

## Isaiah 23

Isaiah addresses *Tyre* in this chapter. It is presently the fourth largest city in Lebanon and houses one of its major ports. *Tyre's* history adds much flavor to what Isaiah states in these eighteen verses.

There were two *Tyres*, one located on the coast of the Mediterranean, the other on an island approximately one-half mile off the shore of coastal *Tyre*. Coastal *Tyre* was attacked by the Assyrians and later destroyed by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. The island of *Tyre* was defeated later as a result of Alexander the Great (the leader of the Greek Empire) taking the ruins of coastal *Tyre* and building an isthmus (a mound over which to travel) from the coast to the island. This allowed Alexander's troops to conquer the city (Zechariah 9:1-4 addresses this conflict). For further input concerning *Tyre*, read Ezekiel 26:1-28:26, 29:18, and Amos 1:9-10, always making sure to apply the verses to the proper *Tyre*, either coastal *Tyre* or the *Tyre* located on an island approximately one-half mile off the shore of coastal *Tyre*.

*Is. 23:1 The oracle concerning Tyre. Wail, O ships of Tarshish, For Tyre is destroyed, without house or harbor; It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus.*

*Tyre* was part of an area known as Phoenicia (situated along the coast of the Mediterranean), and *Tarshish* had been colonized by the Phoenicians. More than one location was known as *Tarshish* (read notes associated with Isaiah 66:19). The *ships of Tarshish*, which carried a hoard of merchandise to and from *Tyre*, received the news of *Tyre's* fall while at *Cyprus*, located in the Mediterranean just northeast of *Tyre* and *Sidon*.

*Is. 23:2 Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland, You merchants of Sidon; Your messengers crossed the sea*

The Phoenician *coastland* would *Be silent*. *Sidon*, which existed before *Tyre*, had mothered *Tyre* (it is for this reason that Isaiah uses the phrase, "*merchants of Sidon*," in place of *Tyre*), *Tyre* being located on the Phoenician *coastland*.

*Is. 23:3 And were on many waters. The grain of the Nile, the harvest of the River was her revenue; And she was the market of nations.*

Egypt, to the south, would suffer as well from *Tyre's* misfortune. After all, *Tyre* purchased much of the grain which Egypt produced.

*Is. 23:4 Be ashamed, O Sidon; For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying, "I have neither travailed nor given birth, I have neither brought up young men nor reared virgins."*

*Sidon* mothered *Tyre* (v.12), meaning that the Sidonians established *Tyre*. *Tyre*, which outgrew *Sidon* and became the center of trade for the *nations* (verse 3), would be so demolished that the *sea* would refuse to admit that *Tyre* had ever existed (v.4). This is why *Sidon* was to *Be ashamed*.

*Is. 23:5 When the report reaches Egypt, They will be in anguish at the report of Tyre.*

*Egypt* would *be in anguish* over *Tyre* for two reasons:

1. Because of the negative impact that these events would have on the Egyptian economy.

2. Tyre protected Egypt from any type of invasion from the north. (It is interesting that Egypt fell shortly after Tyre.)

*Is. 23:6 Pass over to Tarshish; Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland.*

The inhabitants of Tyre, who had colonized *Tarshish* (remember that there was more than one *Tarshish* which Tyre had colonized), would now seek refuge in those colonies.

*Is. 23:7 Is this your jubilant city, Whose origin is from antiquity, Whose feet used to carry her to colonize distant places?*

When Isaiah spoke these words, Tyre was already over two thousand years old—thus the phrase, “*Whose origin is from antiquity.*” Obviously, Tyre colonized many areas before she fell.

*Is. 23:8 ¶ Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?*

Isaiah mentions that the doom addressed in verses 1-7 had been *planned...against Tyre* even though *princes* and *the honored of the earth* traded merchandise with her.

*Is. 23:9 The Lord of hosts has planned it to defile the pride of all beauty, To despise all the honored of the earth.*

Jehovah had *planned* such doom, not only to humble Tyre, but also *To despise* (lower the prestige of) *all the honored of the earth* who had not honored Him in return.

*Is. 23:10 Overflow your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish, There is no more restraint.*

The colonies of Tyre will have *no more restraint* in that they will become free and autonomous.

*Is. 23:11 He has stretched His hand out over the sea, He has made the kingdoms tremble; The Lord has given a command concerning Canaan to demolish its strongholds.*

Tyre would fall due to the stretching out of God's *hand* coupled with His *command* for the coming judgment.

*Is. 23:12 And He has said, "You shall exult no more, O crushed virgin daughter of Sidon. Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest."*

As was stated in verse 4, *Sidon* was Tyre's mother (Tyre was founded by *Sidon*). Thus Tyre, the *virgin daughter of Sidon*, would be *crushed*. The refugees from Tyre would *find no rest* in *Cyprus*.

*Is. 23:13 Behold, the land of the Chaldeans-- this is the people which was not; Assyria appointed it for desert creatures-- they erected their siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.*

I like the manner in which the Revised Standard Bible renders this verse:

**Behold the land of the Chalde'ans! This is the people; it was not Assyria. They destined Tyre for wild beasts. They erected their siegetowers, they razed her palaces, they made her a ruin.**

It would be *the Chaldeans* (the Babylonians) who would erect *siege towers* and overthrow coastal Tyre. There is no doubt that the Assyria Empire overthrew the original Babylonian Empire to gain the strength she possessed in Isaiah's day, but the Babylonian Empire rose again and overthrew the Assyrians. It was after the overthrow of Assyria that the Babylonians overthrew coastal Tyre.

*Is. 23:14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish, For your stronghold is destroyed.*

Again Isaiah emphasizes that the *ships of Tarshish* would suffer loss as a result of the destruction of Tyre (read the notes associated with Isaiah 23:1).

*Is. 23:15 Now it will come about in that day that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:*

Tyre, like Judah, would be in ruins *for seventy years* after the Babylonians overtook her. When this *seventy years* was completed (in conjunction with the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians), Tyre would once again play *the harlot* in her dealings with the nations.

*Is. 23:16 Take your harp, walk about the city, O forgotten harlot; Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs, That you may be remembered.*

This verse mentions the *songs* that Tyre would *sing* while playing the harlot subsequent to being delivered from Babylonian dominance.

*Is. 23:17 And it will come about at the end of seventy years that the Lord will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot's wages, and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.*

Tyre regained her supremacy in the economic realm after her *seventy year* absence, yet continued to *play the harlot*.

*Is. 23:18 And her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the Lord; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the Lord.*

This passage was fulfilled when the Jews purchased supplies from Tyre for the rebuilding of the temple (read Ezra 3:7). It was Cyrus, king of Persia, who had allowed the Jews, as well as the displaced citizens of Tyre, to return to their homelands seventy years after being exiled to Babylon.

## Isaiah 24

Isaiah chapters 24-27 deal mainly with the Tribulation, redemption, and regathering of the Jewish nation for the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. These chapters can be outlined in the following manner:

Isaiah 24:1-23 primarily records events relating to the Tribulation (outside of the last two phrases of verse 23, which deal with the Millennium).

Isaiah 25:1-12 is a song of praise for God's ability to bring about repentance through judgment and protection in the midst of adversity.

Isaiah 26:1-19 is a song of praise for God's ability to save those who wait on Him.

Isaiah 26:20-27:13 describes the redemption and regathering of the Jewish nation.

The book of Revelation basically expands what is recorded here, its structure being much the same as Isaiah 24-27.

*Is. 24:1 Behold, the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface, and scatters its inhabitants.*

Isaiah begins to discuss the Tribulation here in verse 1. *The Lord* will lay *the earth waste*, distort *its surface*, and scatter *its inhabitants*. If you read the book of Revelation you will find more input relating to the degree of this global destruction.

*Is. 24:2 And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor.*

There will be no social or economic classes during the Tribulation, for everyone will be alike.

*Is. 24:3 The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken this word.*

*The Lord* will cause *The earth* to be completely laid waste (emptied) and completely despoiled (desecrated) during the Tribulation because He has promised to do so.

*Is. 24:4 The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away.*

*The earth mourns and withers* away while *the world* (the inhabited earth) *fades and withers* due to this judgment against mankind. *The earth* is so damaged during the Tribulation that it will have to be totally refurbished in preparation for the Millennium (read Isaiah 65:17).

*Is. 24:5 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant.*

The *inhabitants* of *The earth* have *polluted* the earth through transgressing *laws*, violating *statutes*, and breaking *the everlasting covenant*. Therefore, *The earth* is affected negatively as a result of mankind's sin, as has been the case since the fall (Genesis 3:17-18; Romans 8:19-22). *The everlasting covenant* that is broken is evidently the *covenant* that God made with *Noah* in

Genesis 9:1-17. Obviously, many of the conditions associated with this *covenant* will be violated during the Tribulation. For instance, many *laws* will be disregarded, and man will refuse to be held accountable for his misdeeds—a violation of Genesis 9:6.

*Is. 24:6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.*

The *curse* (that results from man polluting *the earth*—v.5) *devours the earth* and burns its *inhabitants* during the Tribulation. *Few men are left*. Notice that fire is used as the source of judgment in place of water (as in Noah's day). This is because of God's promise in Genesis 9:11. Peter, in 2 Peter 3:10-12, gives us even more input concerning these judgments of fire during the Tribulation.