

Notes on Isaiah 23

The Fall and Rise of Tyre

By David H. Linden

23:1 – Tyre was the chief port and trading nation in the Mediterranean Sea. The ships of Tarshish would come from far in the west. They hear the news: Tyre has been destroyed. There will be no harbor for their ships.

23:2,3 – Tyre in ancient times was a harbor and an island off shore. Sidon was a major city of Phoenicia. Now instead of the noise on their busy docks, there is silence. This is bad news in Egypt as well. It was Tyre's merchants who carried grain from Egypt.

23:4,5 – The sea speaks; it has no children any more to sail on it from Tyre and Sidon. Egypt will hear their shippers are gone.

23:6-9 – To “cross over: is to flee as refugees where once they traveled for trade. The lively world-class city that once set up colonies and princes, has been brought low by the Lord. He humbles all the famous of the earth.

23:10-12 – With Tyre gone Tarshish will be free to do as it pleases. God has stretched out His hand to make kingdoms tremble. This oracle is about Phoenicia whose fortress cities will be destroyed by Assyria. They lose pleasure, peace and their once secure homes. Sidon will be crushed.

23:12b-13 – Refugees will not be very welcome in Cypress because they know how the Assyrians handled Babylon, long before Babylon became the great power. If the Assyrians could maul Babylon that way, then who would dare help their enemies by accepting refugees from Tyre? Why anger Assyria?

23:14 – Tarshish had freedom from Tyre (v.10) but then suffered from Tyre's downfall because they were dependent on it for trade.

23:15 – Tyre's judgment is not final. In 70 years it will be back, the time between Sennacherib's campaign and the demise of Assyria. But after the 70 years are over, Tyre will be back in business as harlot, v.16, making money again.

A very odd change of theme happens. (Isaiah does this many times.) It appears that Tyre is just as wicked as before, but Tyre's future trade can have other motives than merely financial gain.

When the Temple was rebuilt Tyre was part of supplying material for it, (Ezra 3:7) just as it did it the days of David for Solomon's Temple. That business was for the Lord. Tyre is back alive and active again.

The profit of prostitution cannot be given to the Lord, (Deuteronomy 23:18). Since her profits will be set apart for the Lord according to v. 18, this prophecy must have in mind a wonderful change. Tyre's selfish motivation as a hoarder and profiteer has changed. They now give!! This is a benevolent Tyre, clothing and feeding those who live before the Lord. This she does voluntarily. Clearly Tyre has been saved from its sin and its old ways and motives. There is a Lord in Zion. Now Tyre knows that and serves the Lord.

This is one more indication that the salvation of the Lord will extend to the nations. This theme came up in chapter 2 and keeps being repeated.

The glory and honor of nations like Tyre will be brought into the New Jerusalem. Nothing impure will ever enter, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:26,27. In Isaiah this kind of glory is prophesied.

Appendix: The Plans of the Lord

Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness (Proverbs 14:22).

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21).

Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed (Proverbs 16:3).

In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps (Proverbs 16:9)

Planned

14:24 – The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.

19:12 – Where are your wise men now? Let them show you and make known what the LORD Almighty has planned against Egypt.

22:11 – But you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One

who planned it long ago.

23:8,9 – Who planned this against Tyre ...? The LORD Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.

25:1 – I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

37:26 – What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

46:11 – What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

Plan

5:18,19 – Woe to those who ... say, "Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it."

8:10 – Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

14:26,27 – This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

Plans

19:3 – The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing;

25:19 – Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD,

30:1 – "Woe ... to those who carry out plans that are not mine..."

32:8 – But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands.

An observation

Within Isaiah every time the word *planned* is mentioned in the past; it is always the Lord Who planned. Man's plans are tenuous and change so much that what man has planned may not be his current plan, and its fulfillment is always uncertain. The plan of the Lord is determined by the Lord (14:26,27) and no one

can frustrate it.

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