

Isaiah 23:1–18 — The Burden Against Tyre

In this chapter Isaiah delivers God’s message concerning Tyre, the great seaport of the Phoenicians. Tyre was the commercial capital of the ancient world. Its ships traveled the Mediterranean, reaching as far as Spain and possibly beyond to the west coast of Africa. The Phoenicians were brilliant traders, and their city grew wealthy and proud through international commerce.

But God pronounces judgment on Tyre:

“The burden against Tyre. Wail, you ships of Tarshish! For it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no harbor; from the land of Cyprus it is revealed to them.” (Isaiah 23:1, NKJV)

Tyre seemed invincible, yet God declared it would be destroyed. History confirms this: Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Tyre for thirteen years, and later Alexander the Great built a causeway to reach the island city and completely demolished it—just as the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel had foretold (Ezekiel 26:12–14). What seemed impossible to human reasoning was carried out in exact detail, proving the certainty of God’s Word.

God’s Judgment on Prideful Commerce

Isaiah describes Tyre as a city full of merchants, princes, and honorable traders (Isaiah 23:8). It was *“the marketplace of the nations”* (Isaiah 23:3). Yet behind the wealth was arrogance, self-sufficiency, and the exploitation of others for profit.

God declares:

“The LORD of hosts has purposed it, to bring to dishonor the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.” (Isaiah 23:9, NKJV)

The downfall of Tyre reminds us that God is not impressed by human wealth, trade networks, or business empires. Nations and companies that exalt themselves or exploit others may prosper for a time, but God can bring them down in a moment.

Tyre’s Temporary Silence and Final Transformation

Isaiah prophesies that Tyre would be forgotten for seventy years, *“according to the days of one king”* (Isaiah 23:15). After that, she would rise again like a harlot seeking business with the nations, once more trading and gaining wealth. Yet in the end, God promises that Tyre’s wealth will be used for His glory:

“Her gain and her pay will be set apart for the LORD; it will not be treasured nor laid up, for her gain will be for those who dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for fine clothing.” (Isaiah 23:18, NKJV)

This points forward to the Kingdom Age, when all the nations will bring their resources to honor the Lord (see Psalm 45:12; Revelation 21:24–26). What once served human pride will ultimately serve God’s purposes.

Practical Application

1. **Worldly wealth is temporary.**

Tyre seemed secure in its riches and naval power, yet it was humbled. No matter how secure we feel in our possessions, they can vanish in a moment. Jesus warned, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6:19–20).

2. **God opposes pride.**

Tyre was *“the crowning city”* (Isaiah 23:8), proud of her achievements, yet God brought her down. Scripture reminds us, *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6).

3. **Commerce can easily become idolatry.**

Business itself is not sinful, but when profit becomes an idol and people are exploited, God’s judgment follows. We must examine our own hearts: are we using our resources for God’s glory or for selfish gain?

4. **God’s plans are certain.**

The detailed fulfillment of prophecy regarding Tyre proves the reliability of God’s Word. If He fulfilled these promises with precision, we can trust Him with the promises He has made for our lives and eternity.

Invitation

Isaiah’s prophecy of Tyre reminds us that the things of this world—wealth, status, power—do not last. Pride, greed, and self-reliance lead only to judgment. But God, in His mercy, offers us something eternal: forgiveness, peace, and life through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Have you been trusting in your own resources, your own plans, or the fleeting security of this world? Just as Tyre was brought low, so too will all who trust in riches instead of God. But you don’t have to face judgment. Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again to give you eternal life.

Today is the day to repent—to turn from pride and self-sufficiency—and to give your life fully to Jesus Christ. Trust Him not only for salvation but for each day of your life. He alone is the unshakable foundation, the One who provides true security and everlasting hope.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5–6, NKJV)

Will you place your trust in Him today?