
“LET THE METAPHORS
SPEAK TO YOU”

An LDS Commentary on Isaiah

ANN N. MADSEN

Dedicated to those who live in the time about which Isaiah prophesied

Isaiah 23

This prophecy begins with the destruction of Tyre.

23:1. Tyre was the dominant Phoenician city-state until the fifth century BC. Though much smaller than Babylon, Tyre was known for its wealth. It is often spoken of in connection with Sidon. The seafarers of Tyre and Sidon were the merchants of the sea in that day.

This enabled them to be wealthy because of trade. Due to their wealth, they established colonies on the coasts of the Mediterranean.

In verse 8, we read the question, “Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth.” The answer to the question is in verse 9: the LORD planned to bring low the “pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.”

23:4. The “fortress of the sea” likely refers to Tyre. “The sea” is *Yam* in Hebrew. *Yam*, or the sea, was the Canaanite god of Tyre (and Sidon), who is mourning the destruction of Tyre:

I have neither been in labour nor given birth

I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters. (Isaiah 23:16)

The fact that no children were born to the daughter of Sidon is the first hint that Tyre will eventually be called a “prostitute forgotten” (see 23:16).

23:10. The NIV translates verse 10, “Till your land as they do along the Nile, Daughter Tarshish, for you no longer have a harbor.”

Compare Isaiah 3–4 (where a daughter of Zion is addressed) with Isaiah 23:10 (where the symbol of a daughter of Tarshish is used to represent the land). Also, see verse 12 where the virgin daughter of Sidon is now crushed.

23:13. The LORD has given an order that Phoenicia’s fortresses be destroyed.

23:16. Verse 15 prophesies that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, but at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute (see 23:17). At the end of seventy years, Tyre will return to her hire as a prostitute and will trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.

23:18. Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for Jehovah, not stored or hoarded, and her citizens will be prosperous. After 70 years, this prophecy was indeed historically fulfilled.

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