

Series: Isaiah
Title: Seven Comforting Words for Tyre
Text: Isaiah 23
Date: January 17, 2010
Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, NJ

Isaiah 23: 1: The burden of Tyre.

Tyre was a great seaport city in Phoenicia, the daughter city of Zidon. We will learn about it in the order that the LORD gives it here in our text.

Proposal: This is a word of mercy to God's elect in this world. These words of judgment from the LORD will harden those who trust in this world's riches. But for God's elect, these words of the LORD will come forth in power and deliverer them in Christ. It would do so in the day when this prophecy came to pass, and it will do so in our day.

I. FIRST WORD—HOWL, MOURN.

Isaiah 23: 1: 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.

Tarshish and Chittim

These are two colonies of Tyre. These are the Gentiles—names of two sons of Javan

Genesis 10: 5: By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations—

The first word from the LORD to those who were so dependent upon Tyre, who were enriched by her, who considered Tyre their life, is this: “Howl. Mourn. Weep, because the rumors you heard in Cyprus are all true, the harbor that has been the source of all your income, your livelihood, is laid waste!

The picture is what I am doing here this morning, “spreading the word that Tyre is destroyed.” God shall make this word effectual in the hearts of those he put in Christ.

How badly is Tyre destroyed? So that there is no house; so that there is no entering into Tyre.

II. SECOND WORD—BE STILL, BE SILENT—

Isaiah 23: 2: Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle

Illustration: When we chasten our children—remove something that has hindered them from heeding our word—we tell them they can cry, but cry silently. Why? They are not allowed to cry in rebellion against their father. That is the word here.

The LORD's elect children are being stripped of all that would come between them and God. He says, that they can mourn, but only in silence, not in rebellion against the LORD.

James 1: 19: Brethren, Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Lay aside your thoughts, your wisdom, your anger and rebellion, and receive your Father's word with meekness. This word is able to save your souls.

Isaiah 23: 2: Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3: And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

Be silent, thou who have been replenished.

Tyre has been “a mart of nations.” All the nations sold their products in Tyre. From Tyre the merchants came over the sea on great ships. Both the merchants and those to whom they took their merchandise were enriched through this port of Tyre.

The example: the seed of Sihor--the Egyptians raised great crops in the delta from the fertile, great waters of the Nile River. They brought those crops to Tyre and from Tyre, the merchants of Zidon carried those goods to the inhabitants of the isles, to the nations. The inhabitants of the nations would sell those goods in their shops, as well as live of those things. Not only had the LORD laid waste Tyre, but he had laid waste Egypt and all those who depended upon Tyre to bring them products.

Illustration: The reaction to the earthquake in Haiti. You remember the world’s reaction to the attack in New York City. Imagine if a major, economic capital such as New York City totally wiped out. Tyre was the Wall Street of the whole land. The LORD has not only devastated Tyre, but Moab, Syria, Ethiopia and Egypt, lesser Babylon (the Chaldeans), Dumea, the desert of Arabia, Israel, even Judah.

That is what I am here telling you this morning. This world and all the goodness of it can not save you. It has been devastated.

NOTICE A WORD—“Replenished”--v2: “thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have REPLENISHED.” The word is “filled in abundance.” Not only had they been supplied what they needed, but they had been supplied more than what they needed so much so that they had grown to look upon their merchandise, their buying and selling, upon the merchants coming from Tyre as their life. Now the LORD has cut it off.

Put yourself in their shoes: They are devastated in their hearts. They are thinking, “How am I going to feed my children? How I am going to provide for my house? Put food on the table, clothes on their backs, pay the bills? They are crying because they have no idea how they will live, how they will go on.”

Illustration: Pray the Lord give you all a building. The Lord will break this world’s economy to make it affordable for you.

Brethren, he will take everything away from us, to make us behold that Christ has put away our sin and to keep us trusting him alone. The LORD says that they can mourn but mourn in silence, not rebellion. Consider what the Lord is teaching you.

III. THE THIRD WORD IS A WORD OF REBUKE

Isaiah 23: 4: Be thou ashamed, O Zidon:

The merchants had worked all their lives. They were up early before the sun came up and off to work. They were hard workers. They had built great businesses. They were contributors to building a great city and other cities. The people were just like folks in our day, hard-working, seeking security in this life, a good life for their families and their children. All looked honorable. (Turn to Ezekiel 27: 4-25.)

Isaiah 23: 4: Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea,

saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

The Sea Hath Spoken

Throughout scripture the sea represents “spirit.” The spirit within a sinner is full of the world and self-righteousness and produces no fruit unto God. When God speaks into the heart he has made, he makes his children truly ashamed of that old, worldly, self-righteous spirit of flesh.

All their labor had spoken for itself. The LORD says to them, “You have brought forth no children, no young men and no virgins.” As long as we think we have life in our earthly security, we have no life in the LORD. No refuge in the LORD. No salvation in the LORD. No fruit of rejoicing. Nothing they created was able to provide them refuge from the overflowing scourge that came upon them.

Isaiah 23: 5: As at the report concerning Egypt, *so* shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. 6: Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7: *Is* this your joyous *city*, whose antiquity *is* of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

The pain of the Egyptians was that they had no Passover Lamb, their firstborn died.

Those of Tyre had lived of the world in great affluence while their city was flourishing, yet now they should be very coarsely and roughly used; they should not ride on horses, or be drawn in carriages, but should be obliged to walk on foot, and be led or driven into a foreign country, where they should be, not as inhabitants, but as sojourners and strangers; and should be used, not as freemen, but as captives and slaves.

Yet, for those who God put in Christ this will all be well. They will be pained by this chastening. But they will be led away, not captives of Satan and of sin and death, but of Christ the Master.

IV. THE FOURTH WORD IS TO CONSIDER WHO HAS DONE THIS AND WHY

Isaiah 23: 8: Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning *city*, whose merchants *are* princes, whose traffickers *are* the honourable of the earth?

Who could possibly overthrow a people whose very merchants are all princes! This is the crowning city--all the kings in the earth want this city protected—those who profit from her traffic are the very honorable men of the earth!

Isaiah 23: 9: The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, *and* to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

The LORD of hosts hath purposed it.

Isaiah 10:33: Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled.

Isaiah 14:24: The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand:

Here is why? There is no glory but the Father of glory.

To stain the pride of all glory, *and* to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

The Father has purposed his name alone must be glorified, in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The LORD of hosts hath purposed it...

Ephesians 3:11: According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Look down to verse 11:

Isaiah 23: 11: He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant *city*, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

In all of these burdens—upon Moab, Syria, Ethiopia and Egypt, the Chaldeans, Idumea, Arabia, Israel and Judah—we have seen 5 burdens which dwelt with self-righteousness and in Tyre we see our other problem which is worldliness—Tyre was the economic center of it all—all this judgment was for the sake of his Son Christ Jesus our Lord and those the Father gave to him in eternity.

The LORD of hosts is doing this entire work according to his eternal purpose to save a people in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now, go back with me:

Isaiah 2: 6:...they be replenished from the east,...**7: Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither *is there any* end of their treasures;...11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 22: Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? 3: 1: For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,**

The LORD described the king of Assyria as a flood of water:

Isaiah 8: 7: Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: 8: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

The first time the LORD destroyed the world in judgment it was with water. That is exactly the same illustration the LORD of hosts is giving in all these burdens—the judgment of God--as the king of Assyria passed over the land like water.

This judgment shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

(I will show you this in more detail next time) all of these judgments of Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Chaldea, Dumah, Arabia, Judah and Israel is the sin that kept God's elect from God. In these burdens, we see what Christ bore in his own body on the tree in place of his people when he who knew no sin was made sin for us. The only ones who survived the flood in Noah's day were in the Ark. So it is in this judgment. Isaiah declared the gospel to Ahaz, saying, "If you will not believe on the Lord, you will not be saved." He declared this salvation is in Immanuel, Christ Jesus, God with us.

Isaiah 8: 13: Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be* your fear, and *let him be* your dread. 14: And he shall be for a sanctuary;

That is the picture here. The LORD is stretching forth his hand, in type, to judge the earth. But for those he put in Christ, this judgment fell upon Christ Jesus, Immanuel, purging his elect of the sin of self-righteousness and of worldliness.

Those For Whom Christ Died Must Be Made to Believe on Christ.

The only true and lasting riches that any sinner has in this earth are “the riches of the full assurance of understanding, the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col 2: 2, 3.) So the remnant must be stripped of every false way, turned to the LORD to behold him high and lifted up that they might trust in no other.

V. THE FIFTH WORD IS: LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND.

Isaiah 23: 10: Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: *there is no more strength.* 11: He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant *city*, to destroy the strong holds thereof. 12: And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

Thou shalt no more rejoice

The LORD speaks this word into the hearts of his redeemed, revealing in us that all our strongholds are vanity. He will allow us no rejoicing in the former things: the sea, the kingdoms, all our strongholds, even in other Gentile lands that we might pass over to—they would find no rest in those places. Neither shall any for whom Christ bore this wrath of judgment.

What will be instrument that the LORD will use?

VI. BEHOLD THE LAND OF THE CHALDEANS

As they looked over their land, the land that had been theirs for so long, the LORD says,

Isaiah 23: 13: Behold the land of the Chaldeans;

The Chaldeans—Babylon would be the instrument the LORD would use to bring this upon Tyre. This is another way the LORD pollutes the pride of men.

At the time, this prophecy was delivered, Babylon was nothing. It was the Assyrians who were reigning in the whole land.

Isaiah 23: 13: This people [Chaldeans. Babylon] was not, *till* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof;

That which Tyre and Zidon regarded as nothing while they lived in luxury and worldliness—the Chaldeans, Babylon—that very people they regarded as little and powerless would be the instrument the LORD would use to devastate Tyre.

Isaiah 23: 13:...and he brought it to ruin. 14: Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

The Key is to Notice the Regard For the Instrument Used

It is not so much the Assyrian or Babylon or later Alexander—all who warred against Tyre and devastated it--that we need to focus on here, but the fact that the instrument the LORD uses to strip his true elect and bring them to himself is regarded as nothing by this world.

1Corinthians 1:26: For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* 27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to

confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28: And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

VII. THE GOSPEL WE PREACH. .

Isaiah 23: 15: And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. 16: Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.

Babylon ruled over Tyre 70 years, the time of king Nebuchadnezzar. But when Babylon was destroyed, Tyre was freed.

This is the gospel we preach. Christ was forgotten for a period of time when Christ was made sin for his people on Calvary's cross. Babylon appeared to reign.

Mark 15: 34: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

But in that separation of judgment, by Christ's death he conquered Babylon, satan, sin, death and hell for his people. And when he came out of the grave his people came out with him.

That is the picture here: as long as Babylon reigned, God's elect in Tyre were forgotten, but when the LORD conquered Babylon he delivered Tyre. **15:...after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. 16: Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.** What a good description of a God's saints—in themselves harlots, but making sweet melody praising Christ alone—that we may be remembered by our heavenly Father.

How is it that this one who in herself is a harlot, has reason to sing and rejoice.

Isaiah 23: 17: And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre,

Isaiah 54: 1: Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD...7: For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8: In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

As for the rest of the world, after Christ was crucified things went right back to normal and remain so unto this day. So it was with Tyre.

Isaiah 23: 17:...and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

AS FOR HIS SAINTS IN THE MIDST OF TYRE. to those whom the LORD has instructed in truth in the heart through this stripping and chastening--after this trial, **Thou shalt no more rejoice in this world's treasures, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon...18: And her merchandise and her hire shall**

be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

AS FAR AS THIS WORLD'S MERCHANDISE. Though the inhabitants of this world know it not, all the merchandise and the hire of the inhabitants of this world, is under the power of the LORD which he uses to provide for those that dwell before him in his Son.

Illustration: We live in a nation suffering great trial economically. Some of us here have suffered it as well.

But thanks be unto our God, he is faithful to take everything away from his elect, to make us behold that Christ has put away our sin and to keep us trusting him alone. And he will provide everything we need in this earth using the merchandise of this world to do it.

James 1: 9: Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

Amen!