

a position to achieve an overwhelming victory. Those dramatic six days of conflict produced effects which reverberate throughout the Middle East today and were part of the outworking of God's purpose to humble His people Israel and bring the nations to a recognition of the one true God Who has a purpose with this earth.

Sources

The Six-Day War, Randolph Churchill and Winston Churchill Junior, Heinemann, 1967.
The Road to War, Walter Laqueur, Pelican, 1968.
Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East, Jeremy Bowen, Pocket Books, 2003.
Various articles published in the *International Jerusalem Post* in recent months.

Two-part article

Whatever happened to Tyre? (1)

Mark Taunton

This two-part article considers a prediction by Ezekiel against the city of Tyre, counters sceptical objections to the prophecy's truth, and presents new evidence for its complete fulfilment.

THREE CHAPTERS of Ezekiel contain predictions about Tyre (26, 27) and her prince (28). We focus on his first prophecy (26:1-14), about the physical city—her walls, towers, garrisons, etc.—her great wealth, and what would become of both. God through Ezekiel sets Himself against Tyre, having determined her utter destruction.

In 26:2 Tyre is condemned by Yahweh for what she said against Jerusalem. Tyre was perhaps gloating over damage to Judah's trade from the activities of the regional superpowers—Egypt, Assyria, and later Babylon—as their forces moved through the Levant in waves of conquest. The word for Jerusalem being “laid waste” is used about Assyrian kings drying up the water supplies, and hence the power, of cities they attacked (Isa 37:18,25). Tyre herself was mighty and rich from her vast trading network. As a strong city (though she was attacked many times), perhaps she felt safe, and expected to benefit from Jerusalem's woe. But Ezekiel shows this hope to be utterly vain.

The prophecy

The prophecy starts with a summary. Yahweh tells Ezekiel how He will bring up many nations, like waves from the sea, upon Tyre, to destroy her walls and towers, and kill her daughters. God

would scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of rock where nets could be spread. Tyre was to become a spoil to the nations. As a result, God says, “they shall know that I am the LORD [Yahweh]” (26:6).

Next comes detail of a two-stage destruction:

- 1 Nebuchadrezzar would first besiege and then enter Tyre, breaking down her walls and killing her people (vv. 7-11).
- 2 After this the nations would spoil and destroy the city; they would lay her stones, timbers and dust in the midst of the water (v. 12).

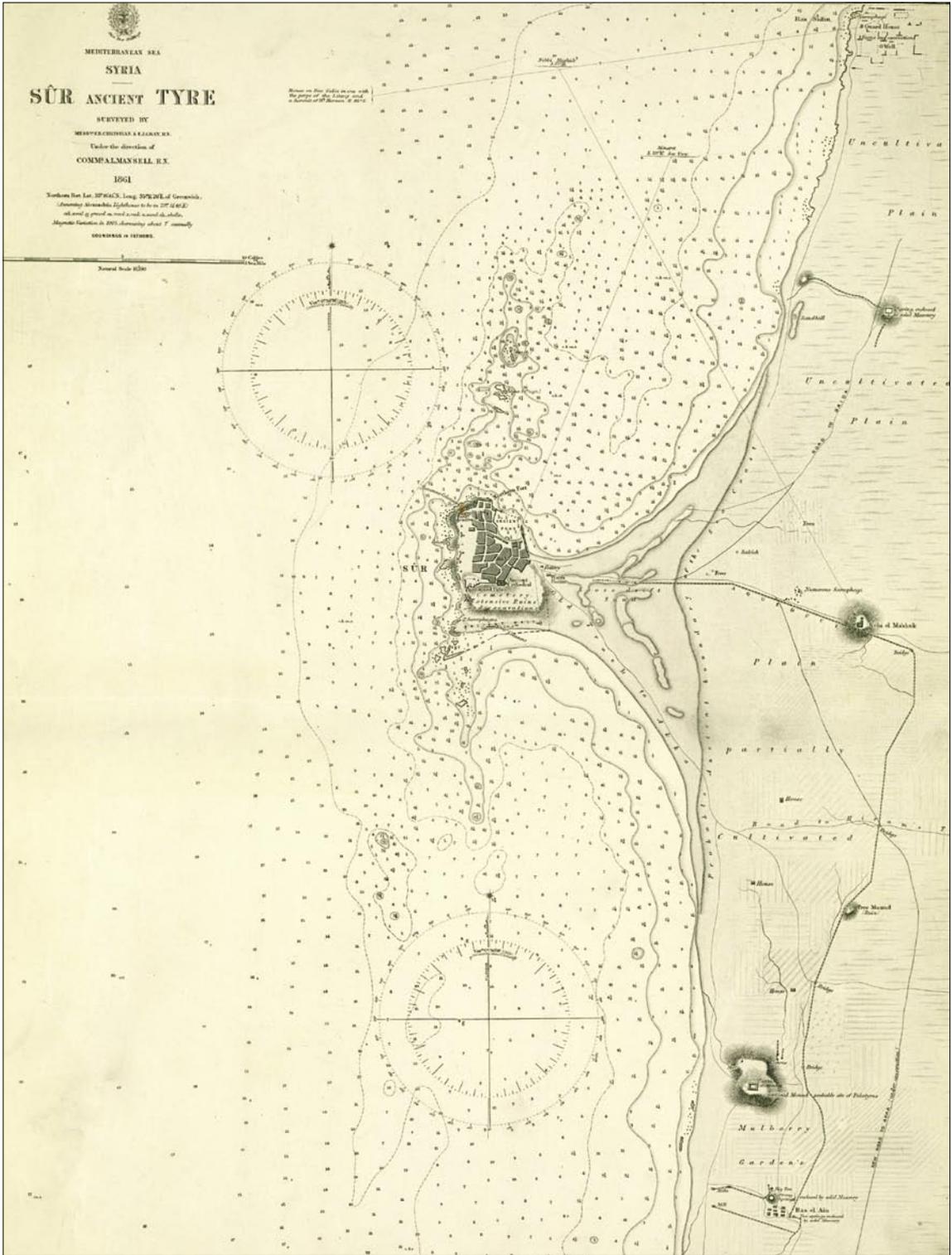
Beyond that, Tyre was to be built no more; the city would never be found again (vv. 14,21).

The fulfilment

Some years after God's words to Ezekiel, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon attacked Tyre, just as was predicted in stage 1. Josephus reports from earlier writers that the siege lasted thirteen years;¹ Ezekiel was told that it was long and hard, but unrewarding (29:18). Eventually, Nebuchadrezzar did “break”, “enter” and “slay” (26:9-11), but some escaped by ship, taking the city's wealth with them out of his reach.

After an interval of about 240 years, stage 2 was fulfilled by Alexander the Great and his allies. As part of his campaign against Persia² (Tyre supported Persia), he made his reputation for

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1. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 10, chapter 11.1.
 2. Predicted in Daniel 8:1-7,20,21.



An 1861 map of the area of Tyre showing the village on the tip of the peninsula, created when Alexander the Great built a causeway between the mainland and what was then an island.

military genius by conquering the island where those old Tyrians had taken refuge. He did so, in astounding fashion, over seven months in 332 B.C. He used the debris, “stones . . . timber and . . . dust” (26:12) from the ruined old city to build a mole or causeway out to the island. (Recently reported research on the isthmus has shown that Alexander’s task was eased by the presence of a ‘sand-bridge’ making the sea-channel shallower.³) Thus Alexander’s troops could directly attack the island fortress. The “many nations” in coalition, including 224 ships, like waves of the sea (v. 3), from nine different maritime states, and Alexander’s own forces, successfully cracked its defences, seizing the wealth Nebuchadrezzar had missed. In the process, Tyre’s physical destruction was completed, even its ruins being laid in the sea. The slaughter continued also: at Alexander’s order, many Tyrians—descended from its former citizens—were killed;⁴ the rest were sold as slaves.⁵

Prophetic precision

The primary events have now been described. Many features of the prophecy’s remarkable fulfilment could be explored beneficially. For now, a few examples will show how exact God’s Word is.

According to Ezekiel 26:12, Tyre’s stones, timber and dust were to be *laid* in the midst of the water; the Hebrew word translated “lay” here means to place deliberately.⁶ And thus it was; Alexander’s men did not hurl rubble into the sea at random. Rather, they used it for his clear purpose, to reach the Tyrians’ island hold-out.

The first mention of where Tyre’s ruins would go is verse 5; she was to become “a place for the spreading of nets in *the midst of the sea*” (cf. 27:32). It is striking that all other occurrences of the Hebrew for the italicised phrase concern Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea.⁷ Yahweh’s host, by His power, passed through “the midst of the sea” on dry land. The comparison is obvious; Alexander also made a route across a sea channel, using Tyre’s rubble, so that *his* army could cross dryshod. (But aptly, whilst God’s people had victory over Egypt by near-immediate miraculous means, idolatrous Alexander overcame the Tyrians only after months of effort and a fierce battle!)

A similar phrase, “the midst of the water” (v. 12), describes where Tyre’s remains were to be laid. The closest related term elsewhere in Scripture is “the midst of the waters” (Gen. 1:6), describing the firmament God made to “divide

the waters from the waters”. Alexander’s mole, in like manner, divided the water to north and south.

Such details illustrate the great precision of prophecy, the consistency of Scripture, and that Ezekiel was indeed an inspired prophet of God.

Objections by critics

It is rare to find objections to this prophecy and its detailed fulfilment based on dating. Most Bible critics accept that Ezekiel wrote during the Exile, not ‘after the event’ in respect of Tyre’s ultimate doom. Instead, the sceptic takes comfort from the notion that Ezekiel’s prophecies did not actually come about in the predicted way, allowing them to predate the events without implying Divine foreknowledge. In this context, two specific objections are raised against the Bible believer’s view of this passage:

- 1 It is argued that the word “they” in verse 12 refers just to Nebuchadrezzar’s forces described in verses 7-11: companies, horses, horsemen, etc. No separate nations are identified in verse 12, only Babylon in verse 7. So, it is alleged, Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces would completely destroy Tyre; in fact he did not, so Ezekiel was wrong.
- 2 Verse 14 says that Tyre would “be built no more”. But, sceptics assert, Tyre was rebuilt, even after Alexander, not once, but several times. Tyre today is the fourth largest city in Lebanon. The prophecy seems to have failed.

“He” and “they”

What about claim 1 that the “they” of verse 12 are the men of Nebuchadrezzar’s army? Firstly, this ignores the fact that Ezekiel has already spoken of “many nations” being brought by God upon Tyre. Ezekiel does *not* predict that Nebuchadrezzar or the nation of Babylon alone would complete the task. Before the account of Nebuchadrezzar’s actions, the prophet describes what the “many

3. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/05/15/nalex15.xml>.

4. Some reports say this was by crucifixion.

5. Joel 3:4-8 may refer to this event. Josephus (*op. cit.*, 11.8.3-6) says Alexander came to Judah about that time.

6. Its first use is of purposeful action: God “put” Adam into the garden “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15).

7. Ex. 14:16,22,27,29; 15:19; Num. 33:8; Neh 9:11.

nations" would do: "they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers" (vv. 3,4). In addition, he says that Tyre would "become a spoil to the nations" (v. 5). So the sceptic's reading is inconsistent with the text.

Secondly, the detail of the Hebrew in verses 7-11 opposes the proposed reading of verse 12. The original sense is not accurately conveyed by most English translations, including the AV. Sceptics claim that "they" matches the various plural terms in verses 7-11 (companies, people, horses, horsemen, etc.). But in fact there are far fewer plural words in the Hebrew here than the AV implies. I offer in the box below a rendering reflecting this. Singular words replacing AV plurals are marked in bold; remaining plural words are underlined.

Ezekiel 28:7-11

7 For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, **in horse and chariot**, and with horsemen, **and a company, and a great people**. 8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. 9 And he shall set **an engine of war** against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. 10 By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of **horseman and wheel and chariot**, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. 11 By the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.

Ezekiel presents Nebuchadrezzar as a one-man powerhouse, his forces a direct manifestation of his personal strength. *He* will slay, *he* will make a fort, *he* will break down Tyre's towers, *he* will enter her gates. The focus is on this "king of kings" (v. 7); his army is but an extension of the will of this one man, fulfilling the purpose of Yahweh, the one true God.

The singular form thus dominates the passage, leaving just three plural parts of the Babylonian war machine that could possibly match "they": horsemen, axes and horses.⁸

Yet even a brief consideration of how any of these might perform the activities of verse 12 quickly leads to the conclusion that by "they", God was *not* referring to the Babylonians. Axes could break down (wooden) towers (v. 9), but would quickly be blunted by stone walls or houses. As for how horsemen or their steeds could cause such damage, or carry timbers and stones to the water, there is no plausible explanation. Military horses served for speed and power in attack; they were not used for heavy lifting! Thus the sceptic's objection, based on his alternative reading of verse 12, cannot be sustained.

But an even more direct reason to reject the critic's view comes from a straightforward word connection. Ezekiel is told that Tyre was to become "a spoil to the nations" (v. 5). Then verse 12 says of Tyre that "they" will "make a prey of thy merchandise". The Hebrew for "make a prey" is the verb form of verse 5's "spoil", proving that "they" of the later verse are "the nations". By contrast, the actions of Nebuchadrezzar (vv. 7-11) include no taking of prey or spoil. This is consistent with God's later comment (29:18), that neither Nebuchadrezzar nor his army had any "wages" directly from their efforts at Tyre.⁹

Was Tyre rebuilt?

The sceptic seems to have a stronger case with the second argument. Clearly the name 'Tyre' was, and still is, used to describe an inhabited region, even after Alexander. It appears in the New Testament; Jesus visited the area (Mt. 15:21), and it had an active port (Acts 21:3).

But care is needed. The answer to our question depends crucially on usage of the name Tyre. Soon after Alexander overcame the island usually counted under that name, it was indeed rebuilt. People still live there, though present-day Tyre is built on the mainland. So was Ezekiel wrong?

I do not believe so. Firstly, it can be shown that *original* Tyre was a *mainland city*, not an island. Though the island was probably used from ancient times, it was not itself Tyre. I say that because:

- 1 The route of the border of Asher included "the strong city Tyre" (Josh. 19:29). But the border
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8. "Hoofs" in verse 11 are attached to "horses", so I have not counted them separately.
 9. The spoil and prey of Egypt were later to be "wages" for Nebuchadrezzar and his army (29:19); had he taken such from Tyre, the same would surely have applied.

is said to reach the sea only further south, after passing Hosah. It touches (the landward side of) four cities on the way from “great Zidon” (v. 28), but does not “go out” at those places. Yet if Tyre were the island, the border would surely be counted as reaching the sea there.

- 2 Ezekiel’s description of Nebuchadrezzar’s siege makes no sense if against an island. He could not possibly raise a fort or mount against that rocky outcrop, then lying half a mile (800 metres) away. Nor would axes, chariots or horses be of use. Instead he would need ships, or to make a causeway. But he had no navy, and neither strategy is mentioned by Ezekiel.

Babylon’s attack on Tyre, then, was clearly the siege of a *mainland city*.

The island that the Tyrians occupied has been destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly through the centuries. If at 26:14 Ezekiel meant the island, his words have indeed failed. But, as I have shown, the Tyre he describes was on the mainland. What then can we determine of that original city, whose permanent utter removal Ezekiel so clearly predicted? Where was it? In the second part of this article we will look at some fascinating evidence from satellite pictures that may well give us the answer to this question.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)

The Damascus Document

Malcolm Edwards

CONSIDERING the debate during the last fifty years about the non-Biblical writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their relevance to Christianity, it is surprising how little prominence has been given to the few scroll fragments found in caves 4 and 6, which are indisputably linked with later writings. Discovered in Cairo in 1897, these later writings are known today as the *Damascus Document*.

The contents of these writings have an important bearing on the identity of the writers of the *Manual of Discipline* and the *Habakkuk Commentary*, found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls and thought by most of their editors to have been connected with the sect of the Essenes, whom some Scrolls experts believe to have been the true originators of Christianity. Happily, very few modern Scrolls writers express this view with any confidence, since there is nothing substantial in the non-Biblical scrolls to suggest this other than the mention of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31. In every other respect the Qumran writers were totally Judaistic in belief and practice, and zealously kept the Law of Moses with its associated ritual. Nevertheless, it is of some value to us to try to establish the identity of this particular Jewish sect and to discover in what period of history they lived.

One of the first Scrolls editors to link the fragments from caves 4 and 6 with the *Damascus Document* was the esteemed Israeli archaeologist Professor Eleazar Sukenik. In spite of this,

its significance seems either to have been not properly appreciated or has been insufficiently expressed.

Documents discovered

The story of the discovery of these writings is briefly as follows. In 1897 Cambridge University scholar Solomon Schechter, a student of ancient writings, heard of the existence of a genizah (a storage room for old faded documents) in the Ben Ezra Synagogue, in an old part of Cairo named Fostat. He lost no time in travelling there, and amongst the writings he took away to examine were some about a highly organised Jewish sect who lived in Judea about 196 B.C. and who had separated themselves from mainstream Judaism, having differences in doctrine and practice.

Back in Cambridge, Schechter worked on the documents for some four years, after which he published his findings in two volumes entitled *Documents of Jewish Sectaries*, Volume 1 of which is the most relevant to our consideration. He called it *Fragments of a Zadokite Work*.

The writings show that members of this particular sect were extremely pious, and claimed to be living in what they termed ‘the age of wrath’. A leader had risen among them called ‘the Teacher of Righteousness’, and he came into conflict with an opposing leader known as ‘the Man of Scoffing’. This powerful adversary seems to have prevailed, resulting in the Zadokite sect having to escape to Damascus.