

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Chapter 18 - 20

3/12/14

Chapter 18 Study Notes

A Prophecy Against Cush - Verses 1-9

Woe to the land of whirring wings along the rivers of Cush ² which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. ³ All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it. ⁴ This is what the LORD says to me: "I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." ⁵ For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches. ⁶ They will all be left to the mountain birds of prey and to the wild animals; the birds will feed on them all summer, the wild animals all winter. ⁷ At that time gifts will be brought to the LORD Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers—the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the LORD Almighty.

ISAIAH 18:1

This prophecy was probably given in the days of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19: 20). The king of Ethiopia had heard that Assyria's great army was marching south toward them. He sent messengers up the Nile asking the surrounding nations to form an alliance. Judah was also asked to join, but Isaiah told the messengers to return home because Judah needed only God's help to repel the Assyrians. Isaiah prophesied that Assyria would be destroyed at the proper time (37:21-38).

ISAIAH 18:3

This is a signal of the doom of Ethiopia and Assyria's victory over Ethiopia (see 20:1-6).

Chapter 19 Study Notes

A Prophecy Against Egypt - Verses 1-15

A prophecy against Egypt: See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear. ² "I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian— brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. ³ The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists. ⁴ I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. ⁵ The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. ⁶ The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up. The reeds and rushes will wither, ⁷ also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river.

Every sown field along the Nile will become parched, will blow away and be no more.⁸ The fishermen will groan and lament, all who cast hooks into the Nile; those who throw nets on the water will pine away.⁹ Those who work with combed flax will despair, the weavers of fine linen will lose hope.¹⁰ The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all the wage earners will be sick at heart.¹¹ The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the wise men, a disciple of the ancient kings"?¹² Where are your wise men now? Let them show you and make known what the LORD Almighty has planned against Egypt.¹³ The officials of Zoan have become fools, the leaders of Memphis are deceived; the cornerstones of her peoples have led Egypt astray.¹⁴ The LORD has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around in his vomit.¹⁵ There is nothing Egypt can do— head or tail, palm branch or reed.

ISAIAH 19:1

Egypt, the nation where God's people were enslaved for about 400 years (Exodus 1), was hated by the people of Israel. Yet Judah was considering an alliance with Egypt against Assyria (2 Kings 18:17ff). But Isaiah warned against this alliance because God would destroy Assyria in his time.

ISAIAH 19:11-15

Egypt was noted for its wisdom, but here its wise men and counselors were deceived and foolish. True wisdom can come only from God. We must ask him for wisdom to guide our decisions, or we will also be uncertain and misdirected. Are you confused about something in your life now? Ask God for wisdom to deal with it.

Verses 16-25

¹⁶ In that day the Egyptians will become weaklings. They will shudder with fear at the uplifted hand that the LORD Almighty raises against them.¹⁷ And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the LORD Almighty is planning against them.¹⁸ In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of the Sun.¹⁹ In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border.²⁰ It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them.²¹ So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them.²² The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing^[b] on the earth.²⁵ The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

ISAIAH 19:19, 23

After Egypt's chastening, it would turn from idols and worship the one true God. Even more amazing is Isaiah's prophecy that the two chief oppressors of Israel, Egypt and Assyria, would unite in worship. This prophecy will come true "in that day," the future day when Christ comes to reign.

ISAIAH 19:20

When Egypt calls to God for help, he will send a savior to deliver them. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is available to all who call upon him. We, too, can pray and receive his saving power (John 1:12).

ISAIAH 19:22

Egypt is but one Gentile nation that will bow before the Lord. Philippians 2:10, 11 says that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. So we shouldn't be surprised that Egyptians and Assyrians are part of the "every." Each of us is part of that "every," too. We may bow now in devotion, or later in submission.

ISAIAH 19:23-25

In Jesus Christ, former enemies may unite in love. In Christ, people and nations that are poles apart politically will bow at his feet as brothers and sisters. Christ breaks down every barrier that threatens relationships (see Ephesians 2:13-19).

Chapter 20 Study Notes

A Prophecy Against Egypt and Cush – Verses 1-6

In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it—² at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, "Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet." And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot.³ Then the LORD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush,⁴ so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt's shame.⁵ Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be dismayed and put to shame.⁶ In that day the people who live on this coast will say, 'See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?'"

ISAIAH 20:1

Sargon II was king of Assyria from 722-705 B.C., and this event happened in 711 B.C. Isaiah graphically reminds Judah that they should not count on foreign alliances to protect them.
Cross References:

ISAIAH 20:2

God's command to Isaiah to walk about naked for three years was a humiliating experience. God was using Isaiah to demonstrate the humiliation that Egypt and Ethiopia would experience at the hands of Assyria. But the message was really for Judah: Don't put your trust in foreign governments, or you will experience this kind of shame and humiliation from your captors.

ISAIAH 20:2

God asked Isaiah to do something that seemed shameful and illogical. At times, God may ask us to do things we don't understand. We must obey God in complete faith, for he will never ask us to do something wrong.