

Isaiah 23:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city,
whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the
honourable of the earth?

Analysis

Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city? (מי יעצץ זאת על-) (צור הטעטיקה)—The question demands identification of the planner behind Tyre's judgment. The epithet ha-ma'atirah (the crowning/crown-giving) signifies Tyre's role as kingmaker: she established colonies, appointed governors, and crowned merchant princes. **Whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth**—Phoenician traders held aristocratic status. The Hebrew sarim (princes) and nikbadim (honored ones/nobles) indicate they ranked with political royalty.

Yet verse 9 answers the rhetorical question: **The LORD of hosts hath purposed it** (יהי אצבאות יעצה). The same verb ya'ats (counsel/purpose) appears in both verses. Human counsel, however noble and powerful, submits to divine decree. God's purpose: **to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.** The verb lehachel (to profane/defile/stain) and lehakel (to make light/contemptible) target human glory and honor. This passage demolishes prosperity gospel theology: economic success does not indicate divine favor. God judges proud wealth as harshly as any other pride.

Historical Context

Phoenician merchants enjoyed extraordinary social status in the ancient world. Unlike most cultures that viewed commerce as lower-class, Phoenicia elevated

traders to nobility. Kings participated directly in trade ventures. This made Tyre's judgment especially shocking—it targeted not just a city but an entire value system that equated commercial success with honor.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does modern culture crown merchants and business leaders as princes, making wealth the measure of honor?
2. What does it mean that God purposes to 'stain' or profane worldly glory and honor?
3. In what ways do Christians wrongly assume that financial success indicates God's blessing and approval?

Interlinear Text

מִזְרָחַ תִּשְׁאַל אַתָּה כִּי־מְעַטִּיכָּה הַצְּרִיךְ־תְּבִנָּה
H4310 Who hath taken this counsel H3289 H2063 H5921 against Tyre H6865 H5849

אֲשֶׁר־רַב־מִקְנָתָךְ יְהִי שָׁרֵם סְפִינָה יְהִי כְּכָבְדִּי
H834 city whose merchants are princes H5503 H3669 H8269 H3513 are the honourable

אָרֶץ:
of the earth
H776

