

Isaiah 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

Analysis

Ships of Tarshish—long-distance trading vessels—symbolize commercial enterprise and economic pride. 'Pleasant pictures' (or 'beautiful craft') may reference ornate decorations or the ships themselves as objects of aesthetic pride. Divine judgment targets even human ingenuity and beauty when these become sources of self-glory. This anticipates Revelation 18's lament over Babylon's commercial fall, demonstrating that economic achievement apart from God is ultimately vanity.

Historical Context

Tarshish (likely southern Spain) represented the western extremity of ancient trade. Solomon's Tarshish fleet (1 Kings 10:22) brought exotic wealth, symbolizing international commerce and prestige.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do we make idols of economic success or business achievement?

2. What does judgment on 'ships of Tarshish' teach about the temporal nature of commercial enterprise?

Interlinear Text

ל	כָּל	אֲנִי	וְתַרְשִׁישׁ	ל	כָּל	שְׂכֵי
H5921	H3605	H591	H8659	H5921	H3605	H7914
		And upon all the ships	of Tarshish			pictures

וְהָיָה:

and upon all pleasant
H2532

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 10:22 (Parallel theme): For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

Isaiah 23:1 (Parallel theme): 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.