

Isaiah 23:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

Analysis

The LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire—The verb paqad (visit) carries double meaning: divine intervention that can be either blessing or judgment. Here it's both: God ends the seventy-year desolation, but Tyre returns to etan (hire/prostitute's wages). **And shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth** (בְּאָרֶץ עַל־מֶמְלָכֹת עַמִּים)—The verb zanatah (commit fornication/prostitution) with 'all kingdoms' emphasizes indiscriminate trade relations. Tyre's restoration brings no moral improvement—she resumes morally neutral commerce with anyone for profit.

This verse's cynicism about partial restoration is sobering: divine judgment lifted doesn't automatically mean spiritual transformation occurred. Tyre, given a second chance, returns to idolatrous commercial practices. The pattern repeats throughout Scripture: Israel freed from Egypt grumbles; exiles return from Babylon half-heartedly; churches warned in Revelation relapse. External circumstances change, but hearts remain hard unless regenerated by God's Spirit. The prophetic warning: outward reformation without heart transformation is temporary and superficial. Only the New Covenant's promise—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33)—breaks this cycle.

Historical Context

After Babylonian and early Persian-period weakness, Tyre regained commercial importance by the 4th century BC. She traded impartially with Greeks, Persians, Egyptians—whatever paid. This 'fornication with all kingdoms' continued until Alexander's final destruction (332 BC) ended Phoenician Tyre forever. Modern Tyre (Sur, Lebanon) is an entirely different entity.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why does removal of external judgment not automatically produce internal repentance and transformation?
2. How do people and institutions repeat the same sins after experiencing consequences, and what does this reveal about human nature?
3. What is the difference between external reform and the heart transformation the gospel produces?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹאכַל זְמָן שְׁבֻעָה יָמִים
H1961 And it shall come to pass after the end H7093 H7657 H8141 H6485

לְאָתַנְתָּה הַיְהוָה אֶת צָרָתָה וְשָׁבַת הַיְהוָה
that the LORD H853 Tyre and she shall turn to her hire H3068 H6865 H7725 H868

עַל בָּאָרֶץ מְמָלָכָה וְתַּחֲזִיקָה כָּל אֶת הַיְהוָה
and shall commit fornication H2181 H854 H3605 H4467 H776 H5921

בְּאָדָםָה: גַּם
upon the face of the earth H6440 H127

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 3:4 (Parallel theme): Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

Revelation 19:2 (Parallel theme): For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.