

What is the significance of the city of Tyre in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Tyre-in-the-Bible.html>

Tyre is thought to be one of the oldest cities on the Phoenician coast, established long before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. Isaiah affirms Tyre's ancient origins as "from days of old" (Isaiah 23:5-7).

Tyre is situated on the Mediterranean coast directly north of Jerusalem between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea, about 20 miles south of Sidon and 23 miles north of Acre. Neighboring Sidon is believed to be the oldest Phoenician city, but Tyre's history is more distinguished. The name Tyre (Tzor in Hebrew) signifies "a rock," an apt description for the rocky coastal fortress. In ancient times, Tyre flourished as a maritime city and a busy center for commercial trade. The area's most valuable export was its then world-famous purple dye.

Originally, the ancient city was divided into two parts: an older port city ("Old Tyre") located on the mainland and a small rocky island about a half-mile off the coast where most of the population resided ("New Tyre" or "insular Tyre"). The island has been connected to the mainland ever since Alexander the Great built a siege ramp to it in the fourth century BC. The causeway has widened over the centuries, creating Tyre's current-day peninsular formation.

The Bible first mentions Tyre in a list of cities that were part of the inheritance of the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:24-31). Fortified with a wall, Tyre held an exceedingly strong position. It was the only city in the list described as "strong" or "fortified" (verse 29). Joshua was unable to capture Tyre (Joshua 13:3-4), and, evidently, it was

never conquered by the Israelites (2 Samuel 24:7).

By the time of King David's reign, Israel had formed a friendly alliance with Hiram king of Tyre. David used stonemasons and carpenters from Tyre, along with cedars from that region to build his palace (2 Samuel 5:11). Peaceful relations with King Hiram continued into Solomon's reign, with the construction of the temple in Jerusalem relying heavily on supplies, laborers, and skilled artisans from Tyre (1 Kings 5:1-14; 9:11; 2 Chronicles 2:3).

Israel continued to share close ties with Tyre during King Ahab's reign. Ahab married the Phoenician princess Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, and their union led to the infiltration of pagan worship and idolatry in Israel (1 Kings 16:31). Both Tyre and Sidon were notorious for their wickedness and idolatry, which resulted in numerous denunciations by Israel's prophets, who predicted Tyre's ultimate destruction (Isaiah 23:1; Jeremiah 25:22; Ezekiel 28:1-19; Joel 3:4; Amos 1:9-10; Zechariah 9:2-4). One of the most detailed prophecies of Tyre's demise is in Ezekiel: "They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord. She will become plunder for the nations" (Ezekiel 26:4-5).

After the restoration of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time (c. 450 BC), the people of Tyre violated the Sabbath rest by selling their goods in the markets of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:16). In 332 BC, after a seven-month siege, Alexander the Great conquered Tyre, putting an end to Phoenician political control, but the city retained its economic power.

In the New Testament, Jesus mentions Tyre as an example of an unrepentant city (Matthew 11:21-22; Luke 10:13). Jesus also ministered in the district of Tyre and Sidon, healing the demon-possessed daughter of a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28).

The persecution that arose after Stephen's death caused the Christians in Jerusalem to scatter. As a result, a church was established in Tyre (Acts 11:19). Paul spent a week there with the disciples on the return voyage of his third missionary journey (Acts 21:2-4).

In 1291, Tyre was completely destroyed by the Saracens, fulfilling Ezekiel 26's prophecy. The place remained uninhabited for the next 300 years. In 1894 the population of Tyre was reported to be about 200 people living in an obscure fishing village. In more recent times, the country of Lebanon has been rebuilding Tyre and rebranding it as a tourist attraction. The city now has an estimated population of 135,000. True to the prophecies, Tyre has never regained the commercial superpower status it held in Ezekiel's day. Ancient Tyre was truly stripped of its glory and strength, and modern Tyre is but a shadow of its former reality.