

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THEME:

The Burden of Tyre.

REMARKS:

This is the eleventh and last burden against the nations. Each one of these great nations represents or symbolizes some principle, philosophy, or system which God must judge:

- (1) Babylon represents false religions—*idolatry*
- (2) Palestine represents true religion—*became apostate*
- (3) Moab represents a formal religion—*a form of godliness but denying the power thereof*
- (4) Damascus represents *compromise*
- (5) Ethiopia represents *missions*
- (6) Egypt represents the *world*
- (7) Persia (Babylon) represents *luxury*
- (8) Edom represents the *flesh*
- (9) Arabia represents *war*
- (10) Valley of Vision (Jerusalem) represents *politics*
- (11) Tyre represents *commercialism* (big business)

Tyre and Sidon were the two great cities of the Phoenicians; Sidon, the mother city, was surpassed by her proud and rich daughter. The ships of the Phoenicians entered all ports of the Mediterranean Sea; they even penetrated the uncharted ocean beyond the pillars of Hercules. Their vessels brought tin from Great Britain. The meaning of Britannia is “*the land of tin.*” The Phoenicians were aggressive and progressive peoples. Carthage in North Africa was settled by them. Cyprus owed its prosperity to trading with Tyre. This was true of other centers. It is of interest that the Phoenicians invented the alphabet.

Ezekiel 26 contains a remarkable prophecy concerning Tyre which has had an exact fulfillment. Tyre was destroyed by Babylon and was taken into captivity for the same 70 years as was Judea. The city was rebuilt on an island after the return. This was a partial recovery. Later, Alexander the Great scraped the ancient site of Tyre to make a causeway to the new city. The old city is never to be rebuilt.

And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon: thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God (Ezekiel 26:14).

He destroyed the island city. From that day to the present, Tyre has remained sunken in insignificance. According to Ezekiel it will continue through this age as a place where nets are to be spread.

This prophecy in Isaiah indicates in the last verse that Tyre will be rebuilt in the Millennium.

And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing (Isaiah 23:18).

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift . . . (Psalm 45:12).

OUTLINE:

(The Hebrew Bible divides this chapter into 3 parts.)

1. **RESPONSIBILITY (Divine) for the Destruction of Tyre** (The Lord of hosts). Verses 1-9
2. **RESPONSIBILITY (Human) for the Destruction of Tyre** (Chaldeans). Verses 10-14
3. **RECOVERY OF TYRE—Partial at First and Finally Complete.** Verses 15-18

COMMENT:

Verse 1—The burden of Tyre, howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

“**Tarshish**” was a distant land (Isaiah 66:19). Jonah fled there. It was evidently in the south of Spain where a colony from Tyre was established and given the name of “Tartessus.” It was near Gibraltar and is obviously the place mentioned in this verse. Imports of silver, iron, tin and lead were brought to Tyre from Tartessus. “**Chittim**” was the island of Cyprus.

This burden opens with the ships of Tyre returning from far away Tarshish and they hear of the destruction of Tyre. All houses are leveled and the harbor is blocked. This news spreads to the island of Cyprus where Tyre carried on an extensive business.

Verse 2—Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

Tyre was partially built on an island. Tyre and Sidon go together like “pork and beans.” They were the two leading cities of the Phoenicians. The prominent sea merchants of Sidon had made Tyre the great city it was.

Verse 3—And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

“**Sihor**” means “*black*” and refers to the upper Nile, the silt of which flooded Egypt and made it fertile. The wealth of Egypt had flowed through the port of Tyre.

Verse 4—**Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins.**

There is a suggestion here that Tyre is the daughter of Sidon, historically this is accurate.

Verse 5—**As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.**

The destruction of Tyre ruins the commerce of Egypt.

Verse 6—**Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.**

The fall of Tyre causes universal mourning. This is similar to the fall of Babylon at the end of the Great Tribulation.

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more (Revelation 18:11).

Some escape to Tarshish.

Verse 7—**Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.**

Tyrians are urged to flee as far as possible. This is the city of antiquity. It was formerly the “**joyous city**.”

Verse 8—**Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?**

“**The crowning city**” means the “**giver of crowns**.” Did Tyre originate the present day popular practice of electing queens—e.g. potato, orange, cotton and rose queens? Colonies from the city of Tyre had established city kingdoms. These were the crowns.

The question asked in this verse is answered in verse 9.

Verse 9—**The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.**

It was the Lord of hosts who had determined the destruction of Tyre, he offers no apologies for making the arrangement.

Verse 10—**Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.**

“**River**” here is the Nile. As the Nile overflowed her banks, this the colony of Tarshish is now free to do as she pleases since Tyre is fallen.

“**There is no more strength**” means that “*no girdle binds thee.*”

Verse 11—**He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.**

Tyre is given a threefold description:

- In verse 7 it is called a “**joyous city.**”
- In verse 8 it is called a “**crowning city.**”
- Here it is called a “**merchant city.**”

Verse 12—**And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.**

What was suggested in verse 4 is plainly declared here. Tyre is the daughter of Sidon. Sidon was the older city and rich merchants from there had founded Tyre and given her prestige. The joy of prosperity was to disappear. Some thought by fleeing to Cyprus they might make a fresh beginning. In this they were to be disappointed.

Verse 13—**Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.**

Attention is drawn to the future conqueror of both Tyre and Judah. The Babylonians were to be the human instrument.

Verse 14—**Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.**

This verse is a repetition of verse 1 and completes this section.

Verse 15—**And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.**

Tyre was to go into captivity for the same 70 years that Judah did and by the same enemy.

Verse 16—**Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.**

Verse 17—**And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.**

At the end of 70 years Tyre was to return and begin again her world commerce. The prophet compares Tyre to an harlot plying her unholy trade.

Verse 18—**And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.**

There is an interval between verses 17 and 18. At the end of verse 17 we see Tyre assuming her ancient position. This continued until she was destroyed by Alexander the Great.

Other centers since then have been the centers of big business, however verse 18 makes it clear that Tyre will enter the Millennium. Then she will be purified and made holy.

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift: even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour (Psalm 45:12.)

She is no longer an harlot. Scripture makes it clear that the hire of an harlot was not acceptable to God.

Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God (Deuteronomy 23:18.)

Yet in the future day the very words written on the mitre of the High Priest are spoken of Tyre—**“Holiness unto the Lord.”**

This lapse of time is not peculiar to this passage, but is one of the elements of prophecy (See Chapter 61:1-3, also Daniel 9:26-27 etc.).

~ end of chapter 23 ~

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