

Zechariah 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

Analysis

And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets—this verse catalogs Tyre's vaunted strengths: military fortifications and staggering wealth. The verb "**did build**" (vativen, וַיַּבְנֵי) emphasizes Tyre's self-reliance—she built for herself (lah, לֹהֶ). The city constructed elaborate defenses, particularly after moving from the mainland to a fortified island (following Nebuchadnezzar's 13-year siege, 585-572 BC). Island Tyre seemed impregnable, surrounded by 150-foot walls rising from the sea.

"And heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets" employs hyperbolic imagery to convey unimaginable wealth. The Hebrew verbs vatitzror (וַיַּצְבֹּר, "heaped up") suggests accumulation like storing grain. Silver became "**as the dust**" (ke-afar, כְּעָפָר) and fine gold "**as the mire of the streets**" (ke-tit chutzot, כְּתִיט חֻצּוֹת)—common as dirt. Tyre's commercial empire generated wealth that made precious metals mundane. This echoes Solomon's Jerusalem where silver was "as stones" (1 Kings 10:27), but Tyre surpassed even Solomonic prosperity.

Yet verse 4 immediately announces these strengths' futility against divine judgment. The literary structure builds up Tyre's apparent invincibility to heighten the contrast with God's effortless destruction. This pattern recurs in Scripture: human pride constructing towers, fortresses, and wealth, only to discover God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Babylon's similar fate (Isaiah 47; Revelation 18) demonstrates that commercial empires trusting in wealth and power face divine reversal.

Historical Context

Tyre's wealth derived from controlling Mediterranean trade routes, monopolizing purple dye production, and establishing commercial colonies. Phoenician ships traded throughout the known world, bringing exotic goods that enriched Tyre beyond measure. The city's move to an offshore island after Assyrian and Babylonian threats created formidable defenses. Even Nebuchadnezzar's 13-year siege (585-572 BC) failed to capture the island city, though he destroyed mainland Tyre—the Tyrians evacuated to the island with their wealth.

This historical background makes Zechariah's prophecy remarkable: who could conquer island Tyre? Alexander the Great accomplished it (332 BC) by constructing a half-mile causeway from the mainland, using rubble from old Tyre to build a land bridge—literally casting the city "into the midst of the sea" (Ezekiel 26:12). The seven-month siege ended with 8,000 Tyrians killed and 30,000 sold into slavery. Alexander's triumph fulfilled multiple prophecies (Ezekiel 26:3-14; Zechariah 9:3-4), demonstrating God's sovereignty over seemingly impregnable powers. The causeway permanently connected the island to the mainland, fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy that Tyre would become "a place for the spreading of nets" (Ezekiel 26:14).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Tyre's trust in fortifications and wealth mirror modern society's confidence in military power and economic prosperity apart from God?

2. What does God's judgment on Tyre teach about the temporary nature of worldly security and the futility of self-reliance?
3. In what ways might believers today be tempted to 'build strongholds' and 'heap up wealth' as substitutes for trusting God's protection and provision?

Interlinear Text

בָּנָה	וְ	תְּרִיבָה	מִצְרָיִם	לְ	הַ	וְתִּצְבָּר	סֶלֶב
did build	And	Tyrus	herself a strong hold		וְ	and heaped up	silver
H1129		H6865	H4692			H6651	H3701
כַּעַפְתָּר	וְ	כַּעַפְתָּר	אַיִל	כַּעַפְתָּר	יָטָה	חוֹצֹתָה	רַחֲמָה
as the dust	and fine gold		as the mire		of the streets		
H6083		H2742		H2916		H2351	

Additional Cross-References

Job 27:16 (Parallel theme): Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay;

Ezekiel 27:33 (Parallel theme): When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

Joshua 19:29 (Parallel theme): And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:

2 Samuel 24:7 (Parallel theme): And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beer-sheba.