



14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. (Prov 31:13-14)

4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. 6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. 11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. (Isaiah 54:4-11)

God presents us with the perfect picture of a wife and mother in Proverbs 31:10-31. She is like a Merchant Ship bearing her wares to many lands. The use of the term for woman here is *polysemous* – having more than one meaning – and may also be applied to the true Church just as the woman of Revelations 12 is so designated.

We have highlighted before the similarities of the Church to a ship at sea, and I will rehearse those similarities in today's devotion. You may recall that the Church may be compared to a ship in several particulars. Let's review some of those particulars below:

- 1 A ship is designed to always move FORWARD. Its bow and rigging will only afford a forward movement. This compares precisely with the Church. It is conceived for forward movement only and should never move to flank or rear.
- 2 A ship is intended only to remain for a brief period in port. Its greater function is to sail the pelagic waters of the ocean seas. The Church, too, lingers for short periods in

worship and fellowship, but then must weigh anchor and sail into the sometimes turbulent and stormy waters of the sea.

- 3 A ship is designed and constructed for the sea. Its very concourse are the deep waters of the sea. Its hull is pitched and polished to glide through those waters. But when the sea gets into the ship – instead of the ship into the sea – the results will always be tragic. The same is true of the Church. It is made to navigate the ocean seas of humanity. It is intended to proceed to all ports of call carrying its precious cargo of the Word of God to those who have walked in darkness. The Church is made to be IN the world; but when the world seeps into the Church, ruin and mayhem will follow. As an example, simply look at the uncertain message being propagated by the modern church today concerning marriage, homosexuality, abortion, promiscuity, obedience to parents, respect of others, decency of apparel, music of worship, manner of worship, use of apostate Bible versions, etc.
- 4 The Tall Ships of the past relied upon the winds for propulsion through the waters. The main, and lesser, sails were set to catch the wind from every angle – and sometimes even to sail against a contrary wind. When the wind died, the ship remained dead in the water. The sails of the Church are designed to catch the Winds of the Holy Ghost and propel the Church where it should go. If we navigate in the wrong direction, the Winds of the Spirit will cease and we, too, will be dead in the waters of the world. *8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:8)
- 5 A ship at sea without means of navigation will end in shipwreck. If the clouds obscure the stars, and there is no compass, how shall the crew know the way? The Church has the Great North Star of Christ upon which to rely, and it is the brightest Star in the Heavens – the DAYSTAR! *19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.* (2 Peter 1:19) But every well-engineered craft has a double assurance of its systems. In addition to that DayStar, we have the Word of God which is also illuminated and personified by that DayStar. So we have a sure Chart and Compass by which to navigate the mysterious waters of the ocean seas of life. A ship needs a means of directional control so that it may comply with the navigators commands. That means of directional control is afforded by the Helmsman's control of the RUDDER. Our Helmsman, too, is Christ; and the RUDDER is His Word. If we do not know the Way, we resort to the One who is the *Way, the Truth, and the Life*. The RUDDER can be the greatest tool for proper navigation, but a false RUDDER and Helmsman can lead to sudden ruin: *4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.* (James 3:4-8) A false teacher, or preacher, can do far more damage than no teacher at all. A false Bible (NIV, NASB, NRSV, NKJV) can likewise turn the ship from its course leading to almost certain destruction. A ship navigating the Pacific from Long Beach Harbor to Manila Bay will not reach its destination if the course navigated is off by one degree for those thousands of miles.
- 6 The worthy seagoing vessel is made to withstand the most terrific of gales and gusts of

the sea. In unusually heavy storms, the great ship may turn its bow directly into the wind, cast anchor, and hold fast until the storm subsides. The Church has seen moments in its history when it must 'weather the storm' by casting anchor and facing the storm head-on. That Anchor which holds our position and prevents drift in the church is the Rock of our Salvation – Jesus Christ. He is the anchor of our soul as well as the Church. *17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an **anchor of the soul**, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.* (Heb 6:17-19) The modern church has no anchor at all.

7 The great ship provides carriage for much and varied merchandise, but also for every different tribe, race, and nation of passenger. So the Church is to teach and preach the Gospel to all the world. To those who disbelieve still, it will result in damnation; but to those who believe and are called, it is salvation. But, like the church, if the ship navigates the waters poorly and with an uninformed navigator, all passengers are subject to the same fate of being lost at sea. We are either One with Christ, or one with the Dark Prince of the Air. There is no middle ground at sea – we are either on the ship, or overboard. *2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* (Eph 2:2-3)

The modern church might be compared with the great sea power of the ancient world – Tyrus. They were very wealthy and increased with the riches of the known world. Ezekiel 26 & 27 gives a full account of the doom of that rich sea power. Their ships had beautiful and multi-colored sails. They were a proud gathering of seaman. Much of their military defense grew to be mercenaries of other regions. But God said that He would utterly destroy the seaport of Tyre making its foundations so flat that fishermen would dry their nets thereon. God warned that great seaport that He would bring Nebuchadnezzar against it to destroy its proud walls. This God did: *12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. 13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. 14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.* (Ezek 26:12-14) This was fulfilled in detail. *they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.* When Alexander the Great passed by, Tyre had moved to an island about one mile from shore. They believed themselves invulnerable there, but Alexander had the stones from the walls cast into the sea, along with even the dust, and made a causeway therewith out to the island, and Tyre was the victim of a terrible destruction. Fishermen today dry their nets on Tyre's old foundation.

Conclusion

I fear the sea power of Tyre (or Tyrus) is much like the modern church. It has established itself as a prostitute of false doctrine and built for herself impressive structures and opulent garments, but they have not opted for that simple and pure White Robe of Righteousness that is the offer of the Bridegroom to which she tentatively aspires. Better to have a Man-o-War of the DAYSTAR LINE sailing flank speed in constant search of the pirates of the sea as our Ship of the Church than the lavishly accommodated RMS Titanic of the White Star Line. We are engaged in a war for the souls of men. Rather than lose those souls by prideful and erroneous navigation, we should rather seek to find and save that which was lost.