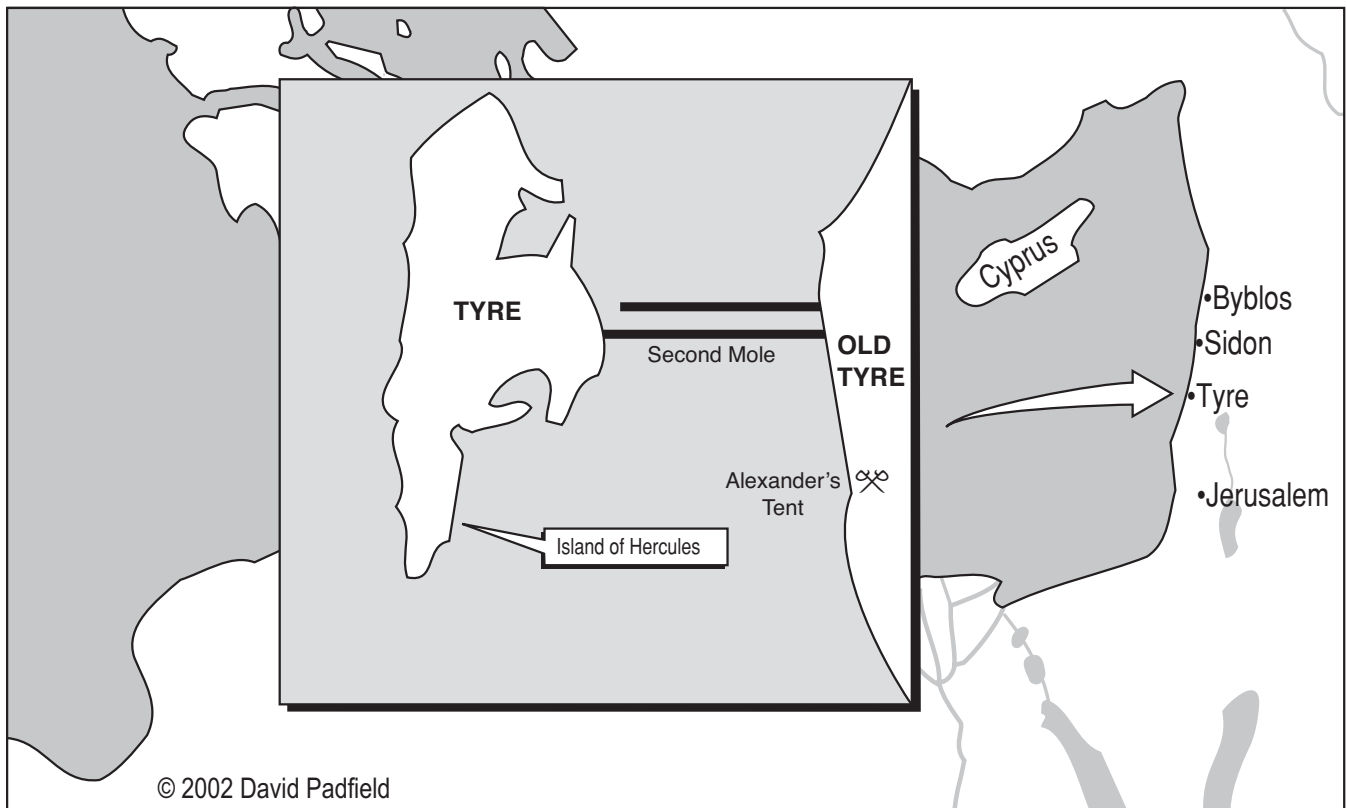


The Destruction Of Tyre



“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. 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)

The Destruction Of Tyre

Introduction

- I. Tyre, the famous Phoenician seaport, was located 20 miles south of Sidon 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—most of the Sidonians fled to Tyre, which from that time began to surpass its neighbor in importance.
 - C. Trade in Tyre flourished—thanks to Tyre’s natural resources of timber — particularly the famous cedars of Lebanon—and the shipping fleet which traded all over the Mediterranean.
 - D. Tyrian coins have been found all over the Mediterranean Sea region and the rest of the Middle East.
 - E. “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.” (Oliver Goldsmith, *Alexander Reduces Tyre*).
 - F. “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!” (Jim McGuigan, *The Book Of Ezekiel*, pp. 268–269).
- II. Hiram, king of Tyre, was instrumental in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem during the time of Solomon (1 Kings 5:1–18).
 - A. The friendship between the Jews and Phoenicians ended when King Ahab married a daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon.
 - B. During the time of Joel, the Phoenicians sold Jewish children as slaves to the Greeks and the Lord promised retribution.
 - C. “Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head; because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions. Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders.” (Joel 3:4–6).

- III. God makes a proclamation concerning 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).

Discussion

I. Nebuchnezzar

- A. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of her king Zedekiah into captivity, “Nebuchadnezzar took all Palestine and Syria and the cities on the seacoast, including Tyre, which fell after a siege of 13 years (573 B.C.)” (E. A. Wallis Budge, *Babylonian Life And History*, p. 50).
- B. The inhabitants of Tyre fled to a rocky island half a mile offshore.
- C. The walls on the landward side of the island were 150 feet high.
- D. Mainland Tyre remained in ruins until the time of Alexander the Great.
- E. “The channel between Tyre and the mainland was over twenty feet deep, and frequently lashed by violent south-west 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.” (Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon*, p. 248).
- F. Nebuchadnezzar left Tyre, “yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the labor which they expended on it” (Ezek. 29:18).

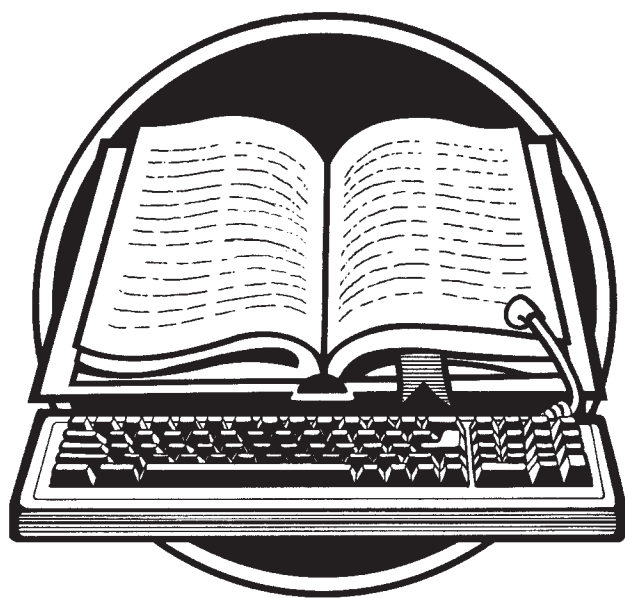
II. Alexander The Great

- A. On his way towards Egypt, Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) 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.
 - 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.” (David Chandler, *Alexander 334–323 B.C.*, p. 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) to get his troops from the mainland to the island.
 - 1. The mole is said to have been at least 200 feet 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. For a while the Tyrians laughed at Alexander's project.
 - 1. At first they would row boats across the channel and harangue the Macedonians.
 - 2. Their laughter turned to concern when they saw the mole was going to be completed.
 - 3. The Tyrians ignited a barge and drove it into the first mole.
 - 4. The towers on the mole caught fire and several of Alexander's men lost their lives.
 - 5. Alexander gave orders for the work to continue, and that the mole 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 mole was within artillery range of Tyre, Alexander brought up stone throwers and light catapults, reinforced by archers and slingers, for a saturation barrage.
 - 2. 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) Over 8,000 Tyrians died in the defense of their island, and 30,000 women and children were carried away into slavery.
 - b) In contrast, only 400 Macedonians were killed.
- F. The seven month siege, from January to July 332 B.C., was over.
 - 1. "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).
 - 2. Historian Edward Creasy said, "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."

Conclusion

- I. True to Ezekiel's prophecy, the mainland city of Tyre has never been rebuilt (Ezek. 26:14).
 - A. The small southern Lebanese town of Tyre (Sur) now has a population of about 14,000.
 - B. "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, p. 263).
- II. Historian Charles Rollin observed: "To prove, in a sensible manner, to Tyre, that the prophecy concerning her ruin was not incredible, and that all the strength and wisdom of man could not ward off or suspend the punishment which God has prepared for the pride and the abuse of riches, Isaiah set before her the example of Babylon, whose destruction ought to have been an example to her. This city, in which Nimrod laid the foundation of his empire, was the most ancient, the most populous, and was embellished with more edifices, both public and private, than any other city. She was the capital of the first empire that ever existed, and was founded in order to command over the whole earth, which seemed to be inhabited only by families, which she had brought forth, and sent out as so many colonies, whose common parent she was. Nevertheless, says the prophet, she is no more, neither Babylon, nor her empire. The citizens of Babylon had multiplied their ramparts and citadels, to render even the besieging it impracticable. The inhabitants had raised pompous palaces, to make their names immortal; yet all these fortifications were but as so many dens, in the eyes of Providence, for wild beasts to dwell in; and these edifices were doomed to fall to dust, or to sink to humble cottages."
- III. One day, Jesus Christ will come in judgment—are you ready?



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