

Isaiah 18-20

Highlights from Ethiopia

March 20, 2022

Background: Egypt was ruled by Ethiopia for more than 100 years, including the time of Isaiah's prophecy. During the unrest caused by the threat of Assyria, ambassadors from Ethiopia (& Egypt) are sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah in Jerusalem, to enlist his help in forming an alliance to protect from Assyria. Isaiah counsels Hezekiah to refuse this alliance and trust in God alone Who will bring a mighty deliverance which will preserve the nation of Judah. This will occur when God comes to the end of His patience with Assyria and their sin as a nation. The ambassadors from Ethiopia are told to go back home and wait to see what God will do. Second Chronicles 32 contains a portion of this event and can be read along with Isaiah 18-20.

Rather than going verse-by-verse over these chapters and examining the history, I propose to select highlights from each chapter which apply to the Christian life.

I. Chapter Eighteen, verses 4-5

Assyria posed a great threat to Judah. She was an enemy of God's people. We too have enemies that come against us in various forms, enemies of the mind and heart, of temptation, of adversity and circumstances beyond our control. They threaten to undo us and to destroy us (Ephesians 6:10-17). Notice how God responds: "I will look from My dwelling place quietly." Nothing excites God, He is calmly in control, in Him we may find peace and rest in the midst of storms. In His time "as soon as the bud blossoms . . . he will . . . cut off and remove the spreading branches." At just the right time, at the peak of the trouble, God will destroy the opposition. In Him we can place our trust, He is our mighty Deliverer.

II. Chapter Nineteen, verses 11-12, 20

The princes of Zoan are mere fools; The advice of Pharaoh's wisest advisers has become stupid. How can you men say to Pharaoh, "I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings"? Well then, where are your wise men? Please let them tell you, And let them understand what the LORD of hosts Has purposed against Egypt. (11-12) . . . for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. (20)

There are many verses in the Bible that warn us against trusting the wisdom of men or even our own (Eg.: Proverbs 3:5-6). Egypt is warned not to put their trust in their wise men and political counselors, for not only can they not tell the future, they cannot offer wise guidance in the present. It is a word to us to put our trust in the Lord our God and not in the wisdom of human beings. When we come to the end of our rope and things look the bleakest, cry out to the Lord and He will send a Savior and a Champion to bring deliverance. We can always put our confidence in God the Father and His Son, our Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Chapter 20, verses 5-6

Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?'" Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?'"

Because Egypt fled to their wise men, the spiritists and mediums, and the idols of their making, rather than to the Lord, they were overtaken by Assyria, their greatest fear. They were humiliated in captivity and dismayed at the error of their ways. We always have a choice: to trust God or to trust their ways of humanity; but we will pay the price either way. Put your hope in God alone!