ISAIAH 23:8-18

8 Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose traders are princes, whose merchants are the honored ones of the earth? 

9 The LORD of Armies planned it, to desecrate all its glorious beauty, to disgrace all the honored ones of the earth. 

10 Overflow your land like the Nile, daughter of Tarshish; there is no longer anything to restrain you. 

11 He stretched out his hand over the sea; he made kingdoms tremble. The LORD has commanded that the Canaanite fortresses be destroyed. 

12 He said, “You will not celebrate anymore, ravished young woman, daughter of Sidon. Get up and cross over to Cyprus—even there you will have no rest!” 

13 Look at the land of the Chaldeans—a people who no longer exist. Assyria destined it for desert creatures. They set up their siege towers and stripped its palaces. They made it a ruin. 

14 Wail, ships of Tarshish, because your fortress is destroyed! 

15 On that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years—the life span of one king. At the end of seventy years, what the song says about the prostitute will happen to Tyre: 

16 Pick up your lyre, stroll through the city, you forgotten prostitute. Play skillfully, sing many a song so that you will be remembered. 

17 And at the end of the seventy years, the LORD will restore Tyre and she will go back into business, prostituting herself with all the kingdoms of the world throughout the earth. But her profits and wages will be dedicated to the LORD. They will not be stored or saved, for her profit will go to those who live in the LORD’s presence, to provide them with ample food and sacred clothing.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Tyre was part of a group of maritime city-states. Ezekiel and Isaiah spoke against Tyre for its arrogance (Ezek. 28; Isa. 23). Tyre had great wealth. 

B Part of a rhetorical question: How can the wealthy men of Tyre and Sidon, who were treated like princes one day, become poor the next day? 

C “Bring down her pride” (NIV). While the land of Israel was said to be exceptional because of its relationship to the Lord and His majesty (Ps. 47:4; Isa. 4:2; Ezek. 24:21), it had become arrogant. The prophets spoke against pride. 

D They traded precious metals with Tyre. 

E God will sovereignly use His kingdom to humble all other kingdoms. 

F The term is synonymous with Baal worship. 

G Instead of prosperity, Tyre and Sidon would experience poverty. 

H A city linked with Tyre. 

I A place that had great sources of timber used in making ships. It was also known for copper. 

J “The Babylonians” (NIV). 

K Known for extremely cruel and evil practices, Assyria defeated the North Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. 

L Tyre was compared to a harlot. At the end of seventy years, Tyre would return to prominence, but this time to give money to the temple of the Lord. 

M “Good food and fine clothing for the Lord’s priests” (NLT).
1. GOD IS JUST (Isa. 23:8-12)
   • Isaiah posed a rhetorical question about who would destroy Tyre.
   • He pointed to God being the One who would bring Tyre down, raising His hand against Tyre and Sidon.
   • Even those fleeing the region would not escape God’s judgment.

2. GOD IS ACTIVE (Isa. 23:13-14)
   • Isaiah pointed to Assyria’s defeat of the early Babylonians (Chaldeans) as evidence of God’s power in the affairs of His creation.
   • The same fate awaited Tyre and Sidon.

3. GOD IS HONORED (Isa. 23:15-18)
   • Isaiah declared that Tyre would be desolate for a period of seventy years.
   • After that time, God would allow Tyre to make a comeback.
   • However, He would ensure that Tyre’s great profits would advance His plan by benefiting His temple and its priesthood in Jerusalem.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

*God controls the rise and fall of nations and powers.*

• God is just in all He does.
• God actively directs the affairs of His creation.
• God’s plan includes all nations honoring Him.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What are some common human responses to being given an abundance of wealth or power?

- Riches and power aren’t evil in and of themselves; it’s the attitude and response to having them that matters most.
- If an individual or nation prospers but doesn’t acknowledge God, all will ultimately be lost.
- Today’s text foretells the destruction of Tyre, a city of great power and wealth that failed to acknowledge God as the source of its success. God is sovereign over all nations and powers of the earth.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 23:8-12

Isaiah 13–23 tell of God’s judgment against enemy nations of Judah. Why is it important to trace the judgment of Tyre and other nations to God?

- Enemy nations faced judgment because of their pagan ways and rebellion against God.
- Tyre was a strong, influential force in the ancient world with undeniable prominence. Attributing its imminent downfall to the Almighty affirms God’s sovereignty.
- God is just, administering judgment according to His divine plan.
- God’s plans cannot be thwarted.
- There is no hiding from God (Heb. 4:13).

How would you explain the difference between godly and ungodly pride?

- Pride suggests we don’t need God’s help. It’s an attitude that exhibits an exaggerated sense of one’s own ability and accomplishments.
- Pride separates people from God (Prov. 16:5). As His followers, we must avoid allowing pride to reside in our hearts.
- As Creator and Ruler over all, God alone deserves to be exalted.

How does God’s view of wealth and success differ from that of our present culture? Explain.

- God empowers those who are His to produce wealth (Deut. 8:18).
- Wealth and material possessions are temporary and have no eternal value.
- God’s followers are to set their minds and hearts on things above, not on earthly things (Col. 3:2).

ISAIAH 23:13-14

Why did Isaiah encourage his hearers to reflect on the defeat of the Chaldeans (early Babylonians)?

- Throughout Scripture and in the present, Babylon symbolizes opposition against God.
- Tyre’s wealth and power mirrored Babylon’s; so would its defeat.
- Remembering what God has already done testifies to His power.

When have you experienced assurance that God is always at work?

- Recall a situation or circumstance in which you experienced opposition and God clearly intervened.
- Emphasize that God is always working behind the scenes, moving in ways we sometimes don’t recognize.

ISAIAH 23:15-18

How does comparing Tyre to a prostitute paint a vivid picture for us of what dishonoring God looks like?

- Selling oneself for gain is the essence of prostitution. Tyre’s lifestyle was filled with self-absorption.
- Tyre would fail to willingly honor God, even after experiencing God’s judgment.
- God’s followers are to make life decisions that bring honor to Him.

Why would God restore Tyre after destroying it?

- Tyre’s revival would benefit God’s people, in accordance with His plan.
- God’s plans always align with His divine purposes.

Imagine a world in which all nations honored God. What would that look like? What contributions can we make to that end?

- Honoring God includes holding His Word in high regard and conforming to it.
- Evangelizing and discipling others helps spread God’s message and encourages others to honor Him.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

Amid the revelry that exists in today’s world, how can we remain hopeful that God’s plan is at work?

- This week’s memory verse (Isa. 14:24) reminds us all things occur according to God’s plan.
- In God’s economy, value and worth aren’t based on power, position, or popularity.
- Whether in the present or future, no one will escape God’s judgment. We can be confident all humankind will be judged accordingly.
- God never sleeps nor slumbers (Ps. 121:2-4). Because all creation is under His watchful eye, we can trust He actively directs all that occurs across the earth.
- Ultimately, all people will glorify God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11).
- Personal Challenge: Be intentional in noting signs of God’s power throughout the week. Jot down what you observe. Make a list to share at the next group time.
OBJECT LESSON

A GPS-ENABLED DEVICE

The Global Positioning System, more commonly known as GPS, is an electronic, navigational device. Originally used for military purposes, the technology was made available to consumers in the early ‘80s and has since been used in a variety of ways—the most popular being mapping. Many of us have GPS in our cars, on our mobile devices, in boats, and the like. When seeking directions or guidance, GPS plots our course, providing a specific plan to help us reach our destination. (If available, demonstrate GPS on a mobile device, using a map app.)

Draw the group’s attention to the memory verse: Isaiah 14:24. Say: Just as using GPS provides a course of action, a plan to help us get from here to there, God has a plan—a course of action—for all creation. In His sovereignty, God alone controls all that takes place in heaven and on earth. Both the spiritual and natural realms are under His dominion.

Today’s passage demonstrates God’s sovereignty and His plans for those who fail to acknowledge and surrender to His lordship and power. Read Isaiah 23:8-12. Ask: Has humanity’s definition of success created attitudes, thought patterns, or lifestyles that have caused us to dishonor God?

Say: May what happened to Tyre serve as a reminder to all of us: worldly power and influence are no match for an Almighty God. Judgment is certain for those who oppose and refuse to surrender to God. Scripture teaches a time is coming when God’s universal reign will be recognized by all nations, and He will be honored as He deserves.

Acknowledging we may not always understand God’s plan, but we can always trust His plans and purposes. Close in prayer, confirming that God reigns supreme. Thank Him for His active presence in our lives.

GOD’S PLANS

In His plans, God establishes various circumstances to reveal His sovereignty. Isaiah’s message from day one was about God’s plans “to profane, defile (lehallal) the pride of mankind that brings glory to people.”1 Anything that detracts from God’s plan is unacceptable.

Tyre and Sidon were prosperous places that had great influence upon the surrounding nations, including God’s chosen people. These two places were reliant on themselves. Yet, God desires to have the kind of relationship with humankind in which we place our full trust in God and not in ourselves. We aren’t to place reliance upon our own abilities but in God’s sovereign grace. A relationship with God implies that we accept being in unity and harmony with God.

Yet, it appears by the way humankind lives that having a personal relationship with God is impossible and outlandish—for many seem to have no regard for God nor His Word. Instead, some trust in themselves. It seems that some have made themselves into gods, idolizing their own accomplishments.

The Bible states that there are seven things the Lord “hates” (Prov. 6:16-19). The Lord condemns idolatry. The reason that He hates idols is that they are worthless objects of desire. In the ancient Near East, humans understood their gods were distant and aloof. The gods of the ancient Near Eastern world had their own communities and lives (along with their personal issues and concerns) and weren’t generally concerned with humanity. The only way a person could summons the gods was to create an idol representing a god, and hope that he or she might appear.

However, the God of Israel—the God of the Bible—offered something totally different: an opportunity for humans to know Him. In fact, humans have the potential to know Him intimately. It’s on the basis of the relationship between God and man that the Bible instructs man how to treat other human beings. In other words, there’s a functional purpose for relationships to know God intimately and to know one another in a similar fashion. God is just in all that He does, and all nations and people should honor Him.