

“PARADISE LOST AND REGAINED”

I. Introduction

- A. On the campus of Harvard University stands a building called Emerson Hall, named after the Transcendentalist writer and Unitarian minister Ralph Waldo Emerson.
1. Chiseled into the building’s front are these words from Psalm 8: “WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM?”
 2. It is a bit ironic that these words would be on such prominent display on the campus of one of the most prestigious colleges in the world, and on a building that is named after someone who advocated having “faith in man” rather than faith in Christ.
 3. I say that it is ironic because in the original context of Psalm 8, this phrase was meant to evoke a sense of humility in us as we consider the honor that we have been given as the chief of all God’s creatures.
 4. This is made clear in the next verse of the psalm, where it says, “you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.” (Psa 8:5–8 ESV)
 5. Though the human race is now a fallen race, man’s unique dignity as the one creature made in the image of God is still quite evident.
 6. Yet in our fallen estate we take pride in our accomplishments rather than let them humble us.
 7. This is the sort of thing that the Lord is dealing with in Ezekiel 28.

- B. This passage is the last part of a unit that began back in chapter 26.
 - 1. This three chapter section contains a series of oracles against the city-state of Tyre.
 - 2. As we noted in the previous sermon in this study, Tyre was a prominent port city, located on the Mediterranean coast about one hundred miles north of Jerusalem.
 - 3. It was a city that enjoyed both great wealth and great security, making it a notable example of how fallen man takes pride in his accomplishments and finds his sense of security in them.
 - 4. As we study Ezekiel 28 this evening, we will see how the Lord continues to expose the folly and futility of this mindset.

II. A Pronouncement against the Folly of Self-Deification (1-10)

- A. The chapter begins by identifying the prince of Tyre as the one to whom this oracle is being directed.
 - 1. The same figure is being referred to in verse 12, where he is called the king of Tyre.
 - 2. In the ancient world, the fate of a king and of his kingdom were so intertwined that they were often indistinguishable.
 - 3. The people of Tyre would have regarded an oracle against their king as an oracle against them, and so it was.
 - 4. In Ezekiel's time, Tyre's king was a man named Ethbaal II, which means 'Baal is with him.'
 - 5. Baal was the name of a variety of gods worshipped by Israel's neighbors.
 - 6. While false gods may have been with Tyre's king, this oracle makes it clear that the Lord, the only true and living God, was not with

him.

- B. The Lord rebukes the king of Tyre for his great pride.
 - 1. Though he is a mere man, he makes the audacious claim that he is a god.
 - 2. He also claims to be wiser than Daniel, who had established a reputation for wisdom and piety while serving in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 3. He thinks that “no secret is hidden from” him, just as Daniel was able to interpret dreams without even being told the content of those dreams.
 - 4. He looks at the great wealth that he had accumulated and concludes that he attained it through his great wisdom.
 - 5. Here is a picture of the danger that comes with success.
 - 6. Whenever we find ourselves successful, we are tempted to take pride in our accomplishments and give ourselves the honor that belongs to God alone.

- C. The Lord tells the king of Tyre about the judgment that will come upon him because of his pride.
 - 1. Powerful, ruthless nations will set themselves against Tyre and bring all her glory to nothing.
 - 2. When that happens, when this king looks upon the sword that is about to slay him, then his eyes will finally be opened to see the folly of the lies that he told himself.
 - 3. When the judgment comes, he will no longer say, “I am a god.”
 - 4. The same will be true for anyone who exalts himself in this life.

5. A day is coming when all who are proud will be brought low.

III. A Reflection of a Fallen Predecessor (11-19)

- A. This brings us to the next section of the chapter, which begins in verse 11.
 1. Here we find another lament, like the one contained in chapter 27.
 2. In Scripture, the lament is a literary genre in which a sharp contrast is drawn between a state of former glory and a state of present devastation.
 3. It calls our attention to the height from which some person or some entity has fallen.
 4. The former glory of Tyre's king is described in verses 11 through 14.
 5. He is likened to a glorious pre-fallen being in Eden.
 6. From the time of Origin in the third century, some Christians have taken this to be a description of Satan's lofty position before his fall.
 7. The main support for this interpretation is the use of the phrase "guardian cherub" in verses 14 and 16.
 8. While it is true that the term "cherub" refers to an angelic being, it is possible that the word is being used figuratively rather than literally here.
 9. Furthermore, there is no indication anywhere else in Scripture that Satan was given the role of guarding Eden prior to his rebellion.
 10. What we are told in Genesis 2:15 is that the Lord placed man in Eden to work and keep it.
 11. And in the other Old Testament instances where these two Hebrew terms are used together, they describe the priests' responsibility as servants and guardians in the sanctuary.

12. This, along with the many parallels between the descriptions of Eden and those of the tabernacle and temple, leads many scholars to contend that Eden should be understood as a sanctuary in which Adam served as priest.
 13. When Adam failed in his duties, he was expelled from Eden and the task of guarding it was given to the cherubim, which could explain why Adam would be referred to here as a “guardian cherub.”
- B. The question of whether this is a description of Adam or Satan in their state of innocence cannot be determined with certainty, and it does not really have any bearing on the main point that is being conveyed here.
1. The basic idea is that the king of Tyre’s former glory was like the glory of God’s greatest creatures in their state of innocence.
 2. As with all human rulers, God placed the king of Tyre on his throne.
 3. His kingship was a matter of stewardship.
 4. But instead of exercising his authority for the common good, the king of Tyre fell victim to pride, and this led to his downfall.
 5. This chapter is essentially a study in pride.
 6. Pride is the idolatry of the self.
 7. It displaces God by putting self in his place.
 8. We need to be watchful against the trappings of pride, especially as we live in a culture that so blatantly exalts self.
 9. This was made shockingly clear to me a year or so ago when the elementary school across the street from our house put up a sign announcing that its new slogan consists of these three words: “Pride, Safety, Self.”

10. From the earliest age, children in our society are being taught that self is at the center of everything.
11. This passage warns us of the fate that lies in store for those who make self their god.
12. What happened to Tyre and her sister city of Sidon will happen to all who follow in their steps.
13. They will come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

IV. A Promise of Renewal and Security (20-26)

- A. The chapter ends with a promise of renewal and security for God's people.
 1. Notice how verses 24 and 26 draw a connection between the judgment that was coming upon Israel's neighbors and the deliverance that God was going to bring about for his people.
 2. This helps us understand why chapters 25 through 32 are included in this book of prophecy.
 3. As we noted in an earlier sermon, this section contains oracles of judgment upon the nations that surrounded Israel, even though these oracles were never delivered to those nations.
 4. God gave these messages to assure his people that he would redeem them.
 5. The judgment that befell Israel's neighbors was the means by which the Lord delivered Israel from the influence of those pagan nations.
 6. This is an important biblical theme.
 7. While we certainly need to be delivered from our own sin, we also need to be delivered from this world that keeps enticing and intimidating us to be conformed to its mould.

8. And this will not happen in all its fullness until the return of Christ at the end of this age.
- B. The Lord says that he will gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered.
1. This is a promise that has multiple layers of fulfillment.
 2. At the level closest to Ezekiel and his contemporaries, it began to be fulfilled when some of the exiles returned to Jerusalem and the temple was rebuilt.
 3. At another level, it is being fulfilled during the period in between Christ's two comings, as our Lord is gathering in his elect from all nations and building them into his dwelling place by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 4. And at the ultimate level, it will take place on that great day when all the tribes of the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, when Christ will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather his elect from the four winds.
 5. Only then, will we enter the rest that Christ has secured for us.
 6. Only then will we dwell in perfect security and be free from all threats and temptations.
 7. But as we await the arrival of that glorious day, we can take comfort in knowing that by God's power we are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.