

# The Visions of Ezekiel

## Lesson 20

It is unfortunate that Vision Five is broken into three chapters because it is all about Tyre except for a small portion at the end of Chapter 28 concerning Sidon. When were chapter breaks put into the Bible? The best chapter break could have been placed at the beginning of the word to Sidon. We might ask, when were verse breaks put into the Bible? Each of the sixty-six books of the Bible were originally written as complete units without chapter and verse breaks. The first word of the book of Genesis was written down about 1464 BC and the last word of the Revelation about 96 AD. Altogether, the writing of the sixty-six books of the Bible spanned about fifteen hundred and sixty years. It was not until the middle of the 1400s AD that the books were broken into chapters. Then, about one hundred years later, in the middle of the 1500s AD, the verse breaks were added. Therefore, the breaks for chapters and verses are relatively new compared to the actual writings. These breaks were added for the ease of quickly finding certain teachings. Although they were carefully added and a specific strategy was used for the location of the breaks, those decisions were based on human interpretation and not that of the LORD.

In Chapters 26 and 27 we discovered the history of Tyre and her ultimate destruction. We learned about her establishment, construction, workers, customers and sailors, as well as her warriors. Throughout Ezekiel, the LORD used the word *prince* for what we would naturally call a *king*. Therefore, each time we came across the word *prince*, we interpreted it that way. The LORD even referred to *King Zedekiah* as a prince instead of using the word *king* as we would expect. Why are we splitting hairs over this point? The reason will be clear in this chapter. The LORD used certain words in certain ways for certain purposes. If the Hebrew language was our native tongue, we would immediately recognize that the LORD addressed *the prince*, *the leader* and *the king* in this vision as three separate individuals.

Ezekiel's Fortieth Assignment from the LORD - Leader of Tyre

### 8. The Leader of Tyre

**28:1 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 28:2a "Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre,**

As we travel to the end of the fifth vision and discover what the LORD had to say about Tyre and Sidon, the message paused to discuss two persons who controlled Tyre – its *leader* and its *king*. First, the LORD had Ezekiel address Tyre's *leader*.

#### a) The Claim of the Leader of Tyre

**28:2b 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas'; Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God—**

According to this passage, this *leader* was clearly human, **"a man and not God."** He wanted to be a god. He must have had virtually all the riches and power for which any other leader of any other kingdom of any other town could only dream. The constant coming and going of merchant ships, the churning of the market places in Tyre and the profits made that were literally beyond any and all imagination did one special thing for the leader of Tyre. What was it? Everything was a transaction that made a little money that went into the pocket of the *leader*. He could do nothing and still rake in great wealth. With that constant flow of wealth, the *leader* began to think much more of himself than he should. That was not new. Almost every Pharaoh of Egypt did the same thing. They thought so much of themselves that they

thought they could be God. It happened to the Pharaoh and it happened to the leader in Tyre. But upon reflection of human nature, it happens in all businesses and organizations across the world even today. Powerful people in little ponds of folks, powerful people in big ponds of folks, many of them who should not be powerful people in any pond of folks, but they all tend to have one thing in common, they have a smartness about them that the others do not have.

#### b) The Wisdom of the Leader of Tyre

##### **28:3 Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you.**

The LORD said this leader of Tyre was “**wiser than Daniel.**” That was an interesting comment about Daniel. We would be hard pressed to find a passage that outrightly said that Daniel was a wise man. The people of the world might think that Daniel was wise, and he was wise, but in a Godly way. For instance, when Daniel needed to answer a question, where did he find the answer? In prayer with the LORD. Daniel was wise enough to know where the answers to all the questions of this world could be found. He did not have to be wise when he had a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe. But Daniel did not have all the answers to all the questions. In Daniel chapter 12, he asked the LORD when certain things would happen. The LORD did answer him but not with the answer to that specific question. He told Daniel not to worry about the answer because things would be better for him and he would not have to wait for the Coming of the LORD to redeem Israel. However, the *leader* of Tyre was different. He knew all the answers to all the questions – at least the ones he had to deal with personally.

We must stop to recognize another characteristic of the LORD’s word found in the Scripture. When the LORD speaks of a *prince, a leader or a king*, He is speaking about the position and not the person except where He has clearly indicated a specific human. In the last chapter, the LORD specifically named Nebuchadnezzar as the destroyer of Tyre for this vision. History tells us that Shalmaneser and Alexander the Great were also destroyers of Tyre, but in the last chapter, the LORD made it clear that He was speaking about Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand, in the last three chapters of the book of Daniel, the LORD spoke of the king of the north and the king of the south in a long string of prophecies that took hundreds of years to fulfill. In that case, the LORD was speaking of the title for the person ruling the different countries in succession through the hundreds of years and not any one specific individual to fulfill all the prophecies. Such was the case in this section of the vision. The *leader* of Tyre, whatever his name was and no matter how many *leaders* served in that position through the hundreds of years it took Tyre to obtain its monumental status as the heart of the merchandising hub of the world, all acted in a cumulative manner to build the city and its wealth.

However, in this passage, the LORD seemed to be directing this prophecy to the *leader* in power during the days of the life of Daniel. We know the wisdom of Daniel and we know that Nebuchadnezzar recognized that wisdom and appointed Daniel second in control of the Babylonian Empire. Where did Daniel’s wisdom come from? The LORD. If you remember, when Daniel needed to know something, he did what we are supposed to do, he sought the LORD in prayer. The *leader* of Tyre most definitely did not seek the LORD in prayer. His wisdom came from his study and knowledge of the ways of the world. It was not divine wisdom, it was worldly wisdom. We know this leader’s name. It was Ethbaal III who ruled Tyre from 590 BC to 572 BC.

#### c) The Wealth of the Leader of Tyre

##### **28:4 "By your wisdom and understanding You have acquired riches for yourself And have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries. 28:5 "By your great wisdom, by your trade You have increased your riches And your heart is lifted up because of your riches—**

Street-smartness had made Tyre and its *leader*, Ethbaal III, rich. He was not a self-made man because Tyre was a strong and prosperous city long before he took control but once he was in control, he took the city to new heights and wealth. His evil heart overtook his success and swelled within him as if he alone had made Tyre the city of cities in the world.

#### d) The Heart of the Leader of Tyre

**28:6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God,**

Evil pride gets in the way of many people. It was the case with Ethbaal III. He had accomplished so much that he put himself on the level with God. A dangerous thing to do! Something the LORD did not take lightly from anyone.

#### e) The Attackers on the Leader of Tyre

**28:7 Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords Against the beauty of your wisdom And defile your splendor.**

Offended, the LORD would send “strangers,” “the most ruthless of nations,” to attack the products of Ethbaal III’s wisdom and splendor. Remember, the LORD had already told Ethball III that “you are a man and not God, although you make your heart like the heart of God” (Ezekiel 28:2b).

#### f) The Fate of the Leader of Tyre

**28:8 'They will bring you down to the pit, And you will die the death of those who are slain In the heart of the seas. 28:9 'Will you still say, "I am a god," In the presence of your slayer, Though you are a man and not God, In the hands of those who wound you? 28:10 'You will die the death of the uncircumcised By the hand of strangers, For I have spoken!' declares the Lord GOD!'"**

In Ezekiel 26:20 we discovered this change in the story line where the LORD replaced the word “pit” for the word “deep,” referring to the waters of the sea. In the Old Testament, the word “pit” seems to be synonymous with the grave or the place of the dead called *sheol*.<sup>49</sup> In this vision we have already discovered how the city and all its contents, including humans, would be scrapped in the sea. Here we see that many, including this leader, would drown in the sea and “go down to the pit.” He, his body dead but his soul still alive, would arrive in *Sheol* where he would be a nobody. There, he would not think that he was a god.

What was the “death of the uncircumcised?” The scholars tell us that Tyre and all of the Phoenicians practiced circumcision. No doubt, Ethbaal III was circumcised but his death would be marked by the same characteristics as the “death of the uncircumcised.” That meant that he would die in shame. We are not there yet, but in chapter 32, the LORD would speak about uncircumcised people who die and go to the pit in shame and disgrace.

**Ezekiel 32:**<sup>30</sup> "There also are the chiefs of the north, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who in spite of the terror resulting from their might, in shame went down with the slain. So they lay down uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and bore their disgrace with those who go down to the pit.

Thus, the *leader* of Tyre, a human, would be killed by Nebuchadnezzar.

### Ezekiel's Forty-first Assignment from the LORD - King of Tyre

#### 9. The King of Tyre

**28:11 Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 28:12a "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre**

The “lamentation” was the dirge that was usually sung on the way to the grave by those in attendance. But, as in the case of the Book of Lamentation which follows the prophecy of Jeremiah, it can also be a song of sorrow for a city, village, tribe or tragic event. In this forty-first assignment for Ezekiel to deliver

<sup>49</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

to the exiles, the song had to do with the “**king of Tyre,**” but this king was no human, he was a cherub, an angel who rebelled against the LORD and presided over the city of Tyre, their true supernatural king.

#### a) The Seal of Perfection of the King of Tyre

**28:12b and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.**

This king of Tyre “**had the seal of perfection.**” What did that mean? The Hebrew word translated “**seal**” meant *measured and marked*. The Hebrew word translated “**perfection**” meant *proportion*. Therefore, the LORD had measured this king and marked his proportions. The Wycliffe 1394 translation says, “a print of likeness.” The Tyndale 1525 translation says, “the seal of the sum.” In all cases, the translations of those days meant, *he had it all*. In this phrase, he had all the wisdom and beauty that he needed.

#### b) The Place of the King of Tyre

**28:13a "You were in Eden, the garden of God;**

And now the LORD saw this creature in the garden in the beginning – the garden of Eden, the home of Adam and Eve.

#### c) The Covering of the King of Tyre

**28:13b Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared.**

When this creature was measured, his likeness was beautiful. All the details of his created being consisted of the best in worldly terms and those of heaven. We could take the time to identify and describe all these stones as we know them today, but the purpose of their placement on this creature might be missed. Simply, he was exquisite in his looks and not one change in his looks would add to his beauty.

#### d) The Life of the King of Tyre

**28:14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.**

Ah, he was not a man, he was an “**anointed cherub.**” Cherubs are angels, eternal creatures that cannot die and cannot bear little angels as offspring. We know of four other cherubs in the Bible. All four have an eternal place at the throne of the LORD, standing by the wheels within the middle of the wheels. They have been mentioned in two passages in Ezekiel. They are also mentioned in the Revelation. They control the fire in front of the throne. They have the heads of a man, a lion, a bull and an eagle. They guard the throne of the LORD from every angle. The word “**covers**” in this verse means *to guard*. This angel was once a guard like the other four who are around the throne of the LORD. Where does the LORD reside? “**... on the holy mountain of God.**” Where are the “**stones of fire**” located? In the middle of the four wheels-within-the-middle-of-the-wheels by the cherubim who guard the LORD. He had walked across that fire as the cherubim had. The entire throne of the LORD is aflame with fire.

#### e) The Character of the King of Tyre

**28:15 "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.**

Just like the other four cherubim, this cherub was blameless, sinless from the first moment of his creation. The LORD had a purpose for creating this cherub. The cherub did not know the plan, but the LORD did. The LORD created everything, good and evil. The LORD would explain to His creation what He considered good, pure and holy and what He considered bad, tainted and evil. This cherub heard the LORD’s decree. Blameless he was in all his ways until! In the creation of all the intelligent beings, the

LORD placed within them the ability to make a choice. Angels were granted the ability to choose and so were humans. All other animals, though we love them and consider many of them intelligent and smart, act and react because of a God-given nature or instinct. Yes, they have the ability to choose what they want to eat and where they want to go and what they want to do, but those choices are based on concrete instinct and are nothing like the abstract choices that angels and humans have the ability to engage in. Animals do not sin – not one of them. Humans may think their animal sins because it may have broken a rule for which its human thought it had been trained, but that is not the case. Animals act on instinct, humans and angels act on choice. This cherub saw what the LORD considered evil and made the choice to leave his place of responsibility at the throne of the LORD on the mountain of God and indulge in sin. For this, the LORD said, **“unrighteousness was found in you.”**

#### f) The Sin of the King of Tyre

**28:16a "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned;**

What does the word **“trade”** mean in this passage? It is the Hebrew word *rekullah* and it means *merchandise*. Wycliffe used that word in his translation from Latin to English; however, what did the word *merchandise* mean in Wycliffe’s day? It meant *the action of trafficking or the moving of some product*. It did have to do with the product, but only the action of buying or selling. This cherub entered into the business of trafficking sin and he did so in a big way. He was selling it, buying it and spreading it throughout creation. Sin spewed from within and the LORD called that **“violence.”** To that the LORD said to that cherub, **“you sinned.”**

#### g) The Ousting of the King of Tyre

**28:16b Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.**

The LORD could not have a sinful cherub guarding His throne on His holy mountain. Therefore, the LORD **“destroyed”** this cherub from the midst of the stones of fire. If the LORD **“destroyed”** this cherub, why does he still exist? Wycliffe does not use the word **“destroy.”** His translation says, *“I cast thee out”* and that is the correct translation for this word in this verse. This cherub was not destroyed but he was cast away from the holy throne by the LORD. This point will be confirmed in the next verse.

#### h) The Arrogance of the King of Tyre

**28:17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you.**

To the point previously made, this cherub was not destroyed but he was cast to the ground, or rather, to the earth. Not here, but later in the Holy Writ we will discover that at this time, this cherub became the *prince of the power of the air* surrounding the earth, meaning, as this verse says, he would be **“put before kings”** in such a way that the kings would see him and his trafficking. We must not miss the first part of this verse. This cherub was so caught up in himself that he was his own worst evil enemy. He lost his original home, or domain, because of his **“corrupt”** heart.

It is at this point that we must look at a similar passage written in the prophecies of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 14:3** And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, <sup>4</sup> that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say, "How the oppressor has ceased, *And how* fury has ceased! <sup>5</sup> "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers <sup>6</sup> Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.

A taunt is a mocking or jeering of an individual or group. Throughout Isaiah, the Lord had taunted the Northern Kingdom saying He would bring judgment on them if they continued to disobey. In history, Goliath taunted the Israelites to present their best warrior and challenge him to a fight. The nation of the loser would surrender to the nation of the winner. Religious taunts were directed at pagan idols. In this case, the Lord provided the whole nation of Israel with a taunt that predicted the fall of Babylon, a nation not even in power at the time. One day, 190 years after the Lord had provided this taunt through Isaiah, Israel would be headed home from exile and would understand every word provided in this passage. In Ezekiel, just a few months remained until the last Israelites of the Southern Kingdom were about to head to Babylon for their exile. It would be fifty years before they returned.

A succession of Assyrian kings would take the Northern Kingdom into exile, but Nebuchadnezzar would increase the Jewish presence when he added the exiles from the Southern Kingdom. At the beginning, Nebuchadnezzar was ruthless, but as time passed, Daniel pointed him to the true God. When Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC, the following kings, all related to Nebuchadnezzar by marriage or birth, failed to lead the empire well and conditions for the exiles degraded. Nevertheless, because Nebuchadnezzar continued the practice of taking exiles out of the Promised Land, the blame and aggression of the Assyrian Empire ultimately fell on the Babylonians. This taunt would be used when the oppression ceased in 536 BC and Israel was headed home.

**Isaiah 14:7** "The whole earth is at rest *and* is quiet; They break forth into shouts of joy. <sup>8</sup> "Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, 'Since you were laid low, no *tree* cutter comes up against us.'

At this point in Isaiah's ministry, the Lord had not revealed the identity of the king who would free the exiles, but He soon would. When the Babylonians lost their empire, the whole earth would seem at rest and peaceful to the tribes of Israel. When this taunt was prophesied, the cypress trees and the cedars were still standing in mass. During Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns, he cut down the forests that were in his way. He built roads and cut channels to the Red Sea to transport the timber cut down in battle. By the time of the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 BC, the people needed not fear the axe of the king against the few cypress and cedar trees left in the region.

**Isaiah 14:9** "Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. <sup>10</sup> " They will all respond and say to you, 'Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us. <sup>11</sup> 'Your pomp *and* the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; maggots are spread out *as your bed* beneath you, and worms are your covering.'

The Hebrew word Sheol was the same as the Greek word Hades and represented the invisible place where all souls were gathered after death, both righteous and wicked before the Lord's death at Calvary.<sup>50</sup> The two are separated by a great gulf, the righteous in a peaceful section called Abraham's Bosom and the wicked in a dreadful place called Torment.<sup>51</sup> In the Old Testament, Sheol is at first inescapable. However, it will change for the righteous about 750 years after this prophecy, with the resurrection of the Lord from Sheol on the third day after His death.<sup>52</sup> The arrival of the Babylonian king in Sheol, specifically the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar, would arouse all the good kings of other nations from their peaceful rest and get the attention of all the wicked kings housed across the great gulf which no one can cross. The great Nebuchadnezzar was dead. He could not overcome the same fate of all kings - death. His soul was in Sheol, his body was in the grave, devoured by the maggots and worms.

**Isaiah 14:12** "How you have fallen from heaven, **O star of the morning**, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! <sup>13</sup> "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount

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<sup>50</sup> Job 30:23

<sup>51</sup> Luke 16:22-23

<sup>52</sup> Psalm 49:10-12; Ezekiel 31:16



of assembly in the recesses of the north. <sup>14</sup> 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

In other English versions, the phrase **“O star of the morning”** is translated as one word, *Lucifer*. It comes from the Latin word *lucifer* which refers Venus, the planet that appears just briefly before the dawn of the day. *Lucifer* means *light-bringer*. Here, in this passage, it was used to refer to a king of Babylon who had exalted himself as a god. Much later in church history, *Lucifer* was associated with evil and applied this passage to the devil although the Bible does not use it in that way.

In Daniel 4, the prophet interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar concerning a tree that was cut down. Daniel explained that Nebuchadnezzar was the tree and the moment he proudly exalted himself above God, he would then be like a wild animal driven into the wilderness for seven years. One year later, Nebuchadnezzar strolled onto his balcony and expressed his pride in the kingdom he had built through his own power and strength. Immediately, Nebuchadnezzar became like an animal and was thrust into the wilderness for seven years, **“cut down to earth.”**

Isaiah 14:15 "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.

Even after Nebuchadnezzar returned to his senses at the end of the seven years, he could not escape the grave and his appointment in Sheol.

Isaiah 14:16 "Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, *saying*, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, <sup>17</sup> Who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to *go* home?'

In Sheol, the people who had gone to that place before the king arrived asked the same questions we would ask. How did Nebuchadnezzar end up in this section of Sheol? He did nothing good while we were there with him. We trembled before him. He devastated our lands. He captured our cities. He kept the exiles prisoners in his lands. Now he was there in Abraham's Bosom on the good side of Sheol. How did he get here? At the end of his seven years of living like an animal in the wilderness, Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses. He said:

Daniel 4:34 "But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar called upon the name of the Most High God and his reward was eternal life and peaceful rest when his days on earth were complete.

In conclusion, the name *Lucifer* biblically had nothing to do with Satan. It was the name of the morning star or planet and we now know that was a metaphor for Nebuchadnezzar. Furthermore, it cannot be applied to this evil king of Tyre. He really was the devil – the cherub king of Tyre!

#### i) The Iniquities of the King of Tyre

**28:18a "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries.**

From the place of glory to the place of corruption this cherub traveled because of his decisions. With his own brand of trafficking in sin he defiled the holiest place in the universe. The word for **“sanctuaries”** was first translated *ballowings*. It means *the most holy*. The most holy was at the throne of the LORD on the Mountain of God. He could stay there no longer. Besides that, he had slipped into the perfect garden of Eden and polluted it too.

## j) The Consumption of the King of Tyre

**28:18b Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you.**

The LORD had a plan for this cherub and it is found here and in other places in the Bible. Here is one example.

**Malachi 4:3** "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

And so, all the redeemed wait anxiously for that day which the LORD is preparing to rid this world of this evil cherub. The Scripture says about this day that this evil cherub, who will gain the title of the *Great Red Dragon*, will be cast into the *lake of fire*.

## k) The End of the King of Tyre

**28:19 "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.""**

The world was not quite ready for the end of this cherub. He had been the king of many in the past. He is the king of many today. He will be the king of many in the future. But, on that planned day, he will forever be in the lake of fire.