

**Giving Nebuchadrezzar and Ezekiel Their Due:
A Laborer is Worthy of His Hire
Ezekiel 29:17–21
Veritas Adult Community
December 12, 2020**

¹⁷In the twenty-seventh year, in the first [month], on the first day of the month, the following message of YHWH came to me:

¹⁸Human, Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, had his army to render a great service concerning Tyre. Every head is worn bald, and every shoulder rubbed bare. Still neither he nor his army has received appropriate compensation from Tyre for the service he rendered against her.

¹⁹Therefore, thus has YHWH declared: Look! I am presenting the land of Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon. He will carry off her wealth, take her spoil, and seize her loot. And she will be compensation for his army. ²⁰As his reward for which he served, I have given him the land of Egypt, because they were acting on my behalf—The declaration of the Lord YHWH. ²¹In that day I will cause a horn to sprout for the house of Israel, and I will grant to you fluency of speech in their midst. Then they will know that I am YHWH.

Exposition

Introduction:

1. The Problem of Failed Prophecy
2. Outline:
 - a. Preamble (29:17)
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar's Labors (29:18)
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar's Reward (29:19–20)
 - d. Concluding Apologia (29:21)

A. The Timing of Ezekiel this Message (v. 17)

New Years Day (April 26, 571 BC); the day of the Babylonian Akitu Festival

Josephus on the Siege of Tyre, based on Menander of Ephesus (*Against Apion* 1.20–21 (156–59))

Under King Ithobal [Ethbaal III 591–574 BC], Nabuchodonosor besieged Tyre for thirteen years. The next king, Baal [II, 573–564 BC], reigned ten years.

After him judges were appointed and held office as follows: Eknibal, son of Baslech, two months; Chelbes, son of Abdaeus, ten months; Abbar the high-priest, three months; Myttyn and Gerastratus, son of Abdelimus, six years; after them Balator was king for one year. On his death his subjects sent to Babylon and fetched from there Merbal, who reigned four years; and on his death they sent for his brother Hirom, who reigned twenty years. It was in his reign that Cyrus became monarch of Persia.

The whole period thus amounts to fifty-four years and three months. For it was in the seventh year of his reign that Nabuchodonosor began the siege of Tyre, and in the fourteenth year of Hirom's reign that Cyrus the Persian came into power. (Loeb Classical Library).

B. Nebuchadnezzar's Place in YHWH's Agenda (vv. 18–20)

1. YHWH's Relationship with Nebuchadnezzar

- a. YHWH identifies Nebuchadnezzar by his true name and title.
- b. YHWH explicitly identifies Nebuchadnezzar and his armies as his agent.
- c. YHWH emphasizes that Nebuchadnezzar had indeed acted on his behalf.
- d. YHWH recognized that Nebuchadnezzar's service had involved an extremely significant agenda, which involved taking care of Tyre, who had stood in his (YHWH's] way.
- e. YHWH recognized that Nebuchadnezzar and the armies under him had worked extremely hard for him.
- f. YHWH recognized that Nebuchadnezzar personally had not been rewarded sufficiently for his efforts.

2. How shall we interpret the relationship between Ezekiel 26:7–14 and 29:17–21?

- a. The issue is not failed prophecy.
- b. We need to take another look at what 29:3–6 actually says.

³Therefore, thus has the Lord YHWH declared:

I am against you, O Tyre! ***As the sea hurls its waves, so I will hurl against you many nations.***

⁴They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers. I will scrape her soil off her and transform her into a bare rock. ⁵She will be a place where nets are spread, in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken—*the declaration of the Lord YHWH*. She will become plunder for the nations, ⁶while her daughters who are on the mainland will be slaughtered with the sword. Then they will know that I am YHWH.

- c. We need to take another look at what the historical record shows: What happened to Tyre under Nebuchadnezzar?
 - Josephus: Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre 13 years and then lifted the siege.
 - By the time he lifted the siege, her economy was destroyed, and political independence ended.
 - A “court list” from Babylon (*ANET*, 308) mentions 126 captives from Tyre.
 - A Nebuchadnezzar II prism inscription (7834) mentions “the king of Tyre” along with other royal captives.
 - Never again did Tyre have significant independent influence in the world.
- d. We need to understand how prophecy works: It often involves staged fulfillment.
- e. We need to understand the big issue in this text: YHWH giving him appropriate compensation for his work on God's behalf. 1 Tim 5:8.

C. Ezekiel's Place in YHWH's Agenda (v. 21)**D. Lessons from Ezekiel 29:17–21**

1. God uses human agents as his servants on the stage of world history, but his **use of them is** neither calloused nor arbitrary.
2. God keeps his word.
3. Prophetic proclamation is about persuasion and revealing YHWH to one's hearers.
4. YHWH is deeply concerned about those he engages as his agents and mouthpieces.