

# Homiletics Analysis: Ezekiel 26

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## Content & Intent

### This Text — Content

Ezekiel 26 is a formal oracle of judgment against the Phoenician city of Tyre, delivered in the eleventh year following Jerusalem's fall (dated to approximately 586 BC). The chapter opens with Tyre's gloating response to Jerusalem's destruction — the city sees Jerusalem's collapse as commercial opportunity, a rival removed from the trading lanes. God hears this and responds not with rebuke but with sentence. The oracle announces that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon will come against Tyre with overwhelming force: waves of nations, like the sea itself breaking against a shore, will strip the city of its stones, its timber, and its soil, leaving only a bare rock — the literal meaning of the name "Tyre" (Hebrew *tsur*). The oracle extends beyond Nebuchadnezzar to a comprehensive vision of Tyre's permanent desolation: she will become a place for the spreading of nets, never to be rebuilt, never to be found again among the living. The chapter closes with a lament — a *qinah* — mourning Tyre from the sea, the coastal rulers terrified by what God has done to a city they thought indestructible.

### This Text — Intent

God is seeking to accomplish two things simultaneously through this oracle. First, He is judging Tyre for treating God's people's suffering as personal gain — for rejoicing when the covenant city fell. This is not merely a commercial or geopolitical sin; it is a sin against the covenant, an assault on God's purposes through Israel. Second, and more broadly, God is demonstrating to the nations — and to Israel watching from exile — that He is sovereign over all the commercial, maritime, and military powers of the ancient world. Tyre was the supreme symbol of human wealth, ingenuity, and self-sufficiency. Her destruction, announced here, is God's declaration that no human city, however impregnable, however prosperous, however celebrated, stands beyond His jurisdiction. The intent of this passage is to strip the reader of confidence in any earthly city, power, or prosperity that stands apart from God — and to restore the reader to the fear of the LORD as the only stable orientation in a world where the mightiest things fall.

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**Subject Sentence:** God pronounces total, irreversible judgment on Tyre for exploiting Jerusalem's fall.

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**Primary Claim:** Because Tyre rejoiced at Jerusalem's ruin and saw God's people's suffering as opportunity, God will reduce her magnificence to bare rock and silence —

demonstrating that no earthly power that sets itself against God's purposes can survive His reckoning.

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## Interpretive Evaluation

### The scope of Nebuchadnezzar's role (vv. 7–14)

A significant interpretive issue concerns the fulfillment of this oracle. The text names Nebuchadnezzar specifically (v. 7) as the instrument of Tyre's destruction, and the siege described in verses 8–11 fits the historical Babylonian siege of mainland Tyre (585–573 BC). However, Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy the island city of Tyre — after a thirteen-year siege, he reached a negotiated settlement. Ezekiel himself later acknowledges this partial fulfillment in 29:17–20, noting that Nebuchadnezzar's army received no wages from Tyre and that Egypt would be given as compensation. Some interpreters, particularly those with a dispensational orientation, argue from this that the oracle was unfulfilled until Alexander the Great's destruction of Tyre in 332 BC — when Alexander built a causeway using the rubble of mainland Tyre to reach the island, thereby literally fulfilling the imagery of stones and timber cast into the sea (vv. 12). Others extend the unfulfilled portions even further into a future eschatological event.

The Reformed reading does not require a single human agent to fulfill every element of the oracle. Biblical prophecy regularly employs a “telescope” effect — near and far fulfillments merge into a single vision, and the instrument of judgment may shift across the oracle's scope. Nebuchadnezzar fulfills the near movement; Alexander's destruction of the island city in 332 BC — using the debris of the mainland city — fulfills the more comprehensive imagery. The oracle's claim that Tyre would never be rebuilt (v. 14, “you shall never be rebuilt”) is not negated by Tyre's later partial reconstruction; the oracle's force is theological — the city as it was, the Tyre that gloated over Jerusalem, will never stand again. The Reformed reading *acknowledges* the dispensational observation that Alexander's campaign is genuinely relevant to fulfillment while *qualifying* the inference that the oracle therefore requires a single future eschatological event. The text does not demand it, and importing such a framework does interpretive violence to the passage's own focus on Tyre's judgment for its specific sin.

### The sin of Tyre — commercial or covenantal?

Some interpreters, particularly those with a more sociological or liberation-theology orientation, read Tyre's sin primarily as economic exploitation — the city that profits from others' suffering. This reading is not wrong but is incomplete. The text identifies the sin in explicitly covenantal terms: Tyre said, “The gate of the peoples is broken” (v. 2) — Jerusalem, the city through which God's covenant purposes moved, has fallen, and Tyre will fill the vacuum. This is not merely economic opportunism; it is a statement about Israel's God and His purposes in history. Tyre is rejoicing that the covenant city has been undone, which implies gladness at the apparent defeat of the God who built it. The

Reformed reading *qualifies* the economic reading by insisting the passage grounds Tyre's guilt in her posture toward God's covenant purposes, not merely her commercial ethics.

### **The lament (vv. 15–21) — irony or genuine mourning?**

The closing lament from the coastal princes is occasionally read as straightforward mourning — neighboring peoples grieving the fall of a great city. But the lament functions primarily as irony and as testimony. The princes who once drew confidence from Tyre's apparent indestructibility now tremble. Their mourning is not sympathy but terror — if Tyre can fall, no one is safe. The Reformed reading recognizes this as a rhetorical intensification of the oracle's central claim: Tyre's fall is not a local catastrophe but a cosmic signal about who rules the nations.

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## Key Canonical Support

- **Isaiah 23** — Isaiah's earlier oracle against Tyre covers much of the same ground, portraying Tyre as a city whose commerce and pride will be brought low by the LORD. It establishes the prophetic pattern that Ezekiel's oracle extends: God judges commercial powers that live as though wealth is its own justification.
  - **Revelation 18** — The fall of Babylon in Revelation 18 explicitly echoes Ezekiel's oracle against Tyre (and Ezekiel 27–28). The lament of merchants and sea captains (Rev. 18:17–19) mirrors the coastal princes' lament in Ezekiel 26:15–18. John deliberately casts Rome/Babylon in the role of Tyre — the commercial empire that stands against God's purposes — and announces the same verdict: fallen, never to rise again. Ezekiel 26 is, in part, the canonical template for Revelation 18.
  - **Psalms 46** — The image of nations raging and kingdoms falling (Ps. 46:6) while God remains sovereign establishes the theological ground on which all oracles against the nations stand. God is the LORD of hosts; the earth changes; human cities collapse; He endures.
  - **Isaiah 40:15–17** — “The nations are like a drop from a bucket... he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.” The commercial maritime powers — including cities like Tyre — are in God's hand. Ezekiel 26 enacts what Isaiah 40 declares.
  - **Luke 12:16–21** — The parable of the rich fool enacts the same theological logic at the individual level that Ezekiel 26 enacts at the civic level: the one who says “I have enough, I am secure,” and whose confidence rests in accumulated wealth rather than God, faces the same verdict — stripped, silenced, bare rock where abundance once stood.
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**Aim:** To confront the reader’s misplaced confidence in earthly prosperity, power, and self-sufficiency — and to call that confidence to submit to the fear of the LORD as the only stable ground.

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## Content Table

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                          | Notes                                                                                             |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 26:1     | Date formula — eleventh year, first day, unspecified month                                       | One of Ezekiel’s dated oracles; connects to Jerusalem’s fall in the eleventh year                 |
| 26:2     | Tyre’s gloating speech: “Jerusalem is broken; I will be filled”                                  | The sin named immediately — commercial and covenantal opportunism                                 |
| 26:3     | God’s response: “I am against you, O Tyre” — nations will rise against her like waves of the sea | The divine <i>rib</i> (lawsuit); the sea imagery begins — ironic, given Tyre’s maritime dominance |
| 26:4     | Her walls destroyed, towers broken down, soil scraped bare                                       | “Bare rock” — fulfillment of the name <i>tsur</i>                                                 |
| 26:5     | She becomes a place for spreading fishing nets                                                   | Complete reversal: commerce replaced by subsistence; maritime power humiliated                    |
| 26:6     | Daughters on the mainland will be slain by the sword                                             | The oracle encompasses both island city and dependent settlements                                 |
| 26:7     | Nebuchadnezzar named — “king of kings” coming from the north                                     | Title “king of kings” echoes imperial Near Eastern convention; later applied to Christ            |
| 26:8     | Siege works against the mainland daughters — rampart, shield, battering ram                      | Standard ancient siege warfare enumerated; the machinery of God’s judgment                        |
| 26:9     | Battering rams against her walls, axes against her towers                                        | Systematic destruction of Tyre’s defensive architecture                                           |
| 26:10    | Cavalry so numerous they                                                                         | Overwhelming force — the                                                                          |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                      | Notes                                                                                   |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | fill the city with dust                                                      | noise and chaos of total military defeat                                                |
| 26:11    | Hooves trample all her streets; her strong pillars fall                      | “Strong pillars” ( <i>matsevot</i> ) — may refer to standing stones or civic monuments  |
| 26:12    | Plunder taken; stones, timber, soil thrown into the sea                      | Literally enacted by Alexander’s causeway construction in 332 BC                        |
| 26:13    | Music silenced — no more songs of the harps                                  | The festive commerce-culture of Tyre goes quiet                                         |
| 26:14    | “I will make you a bare rock... you shall never be rebuilt”                  | The divine signature: permanent, irreversible judgment                                  |
| 26:15    | Coastal princes asked: will you not shake at the sound of Tyre’s fall?       | Rhetorical question — her collapse sends shockwaves through the maritime world          |
| 26:16    | Princes step down from thrones, remove robes, sit on the ground trembling    | Formal mourning rites; the mighty brought low                                           |
| 26:17    | The lament begins: “How you have perished... you who were mighty on the sea” | <i>Qinah</i> meter (3+2); the lament voice; irony — Tyre’s greatness is now its epitaph |
| 26:18    | Coastlands tremble on the day of her fall                                    | Her collapse is felt across the ancient maritime network                                |
| 26:19    | God will make her a desolate city, like cities not inhabited                 | She joins the list of the gone — not uniquely destroyed but categorically gone          |
| 26:20    | She goes down to the pit, to the people of long ago                          | Sheol imagery — Tyre joins the realm of the permanently departed                        |
| 26:21    | “I will make you a terror, and you shall be no more”                         | The oracle’s closing verdict: obliteration from the land of the living                  |

## Divisions Table

| Division | Verses | Label               |
|----------|--------|---------------------|
| 1        | 26:1–2 | The Sin Named: Tyre |

| Division | Verses   | Label                                                                                                |
|----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2        | 26:3–6   | Rejoices at Jerusalem's Ruin<br>The Sentence Declared: God Turns the Sea Against the City of the Sea |
| 3        | 26:7–14  | The Execution Described: Nebuchadnezzar and the Stripping of Tyre                                    |
| 4        | 26:15–18 | The Shockwave: Coastal Princes Mourn What They Cannot Believe                                        |
| 5        | 26:19–21 | The Verdict Sealed: Tyre Descends to the Pit, Never to Return                                        |

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## Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

**Subject Sentence:** God pronounces total, irreversible judgment on Tyre for exploiting Jerusalem's fall.

**Primary Claim:** Because Tyre rejoiced at Jerusalem's ruin and saw God's people's suffering as opportunity, God will reduce her magnificence to bare rock and silence — demonstrating that no earthly power that sets itself against God's purposes can survive His reckoning.

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## Applications (Five)

**1. Examine what you celebrate when God's people suffer.** (*Mind/belief*) Tyre's sin began with a thought — a calculation that Jerusalem's fall was good news for Tyre. Before any action followed, the heart had already aligned itself against God's purposes. The reader needs to examine the interior response that rises when other believers fail, when a rival ministry struggles, when a community they are suspicious of faces hardship. If the first movement of the heart is opportunity rather than grief, the reader stands in Tyre's position — and this passage announces that God hears those interior calculations and judges them. Repentance here begins not with behavior but with the honest naming of what we have felt when God's people fell.

**2. Stop treating worldly prosperity as evidence of invulnerability.** (*Mind/belief*) Tyre was, by every measurable standard, indestructible — an island fortress, a maritime superpower, an economic engine that sustained the ancient world's trade. Her citizens and neighbors would have laughed at the suggestion that she could be reduced to bare rock. The reader is

invited to identify the “Tyre” in their own imagination — the institution, the security, the career, the portfolio, the nation — that functions as an object of ultimate stability. This passage demands a cognitive reckoning: that thing will not stand if it stands apart from God. The question is not whether it is impressive but whether it is under His lordship.

**3. Let Tyre’s fall produce genuine fear of the LORD in you, not just intellectual acknowledgment.** (*Affections/worship*) The coastal princes do not simply note Tyre’s fall as an interesting development — they tremble. They take off their robes and sit on the ground. They are undone. This is the affective response that the oracle is designed to produce in its readers. A merely cognitive acknowledgment that “God is sovereign over nations” leaves the reader untouched. The passage intends terror — not the panic of the condemned, but the trembling reverence of those who have seen what God does to the mightiest of cities and have realized that they stand before the same God. Ask whether your doctrine of God’s sovereignty produces this quality of trembling, or whether it has become a proposition that sits safely in the mind without touching the knees.

**4. Grieve the way Tyre-thinking shapes how your community relates to the suffering of others.** (*Affections/worship*) Tyre’s calculation — that another’s loss is my gain — is not merely an ancient commercial instinct. It is the logic of every zero-sum community, every church that grows by drawing members from struggling congregations, every ministry that privately benefits when a competitor fails. The reader is called to grieve the ways this logic has been absorbed into how their community operates — to recognize it as the sin that brought Tyre down and to repent of it at the structural level, not just the personal level. This is not guilt-management; it is the affective reorientation that comes when the reader sees Tyre’s end and recognizes a familiar pattern.

**5. Identify one area of your life where your security rests in something that can be stripped to bare rock — and confess it.** (*Will/behavior*) The oracle’s verdict is concrete: stones into the sea, timber into the sea, soil scraped away — nothing left. The reader is called to a specific, non-abstract act: name the thing that currently functions as their Tyre. Write it down. Confess to God that they have built their security there. This is not a generalized call to “trust God more” — it is the specific act of identifying a named false refuge and surrendering it to the God who strips bare rocks and who, for that same reason, can be trusted with what remains.

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## Theological Importance

**Theological Importance:** Ezekiel 26 establishes that God’s jurisdiction over human civilization is not limited to Israel or to those who have explicitly entered covenant relationship with Him. Tyre has no covenant with God, yet God holds her accountable — specifically for her posture toward His covenant people and His purposes in history. This grounds a robust doctrine of common grace and universal accountability: all nations exist under God’s sovereign rule, and all nations will answer for how they have treated the things God calls His own. The passage also demonstrates that God’s judgment is proportionate

to specific sins, not generic wickedness — the oracle identifies precisely what Tyre said and why it constituted grounds for annihilation. Finally, the imagery of Tyre reduced to bare rock — *tsur*, her own name turned against her — displays God’s dark sovereignty: He uses the identity of the proud as the instrument of their humiliation.

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## Reformed Theological Significance

**Reformed Theological Significance:** This passage displays the doctrine of God’s comprehensive sovereignty in its most confrontational form — not as a comfort but as a warning. The Reformed tradition’s insistence that God governs all things, including the rise and fall of nations and empires, is not abstract here; it is enacted against the most commercially formidable city in the ancient world. Tyre’s fall also serves as a canonical type for the New Testament’s vision of Babylon in Revelation 18 — the pattern established here (commercial magnificence, pride, judgment, permanent desolation) is the template John applies to Rome and, by extension, to every civilization that organizes itself around wealth and self-sufficiency rather than the fear of the LORD. For Reformed preaching, this passage functions as a concrete demonstration that there is no neutral ground: wealth, power, and ingenuity are either submitted to God or they are already under His judgment. The gospel does not float above commerce and politics — it confronts them, and Ezekiel 26 shows what that confrontation looks like when the confrontation reaches its appointed end.

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## Main Takeaway

Tyre looked at Jerusalem’s ruin and saw an opening. God looked at Tyre’s response and saw a verdict. No city, no institution, no personal empire built on the suffering of God’s people or the rejection of His purposes will stand — not because human power is weak, but because God is sovereign over all of it and He does not forget what is said in the moment of another’s fall. The thing you have called indestructible is already known to the One who turned Tyre’s name — “rock” — into her epitaph. Fear Him. Release your grip on every other rock.

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## Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Treating this as primarily a fulfillment-prophecy lesson rather than a theological claim.** The oracle is frequently preached as a demonstration of biblical prophecy’s accuracy — cataloguing how Alexander’s causeway fulfilled the “stones into the sea” imagery and thereby proving Scripture’s reliability. This is not wrong, but it converts the passage into an apologetics exhibit rather than a theological claim. The point of the oracle is not “see how accurately God predicted Tyre’s fall”

but “see who God is and what He does to the powers that set themselves against His purposes.” Start with the claim, not the fulfillment record.

- **Failing to preach Tyre’s specific sin.** It is easy to preach this passage as a general warning against pride or commercial excess. But the text is precise: Tyre sinned specifically by rejoicing at Jerusalem’s suffering and treating God’s people’s loss as personal gain. Preaching the passage without naming this specific sin loses the oracle’s moral particularity and reduces it to a vague “God judges the proud” message — which is true but not what this text is doing.
- **Skipping the lament section (vv. 15–21) as merely decorative.** The lament is not a literary ornament. It is the passage’s affective climax — the moment when the reader is supposed to feel the weight of what has happened. Preaching that concludes with verse 14 misses the oracle’s rhetorical design. The trembling of the coastal princes is the intended response in the hearer, and it cannot be produced if the lament section is treated as padding.
- **Over-applying the passage to political prophecy about modern nations.** Ezekiel 26 is sometimes imported into contemporary geopolitical speculation — used to identify modern nations that are “the new Tyre” or to generate prophetic expectations about specific countries’ futures. This misuses the passage’s canonical function. The passage’s principle — God judges the powers that set themselves against His purposes — applies to all nations in all eras, but it does not function as a template for naming specific modern states as the objects of specific modern prophecies.
- **Preaching judgment without naming the gospel’s alternative.** Ezekiel 26 is an oracle of unrelieved judgment — there is no offer of repentance within this text. But preaching it without any canonical grounding in the God who is simultaneously judge and redeemer leaves the congregation stranded in terror. The pitfall is not to import a cheap offer of grace that the text does not contain, but to fail to ground the passage in its canonical context: the God who strips Tyre bare is the same God who, in Christ, absorbs His own judgment so that those who flee to Him are not stripped but clothed. The fear this passage produces should drive the reader toward that God, not merely into despair.
- **Moralistic application that misses the idol-diagnostic layer.** The passage’s application is frequently reduced to behavioral warnings: “don’t gloat over others’ suffering,” “don’t put your trust in wealth.” These are true but surface-level. The deeper application is idol-diagnostic: Tyre’s confidence in her maritime wealth was a form of functional atheism — she lived as though God was not a factor in her calculations. The preacher should press beneath the behavior to the false savior: what is functioning as the reader’s Tyre — the thing they have decided is too big, too established, too important to fall?

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