

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: June 29, 2014

Lesson Title: "When Pride Turns to Greed"

Lesson Passage: Ezekiel 28:1-5,11-13a,14-19

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Ezekiel did not limit his prophetic ministry to his own country. His vision was international. For instance, in chapters 25-32 of Ezekiel we find prophecies against Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia. Then, in chapters 26-28, Ezekiel inveighs against Tyre, a leading city in the nation of Phoenicia on the Mediterranean coast. Tyre was thoroughly pagan, devoted to the worship of Baal-Melkart; but her most offensive sin was her insatiable lust for riches and fame as a great maritime trade center. This was the focal point of the prophet's attack.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the reason for the pride that dominated the attitude of Tyre. (2) Explain how excessive pride can turn one away from God.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with these thoughts: "Pride" is usually thought of as a minor sin, not as serious as idolatry, murder, adultery or stealing. However, Proverbs 16:18 warns, "Pride goes before destruction" (NIV). We might even say pride was the original sin, because, when the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, his main argument was, "God knows that when you eat of it...you will be like God." Excessive pride amounts to rebellion against God because it attributes to oneself the honor and glory due to God alone. In Ezekiel's day, the ancient world was infested with idolatry, violence and social sins; but, without doubt, Tyre's most dominant sin was pride, her lust for international acclaim through her commercial exploits.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Share this information:* The ancient Phoenician city of Tyre, located between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea, became widely known for her thriving maritime trade. One of her most famous imports was her world famous purple dye. Her successful commercial enterprises created an arrogant pride rooted in her production of material wealth. She brazenly looked upon herself as the greatest of maritime trade nations. Tyre wasn't satisfied with mere commercial success. She wanted complete monopoly, total control over trade, like the business cartels in our day who are not satisfied with being financial giants; they wish to be the only financial giant.

2. *Call attention to the phrase, "say to the prince of Tyre," in Ezekiel 28:2, and explain:* Here Ezekiel portrays the king of Tyre as the ultimate example of the city's pride, because he personifies the

city's attitude. So, what Ezekiel says to the city's ruler applies also to the population of the city itself.

3. *Observe that the reason for Tyre's pride is summarized in verses 4-6:* Their shrewdness in business affairs, on an international scale, had brought incredible prosperity and fame to them. And their seemingly unlimited prosperity had cultivated such a high opinion of themselves that their pride knew no bounds. In fact, since there seemed to be no limit to their ability to amass wealth, they rationalized that they were as wise as a god (*refer to vv. 2 and 6*).

4. *Explain the references to "the seat of the gods" and "Daniel" in vv. 2 and 3:* (1) The "seat of the gods in the midst of the seas" (v. 2) probably refers to the rock at the edge of the sea on which Tyre was built. But some interpreters suggest that this refers to an unused throne in the temple of the deity Melkart at Tyre, which the king presumed to claim. In either case, the reference symbolizes the claim to deity of the city and its ruler. (2) "Daniel," mentioned in v. 3, was not the prophet Daniel (a contemporary of Ezekiel), but, more than likely, Dan-el, a legendary figure of Canaanite wisdom.

5. *Suggest that we need to keep two things in mind as we consider the lamentation over the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19:* (1) Tyre's ruler is symbolic of the city itself (as noted earlier in our consideration of verses 1-2). For example, "you have come to a dreadful end" (v. 19) applies not only to the king, but to the city itself. (2) The comparison to the garden of Eden is symbolic. Tyre, with all her wealth, was, like Eden, an earthly paradise. Also, the sin of Tyre, her inordinate pride, was like the sin of Adam and Eve, who wanted to be like God.

6. *Note that verses 11-15a imply that Tyre and its ruler formerly enjoyed a favorable relationship with God.* The fact that he is depicted as having been "in Eden, the garden of God" (v. 13) and "on the mountain of God" (v. 14) implies that the Tyrian king (v. 12) was once in fellowship with God. But, eventually, this divine-human fellowship was broken by his rebellion against the Lord ("You were blameless in your ways...till iniquity was found in you," v. 15).

7. *Summarize Ezek. 28:16-19:* (1) Pride and misdirected wisdom were the cause of Tyre's downfall (v. 17). (2) Pride (v. 17a) opened the door to other sins, and sin led them to desecrate their sanctuaries (probably with idol worship) (v. 18). (3) This led to a fiery judgment (vv. 18b-19).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A closing thought: Is pride good or bad? Actually, it can be either. Last February we saw a lot of justifiable national pride among the athletes at the winter Olympics in Sochi. And it's delightful to observe the pride of parents as their children perform at a school program. But pride becomes sinful when it convinces us that we are superior to others. (*Read Philippians 2:3.*)