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Isaiah 23

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Isaiah 23.

Topics.

- Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste.
- The revenue of the merchant of the nations was the harvest of the Nile.
- The LORD has stretched out his hand over the sea to destroy kingdoms.
- Oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon in Cyprus you will have no rest.
- The Chaldeans that were not; Assyria destined it for wild beasts.
- Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, then the LORD will visit Tyre.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it:

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application: of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING TYRE AND SIDON

ISAIAH 23:1

Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is Laid Waste.

- **Isaiah 23:1:** Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, without house or harbor! From the land of Cyprus, it is revealed to them.

2

The King James Bible says:

- The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

The word burden comes from the Hebrew word (*massa'*) which literally means a burden (i.e., affliction, suffering, trouble and misery), this means that the primary focus of this vision and chapter is one of grief, sadness and sorrow for the inhabitants of Tyre. In anticipation of these events, Isaiah utters his prophecy warning of the heavy calamity and destruction to come upon of Tyre the great merchant city and the ships of Tarshish.

Tarshish: (some interpret it Tarsus), is in the Western Mediterranean region, it was a great seaport of Cilicia which lays near to Tyre and anciently had the dominion of that part of the sea (maybe the same place the apostle Paul was in Acts 22:3). However, it can also refer to the sea and ships in general and to all sorts of persons, from every quarter, that go down in the ships of the sea or who sailed in ships to Tyre and traded with them. The following verses show that the seaport of Tarshish was a very busy port from which large merchant ships would sail great distances to trade costly cargo.

- The king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. (1 Kings 10:22).
- By the east wind you (the LORD) shattered the ships of Tarshish. (Psalm 48:7).
- Against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. (Isaiah 2:16).

Tarshish had such great wealth and abundant goods of every kind they did business with many nations trading in such things as:

- Silver, iron, tin, bronze, lead and human beings
- Horses, war horses, mules, ivory tusks and ebony.
- Emeralds, coral, and rubies.
- Honey, oil, balm, cask of wine wool and saddlecloths for riding.
- Lambs, rams, goats and the best of all kinds of spices precious stones and gold.
- Purple and blue garments of embroidered work of fine linen, and carpets of coloured material.

It is very clear these ships of Tarshish filled with merchandise of great value travelled vast distances across the oceans to trade their goods with many nations. (Ezek. 27:12-25).

Tyre: (Tyros) comes from the Hebrew word (*Tsor*) it literally means a rock it was an ancient and wealthy city, situated upon the shore of the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel on the coast in Palestine. It continued and increased in its commerce, wealth, population, and power, during the reigns of the subsequent kings of Israel and Judah and for many ages was one of the greatest and celebrated cities of the Phoenicians in those parts of the world. Her merchants were princes, whose traders were the honoured of the earth (Isaiah 23:8) and its fame for its maritime activities and commerce and navigating the seas exceeded in renown and grandeur all the cities of Syria and Phoenicia. Tyre was famous for the birth of many cities such as Lepti, Utica, Carthage, and Gades (or Cales) and at its peak was considered the mart of the nations and stood in its own strength and glory abounding in riches and mighty in naval power. The ships of Tarshish were filled and heavily laden with abundant goods of great wealth and merchandise of every kind (Ezek. 27:25) and travelled across the seas to barter and trade the following goods with many nations:

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- Silver, iron, tin, bronze horses, war horses, mules, ivory tusks and ebony.
- Emeralds, rubies, precious stones and gold and embroidered work of fine linen.
- Wheat, honey, oil, balm, casks of wine and the best of all kinds of spices.
- Wrought iron, saddlecloths for riding and lambs, rams and goats
- Choice garments, of blue and embroidered work and in carpets of coloured material (Ezekiel chapter 27).

Tyre made their ships from the choicest wood inlaid with ivory and their sails with fine embroidered linen from Egypt. They were such a prideful nation they considered themselves perfect in beauty. (Ezek. 27:3). When Isaiah uttered this prophecy concerning the ruin of Tyre it was standing firm in its strength; its mighty naval power and its glory and was abounded in riches. It is mentioned frequently in prophetic literature, especially in (Ezekiel chapter 26, 27 and 28).

- The ships of Tarshish traveled for you (Tyre) with your merchandise. So, you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas. (Ezekiel 27:25).

During the ancient era Tyre was better situated for commerce, and had greater natural advantages than any port in the Mediterranean. Today to a great extent Tyre has passed away, because the merchandise of India that was once taken overland through Babylon and Palmyra to the seaport of Tyre is now carried around the Cape of Good Hope, and therefore the port of Tyre will never again be restored to its once enormously busy and famous state of ancient days.

New Tyre: stood in it, about half a mile from the shore of the mainland. This New Tyre came about when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Tyre on the mainland for a period of thirteen years after which the inhabitants of Tyre defeated and wearied by endless efforts of withstanding the invasions of Babylon sailed from a shore which was a harbour for ships to an island about half a mile away. In this way Tyre on the mainland was utterly destroyed by Babylon, however the island the people of Tyre fled to, became so greatly enlarged it later became referred to as the New Tyre.

However, seventy years latter Alexander the Great filled fill up the strait which separated the island from the mainland and took New Tyre.

Cyprus (Chittim in KJV): comes from the Hebrew word (*Kittiy*) it is an unused name denoting Cyprus the third largest island in the Mediterranean and an islander (Isaiah 23:12 KJV) in general. In a wider sense the name Chittim is often used to signify other islands and countries along the shores of the coasts of the Mediterranean and therefore would embrace all the countries along the shores of the sea surrounding Cyprus and the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. The following verses show that it was an eminent place for shipping and trading.

- Ships shall come from Kittim (Chittim in KJV) and shall afflict Asshur and Eber; and he too shall come to utter destruction. (Num. 24:24).
- Oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus (Chittim in KJV), inlaid with ivory. (Ezek. 27:6).
- Ships of Kittim (Chittim in KJV) shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. (Daniel 11:30).

Since Tyre employed many ship builders from Chittim to build their ships and these ships sailed to many different countries the name Chittim in some contexts may be used to signify all other countries, islands and maritime places that had great dealings and traded with Tyre. In the lamentation for Tyre it is written:

- Oaks of Bashan they (builders of Tyre) made your (Tyres) oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus (Chittim in KJV), inlaid with ivory. (Ezek. 27:6).

Wail (howl in KJV) O ships of Tarshish: (v1) Isaiah not only sees in this prophetic vision the destruction of all the ships of Tarshish, but also the utter ruin of their cities homes and business of trade. He is calling all who had been enriched by the trade of these ships and all who worked on the Warf's and sailed in ships to Tyre, and traded with her from every quarter to mourn and lament, because all their commerce and trade was coming to an end and every warehouse and port would be shut up.

From the land of Cyprus (Chittim in KJV) it is revealed to them: (v1) means all the nations and countries that prospered by the shipping trade of Tyre and all who were employed to sail the ships and worked on the Warf's will hear rumours coming out from Cyprus (Chittim) that the city of Tyre has been taken and that there is no access to its harbours and such major news would quickly spread along the coasts and to the islands especially to all who relied upon the trade of Tyre.

Tyre is laid waste: (v1) not at this present time, but in the vision, it is as though Isaiah was seeing all these events in his mind pass before his eyes. The city of Tyre will be so utterly destroyed that there will be no houses left in it; no shops to sell their goods; no warehouses; no inns to lodge at; and no harbors or ports where ships could sail into their rich and wealthy trade will come to a sudden end all being destroyed by and enemy. Amongst different commentaries there are various ideas concerning the nation that brought about this destruction upon Tyre.

Following are the two most common:

1. **Nebuchadnezzar:** verse thirteen says, "The land of the Chaldeans (Babylon) destined it (Tyre) for wild beasts they erected their siege towers, they stripped her palaces bare they made her a ruin. (v13). This appears to be a clear reference to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon siege of Tyre which lasted for a period of thirteen years after which the inhabitants of Tyre defeated and wearied by endless efforts of withstanding the invasions of Babylon sailed from a shore which was a harbour for ships to an island about half a mile away. In this way Tyre on the mainland was utterly destroyed by Babylon, however the island the people of Tyre fled to, became so greatly enlarged it later became referred to as the New Tyre. In Ezekiel chapter twenty-six it is written:
 - Thus, says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. --- NOW GO TO VERSE ELEVEN --- ¹¹With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. ¹²They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. (Ezek. 26:7-14) (this entire chapter speaks about the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar).
2. **Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander:** although the destruction of Tyre more directly and properly fit Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon, it also appears to have some reference to Alexander the Great since verse fifteen foretells that, "Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years (meaning left in peace), but at the end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute, meaning it will come to ruin. This means that after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar Tyre will thrive again for seventy years and recover her former power and glory, which came to pass accordingly, but would after seventy years be once again brought to utter ruin which it was by Alexander the Great. Clearly Tyre was destroyed twice, firstly by Nebuchadnezzar and secondly by Alexander. The New city of Tyre withstood the armies of Alexander for seven months at the end of which Alexander filled up the strait which separated the island from the mainland and took the New City of Tyre.

ISAIAH 23:2-5

The Revenue of the Merchant of Nations was Harvest of the Nile.

- **Isaiah 23:2-5:** Be still, O inhabitants of the coast (the isle in KJV); the merchants of Sidon (Zidon in KJV), who cross the sea, have filled you. ³And on many (great in KJV) waters your revenue was the grain of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile; you were the merchant of the nations (mart of nations in KJV). ⁴Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, the stronghold of the sea, saying: "I have neither labored nor given birth, I have neither reared young men nor brought up young women." ⁵When the report comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish over the report about Tyre.

Shihor: (usually Sihor in KJV) could be referring to the Nile or a stream which separated Egypt from Palestine or a canal, with waters drawn from the Nile.

The Nile River: is the longest in the world it covers some four thousand miles it courses like a living tube through the desiccated hills and deserts of north east Africa and was the main channel of commerce and travel. The surrounding nations of Tyre and Sidon were made rich through the shipping trade, but because Tyre has been laid waste all these surrounding nations are going to suffer great financial loss.

Sidon (Zidon in KJV): was a city of commerce on the coast above Tyre. It is frequently mentioned in the Bible in connection with Tyre, especially in prophetic literature. Sidon and Tyre were near to each other (about twenty-five miles a six day's walk). Sidon was a great city and strongly united to Tyre by commerce and trade. In verse twelve the LORD refers

to Tyre as the daughter of Sidon," Sidon is pictured as being the parent country of Tyre or the mother of Tyre. In the same way as an earthly mother is deeply afflicted watching her daughter come to ruin Sidon as the mother of Tyre will be deeply distressed and stricken with the calamity of her daughter city Tyre.

You were the merchant of the nations: (v3) (mart of nations in KJV) meaning Tyre had contact with all the nations and gained her support, splendour, luxury and glory from them all. All her commercial prosperity and fame came to her by the ships of Tarshish carrying cargo of great value across the seas.

I have neither laboured nor given birth: (v4), is the language of Tyre, the founder of colonies and cities. It means all the wealth, fame and glory that Sidon's daughter Tyre had established had come to an end. Tyres destruction will be so utterly complete it is as though she who had been so fruitful in riches, commerce, power and trade was now barren and desolate the ruin will be so complete that it will be as though she had never travailed in labour and given birth to any of the colonies she had raised up. The sense is, "My wealth and resources are gone. My commerce is annihilated, I cease to plant cities and colonies and to nourish and foster them, as I once did, by my trade." The idea of the whole verse is, that the city which had been the mistress of the commercial world, and distinguished for founding other cities and colonies, was about to lose her importance, and cease to extend her colonies and her influence over other countries. Over this fact, Sidon, the mother and founder of Tyre herself, would be humbled and grieved that her daughter so proud, so rich, and so magnificent, was brought so low.

The stronghold of the sea: (v4) refers to Tyre it is referred to as the strength of the sea for the following reasons:

- It was strong at sea, both by its commerce and the strength of its naval forces.
- Its ships defended the Mediterranean and its region of the sea from piracies and therefore could be considered the fortress or strong place of the sea.
- It was defended, protected and strengthened by the sea which surrounded it.
- It was enriched by the cargo it took to the nations across the seas and enriched by what was brought to it by sea.
- It was mighty on the sea and her mighty and many ships-imposed fear on all those sailing on the sea. (Ezek. 26:17).

The title, "The stronghold of the sea," given to Tyre gives Sidon great reason to fear since if such a great and strong nation as Tyre is brought to ruin the citizens of Sidon being much weaker in strength had good reason to fear the same fate would befall them since they were far inferior in wealth, strength and power to Tyre.

Be thou ashamed O Sidon: (v4) (Zidon in KJV) Tyre being built and first inhabited by a colony of the Sidonians is called the daughter of Sidon (v12). Sidon is here pictured as being ashamed of her daughter, (because of her extreme pride) and grieved because she as a mother is bereft of all her children that were once her crown and glory and the strength (or fortress) of the sea. (v4) Verse four could be paraphrased in the following way:

- Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, the stronghold of the sea, (which was Tyre) saying it is as though Sidon has neither laboured nor given birth, neither reared young men or brought up young women.

For a woman to feel shame because she had never given birth and therefore was childless was common amongst women in the East.

For the sea has spoken: (v4) carries the idea that the destruction of Tyres harbors, ports, ships and prosperous commerce and trade on the seas will be so utterly complete and sure to come to pass that it is as though the sea itself has determined Tyres utter destruction.

Egypt will be in anguish over the report about Tyre: (v5) Egypt will also be greatly grieved when they hear of Tyres destruction because the loss of Tyres shipping trade will also drastically affect the commerce and trade of Egypt financially.

ISAIAH 23:6-11

The LORD stretched His Hand over the Sea to Destroy Kingdoms.

- **Isaiah 23:6-11:** Cross over to Tarshish; wail, O inhabitants of the coast! ⁷Is this your exultant city (Tyre) whose origin is from days of old, whose feet carried her to settle far away? ⁸Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth? ⁹The LORD of hosts has purposed it, to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth. ¹⁰Cross over your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish; there is no restraint anymore. ¹¹He has stretched out his hand over the sea; he has shaken the kingdoms; the LORD has given command concerning Canaan (against the merchant city in KJV) to destroy its strongholds.

Canaan: comes from the Hebrew word (*K^ena`an*) it literally means humiliated; to bend the knee; to vanquish, to subdue and bring down (low) into subjection and a merchant who trades in goods. It also refers to Kenaan, a son of Ham and the country inhabited by him which was the land of the Canaanites (modern day Palestine). Its width is between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea, the Jordan River and east of Damascus. These verses shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God is in control of the nations. For the secular world watching on this destruction of Tyre would simply be seen as the stronger nation conquering the weaker nation by the horrors of war, but behind what look to the natural eyes to be the acts of men God is working. The following verses show that man cannot find out God's works upon earth:

- God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes. 3:11).
- Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However, much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17).
- The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them. (Eccles. 9:11-12)

This means that no one no matter how intelligent or how much they study can find out the works of God upon the earth. The LORD has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow. Historians look at history through veiled eyes, devoid of God, but God looks from heaven and sees what mankind cannot see. In these verses man sees a great nation, rich, wealthy, powerful and prosperous and honours and exalts it and its merchants as the crown and glory of the earth. These things count for nothing before God, he looks to the heart of the nation and sees exultant self-glory and pompous pride and judges accordingly.

Two aspects to pride: pride has two aspects, healthy pride and destructive pride, not all pride is evil pride the following shows the difference between healthy pride and destructive pride.

Healthy pride embraces the following:

- That happy satisfied feeling experienced when having or achieved something special that other people admire.
- Taking great pride in one's work is healthy and productive pride.
- That personal sense of satisfaction and pleasure that comes from something accomplished or a quality possessed.
- Having a proper sense of one's own value and the correct level of respect for the importance and value of one's personal character, life, efforts and achievements as opposed to having no confidence and no sense of worth.
- That personal feeling of satisfaction because of an achievement or possession that one is especially pleased to have accomplished and is fully satisfied with (i.e. their grandchildren were their pride and joy or the gold medal I won at the Olympics is my pride and joy etc.).

Unhealthy pride embraces the following:

- Having a feeling of superiority and a haughty attitude. This type of pride is shown by somebody who believes (often unjustifiably) that he or she is better than others. A person who has this kind of pride will often not mix with those they consider their social inferiors. This pride is arrogant it exalts oneself above others and even God, and will treat those it looks down to and believes are inferior to them with disdain and at its peak with cruelty and destruction. It causes quarrels, strife, arguments, fights and even wars.
- Having the biggest ego of all, a person at this level of pride sees themselves at the top of humanity and views themselves as always being right. They believe they are equal to God or even a god themselves and are so egotistical that they think the whole world revolves around them.

ISAIAH 23:12

Virgin Daughter of Sidon in Cyprus you will have No Rest.

- **Isaiah 23:12:** And he said: "You (Tyre) will no more exult, O oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon (Zidon in KJV); arise, cross over to Cyprus (Chittim in KJV), even there you will have no rest."

Virgin daughter of Sidon: the word daughter is a term often applied to a beautiful city or town. In Scripture Jerusalem is pictured as the mother city and the lesser towns on Mount Zion (the hill Jerusalem sits on) are referred to as her daughters. Here Tyre is pictured as the daughter of Sidon meaning that the nation of Tyre was birth out of Sidon. The word virgin in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*b^ethuwlah*) it can refer to a city, a nation, a state or a maid or bride or to a virgin in its truest sense. It literally means to separate a virgin from her privacy. When the expression, "Virgin daughter," is applied to a nation, city or state it carries the following seven ideas:

1. Of being pure in contrast to being defiled or deflowered, but not to sexual purity, but to never knowing defeat, once a city or nation had been defeated it would be referred to as being defiled or deflowered by the conquering enemy.
2. The expression, "O oppressed virgin daughter" when applied to a city or nation could be expressed in the following way, "O defiled and deflowered virgin daughter, which expresses the sense of the Hebrew word (*b^ethuwlah*) in that the nation has now been separated from its beauty, pride and glory.

3. The LORD when inspiring Nahum to prophecy against Nineveh had him express their defeat in the following way:

- Behold, I am against you (Nineveh), declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. (Nahum 3:5).

The implication here is that Nineveh prior to their defeat where as an undefiled woman whose nakedness had never been seen, but after being defeated they are pictured as a shameful, naked, defiled and corrupt woman who all nations looked upon.

- 4 In some contexts the word virgin when applied to a nation city or state is used to express the great magnificence and beauty of the city and its power and authority over other nations and that its inhabitants are living in luxury, pleasure and great ease since they have never been defeated or suffered loss.
- 5 In ancient literature it was common to personify a city or nation as a virgin woman, firstly, because of her beauty, pride, and lasciviousness, and secondly because she had never been subdued, taken or oppressed. In contrast to this a city that had been subdued, taken and oppressed would be referred to as a city that had been deflowered, plundered, ruined and in this manner robbed of her virginity.
- 6 The expression, "O virgin daughter," carries the idea that the daughter had be raped, abused and defiled. When applied to a city it carries the same idea in that the city had been invaded by armies and robbed of its beauty and glory.
- 7 In its widest sense, "virgin daughter," carries the idea that a city or nation had never been touched, defeated, oppressed or afflicted by an enemy.

The city of Tyre is referred to as being a virgin, firstly, because of her magnificent beauty and pride and its inhabitants were living in great ease and pleasure and secondly, because up until now it had never before been subdued, taken and oppressed by enemies. Tyre was as a fortress, stronghold and sanctuary of refuge that no one could penetrate, until Nebuchadnezzar the conquering king of Babylon and his armies ransacked, plundered and brought Tyre to ruin and in this manner deflowered it of its famed virginity (beauty, triumph and prosperity).

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Cross over to Cyprus: (v12) (Chittim in KJV) Cyprus was the third largest Island in Mediterranean Sea. When Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his armies laid siege against Tyre on the mainland the people of Tyre did flee to Cyprus and dwelt in peace for seventy years (Isaiah 23:15). They recovered their former power and glory so much so that they became known as the New Tyre, but at the end of the seventy years Alexander the Great filled up the strait which separated the island from the mainland and took the New City of Tyre and in this way Isaiah's prophetic vision, "cross over to Cyprus even there you will have no rest," came to pass.

ISAIAH 23:13

Chaldeans that were Not; Assyria Destined for Wild Beasts.

- **Isaiah 23:13:** Behold the land of the Chaldeans! This is the people, that was not; Assyria destined it for wild beasts. They erected their siege towers, they stripped her palaces bare, they made her a ruin.

The King James Bible translates verses thirteen in the following way:

- Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, *til* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; *and* he brought it to ruin. (Isaiah 23:13).

Behold: comes from the Hebrew word (*idou*) it literally means to see, consider, know, perceive, understand, to have knowledge of and beware or sure of a thing. It is used in Scripture to call absolute and focused attention and indicates that what the prophet is about to say would be something unusual, remarkable, and not what would be expected in the ordinary course of events. In this context that which Isaiah was about to speak that was considered so remarkable was the fact that a people like the Chaldees formerly so little known and only considered worthy of dwelling amongst wild animals, would rise to such great power that they would be able to overturn the ancient and mighty city of Tyre.

Isaiah is saying to Tyre, "Cast your eyes upon the land and empire of the Chaldeans (i.e., the Babylonians), because even though the kingdom of Tyre was flourishing at this time and considered impregnable by its inhabitants and the surrounding nations it would be humbled and brought to ruin by the Chaldeans/ Babylonians.

The people that was not: (v13) refers to the Chaldee's, it does not mean that at first, they were of a late origin since they had dwelt in wilderness places since early ancient times, but that they had no recognised nation or kingdom. The expression also occurs in the following verse:

- They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (Deut. 32:21).

Here it carries the idea of an unknown people, rude, barbarous and wandering. The following verse shows us that even in the days of Job the character of the Chaldeans was of a nomadic race, having no established place of abode and who lived by plundering others.

- While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." (Job 1:17).

10

Clearly, "The people that was not," (v12) refers to a people that had no recognized nation or kingdom, but were a wandering and predatory race of people. Such were the Chaldeans at first, they were not a people formed into any commonwealth or kingdom until the Assyrian founded it for them: "that dwell in the wilderness," (Isaiah 23:13 KJV). Nimrod, the head and founder of the Assyrian monarchy-built Babel:

- Nimrod; was the first on earth to be a mighty man. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar, from that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh that is the great city. (Gen. 10:8-12).

Nimrod was the first builder of Babel in the land of Shinar. He built Babel in order to bring all people under one government and thereby increase his own empire and in this way Assyria became the head of the Chaldean people who at that time lived in tents and were scattered in the fields and desert places. However over time the Chaldees ultimately gained their own supremacy by their powerful priest-caste and established the Chaldean/Babylonian Empire. The following verses show that the names Babylon and Chaldea are often interchanged and signify the same kingdom and people:

- The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. (Isaiah 48:14).
- Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it. (Isaiah 48:20).
- The word that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. (Jer. 50:1).
- I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD. (Jer. 51:24).

- I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:13).

Summary of the Chaldeans: the Chaldeans were an ancient people and for a long time they were of no account, meaning they were not formed into any commonwealth or kingdom until Assyria founded it for them. Prior to this the Chaldees dwelt in the wilderness as nomads until Nimrod, the head and founder of the Assyrian monarchy, built Babel (Gen. 10:10). Nimrod built Babel so that he could bring those people, who then lived in tents, and were scattered up and down in fields and wilderness places (Isaiah 23:13 KJV) throughout the region into order and under one government and thereby establish and promote his own empire.

As the Chaldeans built their city, its towers and palaces they established power and dominion over their neighbours until they eventually grew to be the greatest of all the monarchies upon earth and from that time they became commonly referred to as Babylon or Babylonians.

Assyria destined it for wild beasts: the Assyrians had in times gone by considered the Chaldeans only fit to dwell amongst wild beasts, but now the Chaldeans had risen up in such great power and might that Isaiah in this prophetic vision sees them building up siege towers against Tyre on the mainland. History records that this is exactly what happened, after thirteen years of Babylon besieging the city of Tyre its armies brought its palaces and glory to ruin. The underlying theme here is that the extreme pride of Tyre will be brought low by a nation considered by others as being only worthy of dwelling amongst wild animals.

ISAIAH 23:14-18

Tyre will be forgotten Seventy Years then the LORD will visit Tyre.

11

- **Isaiah 23:14-18:** Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your stronghold (Tyre) is laid waste. ¹⁵In that day 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 prostitute: ¹⁶"Take a harp; go about the city, O forgotten prostitute! Make sweet melody; sing many songs, that you may be remembered." ¹⁷At the end of seventy years, the LORD will visit Tyre, and she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself (shall commit fornication in KJV) with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth. ¹⁸Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the LORD. It will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell before the LORD.

History shows that this is exactly what came to pass concerning Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Tyre thirteen years after which the inhabitants of Tyre fled and sailed to Cyprus. Here they had peace for seventy years and regained their former glory, but at the end of the seventy years Alexander the Great filled up the strait which separated the island from the mainland and took the New City of Tyre.

Tyre, shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication: (v17) though Tyre had been chastised by the LORD, she will return to her old wicked practises. The ships of all nations will once more crowd her harbours. The expression, "Tyre shall commit fornication," (Isaiah 23:17 KJV) carries the idea that Tyre will return to her old temptation, which could embrace any or perhaps all of the following: -

- Being lovers of money and worldly riches and full of covetousness and spiritual idolatry.
- Trading with strangers and foreigners to gain worldly wealth regardless of their morals, ethics and gods, even today to increase their financial gain nation's trade with countries that oppress and treat their citizens with brutality.

- Using dishonest and deceptive means, fraudulent practises and illicit ways to achieve greater wealth and global influence and power over other nations.
- Oppressing countries and nations to increase their wealth and deny those who labour of a proper wage.
- Giving herself to the lusts of all nation's like a harlot gives herself to all men, meaning Tyre will give herself to worldly riches; material possessions and luxurious and promiscuous lifestyles without giving God any thought or offering any help to the poor and needy.

The expression, "Tyre, shall turn to her hire, and commit fornication," is used of Babylon in the book of Revelation:

- All nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her (Babylon the great) sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living." (Revelation 18:3).

The King James Bible says:

- All nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her (Babylon the great) fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

Summary of Tyre's Sin: Tyre's sin was, self-exaltation, pompous pride, living to gratify covetous and they hoarded up their wealth to themselves (v18) rather than use it to help the poor.

Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the LORD: (v18) the prophecy here does not mean that this would take place immediately after the rebuilding of Tyre but much later after its seventy years of rebuilding on the Island of Cyprus and its desolation by Alexander the Great. Isaiah predicts that a time will come when money and worldly wealth will not be treasured by Tyre or used to gratify covetous passions or for the service of their pride and luxury as it previously was, but instead will be willing and freely offered for the service of the Lord and charitable uses. This particular part of the prophecy is to be fulfilled at some future period of time when the true faith of Israel would prevail in Tyre and their wealth would be devoted to the service of God. There is no doubt that there have been particular periods of history in which the prophecy was partially fulfilled at some level, but it transcends all these and travels through time until it reaches the Messiah and the Gospel. Isaiah here is predicting that a time will come when the people of Tyre would be converted to the true faith and freely give to the service of the Lord out of reverence to the true God. In Matthew we read:

- Jesus went to the district of Tyre and Sidon and a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon," and Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire," and her daughter was healed instantly. (Matt. 15:21-28).

This shows that prior to Jesus going to Tyre there were people already there who had heard of him and accepted that he was the Christ. It is also certain that while Jesus and his disciples were in the land of Tyre and Sidon they would have proclaimed the Gospel and many would have received it. Added to this many would have witnessed the healing of this woman's son and the testimony of such an amazing wonder would have spread throughout the countryside and brought many to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Saviour. In the book of Acts, it is written:

- When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ⁶and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home. (Acts 21:3-6).

Here we see that there were many faithful men with wives and children and who were able to speak by the power of the Holy Spirit already in Tyre and it is certain that Paul and those with him would have proclaimed the Gospel during these seven days and that many would have received it.

History records: that in the time of Dioclesian's persecution, the Tyrians were such sincere converts to Christianity that several were prepared to die for their faith rather than deny the Lord and when this persecution was over they built a temple for the public worship of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the church of God was founded in Tyre and in other places. There is no doubt that these faithful men and women of Tyre willing gave of what they had to help those proclaiming the Gospel and help their brothers and sisters in Christ. However, the full evangelization of the whole race will not come to pass until the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Since the system of mammon is today the king of the world of capitalism, these last verses can be seen as an echo of our entire world system as it survives and prospers by cargo ships sailing on the seas and globally trading and merchandising with every other nation of the world with the goal of making as much money as one can and living a life of extreme and excessive luxury or storing it to themselves. However, the following prophetic verse shows that the LORD is storing all the wealth of the nation's up for those who belong to Him:

- Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the LORD. It will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell before the LORD. (Isaiah 23:18).

This chapter directs Christians to take their eyes off the world and look to the glory of the Lord, by carrying on their business as God's servants, and for those who have wealth to use it in the service of the Lord to expand his Kingdom and to help the poor, all money and labour that is used to further the Gospel or to aid those proclaiming it or used to help the poor can be spoken of as, "being holiness to the Lord."

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
