

Wednesday, September 20, 2023 • Read Isaiah 23

Questions from the Scripture text: Against whom is this burden (v1a)? Who are weeping over Tyre in vv1–2, 5? How have Tyre and Sidon been filled with wealth (v2–3)? What will be made unproductive for Sidon (v4)? Of what had Tyre and her allies been proud (v6–7)? Why would they wonder at who would conspire against them (v8)? But Who has done it (v9a)? Why (v9b–c)? Why is Tyre out of strength (v10–11)? For whom had they been a stronghold? Where does He suggest they flee, though to no avail (v12)? Whom else had Assyria devastated up to this point (v13)? With what effect on even the best of ships (v14)? What will the result of Tyre's economic hardship be (v15)? How is she pictured advertising herself at the end of this period (v16)? How successful will she be (v17)? But to whom will all of these riches ultimately belong (v18)?

How does the Lord judge those who trust in riches? Isaiah 23 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eighteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Lord judges those who trust in riches by drying up their wealth, by bringing disaster that wealth cannot escape, and even by allowing them to stockpile wealth that will serve the Lord's own people.**

Reversal of "fortune," v1–7. Tyre was an extremely wealthy merchant city. From as far as Tarshish (Spain, v1), and as powerful and wealthy as Egypt (v5), the wealth of the nations passed through Tyre, and much of that wealth stayed there. But now the bustle of business has come to an abrupt end. Cyprus is the last stop before Tyre, and there Tarshish hears the news that sets them wailing (v1). Tyre's partner port, Sidon, is suddenly silenced (v2)—her revenue left out at a sea (v3) that refuses to produce for it now (v4). Egypt also suffers economically (v5). The pride and joy of all of their prosperity has been silenced (v6–7).

Retribution for pride, v8–14. Tyre seemed to powerful to fall: able to crown kings, and whose businessmen were as highest royalty in every nation (v8). So the big question is who could have conspired to bring her down? v9 gives the answer. The LORD purposed this to bring down not the pride not only of Tyre but of the entire wealthy world that honored her (v9). There's nothing Tarshish could do (v10, 14), nowhere Sidon could go (v12), to escape the judgment the LORD had commanded (v11). He has given Assyria power even to destroy Babylon ("the Chaldeans," v13). Tyre had flown high in pride, and the Lord would lay them low with devastation.

Recovery for the righteous, v15–18. Tyre's downfall is given a duration of 70 years (v15), but when it's over she gets right back to advertising herself (v16) and is soon right back where she was (v17). Why would the Lord permit this? Why do the wealthy and wicked seem to prosper and recover? Ultimately, for the sake of the LORD's glory and His people's good (v18). The inheritance of the whole earth is for the Lord's meek ones (cf. Mt 5:5, Rom 4:13).

Who are the people of great "fortune" in the eyes of the world? What sorts of things are they able to control? Who is powerful enough to be able to bring them down? In what ways are you in danger of delighting in riches and influence? What could you expect if that's what you lived for? To whom do all the riches of creation ultimately belong? For whom is the Lord constantly acting in history?

Sample prayer: Lord, we praise You for Your justice to oppose the proud and give grace to the humble. But we are ashamed to confess that we are often proud ourselves—delighting worldly wealth and influence, as Tyre did. Forgive us! And grant unto us humility and heavenly-mindedness by Your Spirit. We confess, also, that we are often anxious about what the wealthy may do. Forgive us for forgetting that You are overruling all that they do for Your glory and our good. Grant unto us to trust comfortably in Your sovereign rule, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP11 "My Trust Is in the LORD" or TPH244 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah 23. These are God's words. The burden against tire. Well, or your ships of tarsus for this laid waste. So that there is no house, no harbor. From the land of cyprus, it has revealed to them. Be still you inhabitants of the coastland you merchants of siden. Whom those who cross the sea have filled.

And on the great waters, the grain of shihor The harvest of the river. Is her revenue? And she is a marketplace for the nations. Be ashamed of sightened for the sea has spoken. The strength of the sea saying, i do not labor nor bring forth children. Neither do i rear young men nor bring it up virgins.

When the report reaches egypt, they also will be in agony. At the report of tire. Cross over to Tarshish. Will you inhabitants of the coastland? Is this your joyous city? Who's antiquity is from ancient days. His feet, carried her far off to dwell. Who has taken this council against tire.

The crowning city. Whose merchants are princess who's traders, are the honorable of the earth. Your way of hosts as purposed, it To bring to dishonor the pride of our glory to bring into contempt. All the honorable of the earth. Overflow overflow through your land like the river. Though, daughter of tarshish.

There is no more strength. He stretched at his hand, over the sea, he shook the kingdoms. Yahweh has given a commandment Against canadian. To destroy its strongholds. And he said you will rejoice no more. Oh, you oppressed virgin of virgin, daughter of siden. Arise cross over to cyprus. They're also you will have no rest.

Behold the land of the chaldeans. This people, which was not. Assyria founded it for wild, beasts of the desert they set up at stars. They raised up its balances And brought it to ruin. Well, you ships of Tarshish. For your strength is laid waste. Now, it shall come to pass and that day.

That tire will be forgotten 70 years according to the days of one king. At the end of 70 years, it will happen to tire. As in the song of the harlot. Take a harp go about the city. You forgotten harlot, make sweet, melody, sing. Many songs that you may be remembered.

And it shall be at the end of 70 years. Yahweh will deal with tires. You will return. To her higher. And commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world and the face of the earth. Her gain and her pay. Will be set apart for yahweh. There will not be treasured nor laid up.

For her, gain will be for those who dwell before. Yahweh To eat, sufficiently. And for fine clothing.

So far, the reading of gods inspired. And inherent.

We live in an age in which more and more. Those who Are the great. Uh, players the great influencers and The world economy. Are the ones who control nations and as nations rise and nations fall. Those who are the ultra wealthy who, Control the international flow of goods money.

Uh, seem to be in control in the background. In fact, there are many now, Who are? More fearful of corporations than they are of nations. And i think that this has come about, As a result of. The internet. And that it is something. Perhaps, even before the internet, something.

Very recent. In world history. As the nations, go out more connected. In the 19th. And then the 20th. And now the 21st centuries. However, the nations have been connected. Uh, even though the lord dispersed them over the face of the earth, There has always been this tendency Uh, to unite.

As babble. And, Um, And tire was. In the midst of this, the wealth of the world. From tarsus in the west tarsus is a port city. In what we would call spain. On the other side of the, Mediterranean right before. In fact, you Um, are into the atlantic ocean?

Um, so from tartish in the west. Uh, Um, And she whore and the river, the river. Uh, here. And Uh, verse 4. Um, Something is Uh, the Nile. Although, Uh, egypt is Egypt is mentioned separately and the river could very well be Uh, the euphrates. Um, But, The nations of the world.

Uh, ran their economic trade through tire, especially and its sister city, or it's partner city. And, As nations rose and nations fell. Those who held influence entire those who are in control of that particular port, and the trade that ran through there. Um, Remained about remained. In control in the background.

So you see that in verse 4. Sorry for not verse 4, verse 8, Where it asks, who has taken this council against tire. The crowning city. Tire being. Um, so influential that they could swing. Who had become king. In one nation or another whose merchants are princes. That in.

Entire those who were the the wealthy traders, the wealthy merchants. Would have the same. Level of influence and power and the world. As those who are royalty of other nations, whose traders are the honorable of the earth. And so you have a wealthy and influential trader from tire And the people from all the nations.

Uh, would know that's the person you have to treat really well, if you want things. To go for you to go well for you. But tire inside and also had. Um, A religious. Role in the life. And really if we're saying it correctly. In the death. Of israel especially the northern kingdom.

Uh, jezebel Uh, was from the royal family. Of tire. And sudden. And, From. Uh, her From the Um,

From the armored dynasty armory. Um, And marrying into. The. The royal family of tired and then, Several generations, most notably ahab coming from him and reigning in an organ kingdom. Um, That was the way that. Canonite bail it worship. Uh, became the dominant religion. In the northern kingdom. And so god in order.

Uh, to punish This. Um, resurgence of canadianite worship you see in verse 11, he's punishing tire. The city that no one thought. Anyone could bring down in fact, when tire has brought down, They ask who has taken council against her verse 8, who could do this in the answer was nine.

Your way of hosts his purposed, it To bring to dishonor the pride. Of all glory to bring into contempt. All the honorable of the earth. You see, there was an idolatry that was greater even. Than the idolatry of veil. And it was the idolatry of pride and the idolatry of wealth.

That was the real stocking trade. Of tire and of sudden. That was why of course, The northern kingdom would want to marry into their royal family. Tap into that influence to tap into that wealth. And there's ever the danger. Of wanting to get in with the wealthy. There's ever the danger of wanting to get in.

With those who seem to have influence. We can have that danger on a small level. And a little community. Uh, like A town or a church. And there's that danger on large level. Seeing those who seem to have money. And seem to wield influence. And wanting to get in with them.

And yet, we know that the lord Can destroy them in a moment. And you have the shock then. When he reverses, the literally fortune of tire. Verse 1, you have the merchant ship on the way from tarsus. You know in spain they get to cyprus which is the last stop before you get to tire and in cyprus what is revealed to them.

That there is no house. There is no harbor, they're asking them, you know, where's the best port? Yeah to which, which parked and of the harbor of tires. Should we sail into now? They ask it cyprus where Making their last stop on their way east and the people in cyprus say, There are no ports or harbors left entire What shocking news that must have been.

To the sailors to the merchants from darshish. But god had raised up a syria. And given then, Over to the fierceness. Of their. Of their warring character. And given them success. In their waging of war. So that they could all totally destroy tire. And so, tarshish is shocked. The merchants of siden have become quiet.

Verse 2, be still, or be quiet. You know, the The unceasing. Business and activity. Of a merchant town trade town, like siding. Or suddenly silenced, it's like A ghost town. The uh,

Water is. Unproductive. In verse 4. Being described in terms of fertility. As using the metaphor of a woman. Uh, but now she is suddenly sterile. She doesn't labor. She doesn't bring forth children. She's not rearing young men or bringing up young maidens. Verse 4. And so, here she was, she was the most fertile woman in the world.

And now she's unable. To bear. At all. Such as the picture of the sea trade. Into the lord. Reverses. They're fortune. To destroy their pride. And so do not be afraid. Of corporations anymore than you're afraid of nations. Because those who raised themselves up in pride. And those who trust in their wealth.

What happens to the proud according to the bible? God, opposes the proud. He brings them to sudden and disastrous ends. Repeatedly throughout history. And then there is the great sudden and finally and fully disastrous end at the conclusion of history. And so there's something of the psalm 73 lesson in here, isn't there?

Of not envying. Those who seem to be prosperous in this life. Because the lord has set them in a slippery place. And all of all at once. They will fall. And yet, the lord. Lets them. Um, Recover after 70 years. And what happens generally speaking? They don't learn their lesson.

They're not recover and repentance. They don't become a nation that throws away the bail idols and is humble and grateful to god to yahweh for the good things that he gives them. The enables them to have. No, they resumed their harlotry. In verses 17 and 18. But there is A reminder here, then.

Something that has been true the whole time. That whatever her gain and whatever her pay. That ultimately serves two purposes, the glory of god. I'm not good of his people. Verse 18, her gain and her pay will be set apart for yahweh. It will not be treasured or laid up her gain.

Will be for those who dwell before. Yahweh To eat, sufficiently. And for fine clothing. And so we know that god is working all things together for the good of those who Love him. And are called according to his purpose. Now, praise god in the context of the book of isaiah as a whole We know, and hope that there will even be those from the coastlands.

Who come to trust and the promised king that deliverer, who is coming. Entire is considered. One of those coastlines. And so there are elect from every nation But when she returns to her higher, And she is just like she was before. The fact that it happens. Exactly. 70 years later.

Would be a clue to those who are trusting in the lord. God. Is doing everything everywhere. For his own glory. And for his peoples, good. And so i'm not to despair. Over the Resumption of. The. The power of the merchants. Over the world. And i'm not to envy them.

Or want to have influence with them. To tap into their wealth or to tap into their influence. But let me dwell before the face of the lord. And know that whatever they think they're accomplishing. The lord is ruling and over ruling. For his glory. And for the good of his people.

That's the same today. You don't have to be afraid. Of google and apple or Putin has probably. Wealthier and controlling more than any of them were. Whatever's coming out of the You know, those who control the wealth and influence in china, or You have. The wealthy nobility of america or europe or Um, Anywhere else.

Because you know, that it is all for the glory of god. There's all four of the good and for the care. Of those who dwell before his face. God will not allow us to go hungry. Unless hunger is beneficial to us. Scaldo not allow us to go naked. Unless nakedness has beneficial to us.

No, not allow the sword. Or pestilence or plague. Upon any one of his children, except that it come. And that, which is bringing them into an inheritance of a new heaven in any earth. And so do not fear them and do not envy them. Dwell before the face of god and repentance and faith.

And no, that he is going to destroy all pride. It's all short-lift got. Opposes the brown. But gives grace to the humble. So, i don't live with fear or envy My dear children. Live by faith in the lord. And a hearty confidence that he is doing all things for your good.

And for his glory,

Our father in heaven. We are often. Confused. When we look at what is happening in the world. Justice. Perhaps. A believer at the time of isaiah, would have been confused. Seeing. How many centuries? Tire continued and it's Prosperity and power. It's influence. Behind the scenes and sometimes not behind.

And yet, o lord. We ask that you would turn our eyes. From what seems to be happening on the world stage. To you. Oh, god. Who rule and overrule in it all. Grant that. We would be humble before you because of our sin. But hopeful and confident, because of your salvation in christ.

And by your spirit, blessing to us, this portion of your word. That you would give us a hearty confidence. That everything that happens. Whether among nations or corporations or anywhere else, or anyone else? Everything that happens is unto your glory. And for our good and the lord jesus. And so we pray that you would forgive us our anxieties.

And forgive us our covetousness. And that your spirit would redeem us. From these that we would not be anxious or fearful. And that we would not be envious or covetous or greedy. But that we would trust and delight in you. To belong to you, to love you to serve you.

And that you would make us to receive with thankfulness. The good portions that you give to us. Knowing that you have determined exactly what is best for us. And so it comes not only in everlasting, love But in perfect wisdom. So, give us to live this way. We pray.

And part by your spirit blessing to us. This portion of your word, we ask in jesus name, Amen.