

# Prophecies Concerning Biblical Cities



Ashkelon

Ashkelon was a Philistine town, a little north of Gaza and on the coast. Amos (about 750 BC), Jeremiah (about 600 BC) and Zephaniah (about 620 BC) all prophesied against it, with the following predictions:

- I will destroy the inhabitants and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon (Philistines) (Amos 1:8).
- Ashkelon will be cut off (Jeremiah 47:5).
- Desolation shall come upon Ashkelon (Zephaniah 2:4).
- Shepherds and sheep will dwell in the area of Ashkelon (Zephaniah 2:6).
- **A remnant of the house of Judah will re-inhabit Ashkelon (Zephaniah 2:7).**

Judgment fell upon Ashkelon precisely as  
predicted:

*When this vast seaport, the last of the  
Philistine cities to hold out against  
Nebuchadnezzar finally fell in 604 BC,  
burnt and destroyed and its people  
taken into exile, the Philistine era was  
over* ([wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkelon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkelon))

In 1270 the Mamluk Sultan Baybars ordered the citadel and the harbor at the site to be destroyed. As a result of this destruction, the site was abandoned by its inhabitants and fell into disuse.

For 700 years the once mighty city lay in ruins, becoming a grazing place for flocks of sheep, the area dotted with huts. Following the establishment of the state of Israel (1948), the Jewish people recognised the splendid location of the old city, and now it has been transformed into a beautiful garden city in keeping with Zephaniah's prophecy.

The Philistines were destroyed along with  
Ashkelon and the house of Judah re-inhabited it.  
Exactly as prophesied.



Babylon

The Babylonians were the world power from about 620 BC to its fall by the Medes and the Persians in 539 BC. Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and after a series of attacks and the taking of captives, he finally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC and took most of the people captive

Babylon was said to be the largest city in the world at the height of its power with an estimate population of 200,000 people and its hanging gardens were one of the seven wonders of the world.





# Prophecies against Babylon

Isaiah 13:19-20; 21:1-10; Chapter 47. About 700 BC

Jeremiah Chapters 50 and 51. About 590 BC

Isaiah 13:19-20

19 *Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,  
the pride and glory of the Babylonians, will be  
overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.*

20 ***She will never be inhabited or lived in through all  
generations; there no nomads will pitch their tents,  
there no shepherds will rest their flocks.***

# Prophecy fulfillment

Babylon fell to Cyrus the Great in 539 BC, but the city still persisted and was captured by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. After Alexander's untimely death, a power struggle amongst his generals ensued and Babylon passed to the Seleucid dynasty in 312 BC. The city's importance was greatly reduced by the building of a new capital on the Tigris, called Seleucia. Babylon fell into disuse.

# Babylon today

Picture taken in 1932 of an excavation site



Isaiah 13:20

*She will never be inhabited or lived in  
through all generations; there no  
nomads will pitch their tents,  
there no shepherds will rest their flocks.*

Edom (Petra)

Isaac had two sons; Esau and Jacob whom God later named Israel. The descendants of Esau became the Edomites, and their main city, Petra, was built into the rock face in the mountains south-east of the Dead Sea, such as to render it almost impregnable.

As the Children of Israel were coming out of the desert and heading towards the Promised Land, Moses asked the king of Edom to allow them to pass through since they were 'brothers.' The king refused and attacked them when they tried and for this action God held Edom to account as well as for the fact that the Edomites opposed Israel at every opportunity. Genesis 25: 24-26. Numbers 20:14-21.

Also, as the Babylonians were destroying Jerusalem, the Edomites were cheering as evident in Psalm 137:7:

*Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.*

God had Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah and Ezekiel pronounce many judgments on the Edomites.

- Edom will never be populated again (Jeremiah 49:18).
- Edom will be conquered by Israel (Ezekiel 25:14).
- They shall have a bloody history (Ezekiel 35:6, Isaiah 34:6–7).
- Edom will become totally desolate and wild animals will inhabit the area (Isaiah 34:13–15).
- The whole book of Obadiah is about the forthcoming destruction of Edom.



The Nabatean Arabs conquered Edom in 312 BC and their national identity was lost (King James Study Bible page 1229).

Having no homeland, they settled in Idumaea (They became known as Idumeans. Herod the Great was a descendant). During the Maccabean revolt, the Israelites took revenge on the Edomites and they were subsumed into the Jewish nation and were a separate people no more.

When the Swiss traveler J L Burkhardt visited the area in 1812, he saw the place as a wild desert and even though the Edomites are mentioned several times in the Bible, many doubted their existence. Incidentally, Petra was built by the Nabataeans not the Edomites.



# How accurate were the prophecies?

- Edom was overthrown as a nation and subsumed by Israel as Ezekiel predicted (25:14).
- The nation and city have become a desolation, as Ezekiel 25:13; 35:4,7 and Isaiah 34:11-13 predicted.
- It has never been populated again as Jeremiah 49:18 predicted.
- It has had bloody history as Ezekiel 25:13 and 35:6,8 predicted.
- Edom became populated with wild animals and birds (instead of people) as Isaiah 34:11, 13-15 predicted.

Jerusalem

# Prophecies concerning Jerusalem

- **After prophesying the destruction of Judah, including Jerusalem, by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah goes on to state, in chapter 31, that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and never be demolished again.**
- *Verse 38: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.*
- *Verse 39: And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.*
- *Verse 40: And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.*

The prophecy states that Jerusalem will be enlarged and will remain forever. In 1996 Jerusalem celebrated its 3,000-year anniversary. Historians and archaeologists estimate that it was in mid-1,004 BC that King David defeated the Jebusites and claimed Jerusalem as the Hebrew capital, as recorded in 2 Samuel 5:6–14. Old Jerusalem still exists and has been enlarged into a modern city, as shown by the accompanying photograph taken from the Mount of Olives.



Nineveh

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire  
In terms of size it was on par with Babylon.  
Archaeological diggings have shown part of it  
was enclosed by a brick wall 12 kilometers long  
and containing 15 city gates.

We are told in scripture, it was a place of great  
evil (Jonah 3:8).



# The whole book of Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh.

- *2:6 The gates of the **rivers shall be opened**, and the palace shall be dissolved (melted).*
- *3:15 There shall the **fire devour thee**; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.*

The fall of Nineveh is in line with biblical prophecy, for the *Babylonian Chronicle* is clear, that when the Assyrian army was on offensive maneuvers, there were several heavy downpours of rain that swelled the Tigris River, flooded part of the city and caused the walls to fall. Also, excavations have shown a course of pebbles and sand a few feet beneath the surface. When archeologists unearthed the site in the early 1800s, they found a layer of ash covering the ruins.

Encyclopedia Britannica states:

*Nineveh suffered a defeat, from which it never recovered. Extensive traces of ash, representing the sack of the city by Babylonians, Scythians and Medes in 612 BC, have been found in many parts of the Acropolis.*

Note, Nahum's prophecy was only one or two decades before Nineveh's destruction.

Samaria

Israel was divided after the death of King Solomon; the northern part became known as Israel and the southern part became known as Judah. This prophecy refers to the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria, which was established by Omri in 880 BC as the capital of Israel. Later, his son, King Ahab, built his palace there.

The city was known for its idolatry Ahab's wife Jezebel supported 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.

The prophet Micah wrote in chapter 1, verses 1, 5 & 6.

*1 The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.*

*5 All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the people of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem?*

*6 "Therefore I will make **Samaria a heap of rubble**, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.*

After a succession of invasions, the Assyrian Empire succeeded in devastating the Northern Kingdom, and took most of its population captive in 722 BC. The city was rebuilt and destroyed by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It was rebuilt and destroyed again by John Hyrcanus in 108 BC. Pompey rebuilt the town in 63 BC and Augustus Caesar bestowed it upon Herod who expanded and renovated the city and named it 'Sebaste' (meaning 'Augustus') in his honor.

Samaria (Sebastia) was finally and totally destroyed during the Maccabean wars (166-142 BC).

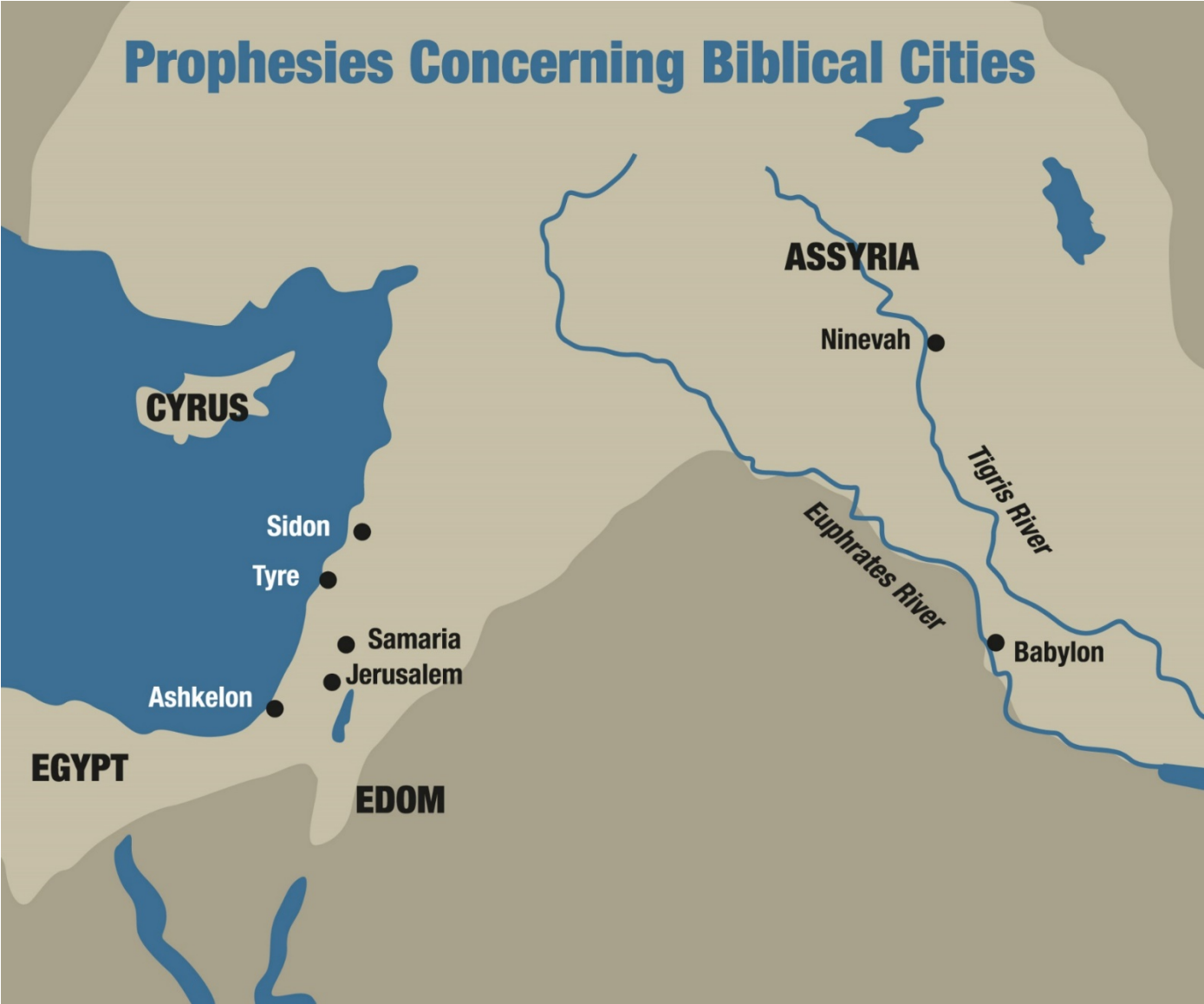
# Samaria today; a heap of ruins



Sidon



# Prophecies Concerning Biblical Cities



Sidon was a very old city having been established by the son of Canaan (Genesis 10:15).

When Canaan was taken by the Israelites it became part of the territory of Asher.

Ezekiel, prophecies against Sidon in chapter 28:20-23:

*20 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,*

*21 Son of man, set thy face against Sidon, and prophesy against it,*

*22 And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Sidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her.*

*23 For I will send into her **pestilence**, and **blood into her streets**; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the **sword upon her on every side**; and they shall know that I am the Lord*

There are three predictions, which we shall investigate:

1. No mention of her destruction
2. Blood in the streets
3. Sword on every side

In 351 BC the Sidonians, who had been vassals of the Persian king, Artaxerxes III, rebelled and successfully defended their city against his attacks. However, their king, Tennes, in order to save his own life, delivered up 100 of the town's principal citizens and then admitted Artaxerxes within the defences of the town where he had 600 citizens run through with the javelin. Sidon was then burnt to the ground either by the Persians or the Sidonians themselves and 40,000 people died. Tennes was later put to death by Artaxerxes.

But the city remained. Jesus visited Sidon (Matthew 15:21-28).

The sword was on every side and Blood did indeed flow in the streets.

Sidon was re-built by the time Alexander the Great, marched through Phoenicia. It enjoyed self-government under the Romans and is still a active city as shown by the recent photograph below.



Tyre

Several Old Testament prophets prophesied against Tyre. Some condemned the Tyrians for delivering the Israelites to the Edomites and selling them as slaves to the Greeks (Amos 1:9) . Jeremiah prophesied against Tyre (Jerimiah 27:1-11), but it is Ezekiel's prophecy which was made between April 587 BC and April 586 BC, that will be considered here, although all the others were fulfilled as well.



## Ezekiel 26: 2-14

Ezekiel began his prophecy by stating that “many nations” would come against Tyre (26:3). Then he proceeded to name Nebuchadnezzar, and stated that “he” would build a siege mound, “he” would slay with the sword, and “he” would do numerous other things (26:7-11). However, in 26:12, the pronoun shifts from the singular “he” to the plural “they.” It is in verse 12 and following that Ezekiel predicts that “they” will lay the stones and building material of Tyre in the “midst of the waters.” The shift in pronouns is of vast significance, since it shifts the subject of the action from Nebuchadnezzar (he) back to the many nations (they) of verse 3.

Yet he (Nebuchadnezzar) and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre. (Ezekiel 29:18)

In Ezekiel 26:3–21, five things are predicted to happen to the city of Tyre:

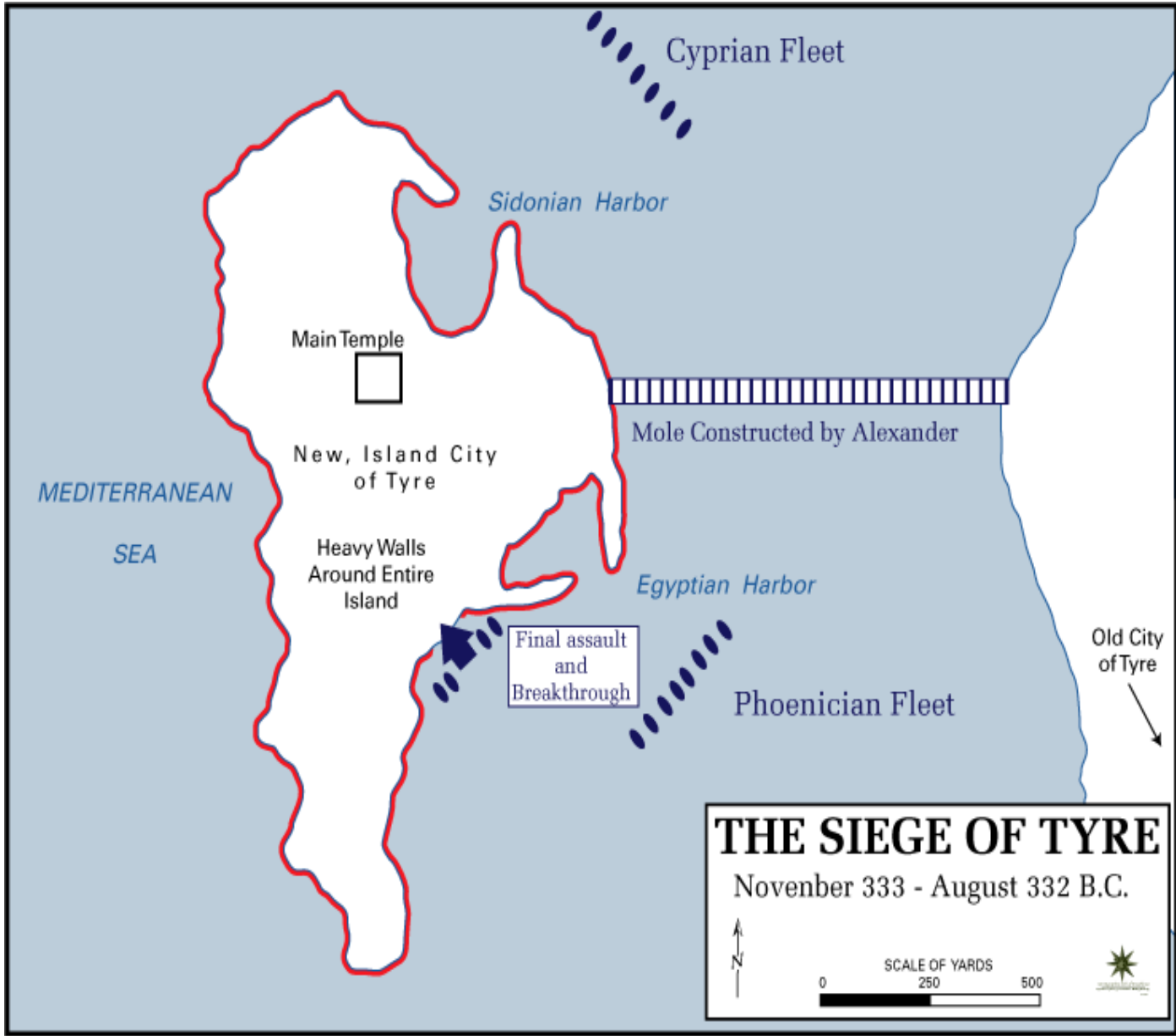
- Many nations will come against Tyre in successive waves like the waves of the sea (verse 3).
- Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland of Tyre (Verse 7-11).
- Debris from the city, stones and timber will be thrown into the water verse 12.
- Tyre will be made a bare rock, flat like the top of a rock and fishermen will spread their nets over the site (verse 14).
- Tyre never will be rebuilt. The ancient mainland city is covered by the sea and the island city never was rebuilt (verse 14).

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to mainland Tyre three years after the prophecy was pronounced, and after a 15-year siege (586–571 BC), Nebuchadnezzar broke the gates down. He found the city almost empty. The majority of the people had moved by ship to an island about one kilometer off the coast and fortified a city there. The mainland city was destroyed in 573 BC, as prophesied. Tyre remained on the island and was a powerful city for over two hundred years.

Yet he (Nebuchadnezzar) and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre. (Ezekiel 29:18)

Alexander the Great, as part of his war on Persia, marched southward and called on each city to open its gates to him. Tyre refused and in 332 BC, he blockaded the island city for 7 months, but Tyre held on. Possessing no fleet, he used the debris of the abandoned mainland city to build a causeway or 'mole' 60 meters (200 feet) wide across the straits, which separated the old and new cities. He then erected towers and war engines at the island end of the causeway (as shown).

The people of Tyre continually raided the causeway with fire-ships, greatly retarding progress, until Alexander pressured conquered subjects to make ships for his operation. After attaining a superior naval force, Alexander finished the causeway, battered the walls of Tyre down, killed 10,000 of the inhabitants, and sold 30,000 into slavery.





Tyre, Lebanon (Middle East)

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Center: 33°14'18.26" N, 35°12'56.17" E, Elev: 110

Zoom: 11 | 100%

Eye Alt: 17730 ft

Although Tyre continued to exist after Alexander, Ezekiel saw one nation after another coming against her like ocean waves on a beach. Many nations did come against Tyre in successive waves as per the prophecy; the Persians, Macedonians, Ptolemies, Seleucids and Romans; in AD 638 the Arabs, and finally, in 1291, the Mameluke Muslims destroyed the city completely.



According to the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, Fifth Edition:

"The principal ruins of the city today are those of buildings erected by the Crusaders. There are some Greco-Roman remains, but any left by the Phoenicians lie underneath the present town."

Philip Myers writes in his book:

*Alexander the Great reduced Tyre to ruins in 332 BC. Tyre recovered in measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock; a place where fishermen now spread their nets to dry.*

P. Myers, *A General History for Colleges and High Schools*, Boston, Ginn and Company, 2003, page 55

Nina Jidejian writes:

*The Sidonian port of Tyre is still in use today. Small fishing vessels lay at anchor there. An examination of the foundations reveals granite columns of the Roman period which were incorporated as binders in the walls by the Crusaders. The port has become a haven today for fishing boats and a place for spreading nets.*

N. Jidejian, *Tyre Through the Ages*, Beirut, Dar El-Mashreq Publishers, 1969, page 139.



All the prophecies of Ezekiel about Tyre have come true: Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre; many nations came against Tyre; Alexander threw debris into the water to make the causeway, thereby enabling him to destroy the island city; he made her a bare rock; fishermen now spread nets over the site; the old city of Tyre has never been rebuilt. Today there is a city called Tyre, but it is not the original as this still lies bare, but rather buildings have been constructed around the original city. All six prophecies have come true in the minutest detail.

# Ancient Tyre today



## Summary

- Prophecies were made on eight ancient cities ranging from total destruction (Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Samaria and Edom (Petra) to destruction and being re-built (Ashkelon and Jerusalem), to Blood in the streets, sword on every side but no destruction (Sidon).
- No two prophecies were the same; all were fulfilled, some in minute detail.
- We can put our trust in the Bible and place our eternal future on it.