

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Overinflated Tyre”

26:1-21

My enjoyment of Bible prophecy probably has its roots in the fact that God used prophecy to open my spiritual eyes to the truth about Jesus Christ. It was February of 1979 and the film, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, was in movie theaters. It was based on Hal Lindsey’s commentary on the Book of the Revelation of the same name.

I saw it and was amazed at the fact God had prewritten history. It was only a couple of days before I gave my life to Jesus.

Predictive prophecy is a great proof, a great apologetic, of the Bible’s inspiration by God. It’s a great tool to introduce folks to Jesus Christ. Especially in the days in which we are living as we see so many of the prophecies of the Bible either being fulfilled or heading towards fulfillment.

What are some of those things? If you attend Sunday mornings, or regularly visit the website, you know them:

- The establishment of Israel as a nation again in her ancient land is a fulfillment of centuries-old prophecies.
- The fact that Jerusalem is a burden to all the nations is a direct fulfillment of centuries-old prophecies.
- The prophet Daniel predicted an exponential explosion of knowledge in the Last Days. Ours is the generation that is seeing knowledge increase exponentially.

- The technology to unite the world in a single system of commerce involving some sort of personal identifier, predicted 2000 years ago, is now possible.
- A very specific coalition of nations, listed by name, coming against Israel in the Last Days was predicted 2500 years ago by Ezekiel. Those nations are lining-up just as you'd expect.

Our passage in Ezekiel is a great example of predictive prophecy coming true in actual human history. I want to look at it from that perspective - as a proof of the Bible's inspiration.

The next three chapters, 26-28, deal with the nation of Tyre. It was located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and was one of the most ancient and prosperous cities in history. From Herodotus, the father of modern history, it can be argued that the city goes back to 2700BC.

The city of Tyre had a rather interesting geographical situation. About half a mile off the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea stood a small rocky island on which the original city of Tyre was most likely founded. Some time after the founding of this island city, the mainland city of Tyre was founded.

Due to its advantageous geographical position and good ports, Tyre became one of the wealthiest trading cities in history. During the reigns of King David and King Solomon (1000BC), Hiram, king of Tyre, played a major role in the acquisition of building materials for important structures such as the Israelite kings' houses and the first temple. In numerous biblical passages the text states that Hiram sent cedar trees, carpenters, masons, and builders to Israel (2Samuel 5:11) because of the Tyrians' renowned skill in timber cutting (1Kings 5:1-18). In addition, the Tyrians were equally well known for their remarkable ability to navigate the seas during Solomon's era. Second Chronicles documents that Hiram sent ships and "servants who knew the sea" to work with Solomon's men in acquiring gold from foreign lands (2Chronicles 8:18).

During the time of Ezekiel Tyre was well established and renowned for its building, manufacturing, and trade. Ezekiel said of Tyre: "Your builders

have perfected your beauty” (27:4), and then he proceeded to list several different kinds of wood and imported materials used by the Tyrians (27:3-11). The prophet stated: “When your wares went out by sea, you satisfied many people; you enriched the kings of the earth with your many luxury goods and your merchandise” (27:33).

I want to take a quick cruise through chapter twenty-six, looking at its major details, but mostly show its place in predictive prophecy.

(I’d like to state, too, that a lot of the specific, historical information I cite comes from the research of Kyle Butt of *Apologetics Press*. Thanks, Kyle!).

God delivered His accusation against Tyre in verses one and two.

Ezekiel 26:1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

Ezekiel 26:2 "Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.'

Tyre was accused with seeking to benefit commercially and materially from the overthrow of Jerusalem.

Throughout the next three chapters we will see how Tyre was materially prosperous but spiritually impoverished. She stands for us as an example of trying to gain the whole world but losing your soul.

A general statement of her judgment follows in verses three through six.

Ezekiel 26:3 "Therefore thus says the Lord God: '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.

Ezekiel 26:4 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 26:5 It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' says the Lord God; 'it shall become plunder for the nations.

Ezekiel 26:6 Also her daughter villages which are in the fields shall be slain by the sword. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.'

God loves poetic justice. Trusting as they did in their secure position in the midst of the sea, God described her downfall over time as if each successive nation was like the relentless pounding of the waves. History supports this prediction. Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, the Ptolomies, the Seleucids, and Rome all came against Tyre until she lie in ruins.

It's this next section, verses seven through fourteen, that are of interest with regard to predictive prophecy.

Ezekiel 26:7 "For thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, with chariots, and with horsemen, and an army with many people.

Ezekiel 26:8 He will slay with the sword your daughter villages in the fields; he will heap up a siege mound against you, build a wall against you, and raise a defense against you.

Ezekiel 26:9 He will direct his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers.

Ezekiel 26:10 Because of the abundance of his horses, their dust will cover you; your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen, the wagons, and the chariots, when he enters your gates, as men enter a city that has been breached.

Ezekiel 26:11 With the hooves of his horses he will trample all your streets; he will slay your people by the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground.

Ezekiel 26:12 They will plunder your riches and pillage your merchandise; they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water.

Ezekiel 26:13 I will put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps shall be heard no more.

Ezekiel 26:14 I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken,' says the Lord God.

Ezekiel predicted six things:

1. Many nations would come against Tyre.
2. The inhabitants of the villages and fields of Tyre would be slain.
3. Nebuchadnezzar would build a siege mound against the city.
4. The city would be broken down and the stones, timber, and soil would be thrown in "the midst of the water."
5. The city would become a "place for spreading nets."
6. The city would never be rebuilt.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Tyre within a few months of this dated prophecy. He did not, however, do the rest of the things Ezekiel listed. What's that all about?

Ezekiel began his prophecy by stating that "many nations" would come against Tyre (26:3). Then he proceeded to name Nebuchadnezzar, and stated that "he" would build a siege mound, "he" would slay with the sword, and "he" would do numerous other things (26:7-11). In 26:12 the pronoun shifts from the singular "he" to the plural "they." It is in verse twelve and following that Ezekiel predicts that "they" will lay the stones and building material of Tyre in the "midst of the waters."

The shift in pronouns is significant since it shifts the subject of the action from Nebuchadnezzar ("he") back to many nations ("they"). As I stated earlier, history records that many nations did come against Tyre.

But perhaps most stunning feature of this prophecy is the historical fulfillment of the words in verse twelve, "they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water."

Enter Alexander the Great. Alexander said he wanted to make a personal sacrifice in the temple of Heracles on the island city of Tyre. You really didn't want Alexander and his forces inside your city! Because the Tyrians considered their island refuge virtually impregnable, with war machines covering the walls, and rapidly moving water acting as an effective barrier from land attack, they refused his request.

Upon hearing their refusal Alexander immediately set to work on a plan to besiege and conquer the city. He set upon the task of building a land bridge (or cause way) from the mainland city of Tyre to the island city. To do it he demolished the mainland city and set many tens of thousands of men to work carrying stones to construct the bridge.

A historian described the final siege in these words:

Alexander was able to obtain ships from Sidon, Greek allies and Cyprus to form a blockade around Tyre. When the cause way was within artillery range of Tyre, Alexander

brought up stone throwers and light catapults, reinforced by archers and slingers, for a saturation barrage. Battle engineers constructed several naval battering rams which smashed through the walls of Tyre. Though courageous, the Tyrians were no match for Alexander's troops. Over 7,000 Tyrians died in the defense of their island. In contrast, only 400 Macedonians were killed.

The seven month siege, from January to July 332BC, was over. "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).

It was an exact fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy hundreds of years prior!

Skeptics remain skeptical, however, and point out that a city of Tyre still exists. They say, therefore, that Ezekiel's prophecy ultimately fails 'the test of a prophet.'

But the facts are that the bulk of the prophecy is about the mainland city, and it no longer exists. In fact, **it no longer can exist!**

One writer said,

[The mainland city of Tyre] was dismantled by Alexander the Great in his famous siege... and disappeared totally with the change of the coastline brought about by the dike and the alluvial deposits that changed Tyre into a peninsula (George Davis, *Fulfilled Prophecies that Prove the Bible*).

Another writer said,

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." (Edward Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, ch. 4).

The facts line-up perfectly with the words of verse nineteen. Let's read them in their context, beginning with verse fifteen.

Ezekiel 26:15 "Thus says the Lord God to Tyre: 'Will the coastlands not shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded cry, when slaughter is made in the midst of you?'

Ezekiel 26:16 Then all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, lay aside their robes, and take off their embroidered garments; they will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment, and be astonished at you.

Ezekiel 26:17 And they will take up a lamentation for you, and say to you: "How you have perished, O one inhabited by seafaring men, O renowned city, Who was strong at sea, She and her inhabitants, Who caused their terror to be on all her inhabitants!

Ezekiel 26:18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; Yes, the coastlands by the sea are troubled at your departure." '

Ezekiel 26:19 "For thus says the Lord God: 'When I make you a desolate city, like cities that are not inhabited, **when I bring the deep upon you, and great waters cover you,**

That's an exact description of the mainland 'lost' city of Tyre today.

Let's close out the chapter.

Ezekiel 26:20 then I will bring you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lowest part of the earth, in places desolate from antiquity, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you may never be inhabited; and I shall establish glory in the land of the living.

Ezekiel 26:21 I will make you a terror, and you shall be no more; though you are sought for, you will never be found again,' says the Lord God."

"Pit" was a reference to the grave, and beyond that to what we know as Hades. It's described by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke when He tells the story about the rich man and Lazarus. There is a large compartment in the heart of the earth, existing in the spiritual realm, consisting of two chambers, or addresses. One is a place of rest that is called Paradise. The other a place of torment called Hades.

Nonbelievers who die still go to Hades to await their future resurrection from the dead and judgment at the Great White Throne. Believers no longer go to Paradise. It was emptied by Jesus after His resurrection. Now when a believer dies, you are absent from your body and present with your Lord.

The inhabitants of Tyre were bound for Hades. *They are there still!* Eventually they will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire.

Ezekiel's prophecies are so mind-blowingly accurate that skeptics can only suggest he wrote after the events occurred. He didn't. He wrote before them, under the inspiration of God. God knew exactly what would occur centuries in the future.

He does still, and He's told us, and we can see the signs. These are the Last Days. The Lord's Second Coming is approaching.

We're looking for a different coming, an imminent one, when Jesus returns in the air to resurrect and rapture His church.

Are you rapture-ready?

