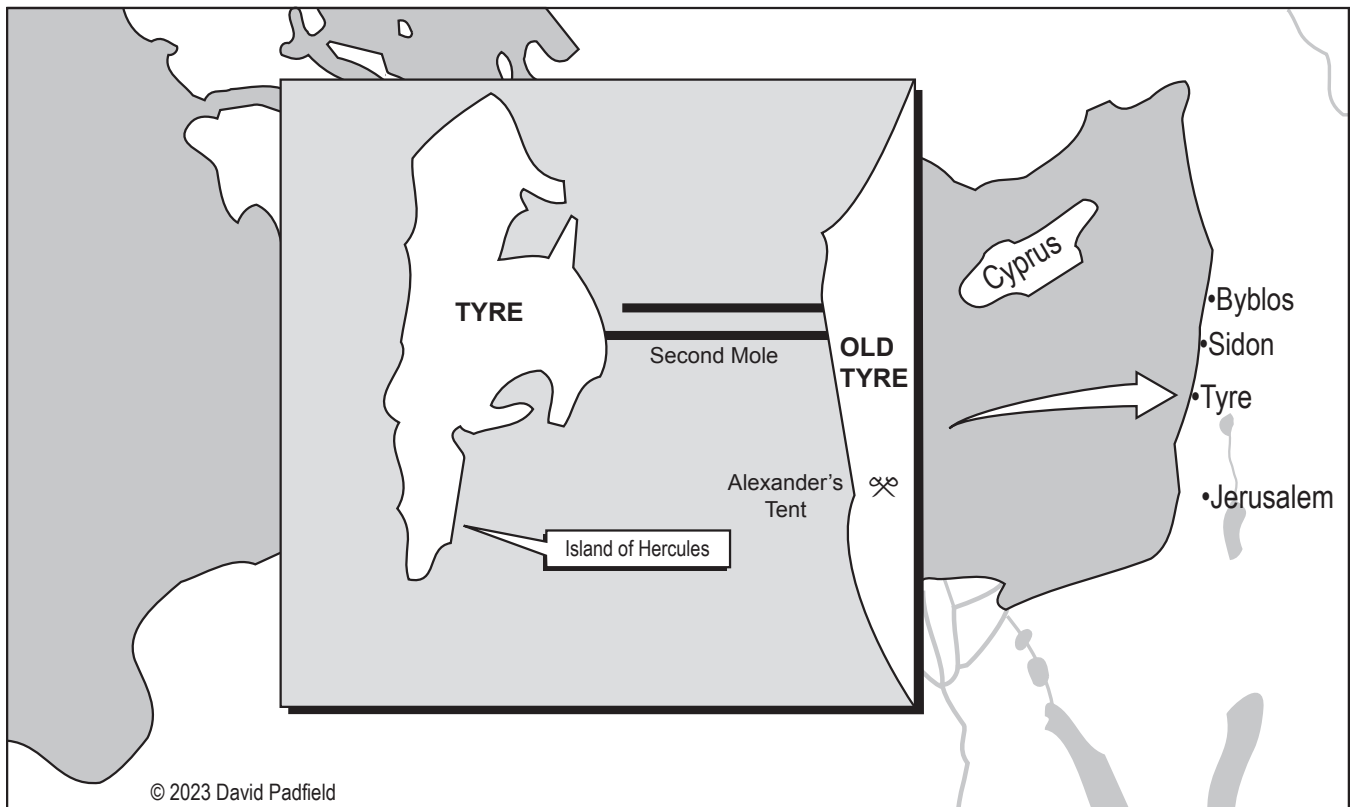


# The Destruction Of Tyre



*“Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.” (Ezekiel 26:3-4)*

David Padfield

**The Destruction Of Tyre**

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# The Destruction Of Tyre

## Introduction

- I. Tyre, the famous Phoenician seaport, was located about 20 miles south of Sidon, Lebanon on the Mediterranean coast.
  - A. During the conquest of the promised land by Joshua the Canaanites were not driven out of Tyre and other Phoenician cities as God commanded.
  - B. In 1200 B.C. Sidon was sacked by the Philistines and most of the Sidonians fled south to Tyre, which from that time began to surpass its neighbor in importance.
- II. Thanks to her natural resources, commercial trade in Tyre flourished.
  - A. Tyre produced and exported wheat, barley, olives and wine, along with the famous cedars of Lebanon, and her shipping fleet traded them all over the Mediterranean.
  - B. Tyre was also a great importer of goods, such as silver and iron from Spain, slaves and bronze from Ionia, fine linen from Egypt and sheep and goats from Arabia.
  - C. Tyrian coins have been found all over the Mediterranean Sea region and the rest of the Middle East.
  - D. "Between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. the Phoenicians established the first trading system to encompass the entire Mediterranean basin, from their homeland to colonies in Cyprus, Tunisia, Sicily, Sardinia, and southern Spain" (Bodi, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 4:459).
  - E. "So Tyre throve. To the rustic Israelites, looking down with awe and envy from their barren hills, Tyre seemed a glittering stronghold of wealth, beauty, luxurious refinement, delicate craftsmanship, and commercial acumen" (de Camp, *Great Cities of the Ancient World*, 106).
  - F. "This city was justly entitled the 'Queen of the Sea,' that element bringing to it the tribute of all nations. She boasted of having first invented navigation and taught mankind the art of braving the winds and waves by the assistance of a frail bark. The happy situation of Tyre, at the upper end of the Mediterranean; the conveniency of its ports, which were both safe and capacious; and the character of its inhabitants, who were industrious, laborious, patient, and extremely courteous to strangers, invited thither merchants from all parts of the globe; so that it might be considered, not so much a city belonging to any particular nation, as the common city of all nations and the centre of their commerce." (Goldsmith, "Alexander Reduces Tyre: Later Founds Alexandria")
  - G. "Tyre! She left no literature, statues, monuments, or anything else of permanent value. She is known as a panderer to the vices of the ancient nations. She was the world's 'Sears Catalogue.' If you wanted it, she could get it if she didn't already have it. If there was a war going on she was nearby ready to barter with the winners for the captives. She was influential beyond her size because of her wealth and connections she pleased everyone. Everyone but God!" (McGuiggan, *The Book Of Ezekiel*, 268-269)

- III. Hiram, king of Tyre, was instrumental in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem during the time of Solomon (1 Kgs 5:1-18).
- A. "After Hiram, Tyre flourished for another 400 years as the largest and richest of the Phoenician cities. During this time, we know the names of the kings but very few facts about their reigns. Such information as we have is mostly in connection with the Israelite kingdoms and is related in the Bible and Josephus." (de Camp, 106)
  - B. The friendship between the Jews and Phoenicians ended when King Ahab married a daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon.
  - C. Years later, during the time of the prophet Joel, the Phoenicians sold Jewish children as slaves to the Greeks and the Lord promised retribution (Joel 3:4-6).
- IV. In 586 B.C., the prophet Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would march against the city of Tyre (Ezek 26:1-21).
- A. Many nations would come against her (Ezek 26:3).
  - B. The walls of Tyre would be broken down (Ezek 26:4).
  - C. Dust would be scraped from her, and she would be left like the top of a bare rock (Ezek 26:4).
  - D. She would be a place for the spreading of nets (Ezek 26:5).
  - E. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would come with chariots, horsemen, and an army and would build a siege wall around the city (Ezek 26:7-8).
  - F. Nebuchadnezzar would plunder the city (Ezek 26:9-12).
  - G. The stones, timber and soil of the city would be cast into "the midst of the water" (Ezek 26:12).
  - H. Tyre would never be rebuilt (Ezek 26:14).
- V. Ezekiel's prophecies against Tyre were not fulfilled all at once, but over the following centuries they all came to pass.

#### Discussion

### I. Nebuchadnezzar's Siege Of Tyre

- A. In 587 B.C., after the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of king Zedekiah into captivity, king Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon besieged Tyre for 13 years (c. 587-574 B.C.) (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.228).
- B. The inhabitants of mainland city of Tyre fled to a rocky island half a mile offshore.
  1. The walls on the landward side of the island were 150 feet high.
  2. "A bronze band at Balawat (from the palace door of Shalmaneser III, 858-824 b.c.) shows Tyre as well protected by a huge wall and fortified by strong towers with two gates" (Freedman, "Tyre," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*).
  3. "The channel between Tyre and the mainland was over twenty feet deep, and frequently lashed by violent southwest winds. Their fortifications, they believed, would resist the strongest battering-ram yet devised. The city-walls stood sheer above the sea: how could any army without ships scale them? Shore based artillery was useless at such a range." (Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, 248)

4. “The Babylonians succeeded in capturing the mainland city but were unable, without a navy, to defeat the island fortress. Tyre was exhausted by the long struggle, however, and with the rise of the Persian empire came under the domination of the Persians.” (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 1345)
  5. “A Babylonian text claims that Nebuchadnezzar was present during the siege. Apparently the long siege ended with a treaty stipulating that the Tyrian royal house was to be deported to Babylon. Although the king of Tyre was allowed to stay, he was under the control of a Babylonian commissioner. Tyre’s power was effectively exhausted by the long siege.” (Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, “Tyre” *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*)
- C. Nebuchadnezzar left Tyre, “yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the labor which they expended on it” (Ezek 29:18).
1. “Here our friend Nebuchadnezzar is given the honor of working for God against Tyre (29: 17ff). However his 13 year long siege of the mainland and the island fortress didn’t come off too well and he is said to have gotten no wages for that job (29: 17ff). He fought hard and long and his troops knew they were in a war but the end wasn’t decisive. So although Nebuchadnezzar started the whole line of judgments he didn’t finish it.” (McGuiggan, *The Book Of Ezekiel*, 269)
  2. The mainland city of Tyre remained in ruins until the time of Alexander.
  3. The long siege of Tyre greatly damaged, but did not halt, Tyre’s commerce.

## II. Alexander The Great Destroyed Tyre

- A. 250 years after Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), on his way towards Egypt, led his Macedonian troops to victory at Sidon and continued south towards Tyre.
1. Tyrian envoys met with Alexander and assured him that their city was at his disposal (332 B.C.).
  2. “However, he put their goodwill to the test by expressing his wish to sacrifice at the shrine of Heracles inside the city; for the Tyrians recognized a Phoenician god who was identified by the Greeks as Heracles, and from this deity Alexander claimed descent. Tyrian goodwill unfortunately did not extend so far as to grant him the permission he sought. In short, they would not admit him into the city.” (Warry, *Alexander 334–323 B.C.*, 41)
- B. Alexander was tempted to bypass the island fortress and continue his march towards Egypt.
1. He sent messengers to Tyre, urging them to accept a peace treaty.
  2. Believing themselves to be safe on their island, the Tyrians killed Alexander’s ambassadors and threw their bodies from the top of the walls into the sea.
  3. This act served only to anger Alexander and embitter his troops.
- C. Alexander determined to build a mole (breakwater, causeway) to get his troops from the mainland to the island.
1. The mole is said to have been 200–300 yards wide and was constructed from stones and timber from the old city of Tyre on the mainland.
  2. In fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy, the very foundation stones, timbers and dust of the city was cast “in the midst of the water” (Ezek 26:12).

- D. At first the Tyrians laughed at Alexander's project and would row boats across the channel and harass the Macedonians.
1. Their laughter turned to fear when they saw the causeway was going to be completed.
  2. The Tyrians ignited a barge and drove it into the first mole and the towers on the causeway caught fire and several of Alexander's men lost their lives.
  3. Alexander gave orders for the work to continue, and that the causeway itself should be widened and more protective towers be built.
- E. Alexander was able to obtain ships from Sidon, Greek allies and Cyprus to form a blockade around Tyre.
1. When the causeway was within artillery range of Tyre, Alexander brought up stone throwers and light catapults, reinforced by archers and slingers, for a saturation barrage.
  2. Alexander's battle engineers constructed several naval battering rams which smashed through the walls of Tyre.
  3. Though courageous, the Tyrians were no match for Alexander's troops.
    - a) Lucius Flavius Arrianus (c. 86–160 B.C.), usually referred to as Arrian, was a Roman citizen of Greek origin and is the best ancient source of information about the life and campaigns of Alexander the Great.
    - b) "The Tyrian losses were about 8,000; the Macedonians, in the actual assault, lost Admetus, who was the first to mount the breach, and died as a soldier should, and twenty men of the Guards who were with him. In the siege as a whole they lost about 400. Azemilcus, the King of Tyre, together with the dignitaries of the town and certain visitors from Carthage who had come to the mother city to pay honor to Heracles according to an ancient custom, had fled for refuge to Heracles' temple: to all of these Alexander granted a free pardon; everyone else was sold into slavery. In all, including native Tyrians and foreigners taken in the town, some 30,000 were sold." (Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, 142–143)
- F. The seven month siege, from January to July 332 B.C., was over.
1. "Tyre was broken, and the causeway still remains, now as a place, as Ezekiel foretold, on which fishermen dry their nets (Ezek 26:5, 14; 47:10)" (Blaklock, "Tyre," *New International Bible Dictionary*).
  2. "The great city over which Hiram had once held sway was now utterly destroyed. Her king, Azimilik, and various other notables, including envoys from Carthage, had taken refuge in the temple of Melkart, and Alexander spared their lives. The remaining survivors, some 30,000 in number, he sold into slavery. Two thousand men of military age were crucified. Then Alexander went up into the temple, ripped the golden cords from the image of the god (now to be renamed, by decree, Apollo Philalexander), and made his long-delayed sacrifice: the most costly blood-offering even Melkart had ever received." (Green, p. 262)

3. “Alexander did far more against Tyre than Shalmaneser or Nebuchadnezzar had done. Not content with crushing her, he took care that she never should revive: for he founded Alexandria as her substitute, and changed forever the track of the commerce of the world.” (Creasy, *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, 72)

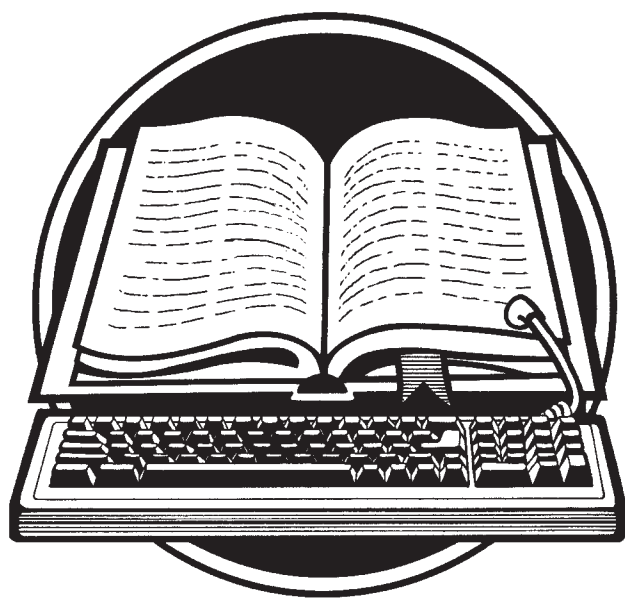
#### Conclusion

- I. Was the city of Tyre ever rebuilt (Ezek 26:14)?
  - A. “The modern city of Tyre is of modest size and is near the ancient site, though not identical to it. Archaeological photographs of the ancient site show ruins from ancient Tyre scattered over many acres of land. No city has been rebuilt over these ruins, however, in fulfillment of this prophecy.” (Dennis and Grudem, “Tyre,” *The ESV Study Bible*)
  - B. “In point of fact, the mainland city of Tyre later was rebuilt and assumed some of its former importance during the Hellenistic period. But as for the island city, it apparently sank below the surface of the Mediterranean...All that remains of it is a series of black reefs offshore from Tyre, which surely could not have been there in the first and second millennia B.C., since they pose such a threat to navigation. The promontory that now juts out from the coastline probably was washed up along the barrier of Alexander’s causeway, but the island itself broke off and sank away when the subsidence took place; and we have no evidence at all that it ever was built up again after Alexander’s terrible act of vengeance. In the light of these data, then, the predictions of chapter 26, improbable though they must have seemed in Ezekiel’s time, were duly fulfilled to the letter—first by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century, and then by Alexander in the fourth.” (Archer, “Tyre,” *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*)
  - C. The small southern Lebanese town of Tyre (aṣ-Ṣûr) now has a population of about 117,000 (Brinkhoff, <<http://www.citypopulation.de/Lebanon.html>>).
- II. “Today, deep under asphalt streets and apartment blocks, the stone core of that fantastic causeway still stands: one of Alexander’s most tangible and permanent legacies to posterity.” (Green, 263)
- III. Jesus warned the residents of Chorazin and Bethsaida that it “will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you” (Matt 11:21–22).
  - A. Even the Tyrians would have repented if it had witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching.
  - B. You have a Bible and have been able to read the teachings of Jesus, so what is your excuse for not obeying His word?

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