

**“THE FUTILITY OF ECONOMIC POWER”**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Ezekiel 26-28 form a single unit of oracles against the city of Tyre.
- B. Tyre was a coastal city on the Mediterranean, located about one hundred miles north of Jerusalem.
- C. Its position at the crossroads of east and west helped it become a leader in international commerce, somewhat like the city of Hong Kong today.
- D. Tyre was also built on an island about six hundred yards from the coast, to which it was connected by a narrow causeway that had been built by Hiram, king of Tyre in the days of Solomon.
- E. These features made it easy to defend the city against attackers.
- F. Tyre’s combination of material prosperity and physical security gave her a great deal of self-confidence.
- G. Like most Americans today, Tyre’s citizens simply could not imagine the possibility of her downfall.
- H. As we study these chapters today, we will see how they remind us that even the most impressive levels of economic power are incapable of providing people with lasting security.

**II. From Renown to Ruins**

- A. The date mentioned in verse 1 tells us that this oracle was delivered several months after Jerusalem had been laid waste by the Babylonians.
  - 1. As with the oracles against some of Judah’s other neighbors in chapter 25, the series of messages about Tyre begins with the Lord stating why this city has become a special object of his wrath.

2. When Tyre saw what the Babylonians did to Jerusalem, she said, "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. Because Judah controlled some of the trade routes in the region, Tyre would be able to profit from Jerusalem's fall.
  4. Tyre was rejoicing in the downfall of a rival, seeing it as an opportunity to expand her own commercial interests.
  5. I would imagine that the owner of the Laconia McDonald's must have felt similarly when the Burger King that was across the street from McDonald's went out of business a number of years back.
  6. From an economic standpoint, we can understand why Tyre would have reacted to the destruction of Jerusalem in this manner.
  7. She saw it as good for business.
  8. The gate to the nations was now wide open for her.
- B. The reason why this was so offensive to the Lord was because he had established Jerusalem so that it might be a religious center for all the peoples of the earth.
1. As the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'" (Isa. 2:2-3 ESV)
  2. The thing that makes Zion a world hub is the presence of the Lord.
  3. The Lord draws people from all the nations of the world to spiritual Zion.

4. Even though the physical Zion of the sixth century B.C. was only a shadowy picture of the true spiritual reality, it was a serious thing for Tyre to think that she could supplant Judah as a world hub.
  5. In seeking to do so, she was making wealth the reality that would draw people to her from all across the globe.
  6. In other words, she was replacing God with money.
- C. Tyre's idolatrous attitude towards wealth, paired with her belittling of the Lord's covenant people, made her the object of God's wrath.
1. The Lord said to her, "Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves."
  2. The fact that the Lord had set himself against Jerusalem and handed it over to the Babylonians did not mean that the Lord was on Tyre's side.
  3. On the contrary, the God who brought that devastating judgment upon his own people is now setting his sights on Tyre.
  4. The same nation that wiped out Jerusalem will now come against Tyre.
  5. This is exactly what happened very soon after this oracle was first given.
  6. The Babylonian army, which was comprised of soldiers from many nations, came against Tyre and quickly conquered the nearby settlements located on the mainland.
  7. Then Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the island city for thirteen years, and it was eventually subjugated to Babylonian rule.
  8. Later, during the conquests of Alexander the Great, the causeway to the island was built up and the city met its end.

9. What is described in this oracle in a more compacted manner was spread out over a number of years in actual history, but it did come to pass.
  10. The city that was once so secure, so luxurious, so filled with mirth and pleasure, was reduced to nothing.
- D. This is a sobering picture of the future that lies in store for those whose hope is bound up with their material wealth and possessions.
1. When God's judgment comes upon this world, all of its riches and finery will be brought to nothing.
  2. The loss that people will experience on that day will have a devastating psychological effect on them.
  3. Instead of being clothed with fine garments, they will be clothed with trembling.
  4. This is why the Bible instructs us not to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
  5. Instead, we are to lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven by seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

### III. A Lament for Tyre

- A. This brings us to chapter 27, where Ezekiel is instructed by the Lord to raise a lamentation over Tyre.
1. It may seem odd that the Lord would have his prophet do this.
  2. Why lament the downfall of a city that delighted in the downfall of God's holy city?
  3. What we have to understand is that the genre of the lament is not only about expressing grief over something that has been lost.

4. The most basic feature of this kind of a lament is to set a contrast between former glory and present loss.
  5. The point is to underscore the fact that though Tyre was once exceedingly great, when the Lord set himself against her she was reduced to nothing.
- B. The lament begins by using the metaphor of a great ship to describe Tyre's magnificence.
1. There is a description of the costly materials out of which the ship was constructed.
  2. There is a description of the skilled crew that manned the ship, as well as the fearsome warriors it carried.
  3. Then there is a lengthy itemization of her trading partners and all their wares.
  4. The good ship Tyre cut an imposing figure.
  5. At the height of its glory, it seemed like it was utterly unsinkable.
  6. However, like that other famous ship that once boasted of its invincibility, the *Titanic*, Tyre sunk into the heart of the sea.
  7. This is how it always ends for those who exalt themselves above the Lord.
- C. The lamentation concludes with a description of how those whose hearts were bound up with Tyre will respond when they see her shipwrecked in the depths of the sea.
1. There will be weeping, wailing, and bitter mourning over Tyre.
  2. People will be in a state of shock and horror over their loss.
  3. They will respond this way because of the satisfaction that they found in the affluence that they enjoyed through their associations

with Tyre.

4. Here we see how the love of wealth knits the soul to this world.
5. When material things are what matter most to people, they are absolutely devastated when they lose those material things.
6. All that they can do is look back on what once was and torment themselves over the fact that it is gone.
7. As the people say of Tyre in verse 33-34: "When your wares came from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth. Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and all your crew in your midst have sunk with you."

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. The pleasures and treasures of this world are fleeting pleasures and treasures.
  1. Those who put their hope in them will eventually have their hopes dashed.
  2. Everything in this world will one day be shaken.
  3. This is why we always need to guard ourselves against the seduction of affluence.
  4. We need to remember what John Newton expressed so well when he wrote these words:

*Fading is the worldling's pleasure,  
All his boasted pomp and show.  
Solid joys and lasting treasure,  
None but Zion's children know.*

- B. Only the Christian has a hope that is perfectly secure.

1. The inheritance that you have obtained in Christ can never be taken away from you.
2. The stock market could crash.
3. Your home and possessions could be consumed in a fire.
4. Your loved ones could be taken away from you.
5. You could even lose your life.
6. One day, you will lose all of these things.
7. But you should never despair, because in Christ you are receiving “a kingdom that cannot be shaken.” (Heb. 12:28)