

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 26

This chapter contains a prophecy of the destruction of Tyre. The time of the prophecy, (^{<3301>}Ezekiel 26:1), the cause of the destruction of it, rejoicing at the ruin of Jerusalem, (^{<3302>}Ezekiel 26:2), the instruments of it, many nations, particularly the king of Babylon, (^{<3303>}Ezekiel 26:3-7), the manner in which it shall be done, (^{<3308>}Ezekiel 26:8-14), the lamentation of other isles, and the princes of them, on account of it, (^{<3305>}Ezekiel 26:15-18), the utter destruction of it, so as never to be found any more, (^{<3309>}Ezekiel 26:19-21).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass in the eleventh year, &c.*] Of Jehoiachin's captivity and Zedekiah's reign, the same year that Jerusalem was taken:

in the first day of the month; but what month is not mentioned; some have thought the first month, and so it was the first day of the year; others the fourth, the same in which the city of Jerusalem was taken; but more probably the fifth, the first of which was twenty days after the taking it; in which time the news of it might be brought to Tyre, at which she rejoiced; and for which her destruction is threatened, and here prophesied of:

that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying; as follows:

Ver. 2. *Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, aha, &c.*] As rejoicing at her destruction, and insulting over her in it; which was barbarous and inhuman, and resented by the Lord:

she is broken that was the gates of the people; through whose gates the people went in and out in great numbers; a city to which there was very popular, not only for religion, from all parts, at their solemn feasts, but for merchandise from several parts of the world; and was now full of people before its destruction, the inhabitants of Judea having fled thither for safety, upon the invasion made by the king of Babylon; but now the city was broken up, as it is said it was, by the Chaldean army, (^{<2607>}Jeremiah 52:7), its gates and walls were broken down, and lay in a ruinous condition. The Targum is,

“she is broken down that afforded merchandise to all people.”

She is turned unto me; either the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which escaped and fled to Tyre for refuge; or the spoil taken out of it, which was carried there to be sold; and even the captives themselves to be sold for slaves, which was one part of the merchandise of Tyre; (see ^{<327B>}Ezekiel 27:3), or the business, trade, and merchandise carried on in Jerusalem, were brought to Tyre upon its destruction; so Jarchi and Kimchi. The Targum is,

“she is turned to come unto me;”

which favours the first sense; all may be intended.

I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste; or, “I shall be filled”^{f406}; with inhabitants, riches, and wealth, with merchants and merchandise, Jerusalem her rival being destroyed; this was what gave her joy; and is a common thing for persons to rejoice at the fall or death of those of the same trade with them; hoping for an increase of theirs by means of it, which yet is sinful.

Ver. 3. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God*, &c.] Who knew the thoughts of the inhabitants of Tyre, and what joy possessed their hearts, and which their lips expressed; and who informs the prophet of it, though at a great distance, and declares his resentment at it:

behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus; and nothing can be more dreadful and formidable than to have God against a nation, city, or a particular person: Tyre was a type of antichrist, who will express a like joy at the death of the witnesses; thinking that the merchandise of Rome will be increased greatly, and there will be nothing to interrupt it, (^{<6110>}Revelation 11:10), but God will show his displeasure, and bring sudden destruction on it:

and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up; the Chaldean army, consisting of soldiers of many nations; who for their number, noise, and fury, are compared to the raging waves of the sea. So the Targum,

“I will bring up against thee an army of many people, as the sea ascendeth in the raging of its waves;”

the ten kings shall hate the whore, and destroy her, even those very people she reigns over, compared to many waters, (^{<6175>}Revelation 17:15,16).

Ver. 4. *And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus* &c.] Undermining them, or breaking them down with their battering rams:

and break down her towers; with axes, (^{צביון}Ezekiel 26:9) built upon the walls; erected for the defence of the city, and for watchmen to stand in, to look out from them for the enemy, and observe his motions, as well as for soldiers to fight from:

and I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock; a bare smooth rock, which has not any surface of earth upon it. So the Targum,

“I will give her for the smoothness of an open rock.”

Tyre was built upon a rock; and whereas the inhabitants had brought earth thither, and laid it upon it, in order to make gardens and orchards, and plant flowers and trees; this should be all removed, and it should become a bare rock, as it was at first. It denotes the utter destruction of it. It has its name from a word which signifies a rock; (See Gill on “^{צביון}Isaiah 23:1”).

Ver. 5. *It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea,* &c.] Where only fishermen would be seen washing their nets, and then spreading them upon this rock, where Tyre stood, to dry them and this has been confirmed by travellers, who have seen fishermen spreading and drying their nets, and having no other habitations on it but the huts of these men. Huetius^{f407} relates, that he remembered one Hadrian Parvillarius, a Jesuit, a candid and learned man, particularly in the Arabic language, who lived ten years in Syria; and to have heard him say, that when he saw the ruins of Tyre, its rocks to the sea, and scattered stones on the shore, and made clean smooth by the sun, waves, and wind, and only used for drying fishermen’s nets, it brought to his mind this passage of the prophet; as it did to Mr. Maundrell^{f408} when on the spot, a few years ago; who says,

“you see nothing here but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. there being not so much as one entire house left; its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly upon fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, viz. “that it should be as the top of a rock”, &c.”:

so Dr. Shaw^{f409} says, this port, small as it at present, is choked up to that degree with sand and rubbish, that the boats of these poor fishermen, who now and then visit this once renowned emporium and “dry their nets upon its rocks and ruins”, can with great difficulty only be admitted:

for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God; and therefore it should certainly come to pass, as it has:

and it shall become a spoil to the nations; the army of many nations, that besieged it for thirteen years under Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 6. *And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword*, &c.] That is, the inhabitants of the cities, towns, and villages, on the shore near it, and which were subject to it; as such cities are frequently in Scripture called the daughters of the place to which they belong: or their daughters literally, that should get out of the city, and endeavour to make their escape; yet should fall into the enemies’ hands, who would not spare them on account of their sex or age. The Targum favours the former sense, as most of the Jewish writers do, which is,

“and the inhabitants of the villages which are in the field shall be killed by the sword:”

and they shall know that I am the Lord: the true God, and not Hercules or Apollo, or any other idols they worshipped; when they shall see all these things exactly accomplished, now prophesied of; which none but the omniscient God could foretell.

Ver. 7. *For thus saith the Lord God*, &c.] What follows; and declares by name the person that should be the instrument of this ruin, and the manner in which it should be brought about:

I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon; a prince whose name was terrible, having conquered many nations: the Lord is said to bring him against Tyre, because, he inclined his heart to steer his course this way; encouraged him to this work; led and protected his army; and, at last, gave him success: it held out thirteen years against him, and then was taken. The siege began, according to Mr. Whiston^{f410}, A.M. 3650 or before Christ 586; and was taken A.M. 3663 or before Christ 573; according to Bishop Usher,^{f411} it began A.M. 3419 or before Christ 585; and was taken A.M. 3432 or before Christ 572. The Phoenician historians make mention of the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar; and Berossus speaks of his

subduing the whole country of Phoenicia, in which Tyre was; with whom agree Philostratus and Megasthenes^{f412}:

a king of kings from the north; who had many kings tributaries to him; the metropolis of whose kingdom lay somewhat, though not fully, north to Tyre:

with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people: with a very numerous army, consisting of a large cavalry; horses being very numerous in the countries subject to him; and which he mounted his men on, both for their more easy travelling, and for their better fighting, and for the terror of their enemies.

Ver. 8. *He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field, &c.*] The first thing he would do would be to destroy the cities, towns and villages on the continent, near to Tyre, and dependent on it, as in (~~צמב~~ Ezekiel 26:6), and so the Targum is here, as there:

and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee; a fort built of wood, and a mount made of earth, from which stones might be cast out of their engines, and arrows shot from their bows into the city, to the damaging of the houses, and the hurt of the inhabitants:

and lift up the buckler against thee; or “shield”; that is, as the Targum paraphrases it,

“set against thee such who are armed with shields;”

to repel the arrows shot out from the city, and so defeat the design of them.

Ver. 9. *And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, &c.*] Which some Jewish writers understand of crossbows, out of which stones or arrows were cast; but rather, according to Kimchi and Jarchi, they were warlike machines, invented to throw large stones against the walls of a place, to beat them down. Some think they were the same with the battering rams, used in sieges for the demolishing of walls; which was a late invention of those times, Ezekiel being the first writer, it is said, that makes mention of them:

and with his axes he shall break down thy towers; the word here used signifies anything made of iron, as swords, spears, hammers, and axes; the latter, being more proper to demolish towers, is here pitched on by our

translators. The Targum renders it, “with stones of iron”; that is, with iron balls cast out of their engines.

Ver. 10. *By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee, &c.*] The dust raised by the feet of the horses so numerous, should rise in such quantities, and to such a height, as to be like a cloud, which should cover the city; an hyperbolical way of speaking, as Kimchi observes; as is also the following clause:

thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots; at the shouts of the horsemen upon every attack, and the rattling of the chariot wheels running to and fro, in carrying on their designs:

when ye shall enter into thy gates; that is, then particularly shall such a shout be made by the horsemen, and such rattling of the chariots, as will even make the walls of the city to shake; an excess of expression, signifying the prodigious noise made at their entrance into it: as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach; or, “according to the entrance of a city broken up”^{f413}; when its walls are broken down, and a gap is made; at which men rush in in great numbers, and with great force and clamour.

Ver. 11. *With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets, &c.*] Such a number of horses running to and fro in the streets, and prancing upon the pavements, shall break them up, and destroy them, so that they shall be mere mire and dirt:

he shall slay thy people by the sword; such as would not lay down their arms and submit; or their principal ones, who encouraged the inhabitants to hold out the siege to such a length of time as they did; which might provoke Nebuchadnezzar to use them with more severity:

and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground: where their soldiers were placed for defence; their citadel and other towers: or, “the statues of thy strengths”^{f414}; their strong statues made of marble, &c. erected as trophies of victories obtained by them; or to the honour of some worthy magistrates, and principal citizens; or of their confederates and allies; or rather of their deities, such as Hercules and Apollo, their tutelar gods; which, though chained as they were, that they might not depart, shall now fall to the ground, unable to protect themselves or their worshippers: all that is here said, concerning the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar,

seems to be understood of old Tyre, which was upon the continent; for this account agrees not with the isle.

Ver. 12. *And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, &c.*] The Chaldean army, when they entered the city, and got possession of it, would plunder it, and divide the riches of it among them:

and make a prey of thy merchandise; of the merchants' goods, laid up in their warehouses for sale, which was greatly hindered by this long siege; compare with this (⁴⁶⁸¹Revelation 18:11,12):

and they shall break down thy walls; the walls of their houses; mention being made before of breaking down the walls of the city, towers, and garrisons:

and destroy thy pleasant houses; or, "houses of thy desire"^{f415}; the most desirable ones in the city; the houses of their princes and chief magistrates; their summer houses; or which were most delightfully situated towards the sea, to have the prospect and advantage of that:

and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water; of the sea, near unto or about it; into which they cast the rubbish of the demolished houses, stones, timber, and dust, and so left it bare and naked: or rather this was fulfilled when Alexander, with the ruins of old Tyre, its stones, timber, and rubbish, and trees from Lebanon, made a causeway from the continent to the island; and by that means took it, after seven months' toil and labour of this sort^{f416}.

Ver. 13. *And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease, &c.*] As this city abounded with riches, so with carnal mirth and pleasure; it was a "joyous city", (²³⁰⁷Isaiah 23:7), the inhabitants lived merrily and jovially; were much given to music, which was very diverting and amusing to foreigners that traded with them; but now it would be all over with them; there would be no more songs, nor any to sing them:

and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard; neither vocal nor instrumental music; and this will be one day the case of Rome, of which Tyre was a type, (⁴⁶⁸²Revelation 18:22).

Ver. 14. *And I will make thee like the top of a rock, &c.*] Smooth and bare; (See Gill on "²³⁰⁴Ezekiel 26:4"):

and thou shall be a place to spread nets upon; (see Gill on “³³¹⁶Ezekiel 26:5”):

thou shalt be built no more: this must be understood with some restriction and limitation; as that it should not be built any more in the same stately manner; or be raised to royal dignity, and be governed in the grand manner it had been; or be built upon the same spot; or after its last destruction, to which the prophecy may have respect; it being usual in Scripture for prophecies to regard what is more remote as well as more near; for, upon the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar, it was to be restored after seventy years, according to Isaiah’s prophecy, (²³¹⁵Isaiah 23:15,17) and, many years after this, new Tyre was besieged, taken, and destroyed by Alexander; and after this it was rebuilt; we read of it in the New Testament; (see Gill on “⁴²⁰³Acts 21:3”), and in Jerom’s time it was a most noble and beautiful city, as he on this passage observes; indeed, as Kimchi says, who lived near a thousand years after Jerom, the city then built in his time called Tyre was built upon the continent near the seashore; whereas Tyre destroyed by Alexander was built in the midst of the sea, and was as the top of a rock. It has since been destroyed by Saladine, in the year 1291; and now quite uninhabited, unless by fishermen, who wash, dry, and mend their nets here:

for I the Lord have spoken it, saith, the Lord God; and therefore it shall be accomplished, as it has been; no more of his returning void, and becoming of no effect. The Targum is,

“because I the Lord have decreed by my word, saith the Lord God;”

it is a determination and resolution of his, and none can disannul it. Abendana thinks that hitherto the prophecy is concerning the first destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, and what follows is concerning the destruction of it by Alexander.

Ver. 15. *Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus,* &c.] By his prophet, who very probably delivered this prophecy to the ambassadors of Tyre at Babylon; or to some of their merchants that traded there; or sent it in a letter to them:

shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall; when they hear the noise of Tyre being taken, it will make them tremble, as fearing their turn will be next; that if a city so well fortified by nature and art, so well supplied with men and money, that had held out the siege so long, should at last

surrender; what should they, the neighbouring isles, do, if attacked, who were so inferior to it? and besides, they might have much of their goods in it, in which they traded with the inhabitants of it, trusting to its great strength, and which would now give them a sensible concern. The Targum renders it, the suburbs; and another Jewish^{f417} writer, the villages; those that were near to Tyre:

when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? upon the enemy's entrance, putting to the sword all they meet with; when those that are wounded shall cry, either to have their lives spared, or through the pain and distress occasioned by their wounds.

Ver. 16. *Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones,* &c.] The kings of the islands of the sea shall lay aside their regalia, all their royal grandeur, and the ensigns of it; leave their thrones of state, and sit in an humble posture:

and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments; their royal robes and raiment of needlework curiously embroidered, and richly wrought, such as princes wear; so did the king of Nineveh in token of humiliation, (Jon 3:6). The Septuagint and Arabic versions understand the first clause of their taking their mitres, or diadems, from their heads:

they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall tremble from head to foot in every joint, as if they were covered with it, as with a garment; or, being clothed with sackcloth, as mourners used to be, shall shake and tremble, being used to other and better clothing:

they shall sit upon the ground; as Job did, and his friends, with dust and ashes on their heads, as persons in distress were wont to do, (~~1818~~ Job 2:8,13):

and shall tremble at every moment; continually, every hour, minute, and moment of the day: or, "at the breaches"^{f418}; so Jarchi; that is, those made upon Tyre; fearing lest the same should be made upon them; so the Targum, "because of their breaches"; or at the ruin and destruction they fear will be their case also:

and be astonished at thee; that a city so wealthy and mighty should be brought so low; (see ~~6818~~ Revelation 18:9,10).

Ver. 17. *And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say unto thee, &c.*] The following mournful song:

how art thou destroyed that wast inhabited of seafaring men; or, “of the seas”: by men who used the seas, and traded by sea to different parts of the world; and was frequented by persons that came by sea thither, by the great ocean, by the Red sea, the Mediterranean sea, and others; or, which was surrounded by the sea. So the Targum,

“that dwellest in the midst of the sea:”

“the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea”; fortified by the sea, and against it; strong in shipping and naval stores; so as to be formidable to others, and mistress of the sea. The Targum is,

“which dwell in the strength of the sea;”

and had the strength and riches of it brought unto it; and so was famous all the world over for its commerce, wealth, and power; but now ruined and undone:

she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it! the sea; on all that used the seas; or on all the inhabitants of the islands of the sea; who all stood in fear of Tyre and her inhabitants, and were obliged to strike their sails to their ships.

Ver. 18. *Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall, &c.*] The isles near unto it, the isles of the Mediterranean sea; the inhabitants of them, the merchants who from thence traded with Tyre, the seafaring men of those places; partly on account of losses sustained hereby, and partly through fear of the same calamities coming upon themselves; (see ^{6681P} Revelation 18:11,15,17): yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure; as at the cry of the wounded, and the number of the slain; so on account of those that should be carried away captive by the Babylonians; as well as at the departure of those that should be obliged to fly to other colonies, (²³¹⁶ Isaiah 23:6), so that, upon one account or another, it shall be entirely stripped of its inhabitants.

Ver. 19. *For thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] Both to the terror of Tyre, and for the comfort of his people:

when I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; whose trade is ruined, whose inhabitants are destroyed, and

whose walls are broken down, and become a mere waste and desert; where no person or anything of value are to be seen:

when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and the great waters shall cover thee: the waters of the sea shall rush in and overflow the city, the walls of it being broken down; just as the old world, and the cities of it, were overflowed with the deluge, to which the allusion may be; whether this was literally accomplished on Tyre is not certain; perhaps it is to be taken in a figurative sense, and to be understood of the large army of the Chaldeans that should come up against it, and overpower it. So the Targum,

“when I shall bring up against them an army of people, who are many as the waters of the deep, and many people shall cover thee; (see ⁴⁶⁷⁵Revelation 17:15,16).”

Ver. 20. *When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit,* &c.] The grave, and make thee like to them:

with the people of old time; either the people of the old world, or, however, who have been dead long ago:

and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth; where the dead are laid:

in places desolate of old: long ago unfrequented by men; as such places be as are for the burial of the dead:

with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; all the inhabitants being free among the dead; a heap of words made use of to express the same thing, for the confirmation of it; namely, that the condition of Tyre should be like that of dead men, who have been of old dead, and are remembered no more. Jarchi interprets the “pit”, of hell; as if this respected their everlasting perdition, as well as temporal ruin; it may be applied to the beast which goeth into perdition, (⁴⁶⁷⁸Revelation 17:8):

and I shall set glory in the land of the living; in the land of Israel; so the Targum; and it is interpreted by the Jewish expositors and others the same way; and which may be called “the land of the living”; because the living God was worshipped in it; living men in a spiritual sense dwelt there, who offered up living sacrifices unto God, and who had the promise and pledge of eternal life; and which was the “glory” of all lands, as it is sometimes called, where the same word is used as here, (⁴⁵¹⁶Ezekiel 20:6), which had its accomplishment in some respects at the Jews’ return from Babylon; but,

as Tyre here is a type of antichrist, it may be observed, that, at the time of his fall and destruction, God will put a glory upon his church and people, upon which there shall be a defence; (see ²⁰⁴⁵Isaiah 4:5 60:1). This is interpreted by the Talmudists ^{f419} of the resurrection of the dead, when they that die in the land of Israel shall live.

Ver. 21. *I will make thee a terror*, &c.] To all the isles round about, who shall shake and tremble at the ruin of Tyre, as before observed; or to herself, being brought into a most terrible and distressed condition:

and thou shall be no more: in the same place and situation, in the same happy state and condition:

though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God: this is true of the antitype, Babylon, or antichrist, (~~682~~ Revelation 18:21).