

Tyre and Sidon

The cities of Tyre and Sidon are the last states to be mentioned in this ten-vision two cycles of prophecies we have had in Isaiah 13–23.

Pagan money-making – as doomed as pagan religion

Pagan money-making is as doomed as pagan religion. First we have a lament over the city of Tyre. Everything in this poetic lament reminds us that as Babylon was famous for warfare and luxury, Tyre was famous for business and money-making. Their ships were famous.

• Tyre – famous for business

¹*The burden concerning Tyre:
Wail, you ships of Tarshish!
For it is destroyed
and left without house or harbour.
Off the coast of Kittim,
word has come to them.*

Their rich merchants were well known.

• Rich merchants

²*Be silent, you people of the island
and you merchants of Sidon,
whom the seafarers have enriched.*

They imported and sold the grain produced by the rivers Nile and Shihor (obviously a river, presumably one of the branches of the Nile).

• Imported and sold grain from the Nile and Shihor

³*On the great waters
came the grain of the Shihor;
the harvest of the Nile was the revenue of
Tyre, and she became the market-place of
the nations.*

• Sidon – Tyre's ally

Sidon, a city with fortress-like strength, was Tyre's ally.

⁴*Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken.
The fortress of the sea has spoken:
'I am as though I had never been in labour nor given
birth;
I have neither reared sons nor brought up
daughters.'*

• Sidon distressed by the loss of Tyre's prosperity

Sidon is distressed because the noise of the sea (as Isaiah imagines it) is mourning the loss of Tyre's prosperity. Tyre (the 'fortress of the sea') is totally bereaved.

⁵*When news comes to Egypt,
they will be in anguish just as when the report came
to Tyre.*

• Egypt also distressed

Even Egypt will be distressed that the great trading city-state has collapsed, for her trade depended on Tyre's sailors and merchants.

⁶*Cross over to Tarshish;
wail, you people of the island.*

The joys of the city have come to an end. Many have now fled for other places.

*⁷Is this your joyous city,
the old, old city,
whose feet have taken her
to settle in far-off lands?*

**Money-making
paganism is
judged by
God**

Money-making paganism is judged by God. Verse 8 asks who is responsible for Tyre's fall. The answer is: Yahweh!

*⁸Who planned this against Tyre,
the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants are princes,
whose traders are the honoured ones of the earth?*

*⁹Yahweh Almighty planned it,
to bring low the pride of all glory
and to humble all who are honoured in the
earth.*

• *Tarshish can
now move
around with
ease*

Tarshish (apparently a colony of Tyre) can now move around with ease because her colonial masters have been defeated.

*¹⁰Go across your land like the Nile,
O Daughter of Tarshish,
for there is no longer any restraint.*

*¹¹Yahweh has stretched out his hand over the sea
and made its kingdoms tremble.
He has given an order concerning Phoenicia
that her fortresses be destroyed.*

*¹²He said, 'No more of your revelling,
O Virgin Daughter of Sidon, now oppressed!'*

• *Loss of
security, joy,
honour and
peace*

Under judgement men and women lose security^{□1}, joy^{□2}, honour^{□3}, peace^{□4} and – as we are now told – any hope of restfulness.

□1 23:6
□2 23:7,12
□3 23:9
□4 23:11

*'Up, cross over to Kittim;
even there you will find no rest.'*

• *Assyrians will
end Tyre's
commercial
prosperity*

The end of Tyre's days of commercial prosperity are coming because of the Assyrians. The Assyrians attacked Babylon in 710 BC and would bring Tyre's commerce to an end.

*¹³Look at the land of the Babylonians,
this people that is now of no account!
The Assyrians have turned it into
a place for desert creatures;
they raised up their siege towers,
they stripped its fortresses bare
and made it a ruin.*

• *Shipping
business to be
ruined*

The shipping business that went from Tyre to Tarshish and back was to be ruined.

¹⁴Wail, you ships of Tarshish; your fortress is destroyed!

**Doom is
followed by
hope**

Doom is followed by hope. Having spoken of the terrible judgement about to come on Tyre, it is typical of Isaiah (as of other prophets) to suddenly bring in a note of hope. The bad news of

judgement is followed by the good news of God's graciousness. After a judgement of seventy years (701–630 BC approximately) Tyre will become a 'prostitute' again, still interested only in money despite all her attractiveness and friendliness!

• After judgement Tyre will become a prostitute again

¹⁵At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of the life of one king. But at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute:
¹⁶'Take up a harp, walk through the city, O prostitute forgotten; play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered.'
¹⁷At the end of seventy years, Yahweh will visit Tyre. She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.

• Further in the future Tyre's gifts dedicated to Yahweh

Yet further ahead in the future would be a day when pagans would turn to God through the coming of salvation. At such a time Tyre would leave her immoral ways and her trading gifts would be dedicated to Yahweh.

• Tyre would help to rebuild the temple and be invited to turn to the Servant of God

¹⁸Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for Yahweh; they will not be stored up or hoarded. Her profits will go to those who live before Yahweh, for abundant food and fine clothes.

Tyre would help to rebuild the temple in the days of Ezra¹ but, more importantly, would be invited to turn to the Servant of God who comes for the salvation of the world.

Tyre will be transformed and all profit will go to God

This cycle of ten prophecies¹ began with Babylon, centre of militarism and luxury. It ends with Tyre, beautiful-but-ugly, friendly-but-money-making woman of the world. But the bottom line focuses on 'that time' and a date beyond 'the end' when Tyre's life would be altogether changed, and every profit she gained would go to God and his people. The harlot will be transformed. Her earnings will no longer be immoral. Her productivity will be given for God and his glory. If it can happen to Tyre it can happen to any nation of the world.

¹ Ezra 3:7

¹ ch. 13–23



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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