

## Isaiah 18-20-

- The next oracle against Israel's neighbors and foes
  - Still looking at an overall pattern
    - Babylon was a message of how the enemy and his forces go down in flames, but Israel rises from the ashes
    - Philistines taught that the throne of David will rise again, even if it appears to have faded, and it will crush all opposition
    - Moab taught that the Lord will offer refuge to a small remnant of Israel's enemies (gentiles), who will be sheltered in Israel's shadow and share in her kingdom
      - But if God is willing to offer mercy for some gentiles, He is equally willing to hold Israel accountable and will bring judgment against Ephraim
  - Now we look at Cush, which is the ancient name for the land of Ethiopia

[Is. 18:1](#) Alas, oh land of whirring wings  
Which lies beyond the rivers of Cush,

[Is. 18:2](#) Which sends envoys by the sea,  
Even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters.  
Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth,  
To a people feared far and wide,  
A powerful and oppressive nation  
Whose land the rivers divide.

[Is. 18:3](#) All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth,  
As soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see it,  
And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it.

[Is. 18:4](#) For thus the LORD has told me,  
"I will look from My dwelling place quietly  
Like dazzling heat in the sunshine,  
Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

- Following the same pattern we've been using, we want to know what country first
  - The land beyond the rivers of Cush (and divided by rivers in v.2)
    - Cush is Ethiopia (Psa 68:31 uses the same Hebrew word)

- And even though it says the land “beyond the rivers,” remember from whose perspective this scene is described - the Jewish perspective
- If you were in Israel looking in Ethiopia’s direction, you look south, southwest
- The first thing in your line of sight is the northeast corner of Ethiopia, where two rivers dominate the geography: the Blue Nile and the Atbara rivers
  - The land beyond those rivers is still Ethiopia
- Verse 2 describes the people of this land
  - Sea-going people, on distinctive ships who sails resembled wings of an insect (v.1)
  - They were tall and had minimal body hair (smooth) by Jewish standards
  - They were powerful and feared nation
    - Josephus identifies Ethiopia as the kingdom Sheba, as in the Queen of Sheba
- Then Isaiah says that there will be a signal, a standard raised on the mountains that every human on earth will see
  - For the Lord will emerge from his dwelling place...quietly
    - But the word shaqat also means to grant relief
  - The Lord appears like a dazzling hot sunshine, and like a refreshing cloud
    - Consider these verses

[Zech. 14:5](#) You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

[Zech. 14:6](#) ¶ In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.

[Zech. 14:7](#) For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

[Zech. 14:8](#) ¶ And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

[Zech. 14:9](#) ¶ And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

[Rev. 19:11](#) ¶ And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

[Rev. 19:12](#) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

[Rev. 19:13](#) He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

[Rev. 19:14](#) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

- So it seems that v.3 refers to a worldwide sign, like the one referenced in Zech 14
- And v.4 talks about the Lord leaving His dwelling place to bring relief
  - Looking like a sun shining and a refreshing cloud (could this be the cloud of saints following after?)
  - Or maybe a reference to the living waters that will flow after His arrival?
- Ostensively, we're talking about Ethiopia's future judgment in return for her opposition to Israel
  - But Isaiah has obviously decided to take this conversation much further than just Ethiopia
    - Isaiah's describing the return of the Lord
      - Remember the two levels of Isaiah's teaching in this section

[Is. 18:5](#) For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms  
 And the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
 Then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives  
 And remove and cut away the spreading branches.

[Is. 18:6](#) They will be left together for mountain birds of prey,  
 And for the beasts of the earth;  
 And the birds of prey will spend the summer feeding on them,  
 And all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them.

[Is. 18:7](#) At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of hosts  
 From a people tall and smooth,  
 Even from a people feared far and wide,  
 A powerful and oppressive nation,  
 Whose land the rivers divide —  
 To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, even Mount Zion.

- Now we look at timing a little
  - v.5 says that all of this will happen like when buds are blooming and branches are spreading
    - Grape flowers are blooming ready to become grapes
      - We know that grape vines and fig trees are consistently used in Scripture to describe the nation of Israel
      - So here we have Israel blooming

[Matt. 24:32](#) ¶ “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;  
[Matt. 24:33](#) so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

- But suddenly the vine is pruned
  - The image is one of prematurely pruning
  - The events occur when it's least expected, before anyone was ready

[Matt. 24:36](#) ¶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.  
[Matt. 24:37](#) “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.  
[Matt. 24:38](#) “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,  
[Matt. 24:39](#) and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- Then in verse 6, Isaiah gets to the meat of the judgment it seems
  - “They” are left for the birds to feast on them over the entire summer

[Rev. 19:15](#) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

[Rev. 19:16](#) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

[Rev. 19:17](#) ¶ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God,

[Rev. 19:18](#) so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

[Rev. 19:19](#) ¶ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

[Rev. 19:20](#) And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

[Rev. 19:21](#) And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

- Finally, a gift of homage to the Lord results
  - People coming to the Lord, including the tall and smooth of Ethiopia
  - Coming to Mt Zion in peace rather than as an oppressor
    - Of course, this is the Messianic kingdom that follows Christ's return, taking hold with Christ ruling from the Mountain
- In total, it's a great picture of the Lord's return built into an oracle concerning Ethiopia
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- There's a beautiful symmetry to Isaiah's writing here...a chiasm
  - Verse 1 & 2...wings and rivers dividing, tall smooth men, coming to attack Jerusalem
    - In verse 6 & 7...wings, rivers dividing, tall smooth men, coming to praise the Lord
  - Verse 3... signs to the nations of Christ's arrival
    - Verse 5...a sign to the World of his imminent return
  - Verse 5 is the chiasm, Israel's blossoming again on the world stage

- What's our puzzle piece here?
  - Babylon = enemy and his forces will be defeated, but Israel rises from the ashes
  - Philistines = throne of David will rise again, even if it appears to have faded, and it will crush all opposition
  - Moab = the Lord will offer refuge to a small remnant of gentiles, sheltered in Israel's promises and share in her kingdom
    - God will hold Israel accountable and will bring judgment against Ephraim
  - Cush = Israel's enemies will be transformed into nations that pay homage to Zion

[Is. 19:1](#) ¶ The oracle concerning Egypt.

Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;  
The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,  
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

[Is. 19:2](#) "So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians;  
And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor,  
City against city and kingdom against kingdom.

[Is. 19:3](#) "Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them;  
And I will confound their strategy,  
So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead  
And to mediums and spiritists.

[Is. 19:4](#) "Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master,  
And a mighty king will rule over them," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

[Is. 19:5](#) ¶ The waters from the sea will dry up,  
And the river will be parched and dry.

[Is. 19:6](#) The canals will emit a stench,  
The streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up;  
The reeds and rushes will rot away.

[Is. 19:7](#) The bulrushes by the Nile, by the edge of the Nile  
And all the sown fields by the Nile  
Will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.

[Is. 19:8](#) And the fishermen will lament,  
And all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn,  
And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.

[Is. 19:9](#) Moreover, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax  
And the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected.

[Is. 19:10](#) And the pillars of Egypt will be crushed;  
All the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.

- Clearly this is Egypt
  - Egypt has had a much more detailed involvement in Israel's past
    - So much so that the nation of Egypt itself is used at times in Scripture as a picture of the unbelieving sinful world
    - Egypt was famously Israel's oppressor during the time of Moses
      - And in later centuries they continued to form a threat to Israel, initiating four separate wars against Israel
      - And even today
  - Not surprisingly, this oracle includes much more discussion of specific judgments than the past couple of oracles
    - Verse 1 establishes that the instigator for all that will happen is God
      - Though there are natural events, like civil war, they are still all triggered and controlled by God
    - For example, v.2 says "I" meaning God
      - God will stir up a civil war
      - Ultimately leading to a despot rising to power and ruling in a cruel fashion over the people
    - Over its long history, Egypt has experienced many civil wars and cruel pharaohs, so it's not easy to identify which one (or ones) are in view here
  - God goes further and will break down their social and religious pillars
  - And He will disrupt their natural resources, particularly the important river system of Egypt in the Nile valley
    - This would be devastating to Egypt
    - Their entire economy, as represented by laborers, will be in shambles

[Is. 19:11](#) ¶ 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"?

[Is. 19:12](#) 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.

[Is. 19:13](#) The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly,  
The princes of Memphis are deluded;  
Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes  
Have led Egypt astray.

[Is. 19:14](#) The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion;  
They have led Egypt astray in all that it does,  
As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

[Is. 19:15](#) There will be no work for Egypt  
Which its head or tail, its palm branch or bulrush, may do.

- In response to these calamities, Pharaoh seeks the advice of wise men, sorcerers and spiritists
  - They come from Zoan and Memphis, which are both major cities in southern Egypt
  - God mocks their supposed wisdom
    - Asking how can they hope to understand God through human wisdom
  - God points to the leaders and assign blame to them for leading the people astray
    - Leading them into wars against Israel and leading them in to idol worship
  - God then goes so far in v.14 as to purposefully delude and distort their understanding to cause the nation of Egypt to go even further astray
    - Ultimately leading to total unemployment and the abandonment of the land
    - Ezekiel covers this same event

[Ezek. 29:8](#) ¶ 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will bring upon you a sword and I will cut off from you man and beast.

[Ezek. 29:9](#) "The land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD. ¶ Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made it,'

[Ezek. 29:10](#) therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia.

[Ezek. 29:11](#) "A man's foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years.

[Ezek. 29:12](#) "So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands."

- We haven't seen this happen yet
  - So in a future day to come, God brings this judgment against Egypt
    - Empty for forty years
  - The scene gets more curious
- Back to Isaiah...

[Is. 19:16](#) ¶ In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them.

[Is. 19:17](#) The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which He is purposing against them.

[Is. 19:18](#) ¶ In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.

[Is. 19:19](#) ¶ In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border.

[Is. 19:20](#) It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; 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.

[Is. 19:21](#) Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

[Is. 19:22](#) The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.

- Now Isaiah begins to use an important and familiar phrase to introduce each new point...in that day
  - When we see this phrase, we know it looks forward to a prophetic day and it begins to suggest a certain special time as we've seen before
    - Let's look at the details to see if we recognize them to be the same "day" as the one Isaiah has spoken about before
  - First, Egyptians tremble in dread of Israel
    - Because of what God does on behalf of Israel
    - Judah becoming a terror to Egypt
  - The five major cities of Egypt begin to speak in the language of Canaan, which means in Hebrew
    - And they swear an allegiance to the Lord
    - And a city is renamed City of Destruction which is also translated city of sun
    - And they set up altars to the Lord rather than pagan altars
  - Then they cry out for God to save them, and he respond by sending them a savior and champion who is God himself (v.20)
    - God makes Himself known to Egypt and they will know Him and worship and sacrifice to Him
    - The strike God delivers is one that ultimately prompts healing (v. 22)
- Now we see clearly which "day" Isaiah means when he says in that day
  - The day of Tribulation followed by Jesus return and reign in the kingdom
  - A day when nations like Egypt are brought under judgment but then some are saved in faith as gentiles to join the kingdom
    - So the events Isaiah describes at the beginning of the chapter are events that occur during Tribulation
      - When rivers dry up and an evil despot (antichrist) takes rule over them and civil wars break out among the people

- And false prophets rise up to explain the calamities of Tribulation in false reasoning that God creates to confuse them

[2Th. 2:8](#) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

[2Th. 2:9](#) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

[2Th. 2:10](#) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

[2Th. 2:11](#) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

[2Th. 2:12](#) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

- Compare this language to the language we read in Isaiah v.14
- When the antichrist is revealed in the world, God sends a deluding influence on the nations so that they believe the lies of the enemy the antichrist and follow his rule
  - This is a part of God's judgment on the nations
  - Ultimately, the purpose of His strike we're told is to heal them (v. 22)
- Finishing Isaiah 19

[Is. 19:23](#) ¶ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

[Is. 19:24](#) ¶ In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth,

[Is. 19:25](#) whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

- Still in that day...
  - We find a road being established from Egypt to Assyria and a common heart established to worship God: Egypt, Assyria, and Israel
    - Could Jews in Isaiah's day imagine that?
  - Under the Romans such a road existed, called the Via Maris
    - The road by the sea, because it went by the Med sea

- But Roman times can't be the time of fulfillment for this prophecy because there was no common worship established between these three nations
  - Much less a common worship of Yahweh
- Today the Via Maris is gone, because the borders between Egypt and Israel and Israel and Syria are sealed
  - This is also a future day, in the Millennial kingdom when the world is united under Christ's rule
- But how do we reconcile this with the Ezekiel passage about 40 years of empty land in Egypt?
  - Well, back to Ezekiel

[Ezek. 29:13](#) ¶ For thus says the Lord GOD, "At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered.

[Ezek. 29:14](#) "I will turn the fortunes of Egypt and make them return to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom.

[Ezek. 29:15](#) "It will be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will not rule over the nations.

[Ezek. 29:16](#) "And it will never again be the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing to mind the iniquity of their having turned to Egypt. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD."'''

- At the end of the forty years, the land is inhabited again, but now they are a lowly nation
  - They are the least of the world's nations
  - And yet in v.16, they will know the Lord as God
- So this must be in the Messianic kingdom, after Christ's return
  - So it's reasonable to assume that the 40 years of emptiness are the first forty years of the kingdom
    - This is a part of Egypt's punishment
  - And then when people do return, the nation will become the least of all nations on earth
    - So while Israel was forced to spend 40 years wander outside their land after leaving Egypt

- Likewise, the Egyptians will have to spend the first 40 years of the kingdom living in other lands as exiles themselves
- So what's the puzzle piece for Egypt
  - Well, interestingly for both Ethiopia and Egypt, we've only see Isaiah talking about the secondary level prophecy (the one that involves the last days)
    - There hasn't been a near-term prophecy for judging these nations
    - It seems like that piece was missing for both
  - And it was because Isaiah saves it for chapter 20 when both nations receive God's judgment at the same time
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[Is. 20:1](#) ¶ In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,

[Is. 20:2](#) at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot.

[Is. 20:3](#) And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,

[Is. 20:4](#) so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

[Is. 20:5](#) "Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast.

[Is. 20:6](#) "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?'"

- In 711 BC, Egypt began encouraging the Philistine city state of Ashdod to resist Assyrian rule
  - They promised to send help in their fight but never did
  - The people of Judah had aligned themselves with Ethiopia and Egypt against Assyria
    - So God wants to send Judah a message of what to expect
  - He tells Isaiah to parade around naked for three years

- At the end of three years, Isaiah gets to explain what the message means
    - The point of the message is to illustrate in graphic and humiliating terms what was going to happen to Ethiopia and Egypt at the hands of the Assyrians
  - And for Judah, it will be a shame to them, because they placed their faith and hope in those allies instead of in God (vs.5-6)
    - So here is the near-term prophetic judgment against these nations
- So what is the puzzle piece we see with Egypt?
  - Babylon = enemy and his forces will be defeated, but Israel rises from the ashes
  - Philistines = throne of David will rise again, even if it appears to have faded, and it will crush all opposition
  - Moab = the Lord will offer refuge to a small remnant of gentiles, sheltered in Israel's promises and share in her kingdom
    - God will hold Israel accountable and will bring judgment against Ephraim
  - Cush = Israel's enemies will be transformed into nations that pay homage to Zion
  - Egypt = But the healing of these nations is not without consequences for their sins against Israel, even leading to consequences in the kingdom
- Next we return to Babylon
  - Remember that with each nation, we had a near-term prophetic message and a long-term, eschatological message (end times message)
    - But with Babylon, we only got the long-term message in chapter 13 & 14
    - We never got the near-term judgment...that comes in chapter 21 & 22
      - It reflects the importance of Babylon that it receives so much attention