

KING OF TYRE

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The king of the wealthy merchant city of Tyre during the days of the rise of the Babylonian Empire was noted for his wickedness. He was guilty of violence (Ezek 28:16), and he had defiled his sanctuaries by the multitude of his iniquities (Ezek 28:18). Worst of all, his pride was so great, he actually believed he was deity (Ezek 28:1-10). God used Ezekiel the prophet to rebuke the king of Tyre and to foretell his coming destruction. We have the opportunity to learn some important lessons about the judgment of God from considering the teachings of Ezekiel 28.

Proud in heart

The Lord says, “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished (Prov 16:5). A “proud look” is the first of the seven abominations mentioned in Proverbs 9:16-17. Though humility is a rare thing, there are not many people whose pride is so enormous that they claim to be God! But that is exactly what the king of Tyre proclaimed. God answered him thusly: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God; *Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;* Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas” (Ezek 28:6-8). The king’s death would clearly reveal that he was just a mortal man and certainly not God. The Lord asked the king of Tyre, “Wilt thou yet say before him that slays thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slays thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God” (Ezek 28:9-10). As the Lord warned in Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Perfect in his ways

God told the king of Tyre, “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of

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God” (Ezek 28:13). Of course, this is speaking figuratively. The actual garden of Eden was filled with “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food” and was watered by a river, one of whose heads encompassed a land of gold and precious stones (Gen 2:8-15). God compared the immense wealth of Tyre with Eden, telling the king that “every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created” (Ezek 28:13). That is the way in which he had been in the garden of Eden. Further, God said to the king of Tyre, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek 28:15). Though this might refer to the fact that this man, like all men, was born alive to God, not full of iniquity (Eccl 7:29; Rom 7:9), it is more likely a reference to the wisdom this man possessed to accumulate material possessions (Ezek 28:3-5). His “perfect ways” in this area led him into sin (Ezek 28:3-6,12-13). The very next verse, Ezekiel 28:16 says, “By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned.” And God told him, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezek 28:17). Pride (Prov 16:18) and the love of money was the root of all his evil (1 Tim 6:10). Utter destruction was in store for the great city of Tyre. God said, “I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek 26:4-6; see Isa 23; Jer 47:4). The proud and wicked king of Tyre met his destruction along with his city.