

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XXXVII: God's Judgment On Tyre's Proud, Ruthless Commercialism And Its Correction (Isaiah 23:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Isaiah 23:1-18 predicted God's judgment on Tyre due to the city's proud, ruthless commercialism, Isa. 23:8-9.
- B. However, that message ends with an instructive twist, offering a lesson of insight on the upright view and handling of material wealth (as follows):

II. God's Judgment On Tyre's Proud, Ruthless Commercialism And Its Correction, Isaiah 23:1-18.

- A. Isaiah 23:1-14 predicts God's judgment on the city of Tyre for its proud, ruthless commercialism (as follows):
 - 1. God's prophet called for the ships of Tarshish, probably located in Spain, to wail as news from Cyprus that the port of Tyre on the coast of Canaan to which they were headed had been laid waste by Assyria, cutting off their business venture there, Isaiah 23:1; The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, 1971, p. 625. The fall of Tyre thus will have devastating effects on the whole sea trade of the Mediterranean.
 - 2. Isaiah also called for others places that had been commercially enriched in trading with Tyre to grieve, places like Sidon on the coast near Tyre and the Shihor region of Egypt that contributed grain to the trade, places that had given Tyre quick wealth not by her own toils as usually occurred in other lands where people tilled their ground, but by the greedy markups of sea trade goods, Isaiah 23:2-5 NIV; *Ibid.* [The testimony of the sea personified as a woman who has neither been in labor nor given birth nor reared sons or daughters (Isa. 23:4-5) speaks of the shame of Tyre and Sidon in gaining riches quickly and easily by the unjust, greedy, ruthless huge mark-up in price of items traded by sea! B. K. C., O. T., p. 1071]
 - 3. The wailing to occur would be caused by Israel's Lord Almighty, for He had planned that it occur to judge those who had been made proud through the riches of such false, ruthless commercialism, Isaiah 23:6-9.
 - 4. Thus, Israel's God would punish Tarshish (Isaiah 23:10) and other nations involved in this vile trade to make them tremble with the loss of proud revelry in Tyre and Sidon, the hub of this sin, Isaiah 23:11-12a.
 - 5. Indeed, the nations would find no rest from Tyre's fall, for Cyprus would hurt like Tyre and Sidon that would be commercial wastelands following first Assyrian and then Babylonian invasions, Isa. 23:12b-13.
 - 6. The ships of Tarshish are thus called upon to wail because their fortress of commercial welfare in the trade with Tyre will have been destroyed by divine judgment, Isaiah 23:14! [The grieving of the merchants in Revelation 18:15-20 over the fall of Babylon the Great, the final world religio-commercial ecumenism, is based on the grieving in this chapter over the fall of a similar evil commercialistic form of idolatry!]
- B. Then, for the seventy years from the conquest of Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon's fall, Tyre would be a weak and poor nation, Isaiah 23:15a, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Isaiah 23:15-17. She would not then express proud revelry in commercial wealth gained by a ruthlessly lucrative sea trade.
- C. After Babylon's fall, and having lost her independence, Tyre would "have to pander to the lusts and desires of her conquerors, like a woman of the streets," pictured in Isaiah 23:15b-16 as a harlot taking a harp and singing as she goes through the streets to attract her lovers, merchants in this case for her trade in merchandise, the harlotry of commercial idolatry, *Ibid.*, The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 626. [Again, the final Babylon the Great harlot of Revelation 17 picks up this theme of spiritual harlotry in the false lust for wealth over God!]
- D. When Tyre returned to her former trade, God would deal with her once again, but this time make her profits and earnings be set apart for the Lord's temple versus her own greedy interests, Isaiah 23:17-18. The Hebrew verb rendered "dwell" (*yashab*) in v. 18b, literally "those who sit" (before the Lord) refers to the priests and Levites who *figuratively* sat as disciples before the Lord their Master and who also *literally* sat serving Him in the temple chambers as "true and devoted servants of the Lord," E. J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, 1974, v. II, p. 141. Tyre's wealth would thus provide for their abundant food and fine clothes, what was at least partly fulfilled in Ezra 3:7 when king Cyrus made Sidon, Tyre and others materially support God's Jerusalem temple!

Lesson: (1) *For her pride over her wealth via her ruthless sea trade, God would judge Tyre and her trade partners.*
(2) *Later, when Tyre again rose to a trade role, God would cause her income to serve His ministries in Jerusalem.*

Application: (1) *If we rely on material gain for security, or if we are proud because of material gain, may we repent lest God discipline us!* (2) *If God materially blesses us, we must not hoard it as if it is a god, but use it for His interests.* (3) *Dishonest or ruthlessly quick, easy gain is stealing in God's eyes, so we must avoid such sins.*