

ISAIAH – Chapter 23

Tyre Sidon

Tyre – a seaport of the Phoenicians, 25 miles south of Sidon and 15 miles north of the present day Lebanese border with Israel. Today both Tyre and Sidon function as ports, but the ruins of Tyre are far more extensive than those in Sidon.

- 1) Isa. 23:12 may indicate that Tyre was a “colony” of Sidon (daughter). In many secular writings, Sidon is treated as superior and controlling over Tyre.
- 2) Joshua assigned Tyre to the tribe of Asher. Josh. 19:24-31, esp. vs. 28
During the life of David and Solomon, Israel exercised some “control” over both Sidon and Tyre. 2 Sam. 24:1-7ff
- 3) Hiram, king of Tyre, provided building materials to both David and Solomon. 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1 (Hiram must have lived a very long life.)

NOTE: 1 Kings 16:31, Ethbaal, a grandson of Hiram, is called “King of the Sidonians” 100 years later. (It was his daughter who became Ahab’s queen, 1 Kings 16:31)

Solomon made heavy payments to Hiram (1 Kings 5:11) and Hiram was apparently not satisfied with those payments. 1 Kings 9:10-13

Hiram helped Israel become a seafaring power. 1 Kings 9:26-28

4) Ezekiel chapters 27 and 28, give us an extensive look at the prosperity of Tyre, describing the city under the image of a ship. We also have one of the two main descriptions of the fall of Lucifer under the image of the fall of the king of Tyre.

5) Cyrus directed Tyre to provide timber for the construction of the post-exilic temple built after the return from Babylon. Ezra 3:7

6) In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great (Greece) lay sieged to Tyre, building a causeway out to the city after which he destroyed the city. Ezk. 26:5, 14; 47:10

7) Tyre recovered somewhat under the Romans, but then disappeared from history in 20 B.C. under the reign of Augustus.

8) In New Testament times, Sidon and Tyre are listed together as one “concept.” Matt. 15:21 At other times, they are treated separately. Mk. 7:31 (In this passage, Jesus performs the only miracle recorded outside of Palestine.)

9) Matt. 11:21-22

10) Acts 12:20-23

11) Acts 27:3

12) The chief god of the Sidonians was Eshmun, of the Tyrians was Melqart – fertility and harvest cult (Babylon – the gods are called Ishtar and Tanmuz, in Egypt as Isis and Osiris.)

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The final oracle – City of Tyre.

Vs. 1 This oracle centers on the trade carried on by this great city. Though Tyre was not destroyed until some 200 years later, her trade was cut off between 700 and 630 B.C.

1) “Ships of Tarshish” refers to large vessels that carried cargo on the open sea. This was the kind of vessel Hiram and Solomon built to carry cargo to Israel. 2 Chron. 9:20-22 (2 Chron. 20:35-37)

2) Ezk. 27:1-9 – a description of these ships.
Ezk. 27:10-25 – a description of their successful commerce.
Ezk. 27:26-36 – description of their sinking.

3) Tyre was destroyed by the Babylonians. Word of that destruction came to Tyre’s fleet while it was docked at Cyprus, which was about 150 miles northwest of Tyre.

Vs. 2-3 Tyre and Sidon were chief city ports of Phoenicia, which was a great seafaring nation. The destruction of this “international” enterprise of shipping will affect both the Phoenicians and the nations (such as Egypt) which traded by means of her shipping enterprises.

The grain grown in the fertile land watered by the flooding Nile will be missing – the means for its distribution destroyed!

Vs. 4 The Sea is “personified” – given human characteristics. The wealth of Sidon had not come by a slow means – birth process – but had produced the wealth quickly. Self-effort was not Sidon’s source, but her wealth had come from her trading partners, which surrounded the Mediterranean.

Vs. 5 when Egypt, a major trading partner, hears what has happened, she will experience great anguish.

Vs. 6-7 Tarshish was rich in silver (Jer. 10:9), iron, tin, and lead. Ezk. 27:12 Its people will wail also because of their economic losses. Their trading center, an ancient city (founded around 2700 B.C.), the city of Tyre is gone. Her ships, which were used to carry people to distant places.

Vs. 8 With Tyre being such a significant and powerful city, who could it be that has both willed and carried out her destruction. Her princes were the honored of the earth, who is it who could possibly do this to this city?

Vs. 9 The Lord of Hosts, the God of Judah, the Almighty is the one!!! He will humble this great and wealthy city (the bestower of crowns, vs. 8).

Vs. 10-13 Every Gentile power mentioned has found its end with the judgment of Judah’s God:

- 1) Tarshish
- 2) Canaan
- 3) Sidon
- 4) Cyprus
- 5) Chaldeans
- 6) Assyria

Vs. 14 The fleet of Tyre – the ships of Tarshish – has lost their homeport. There is nothing to go back to.

Vs. 15-17 This 70 year period (the days of a life, Ps. 90:10) was probably from about 700 to 630 B.C. This is the period when Phoenicia's activities were restricted by Assyria. Assyria will be defeated by Babylon and Tyre will rise again to prominence with trading vessels, like a prostitute who was forgotten but who returned to her trade, singing to attract lovers to her again.

Vs. 18 Verse is hard to understand. Some believe that the 70 years coincides with the Babylonian captivity and that the ships of Tarshish will be used to carry materials for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. They were used in the building of Solomon's Temple. We cannot be dogmatic!