

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

וְהִיא הַ	סִחֲרָהּ הַ	וְאֶתְנֶנָּהּ הַ	קֹדֶשׁ	יְהוָה	לֹא
H1961	And her merchandise	and her hire	shall be holiness	the LORD	H3808
	H5504	H868	H6944	H3068	
יֵאָצֵר	וְלֹא אֵל	יִחָסֵן	כִּי	לִישְׁבֵי יָם	
it shall not be treasured	H3808	nor laid up	H3588	shall be for them that dwell	
H686		H2630		H3427	
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה	יְהִי הַ	סִחֲרָהּ הַ	לֶאֱכֹל	לְשִׂבְעָה	
before the LORD	H1961	And her merchandise	to eat	sufficiently	
H6440	H3068	H5504	H398	H7654	
וְלִמְכֹסֶה	עֲתִיקָהּ:				
clothing	and for durable				
H4374	H6266				

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.