

YOU CAN “HAVE IT ALL!”

23 *The oracle concerning Tyre. Wail, O ships of Tarshish!—because [Tyre] is destroyed and left without house or harbor. The report has come to them from the isle of Cyprus. ²Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland—you who were enriched by the merchants of Sidon who crossed the seas. ³Across the great waters came the grain of the Shihor; the harvest of the Nile was stored [at Tyre], she supplied the nations. ⁴Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, and you, O fortress of the sea, for the sea declares, “I have neither been in labor nor given birth; I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters.” ⁵When word reaches Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report about Tyre. ⁶Cross over [all the way] to Tarshish [with the report]; wail, you inhabitants of the coastlands. ⁷Is this your jubilant city, whose origin goes back to ancient times, whose feet have taken her to colonize distant places? ⁸Who planned this against Tyre, [the city] who bestows crowns, [the city] whose merchants are princes and whose traders are famous throughout the earth? ⁹Jehovah of hosts planned it, in order to defile the splendor of every glorious thing, to humble all those who were famous throughout the earth. ¹⁰Overflow your land like the Nile, O colony of Tarshish; for you are no longer restrained [by the motherland of Tyre]. ¹¹He has stretched out his hand over the sea, he has made the kingdoms tremble; Jehovah has issued an order concerning Canaan, namely, that her fortresses be destroyed. ¹²He declared, “You shall no longer rejoice, O virgin daughter of Sidon, you who are now ravaged.” Get up, cross over to Cyprus; but even there you will find no rest. ¹³Look at the land of the Chaldeans—those people who are now of no account. The Assyrians have made it a place for desert creatures. They erected their siege towers; they overthrew its fortresses and turned it into ruins. ¹⁴Wail, you ships of Tarshish, because your fortress has been destroyed.*

¹⁵When that day occurs Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king’s lifetime. After the seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the Song of the Prostitute: ¹⁶Take your harp, walk through the city, O prostitute who has been forgotten. Play a sweet melody [on your harp]; sing many songs, so that you may be remembered. ¹⁷At the end of the seventy years Jehovah will visit Tyre. She will once again take up her profession; she will perform the role of a prostitute with all the kingdoms of the world that cover the face of the earth. ¹⁸But her earnings and her profits will be dedicated to Jehovah. They will not be stored up or hoarded [for herself; on the contrary], her earnings will purchase abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell in the presence of Jehovah. (Isa. 23:1-18)

Introduction

You can “have it all!” You can live a life that will make the rich and famous look like paupers! Yes, **you** can “have it all!” And that “all” means everything, and a lot more!

Does this sound like a T.V. personality trying to seduce you to purchase what might prove to be a winning ticket for the lottery? No, not at all; on the contrary, this is the Word of God! Read the Scriptures carefully and you will find there a re-occurring theme: the LORD, as the sovereign God, owns the wealth of the world: *“The earth is*

Jehovah's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; ²for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters" (Psl. 24:1-2.) Furthermore, He shall finally bestow that wealth upon those who serve Him: "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God" (Eccl. 2:26.)

Sad to say, the false preachers of a "health and wealth" gospel have twisted into a perversion this promise made to the Christian in the Word of God. Whereas such so-called evangelists put the emphasis upon immediate gratification and almost portray God as a servant who awaits our bidding to bless us with an immediate abundance of material prosperity, we may more accurately state this teaching of Scripture as follows: If you devote yourself to the LORD, He will at last bestow upon you the wealth of the whole world forever with His own divine blessing.

Yes; we really can "have it all;" if we are willing to do it God's way.

I. You Can "Have It All;"

...If You Do Not Behave Like "Tyre" (Isa. 23:1-14)

The prophecy of Isaiah 23 focuses on Tyre; this seaport located north of Israel that became the greatest maritime power in the ancient world. The ships of Tyre sailed as far as men dared to sail in those days, sailing west the length of the Mediterranean Sea, then sailing the Atlantic south along the coast of Africa and on to India, or sailing north from the mouth of the Mediterranean to the British Isles (H.C. Leupold, *A Commentary on Isaiah*, p.361.)

According to verse 2, Tyre, (also identified with her sister city, Sidon,) was the great merchant who crossed the seas; she was the center of international commerce. A prime example of her commercial trade is given in verse 3. The merchants of Tyre were the transporters of the vast grain reserves of Egypt to the nations of the world—the ships of Tyre would load up with grain along the banks of the Shihor (a branch of the Nile River,) that great grain harvest was then transported to the home port of Tyre and from there her ships set sail for a vast variety of foreign ports.

But now, as the ships of Tarshish (a colony of Tyre located in Spain) head back to their home port of Tyre; stopping at the island of Cyprus, they receive the report: "*[Tyre] is destroyed and left without house or harbor" (vs. 1b.) Sidon (the sister city of Tyre,) is told to hang her head in shame: "Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, and you, O fortress of the sea, for the sea declares, I have neither been in labor nor given birth; I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters" (vs. 4.) Formerly, Tyre and Sidon controlled the seas; their vessels filled the seas and stopped at every port. But now the sea is heard to poetically declare that she is not acquainted with the vessels of Tyre and Sidon; those vessels can no longer be*

found sailing the waters of the Mediterranean—so great and so devastating is the turn about in the fortunes of this once dominant international business empire.

What about us? Do we take seriously the biblical counsel concerning the uncertainty of riches? Do we appreciate and take heed to the counsel of Proverbs 23:4-5, *“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. ⁵Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle”*? We need to take to heart and put into practical application the counsel of 1 Timothy 6:17, *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”*

Verses 5-6 reveal the international ramifications of the conquest and downfall of Tyre. When the report of Tyre’s downfall reaches Egypt, it causes great anguish to the Egyptians; men will be distressed because Egypt was dependent upon Tyre to transport her grain to the markets of the world (vs. 5.) The news of Tyre’s fall spreads as far as Tarshish, and all along the way it leaves nations mourning the loss of Tyre and their own consequent loss (vs. 6.)

As the nations receive the incredible news of Tyre’s downfall, they are dumbfounded and ask, *“Is this your jubilant city, whose origin goes back to ancient times, whose feet have taken her to colonize distant places?”* In verse 7 the nations are expressing their astonishment; they cannot comprehend that such a thing could happen to Tyre, the city they have always known as being filled with joy, as being from ancient times (i.e.; firmly established with a long history of financial prosperity,) and as being a colonizer of distant places.

Verse 8 expresses their next logical question, *“Who planned this against Tyre, the city who bestows crowns, the city whose merchants are princes and whose traders are famous throughout the earth?”* Tyre was the great power who bestowed crowns; she dictated to the world and honored those nations who cooperated with her,) who could possibly have seized her crown and done such a devastating thing to her?

The answer to the question of the nations is now given: *“Jehovah of hosts has planned it”* (vs. 9a.) Verse 11, stressing the sovereignty of the LORD, declares that He stretched out His hand over the sea, He shook the kingdoms, and He gave the commandment to destroy the strongholds of the merchants not only of Tyre, but of the whole coastline of Canaan. In verse 12, speaking directly to the great Phoenician maritime empire, the LORD declares, *“You shall no longer rejoice, O virgin daughter of Sidon, you who are now ravaged. Get up, cross over to Cyprus; but even there you will find no rest.”* By identifying Sidon as a *“ravaged virgin daughter”*—a virgin who has been raped—the LORD is symbolically referring to the conquest and plunder of this once great commercial center. The refugees of

Sidon are called to flee to the island of Cyprus, but not even there shall they be spared from the pursuing conquerors.

In verse 13 the LORD identifies the instrument He is using to carry out His righteous judgment against this proud and prosperous international business empire: *“Look at the land of the Chaldeans—those people who are now of no account. The Assyrians have made it a place for desert creatures. They erected their siege towers; they overthrew its fortresses and turned it into ruins.”* The people of the Mediterranean coastlands had heard what the Assyrians had done to the Chaldeans (whose land was located far to the east, the region also known as ancient Babylon)—defeating them, making them of no account, turning their land into a habitation for desert creatures—these very Assyrians, at the LORD’s command, are now on the march against Tyre and all her allies. Verse 14 indicates that the impact of the Assyrian invasion shall be felt as far away as Tarshish: the ships of Tarshish shall wail because their fortress (the mother port of Tyre) has been reduced to ruins.

Verse 9 goes on to state the reason why the LORD’s judgment is about to fall upon Tyre: *“Jehovah of hosts planned it, in order to defile the splendor of every glorious thing, to humble all those who were famous throughout the earth.”* The LORD of hosts has performed this work in order to bring down the pride of this once great and corrupt commercial empire.

What about us? Do we allow our riches to make us arrogant? To make us conceited? To cause us to look down upon those who have less and distinguish ourselves from them so as not to associate with them? Let us not fail to appreciate the fact that God does not look upon a man’s wealth, but upon his heart. God has made both the rich and the poor, and they are equal in His sight. A man, no matter what his financial status, is created in the image of God and for that reason has dignity and is to be treated with respect. When our son or daughter begins to date some one, is our primary concern that they date and marry someone of equal or preferably higher financial and social status? Or do we recognize that the highest priority should be for our son or daughter to build a lifetime relationship with someone who is spiritually rich, devoted to Christ, and who will help him or her grow in their relationship with Christ and their service to Him?

The message of Scripture is that some day you can “have it all;” if you do not behave like “Tyre.” We must remember that the LORD is the Giver of wealth. We must humbly acknowledge that He sovereignly bestows wealth according to His good pleasure—He has given us the abilities and the opportunities to gain whatever measure of wealth we may enjoy. We must handle what wealth He grants us according to His principles—gaining it by integrity, receiving it with thanksgiving, using it with discretion and generosity. We must patiently and confidently await the day when He will bestow the wealth of the world upon His children in Christ. We must remember that the LORD Himself is more important

than wealth. We must not pursue the wealth of the world as an end in itself in place of God. We must never view wealth as being our “god”—our security, our source of happiness and fulfillment.

II. You Can “Have It All;”

...If You Serve the LORD Your God (Isa. 23:15-18)

According to verse 15a, from the date of its overthrow, Tyre shall be forgotten for “*seventy years.*” For a divinely appointed period of time (symbolically designated as “*seventy years,*” this great empire of international business and trade shall lie prostrate under God’s hand of judgment.

But at the conclusion of this divinely appointed length of time, this great international empire of business and finance shall re-emerge, fitting the description given in verses 15-17, namely, as an international “prostitute” of materialism:

After the seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the Song of the Prostitute: ¹⁶Take your harp, walk through the city, O prostitute who has been forgotten. Play a sweet melody [on your harp]; sing many songs, so that you may be remembered. ¹⁷At the end of the seventy years Jehovah will visit Tyre. She will once again take up her profession; she will perform the role of a prostitute with all the kingdoms of the world that cover the face of the earth. (Isa. 23:15-17)

“The Song of the Prostitute,” probably a reference to a sailors’ drinking ballad, will truly depict what will happen in the case of Tyre. Tyre will be like the old forgotten prostitute who makes a comeback, once again strolling the streets, playing her harp, singing her songs, and seducing all passersby (vs. 16.) Note: The original Tyre long ago passed off the scene of history; the “resurrected” Tyre spoken of in verses 15-17 prophetically represents a future nation (or future nations) that come to occupy the same position and possess the same attitudes that characterized ancient historical Tyre. Examples of such “resurrected Tyres” would include the Roman Empire of the first century and the American nation in the latter part of the twentieth century—great “prostitutes” of materialism who seduce men away from God by offering them the wealth and “good life” of this present world.

But, according to verse 18, in the final analysis, all of “Tyre’s” wealth shall be *“dedicated to Jehovah.”* (Note: The Hebrew particle, ו, usually rendered “and,” can at times be rendered “but;” this latter rendering seems to be appropriate in this particular passage.) The LORD tells us that the world and all that it contains belongs to Him: *“The earth is Jehovah’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; ²for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters”* (Psl. 24:1-2.) At the end of history the LORD will finally “re-confiscate” the wealth of the world and bestow it upon those *“who dwell in the presence of Jehovah”—*

those who give Christ the pre-eminence in their lives and over every part of their lives. The redeemed of the LORD come to enjoy the treasures of the world as *“abundant food and fine clothing”* (vs. 18c.)

Some day you can “have it all;” if you serve the LORD your God. Ironically, the way to acquire the wealth of the world and to enjoy it forever with God’s blessing, is by giving your heart to Jesus and living your life in devotion to Him. Speaking of the one who would hold back his life from Christ and would seek to acquire the wealth of the world for himself, our Lord asks, *“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?”* (Lk. 9:25) But speaking to those who surrender their lives to Christ and put Christ first in all things and before all else, the Apostle Paul declares, *“All things are yours ... the world ... life ... death ... the present ... the future—all are yours,²³ and you belong to Christ”* (1 Cor. 3:21-23.)

Conclusion

Yes, you can “have it all!” and that “all” means everything, and a lot more! This is the teaching of the Word of God: The LORD, as the sovereign God, owns the wealth of the world, and He shall finally bestow that wealth upon those who serve Him.

Yes; you really can “have it all;” if you are willing to do it God’s way:

... Jehovah God is a sun and shield; Jehovah bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. ¹²⁰Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in you. (Psl. 84:11-12)