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Her Earnings will be Set Apart for the LORD

23: 15-18

Her earnings will be set apart for the LORD DIG: Babylon, the symbol of strength and prestige in the East, was beaten by Assyria in 710 BC and again in 689 BC. What effect would recalling the destruction of both Babylon in the East and Tyre in the West have on Judah as they faced the Assyrian advance? What would they associate with the 70 years? In what sense will the LORD deal with Tyre? What will happen as a result of Tyre's restoration? How does this compare with what Isaiah said about Egypt and Assyria?

REFLECT: ADONAI is a God of second chances. Read Jonah 3:9-10. As a result of reading the Oracles Against the Nations in Chapters 13 to 23, could any of the nations mentioned by Isaiah have repented and been spared as Nineveh had been? Why or why not? How has God restored you, or things in your life that you thought were gone forever? Was He glorified in it? Why or why not?

After describing the destruction of **Tyre**, **Isaiah** now describes its restoration *for a season*. There is now a change in genre. Up to now **he** has written in Hebrew poetry, but now **he** begins writing in Hebrew prose. As in the oracle against Egypt (**19:1-25**), **Isaiah** adds a postscript to **Tyre's** announcement of destruction (**23:1-14**). It is an addendum of **Judah's** submission to **ADONAI**. **His** word is crystal clear. **She** was not to envy **Tyre** for **her** great wealth. Ultimately, everything **Tyre** owned will be returned to **God** and enjoyed by **His people** (**2:2-3, 45:14, 49:22, 60:9-11**). This section is a fitting summary to the Oracles Against the Nations in **Chapters 13 to 23**. **Judah** need not, in fact must not, **prostitute herself** to the Gentile nations. Instead, **she** should be true to **her Husband, the King of nations**. If **she** will only obey **His** word, **she** will find that **the nations**, in fact, will come to **her**.

At that time, Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king's life. After Babylon destroyed **Tyre**, it was in ruins for **seventy years**, just as **Judah** was to be in ruins for **seventy years**. And during Babylon's supremacy, for those **seventy years**, **Tyre** will be insignificant. **But at the end of these seventy years . . . Tyre** once again would become a leader of sea trade. Like a **prostitute** who had been **forgotten**, **she** returned to **ply her**

trade singing **the song of the prostitute (23:15)**. **The prostitute** is an apt symbol of **Tyre**, where everything **she** does is for money.



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 (23:16). But then **Isaiah** says that **Tyre** will rise again like an old **prostitute** forced **to return to her trade** because of hunger, singing to attract **her** lovers. **She** will **prostitute herself** in the sense that **she** will sell **her** merchandise to whoever will pay for it. After **seventy years**, **Tyre** will again play the part of the **prostitute** in world trade. **She** will again regain the supremacy **she** had before **her** destruction. And much of this merchandise will be corrupting.

In a figurative way, the music of **Tyre** will have an effect. After a dormant period **she** will realize something of **her** former importance as a trading city of the world. **At the end of seventy years, ADONAI will deal with 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 (23:17)**. Although **she** will once again be a **prostitute**, this time the profits from **her** trading would somehow benefit those who feared **God**. There was a new **Tyre** in the mind of **God**. **Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the LORD (23:18a)**. To **be set apart** means *to be holy*. This was the very word engraved on a **plate of pure gold** worn by the high priest (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Gc - Make a Plate and Engrave On It: Holy to the LORD**). A new spirit replaces the old mercenary one, **not hoarded**, but given freely. There would be a new harmony between **Tyre** and **Zion for a season**. But the island city of unprecedented wealth is gone and there is no mention of the nation of **Tyre** in the Messianic Kingdom.

The fact that **her earnings will be set apart for the LORD** seems to go against teaching of the Torah where it says: **You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute . . . into the house of ADONAI . . . because the LORD your God detests it (Deut 23:18)**. A

prostitute's earnings could **not** be given as an offering in the Temple. It is important to remember, however, that **prostitution** is symbolic of **Tyre's** business practice of doing anything for money, and that there is nothing inherently immoral about trade or business.

Her earnings will not be stored up or hoarded. Her profits will be for the benefit of **those who live before ADONAI, for abundant food and fine clothes (23:18b)**. Who are **those who live before God? They** were the Levites in the Temple of **the LORD**. Both **Tyre** and **Judah** (because **they** both came under the same domination of Babylonia), arise again **after seventy years**. **Tyre** arises to rebuild **her** trade and Judah arises to rebuild her Temple. At that point, they come together and *some of the merchandise* (not all) of **Tyre** becomes holy, or **set apart for the LORD**. **Ezra 3:7** tells us that, **Then** (the Jews) **gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus the King of Persia. The ships of Tyre will bring the cedars of Lebanon** to the port of **Joppa** to be used to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. So it was during the period when **Zerubbabel** came back from the Babylonian captivity that **Tyre, for a season, was used by God to rebuild His Temple** (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ar -The Start of Rebuilding the Temple**).

So it is to **God** that **His people** should look, not to **the nations**, for ultimately **the Gentiles** must look to **Him** as well. Moreover, all the wealth, which **Gentile nations** have amassed with such difficulty and effort must eventually be **His** to reallocate as **He** pleases. So in the final analysis, **if the glory of the nations is nothing (Chapters 13-14), if the scheming of the nations is nothing (Chapters 14 and 18), if the wisdom of the nations is nothing (Chapters 18-19), if the vision of the nation is nothing (Chapters 21-22), and if the wealth of the nations is nothing (Chapter 23), then the questions is: Why trust the nations? The answer is clear. There is no reason to trust the nations.**⁸¹