

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** (וַיִּזְנֶהָ עִם־כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ עַל־) (פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה)—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—whoever 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

וְהָיָה הַ	מִקֵּץ יוֹם	שִׁבְעֵי יָמִים	שָׁנָה	וְהָיָה
H1961	And it shall come to pass after the end	of seventy	years	will visit
	H7093	H7657	H8141	H6485
יְהוָה	אֶת צֶרֶס	וְשָׁבָה הִיא	לְאַתְנָןָהּ	
that the LORD	H853 Tyre	and she shall turn	to her hire	
H3068	H6865	H7725	H868	
וְזָנָתָהּ	אֶת כָּל	מַמְלָכֹת וְ	הָאָרֶץ	עַל
and shall commit fornication	H854	H3605	with all the kingdoms	of the world
H2181		H4467	H776	H5921
פָּנָיו	הָאֲדָמָה:			
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.