

Isaiah 23:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD—This stunning reversal transforms the preceding judgment into eschatological hope. The very sachar (merchandise) and etnan (hire/prostitute's wages) that symbolized spiritual adultery will become qodesh (holiness) to Yahweh. Deuteronomy 23:18 forbids bringing a prostitute's wages into God's house, yet Isaiah prophesies exactly this—redeemed and sanctified. **It shall not be treasured nor laid up**—Unlike hoarded wealth, this commerce serves immediate needs: **for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing**.

This eschatological vision (compare Isaiah 60:5-11; Zechariah 14:20-21) anticipates Gentile wealth flowing to Zion. Tyre's commercial genius, purged of idolatry and greed, serves God's people. The Hebrew le-sovah (for sufficiency/satisfaction) and li-mekasseh atiq (for durable clothing) emphasizes practical provision, not luxury. Wealth serves need, not greed. This transformation prefigures the gospel age when 'the wealth of the Gentiles' enriches Christ's church (Isaiah 61:6). It pictures radical redemption: even prostitution's wages, symbol of degradation, can be sanctified for God's glory. Nothing lies beyond Christ's cleansing power—the ultimate hope for all sinners.

Historical Context

Historically, some see partial fulfillment in Persian-period Phoenician support for rebuilding Jerusalem's temple (Ezra 3:7), when Tyre's timber and trade served God's purposes. Full fulfillment awaits the New Creation when all nations bring glory into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24-26). The vision transforms Tyre from opponent to supporter of God's redemptive purposes.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this verse demonstrate that God's redemptive power can transform even the most corrupt systems to serve His kingdom?
2. What does it mean that wealth formerly used for sin becomes 'holiness to the LORD'—how does the gospel redeem not just people but vocations and resources?
3. How should this eschatological vision shape Christian attitudes toward commerce, wealth, and economic activity in the present age?

Interlinear Text

ל	א	יהוָה	קָדֵשׁ	וְאַתָּנָה	סְחָבָה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה
H3808	H3068	H6944	H5504	H868	H1961	And her merchandise	and her hire	shall be holiness
לִשְׁבָּרֶת יְמֵינֵךְ	לֹא	יָצַקְתָּ	לֹא	יָצַקְתָּ	כִּי	וְאַצְרָמָה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה
H3427	H3588	H2630	H3808	H686	H1961	shall be for them that dwell	nor laid up	it shall not be treasured
לְשָׁבֵעַ הַלְּאָכֶל	לְאָכֶל	סְחָבָה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	לְשָׁבֵעַ	הַלְּאָכֶל	לְפָנֵי
H7654	H398	H5504	H1961	H3068	H6440	And her merchandise	to eat	before the LORD
עֲתִיקָה וְלִמְכָסָה	clothing and for durable	H6266	H4374					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 72:10 (Parallel theme): The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Exodus 28:36 (Holy): And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

Galatians 6:6 (Parallel theme): Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.