

Ezekiel 27:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

Analysis

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass (תַּבַּל וְיָוָן וְמִשְׁכַּח וְכָל נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְכָל כֵּל נְחָשֶׁת, benefesh adam ukheli nechoshet)—the horror: nefesh adam ("souls of men") were merchandise, traded alongside bronze vessels! Javan (Ionia/Greece), Tubal and Meshech (regions in Asia Minor, modern Turkey) supplied the slave trade. The casual pairing of human souls with metal objects reveals the dehumanizing logic of commerce divorced from God's image-bearing dignity (Genesis 1:27).

This indictment exposes Tyre's moral bankruptcy beneath commercial success. God's law prohibited kidnapping for slavery (Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7), and the prophets consistently condemned slave trading (Amos 1:6, 9; Joel 3:6). Revelation 18:13 lists "slaves and souls of men" among Babylon's merchandise, showing that end-times commercial empire repeats Tyre's sin. Economic systems that commodify humans invite divine destruction.

Historical Context

The ancient slave trade was extensive, with prisoners of war, kidnap victims, and debt slaves comprising major commodity flows. Javan (Ionian Greeks) were known slave traders, mentioned in Joel 3:6 as buying Judean captives from Phoenicians. Tubal and Meshech appear together throughout Scripture (Genesis 10:2, Ezekiel 38:2-3), regions in eastern Asia Minor known for metalworking and slave supply.

Archaeological evidence from Greek and Phoenician sites confirms extensive slave markets. Bronze vessels from these regions were highly prized for quality.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What modern economic systems trade in "souls of men" through exploitation, trafficking, or dehumanizing labor practices?
2. How does pairing human trafficking with ordinary commerce (bronze vessels) normalize evil—and how should Christians respond?

Interlinear Text

יָוָן	תּוּבַל	וְמֶשֶׁךְ	הֵמָּה	רָכְלָיו	בְּנֵי פֶשַׁם
Javan	Tubal	and Meshech	H1992	they were thy merchants	the persons
H3120	H8422	H4902		H7402	H5315
אָדָם	וְכֵלֵי	נְחָשֶׁת	נָתְנוּ	מִסְכָּרְךָ:	
of men	and vessels	of brass	they traded	in thy market	
H120	H3627	H5178	H5414	H4627	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 10:2 (Parallel theme): The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.

Isaiah 66:19 (Parallel theme): And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

Revelation 18:13 (Parallel theme): And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

1 Chronicles 1:5 (Parallel theme): The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.

Ezekiel 39:1 (Parallel theme): Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

Joel 3:3 (Parallel theme): And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

Ezekiel 32:26 (Parallel theme): There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living.