

## #702 The Defeat of the Spanish Armada – The Dunkirk Raiders

**The Eighty Years' War.** The revolt against the Spanish Empire in the Spanish Netherlands that was led by Protestant William I (the Silent), Prince of Orange, began in 1568. The revolt would officially last for eighty years (hence it was named the Eighty Years' War), with Spain recognizing Dutch independence in 1648.



Amsterdam citizens celebrating the Peace of Münster of 1648, painting by Bartholomeus van der Helst

**Dunkirk.** The strategically placed town of Dunkirk was in the hands of the Dutch rebels for several years early on, from 1577 to 1583. However, Alexander Farnese, the Duke of Parma, re-established Spanish sovereignty. After Spain again controlled Dunkirk, Dutch warships embarked on a near constant blockade of the port. The “Dunkirk Raiders” helped the Spanish against the Dutch blockades.

**The Dunkirk Raiders.** The Dunkirk Raiders were privateers in the service of the Spanish Empire operating from the port of Dunkirk. Cooperating closely with the Spanish navy, they mainly operated in and around the English Channel to intercept Dutch ships. A primary purpose was to destroy Dutch naval trade and fishing. To evade the Dutch navy, the Dunkirkers built a special type of small and very maneuverable warship, the frigate, which would later be adopted by others.

In 1587, a year before the Battle of the Spanish Armada, the Dutch declared Dunkirk privateers (the Dunkirk Raiders) to be pirates. Captains of Dutch navy vessels had to swear an oath that they would throw all prisoners captured from Dunkirk Raider warships into the sea. This harsh standing order was very unpopular with Dutch crews, however, who often evaded it by putting Dunkirk seamen on shallow shoals off the coast where they could wade to the continent.

Even after the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, the Dunkirk Raiders plagued the Dutch throughout the Eighty Years' War.

**Key Understanding: *The Dunkirk Raiders*.** The Dunkirk Raiders show the significance of Dunkirk in the birth of the Protestant Dutch Republic, both leading up to and after the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada at the nearby Battle of Gravelines. Dunkirk is important because of its historical and prophetic relevance in the building of the sword-bearing Protestant Church-ill upon the *sand*.

### Matthew 7:26 – Church on the Sand

*Matthew 7:26 (KJV) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto A FOOLISH MAN, WHICH BUILT HIS HOUSE UPON THE SAND:*



The painting above is *The Explosion of the Spanish Flagship during the Battle of Gibraltar, 25 April 1607* by Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom (1566–1640). Oil on canvas.

The naval Battle of Gibraltar took place on April 25, 1607, during the Eighty Years War between the Dutch and Spain. A Dutch fleet surprised and engaged a Spanish fleet anchored at the Bay of Gibraltar. During the four hours of action, the entire Spanish fleet was destroyed. The Dutch fleet of 26 smaller warships and four cargo ships was led by Jacob van Heemskerck. The Dutch flagship was *Æolus*. Other Dutch ships were *De Tijger* (Tiger), *De Zeehond* (Seal), *De Griffioen* (Griffon), *De Roode Leeuw* (Red Lion), *De Gouden Leeuw* (Gold Lion), *De Zwarte Beer* (Black Bear), *De Witte Beer* (White Bear), and *De Ochtendster* (Morningstar). The Spanish fleet of 21 ships, including 10 galleons of the largest size, was led by Don Juan Álvarez de Ávila. The Spanish flagship *San Augustin* (St. Augustine) was commanded by Don Juan's son.

[<< Previous](#)

[Main Page and List of Unsealing Summaries](#)

[Next >>](#)