A large account of the dignity, wealth, and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations (v. 1-25), which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable.

II. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into (v. 26-36). And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and, by setting the one over-against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them or to be confident of the continuance of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

~~371~~ EZEKIEL 27:1-25

THE PROSPERITY OF TYRE

Here,

I. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, v. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay; yet the prophet must lament it, because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented if they be not preparing for trouble. He must lament it because its ruin is hastening on apace; it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretel it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it. Note, We ought to mourn for the miseries of other nations, as well as for our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

II. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of *the Lord Jehovah*, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, ~~and~~ Ezekiel 26:6.

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride: *O Tyrus! thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty* (v. 3), of *universal beauty* (so the word is), every way accomplished, and therefore every where admired. Zion, that had the *beauty of holiness*, is called indeed the *perfection of beauty* (Psalm 1. 2); that is the *beauty of the Lord*. But Tyre, because well-built and well-filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves on the pomp and pleasure they live in, to call themselves beauties for the sake of them, and, if in these they excel others, to think themselves perfect. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds a way to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves beautified any further than they are sanctified, nor say that they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament; the prophet, accordingly, praises Tyre for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who *looks upon every one that is proud and abases him, hides the proud in the dust together, and binds their faces in secret*, ~~and~~ Job 40:12.

(1.) The city of Tyre was advantageously situated, *at the entry of the sea* (v. 3), having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities seated on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the east end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts; so that she became a *merchant of the people for many isles*. Lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium, or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts: *Their borders are in the heart of the seas*, v. 4. It was surrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; it was the darling of the sea, laid in its bosom, in its

heart. Note, It is a great convenience, upon many accounts, to live in an island: seas are the most *ancient land-mark*, not *which our fathers have set*, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other land-marks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily *dwell alone*, if they please, as *not reckoned among the nations*, and yet, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations has determined well for us.

(2.) It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and, being a city on a hill, it made a glorious show and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports (v. 4): *They builders have perfected thy beauty*; they have so improved in architecture that nothing appears in the buildings of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord does and will build up his Jerusalem.

(3.) It had its haven replenished with abundance of *gallant ships*, ~~2018~~ Isaiah 33:21. The ship-carpenters did their part, as well as the house-carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; at least they improved it, and brought it to as great a perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadstone.

[1.] They made the *boards*, or planks, for the hulk of the ship, of *fir-trees* fetched from *Senir*, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, ~~2018~~ Song of Solomon 4:8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak.

[2.] They had cedars from Lebanon, another mountain of Israel, for their masts, v. 5.

[3.] They had oaks from Bashan (~~2013~~ Isaiah 2:13), to make oars of; for it is probable that their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for shipping. Thus one country uses what another produced, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot say to each other, *I have no need of thee*.

[4.] Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships that they made the very *benches* of *ivory*, which they fetched from *the isles of Chittim*, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or

Assyrians to make them, so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be.

[5.] So very prodigal were they that they made their *sails of fine linen* fetched from Egypt, and that *embroidered* too, v. 7. Or it may be meant of their *flags* (which they hoisted to notify what city they belonged to), which were very costly. The word signifies a *banner* as well as a *sail*.

[6.] They hung those rooms on ship-board with *blue and purple*, the richest cloths and richest colours they could get from the isles they traded with. For though Tyre was itself famous for purple, which is therefore called the *Tyrian dye*, yet they must have that which was far-fetched.

(4.) These gallant ships were well-manned, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships, that had command in their fleets, were of their own city, such as they could put a confidence in (v. 8): *Thy wise men, O Tyrus! that were in thee, were thy pilots*. But, for common sailors, they had men from other countries; *The inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners*. These came from cities near them; Zidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime powers to support and give all the countenance they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for *calkers*, or *strengtheners of the clefts or chinks*, to stop them when the ships come home, after long voyages, to be repaired. To do this they had the *ancients and wise men* (v. 9); for there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what has gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the *ancients and wise men* to be the *repairers of the breaches and the restorers of paths to dwell in*. Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, to put their youths apprentice in Tyre, or to put them on board their fleets; so that *all the ships in the sea with their mariners were ready to occupy thy merchandise*. Those that give good wages shall have hands at command.

(5.) Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, v. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary that they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took those of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service, though they had them from afar (which perhaps was their policy), from Persia, Lud, and Phut. These bore their arms when there was occasion, and in time of peace *hung up the shield and buckler* in the armoury, as it were

to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them, but they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them. Their *walls* were *guarded* by the *man of Arvad*; their *towers* were garrisoned by the *Gammadim*, robust men, that had a great deal of strength in *their arms*; yet the vulgar Latin renders it *pygmies*, men no longer than one's arm. They *hung their shields upon the walls* in their magazines or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them, seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. "Thus *they set forth thy comeliness* (v. 10), and *made thy beauty perfect*," v. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre that it had those of all the surrounding nations in its service, except the land of Israel (though it lay next them), which furnished them with timber, but we do not find that it furnished them with men; that would have trenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, ⁻⁴⁰⁷⁻2 Chronicles 2:17, 18. It was also the glory of Tyre that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay, and such an armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the *shields of mighty men*, ⁻²⁰⁰⁶⁻Song of Solomon 4:4. It is observable that there and here the armouries are said to be furnished with *shields* and *helmets*, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable that there were such, to intimate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection and not to invade and annoy their neighbours, to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

(6.) They had a vast trade and a correspondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity and some in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were, with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations named together as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Genesis 10. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of. Concerning many of them their conjectures are different and they leave us in the dark and at much uncertainty; it is well that it is not material. Modern surveys come short of explaining the ancient geography. And therefore we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry either concerning the

traders or the goods they traded in. We leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

[1.] We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little, of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre. He was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young, and there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there, by which it appears that he was divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that *saith this*, v. 3.

[2.] This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us that God's eye is upon men, and that he takes cognizance of what they do when they are employed in their worldly business, not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling, which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings *keep a conscience void of offence*, and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us.

[3.] We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity or to the comfort or ornament of human life. *Non omis fert omnia tellus — One land does not supply all the varieties of produce.* Providence dispenses its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has *made of one blood*, though they are made *to dwell on all the face of the earth*, ~~4175~~ Acts 17:26. Let every nations therefore thank God for the productions of its country; though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

[4.] See what a blessing trade and merchandise are to mankind, especially when followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage, but to a common benefit. *The earth is full of God's riches*, ~~4125~~ Psalm 104:24. There is a *multitude of all kinds of riches* in it (as it is here, v. 12), gathered off its surface and dug out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them. Now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in, in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves have reason to thank God for tradesmen

and merchants, by whom the productions of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

[5.] Besides the necessaries that are here traded in, see what abundance of things are here mentioned that only serve to please fancy, and are made valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with those things for them which we can spare that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are *horns of ivory and ebony* (v. 15), that are *brought for a present*, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange, or (as some think) presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are *emeralds, coral, and agate* (v. 16), all *precious stones, and gold* (v. 22), which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the *chief of all spices* (v. 22), *cassia and calamus* (v. 19), and, for ornament, *purple, broidered work, and fine linen* (v. 16), *precious clothes for chariots* (v. 20), *blue clothes* (which Tyre was famous for), *broidered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar*, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, v. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without!

[6.] It is observable that Judah and the *land of Israel* were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly *in wheat*, a substantial commodity, and necessary, *wheat of Minnith and Pannag*, two countries in Canaan famous for the best wheat, as some think. The whole land indeed was a *land of wheat* (^{<688>}Deuteronomy 8:8); it had *the fat of kidneys of wheat*, ^{<624>}Deuteronomy 32:14. Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel. They traded likewise in *honey, and oil, and balm, or rosin*; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple commodities of was that which was the *glory of all lands*, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and *precious stones*; and the Israel of God must reckon themselves well provided for if they have *food convenient*; for those that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God will not set their hearts on the *delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and provinces*. We find indeed that the New-Testament Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, ^{<682>}Revelation 18:12, 13. For, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.

[7.] Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. The *wares of their own making*, and a *multitude of such wares*, are here spoken of, v. 16, 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft-tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad *wares of their own making*, which may bring them in the *multitude of all riches*.

[8.] All this made Tyrus very great and very proud: *The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in they market* (v. 25); thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for *thou wast replenished* in wealth and number of people, wast beautified, and *made very glorious, in the midst of the seas*. Those that grow very rich are cried up as very glorious; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, ~~131~~Genesis 31:1.

~~132~~EZEKIEL 27:26-36

THE FALL OF TYRE

We have seen Tyre flourishing; here we have Tyre falling, and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day to come down. They have their period; and, when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline. But the destruction of Tyre was sudden. Her *sun went down at noon*. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

1. How the ruin of Tyrus will be brought about, v. 26. She is as a great ship richly laden, that is split or sunk by the indiscretion of her steersmen: *Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters*; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans which was the ruin of their state. By their insolence, by some affront given to the Chaldeans or some attempt made upon them, in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they

provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and, by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to such a degree that he determined on the ruin of their state, and, *like an east wind, broke them in the midst of the seas*. Note, It is ill with a people when those that sit at the stern, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, *her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise* (v. 27); all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, shall *ball with her into the midst of the seas, in the day of her ruin*. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; *happy therefore are those that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever*.

3. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how wretchedly they have mismanaged and how much they have contributed to their own ruin, shall *cry out* so loud as to make even the *suburbs shake* (v. 28), such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own bad conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts (v. 29), and they shall *cry out against thee*, as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out as they thought thou hadst been; they shall *cry bitterly* for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall *cast dust on their heads*, in indignation against themselves, shall *wallow themselves in ashes*, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall *make themselves bald* (v. 31), with *tearing their hair*; and, according to the custom of great mourners, those shall *gird themselves with sackcloth* who used to wear fine linen, and, instead of merry songs, they shall *weep with bitterness of heart*. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous, and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity (v. 32, 33); she that was Tyrus the *renowned* shall now be called *Tyrus the destroyed in the midst of the sea*. “*What city is like Tyre? Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity? Time was when thy wares, those of thy own making and those*

that passed through thy hands, *went forth out of the seas*, and were exported to all parts of the world; then *thou filledst many people*, and didst *enrich the kings of the earth* and their kingdoms.” The Tyrians, though they bore such a sway in trade, were yet, it seems, fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive by them. All that dealt with them were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with *the multitude of their merchandise*. “But now those that used to be enriched by thee shall be ruined with thee” (as is usual in trade); “*when thou shalt be broken*, and all thou hast is seized on, *all thy company shall fall too*,” v. 34. There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some and laughter to others, according as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be *sorely afraid*, and shall *be troubled* (v. 35), concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall *hiss at her* (v. 36), shall ridicule her pride, and vanity, and bad management, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner *men also shall clap their hands at him and shall hiss him out of his place*, ~~Job~~ Job 27:22, 23. *Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?*