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In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

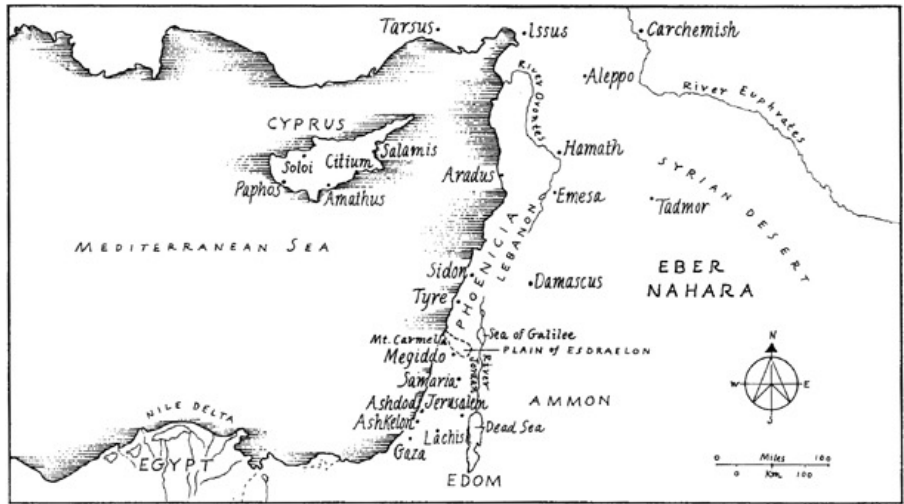
Security Nets Will Fail. Only the LORD Endure.

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts: Isaiah 23; Zech 9:3-4; Ezek. 28:1-17; Amos 1:9; Is. 2:11, 17; 40:6-8; Ps. 91:1-2; Rev. 18:10-24

We now reach the final oracle in Isaiah's collection of judgments against the nations (chapters 13–23), a section that sits inside the larger unit of "Lessons in Trust" (chapters 13–35). In these chapters, the Lord is teaching Hezekiah—and every generation after him—that it is utter folly to place trust in the nations, in human systems, or in impressive economies. These nations aren't strong; they are temporary. They're not independent; they're under God's command. Some of them will even turn to Him before all things come to an end. The Lord is showing that trust placed anywhere but in Him is misplaced trust.



Isaiah 23 focuses on Tyre, the great Phoenician seaport. If Babylon represented power and culture on the eastern side of the ancient world, Tyre represented trade and wealth on the western side. The Phoenicians—situated between the sea and the mountains—became the world's maritime merchants, sending ships as far as Spain, creating colonies around the Mediterranean, and accumulating wealth so massive that the prophets described it as "heaped up like dust." Tyre looked unshakable—successful, wealthy, ancient, deeply rooted, and globally connected. Yet Isaiah announces its collapse, revealing that what appears secure to the human eye is often the most fragile before the Lord.

This oracle poses a challenge to Judah: Why envy Tyre's prosperity when Tyre's prosperity is one breath away from judgment? Why trust the nations when all the nations serve God's purposes? Isaiah is helping God's people see reality: security nets built on human achievement, wealth, and power will fail—but the Lord endures forever.

1. TYRE LOOKED SECURE, BUT GOD EXPOSED HER FALSE SAFETY

The chapter opens with a cry over Tyre's destruction: "*Wail, ships of Tarshish! For Tyre is destroyed. There is no house and no harbor.*" (Isaiah 23:1, TLV). The great fleets returning from the western edges of the Mediterranean—including Tartessus in Spain—receive the unimaginable news: there is no home port left. Tyre, the bustling commercial empire, the marketplace of nations, has collapsed. The scene shifts from sea to coastline as Sidon, Egypt, and the whole trade network reels with shock. Tyre had transported grain from Egypt, timber from Lebanon, and luxury commodities across the Mediterranean. Her merchants walked like princes because Tyre's wealth made them seem untouchable.

Yet the prophet hears the sea itself lamenting like a bereaved parent, saying it has “not reared sons or daughters” (Isaiah 23:4). Egypt trembles when the report reaches them (23:5), not merely because of economic loss but because Tyre’s fall means Assyria’s reach is coming closer. Tyre, the “*exultant city whose antiquity is from days of old*” (23:7), seemed immortal—rooted, prosperous, and experienced in survival. But her vitality, history, and global reach mean nothing when the Lord stretches out His hand. What Tyre trusted in, what the nations admired, and what Judah was tempted to envy—all vanished in a moment.

Isaiah is preaching a hard truth: everything humans build, no matter how mighty or wealthy or enduring it seems, can crumble in an instant. This is the danger of “security nets.” We cling to things that look reliable—wealth, systems, nations, economies—forgetting that only God endures. He shakes what we think is unshakeable to remind us that our trust belongs in Him alone.

2. GOD HIMSELF ORDAINED TYRE’S FALL TO CRUSH HUMAN PRIDE

The core question becomes explicit in verse 8: “*Who planned this against Tyre, the crowning city... whose merchants were princes?*” Who could bring down a city that seemed invincible? Isaiah answers: “*ADONAI-Tzva’ot has planned it, to defile the pride of all glory, to shame all the honored of earth.*” (Isaiah 23:9, TLV). Tyre’s downfall is not an accident of history, nor the result of Assyria’s strength alone. Behind the political movements, commercial networks, and military campaigns stands the purposeful hand of God. He stretches out His hand over the sea (23:11), shakes kingdoms, and commands that strongholds fall. The Phoenicians may have believed the sea belonged to them, but the Lord shows it belongs to Him.

Ezekiel exposes the heart of Tyre’s sin: pride rooted in wealth and power. The “prince of Tyre” declares, “*I am a god... I sit in the seat of the gods in the heart of the seas!*” (Ezekiel 28:2). He boasts in his wisdom, trade, and wealth (28:3–5). His heart is exalted because of his beauty and splendor (28:17). But God says plainly, “*You are a man, and not a god.*” (28:9). Wealth had deceived Tyre into believing she was self-made, self-secured, self-sufficient. God breaks that illusion through judgment—not simply to humble Tyre but to teach His people that pride is falsehood and that all human “glory” is temporary.

Isaiah even points to Babylon as further proof (23:13). If Babylon, the eastern commercial empire, could fall under Assyria’s attack, how much more could Tyre fall? In other words: human strength cannot save. Human systems cannot guarantee safety. And if the mighty nations cannot secure themselves, Judah must not turn to them for refuge. Only the Lord is refuge—never the nations, never the markets, never the “security nets” we gather.

3. GOD WILL RECLAIM ALL WEALTH, SO TRUST HIM ALONE

Isaiah then reveals an unexpected twist: Tyre’s judgment will last seventy years—like the length of one king’s life—and then the city will return to her trade (Isaiah 23:15). The prophet uses the image of an aging prostitute walking the streets with a harp, trying to sing songs to recapture customers (23:16). It is a sad picture—Tyre returning to her old ways after the Lord “visits” her (23:17). This is both a picture of God’s grace and human stubbornness. Many people say they will change when crisis hits, but when relief comes, they return to their former ways. Tyre illustrates how easily grace can be met with ingratitude.

Yet the message ends with hope. Tyre’s wealth—once used for pride and self-glory—will ultimately be “*set apart to ADONAI*” (23:18). It will no longer be hoarded but used to bless those who dwell in God’s presence. This points forward to Isaiah 45, 49, and 60, where the wealth of

the nations flows into Zion for the glory of God. Judah is being told: “Don’t envy Tyre’s prosperity. Don’t seek the nations’ approval. Everything they possess will one day belong to the Lord.”

This is the real choice before God’s people: sell themselves to the nations for temporary security, or remain faithful to the Lord and receive eternal security. All human wealth, systems, and glory will fall—Revelation 18 shows that Babylon (the symbol of the world system) collapses in a single hour. The merchants weep, the sailors grieve, and heaven rejoices. So why trust what the world trusts? Why pursue what cannot endure? Only the Lord is worth our trust.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah brackets this entire section with Babylon on the east and Tyre on the west—two cities that represent everything the world admires: Babylon with her culture and brilliance, Tyre with her wealth and maritime power. Together, they symbolize the full spectrum of human achievement. Yet Isaiah declares that both will fall, both will be humbled, both will be judged—and both must ultimately submit to the God of Israel. His message is simple: *Do not trust the nations. Do not fear them. Do not envy them. They are not ultimate. God is.*

Isaiah 13–23 builds a theological case:

- The **glory** of the nations equals nothing.
- The **scheming** of the nations equals nothing.
- The **wisdom** of the nations equals nothing.
- The **vision** of the nations equals nothing.
- The **wealth** of the nations equals nothing.

Why trust them? Why exchange faithfulness to God for alliances with systems destined for fire? Why build our lives on “security nets” that cannot endure the shaking hand of the Lord? The answer is clear: **There is no security except in Him. Everything else will fail. Only the LORD will endure.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you personally feel the pull to trust in human “security nets” rather than the Lord?
2. Why does God often expose the emptiness of worldly wealth and power before His people?
3. How does Isaiah 23 challenge modern believers who envy the prosperity of the world?
4. In what ways does Tyre represent the temptations facing believers today?
5. What would it practically look like to place your full trust in the Lord instead of in human systems?

CLOSING PRAYER:

ADONAI, we confess that our eyes often drift toward the wealth, strength, and success of the world. We see Tyre, and we envy. We see Babylon, and we fear. But You alone endure. Help us lay down every false security—every net we’ve built with our own hands. Humble our hearts where pride has grown. Strengthen our trust where fear has weakened it. Teach us to cling to You as our only refuge, our only hope, our only true security. May we be a people who dwell in Your presence, satisfied with what You provide, and confident in Your unshakeable kingdom. In Yeshua’s name, amen.