

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter may be considered as the second part of the prophecy concerning Tyre. The prophet pursues his subject in the manner of those ancient lamentations or funeral songs, in which the praeficiae or mourning women first recounted whatever was great or praiseworthy in the deceased, and then mourned his fall. Here the riches, glory, and extensive commerce of Tyre are enlarged upon, vv. 1-25. Her downfall is then described in a beautiful allegory, executed in a few words, with astonishing brevity, propriety, and perspicuity, Ezekiel 27:26; upon which all the maritime and commercial world are represented as grieved and astonished at her fate, and greatly alarmed for their own, Ezekiel 27:27-36. Besides the view which this chapter gives of the conduct of Providence, and the example with which it furnishes the critic and men of taste of a very elegant and highly finished piece of composition, it likewise affords the antiquary a very curious and interesting account of the wealth and commerce of ancient times. And to the mind that looks for a city that hath foundations, what a picture does the whole present of the mutability and inanity of all earthly things! Many of the places mentioned in ancient history have, like Tyre, long ago lost their political consequence; the geographical situation of others cannot be traced; they have sunk in the deep waters of oblivion; the east wind hath carried them away.

Verse 2

Take up a lamentation for Tyrus - This is a singular and curious chapter. It gives a very circumstantial account of the trade of Tyre with different parts of the world, and the different sorts of merchandise in which she trafficked. The places and the imports are as regularly entered here as they could have been in a European custom-house.

Verse 3

The entry of the sea - Tyre was a small island, or rather rock, in the sea, at a short distance from the main land. We have already seen that there was another Tyre on the main land; but they are both considered as one city.

Verse 4

Thy builders have perfected thy beauty - Under the allegory of a beautiful ship, the prophet, here and in the following verses, paints the glory of this ancient city. Horace describes the commonwealth of Rome by the same allegory, and is as minute in his description, Carm. lib. 1. Od. xiv: -

O navis, referent in mare te novi
 Fluctus? O quid agis? Fortiter occupa
 Portum. Nonne video, ut
 Nudum remigio latus,
 Et malus celeri saucius Africo,
 Antennaeque gemant? ac sine funibus
 Vix durare carinae Possint imperiosius
 Aequor! non tibi sunt integra lintea;
 Non Di, quos iterum pressa votes malo:
 Quamvis Pontica pinus,
 Sylvae filia nobilis,
 Jactes et genus, et nomen inutile
 Nil pictis timidus navita puppibus
 Fidit. Tu, nisi, ventis
 Debes ludibrium, cave.
 Unhappy vessel, shall the waves again
 Tumultuous bear thee to the faithless main?
 What, would thy madness thus with storms to sport?
 Cast firm your anchor in the friendly port.
 Behold thy naked decks, the wounded mast,
 And sail-yards groan beneath the southern blast.
 Nor, without ropes, thy keel can longer brave
 The rushing fury of the imperious wave:
 Torn are thy sails; thy guardian gods are lost,
 Whom you might call, in future tempests tost.
 What, though majestic in your pride you stood,
 A noble daughter of the Pontic wood,
 You now may vainly boast an empty name,

Of birth conspicuous in the rolls of fame.
 The mariner, when storms around him rise,
 No longer on a painted stern relies.
 Ah! yet take heed, lest these new tempests sweep,
 In sportive rage, thy glories to the deep.
 Francis.

I give this as a striking parallel to many passages in this chapter.

Verse 5

Fir trees of Senir - Senir is a mountain which the Sidonians called Sirion, and the Hebrews Hermon, Deuteronomy 3:9. It was beyond Jordan, and extended from Libanus to the mountains of Gilead.

Verse 6

Of the oaks of Bashan - Some translate alder, others the pine.

The company of the Ashurites - The word **אֲשֵׁרִים** (asherim) is by several translated boxwood. The seats or benches being made of this wood inlaid with ivory.

Isles of Chittim - The Italian islands; the islands of Greece; Cyprus. Calmet says Macedonia is meant.

Verse 7

Fine linen - **שֵׁשׁ** (shesh), cotton cloth. In this sense the word is generally to be understood.

To be thy sail - Probably the flag - ensign or pennant, is meant.

Blue and purple from the isles of Elishah - Elis, a part of the Peloponnesus.

Verse 8

Zidon and Arvad - Or Arad. Two powerful cities on the Phoenician coast, in the neighborhood of Tyre, from which Tyre had her sailors; and the best instructed of her own inhabitants were her pilots or steersmen.

Verse 9

The ancients of Gebal - This was a city of Phoenicia, near Mount Libanus, Joshua 13:5. It was called Biblos by the Greeks.

Thy calkers - Those who repaired their vessels; paying, as it is termed, pitched hemp into the seams, to prevent the water from oozing through.

To occupy thy merchandise - That is, to be thy agents or factors.

Verse 10

They of Persia - Lud, the Lydians; Phut, a people of Africa, see Genesis 10:6. From these places they had auxiliary troops; for as they traded with the then known world, were rich, and could afford to give good pay, they no doubt had soldiers and sailors from every part. Skilful and desperate men will go any where after their price.

Verse 11

The Gammadims were in thy towers - Some think these were a people of Phoenicia; others, that tutelar images are meant; others, that the word expresses strong men, Who acted as guards. The Vulgate reads Pygmaei, the pygmies, who were fabled to be a little people of a cubit in height, from **גָּמַד** (gomed). a cubit; and are told that this little people were celebrated for their wars with the cranes; but nothing of this kind can enter into this description. Probably a people inhabiting the promontories of Phoenicia are here intended; and their hanging their shields upon the walls is a proof that soldiers are meant, and persons of skill and prowess too.

Verse 12

Tarshish was thy merchant - After having given an account of the naval and military equipment of this city, he now speaks of the various places and peoples with whom the Tyrians traded, and the different kinds of merchandise imported from those places.

By Tarshish some understand the Carthaginians; some think Tartessus, near the straits of Gibraltar, is meant; others, Tharsis in Cilicia. The place was famous for all the useful metals, silver, iron, tin, and lead. All these they

might have had from Britain.

Verse 13

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech - The Ionians, the Tybarenians, and the Cappadocians, or Muscovites.

They traded the persons of men - That is, they trafficked in slaves. The bodies and souls of men were bought and sold in those days, as in our degenerate age. With these also they traded in brazen vessels.

Verse 14

Togarmah - The Sarmatians. Some think Cappadocia. With these they dealt in horses, mules, and horsemen; or probably draught horses and war horses are intended.

Verse 15

The men of Dedan - Dedan was one of the descendants of Abraham by Keturah, and dwelt in Arabia, Genesis 25:3. Ivory and ebony might come from that quarter. By way of distinction ivory is called both in Hebrew שן (shen), and in Arabic (shen), the Tooth, as that beautiful substance is the tooth of the elephant.

Verse 16

Syria - These were always a mercantile people. For the precious stones mentioned here see the notes on Exodus 28:17 (note).

Verse 17

Judah, and the land of Israel - traded in thy market wheat - The words have been understood as articles of merchandise, not names of places. So the Jews traded with the Tyrians in wheat, stacte, balsam, honey, oil, and resin.

Verse 18

Damascus wine of Helbon - Now called by the Turks Haleb, and by us Aleppo.

White wool - Very fine wool: wool of a fine quality. Some think Milesian wool is meant.

Verse 19

Dan also and Javan - It is probable that both these words mean some of the Grecian islands.

Going to and fro - They both took and brought - imported and exported: but שׁוּבָה (meuzal), from uzal, may be a proper name. What place is signified I cannot tell, unless it be Azal, a name, according to Kamoos, of the capital of Arabia Felix.

Verse 20

Dedan - Possibly the descendants of Dedan, son of Raamah, see Genesis 10:7.

In precious clothes for chariots - Either fine carpets, or rich housings for horses, camels, etc., used for riding.

Verse 21

Arabia, and all the princes of Cedar - Arabia Deserta, on the confines of the Dead Sea. The Kedarenes inhabited the same country.

These brought lambs, rams, and goats for the consumption of the city.

Verse 22

Sheba and Raamah - Inhabitants of Arabia Felix, at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, who were famous for their riches and spices.

Verse 23

Haran - In Mesopotamia; well known in Scripture.

Canneh - Or Chalane, see Genesis 10:10. It is supposed to be a cape or port of Arabia Felix, on the Indian Sea.

Eden - Equally famous: supposed to have been situated near the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Sheba - Different from that in Genesis 10:22. This was probably near the country of the Edomites.

Asshur - Perhaps the Assyrians.

Chilmad - Possibly Cholmadora, on the Euphrates. Ptol. lib. v.. cap. 15. For several of these places, and the persons from whom they derived their names, see Genesis 10 (note), and the notes there; and see Calmet.

Verse 24

These were thy merchants in all sorts of things - The above people traded with the Tyrians in a great variety of the most valuable merchandise: blue or purple cloth, boxes of cedar, covered with skins, and bound with silken cords, and sealed with an engraved seal, finely cut, etc. See the Chaldee.

Verse 25

The ships of Tarshish - The ships of Tharsis, in Cilicia, were the chief of those which traded with thee.

Verse 26

Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters - Tyre is still considered under the allegory of a ship; and all the vessels of different nations trading with her are represented as towing her into deep waters - bringing her into great affluence. But while in this state, a stormy east wind, or a destructive wind, meaning the Chaldeans, arises, and dashes her to pieces! See the ode from Horace, already quoted on Ezekiel 27:4 (note).

Verse 27

Thy riches - This vast ship, laden with all kinds of valuable wares, and manned in the best manner, being wrecked, all her valuables, sailors, officers, etc., went to the bottom.

Verse 28

The cry of thy pilots - When the ship was dashed against the rocks by the violence of the winds and the waves, and all hope of life was taken away, then a universal cry was set up by all on board. I have heard this cry, and nothing more dismal can be imagined, when the ship by a violent tempest is driving among rocks on a lee shore. Then "All lost! cut away the boat!" is more dreadful than the cry of fire at midnight.

Verse 30

Shall cry bitterly - All that were on the land, seeing this dreadful sight, a gallant ship perishing with all her men and goods, are represented as setting up a dismal cry at this heart-rending sight. But what must they have felt who were on board? Reader, wert thou ever shipwrecked? Wert thou ever in a hurricane on a lee rocky shore, where the helm had lost its power, and the sails were rendered useless? Dost thou remember that apparently last moment, when the ship drove up to the tremendous rocks, riding on the back of a mountainous surge? Then what was the universal cry? Hast thou ever heard any thing so terrific? so appalling? so death and judgment-like? No. It is impossible. These are the circumstances, this is the cry, that the prophet describes; disorder, confusion, dismay, and ruin. And this is a scene which the present writer has witnessed, himself a part of the wretched, when all hope of life was taken away, the yawning gulf opened, and nothing presented itself to support body or soul but that God who gave to both their being, and ultimately rescued him and his forlorn companions from one of the worst of deaths, by heaving the ship from the rocks by the agency of a tremendous receding wave. My soul hath these things still in remembrance, and therefore is humbled within me.

Verse 32

What city is like Tyrus - This, to the end of the chapter, is the lamentation.

Verse 36

Shall hiss at thee - שָׁרָץ (shareku), shall shriek for thee. This powerfully expresses the sensation made on the feelings of the spectators on the shore when they saw the vessel swallowed up.