

Isaiah Lesson 20

Isaiah Chapter 20

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Introduction: We covered in chapter 19 the ‘burdens’ upon the neighboring nation of Egypt. Foretold is the impending judgment against Egypt which apparently was to be fulfilled in the not distant future. However, there also is prophecy looking toward Egypt and Assyria in the Day of the Lord.

Chapter 20 is a continuation of the burden of judgment prophesied against Egypt. Unique details regarding the life and ministry of Isaiah are provided. Judgment is also foretold against Ethiopia. The greater message however is for Judah.

I. A Sign Against Egypt and Cush

Isa 20:1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it;

Isa 20:2 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

The time frame of this prophecy is noted. It was in the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, a city of the Philistines and fought against Ashdod and took it. Sargon the king of Assyria sent him. The Tartan mentioned is the same one noted in II Kings 18:17. There, it is evident that he was a high-ranking commander in the Assyrian army.

2Ki 18:17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field.

At the time frame specified above, God instructed Isaiah to humble himself as an allegory against Egypt and Ethiopia. The prophet evidently had been wearing sackcloth while mourning the impending judgment of God. Now, he was instructed to go forth “walking naked and barefoot.” Isaiah’s nakedness involved the removal of the sackcloth and shoes. His undergarments likely remained intact and on his body.

Isa 20:3 And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

Isa 20:4 So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

The symbolism of this drastic allegory is described. The spectacle of Isaiah's deportment for three years was a sign of impending judgment against Egypt and Ethiopia, its neighbor. Apparently that judgment would fall three years later. More specifics of the judgment are noted. The symbolism of Isaiah would be fulfilled in the utter conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia by the Assyrians. The Assyrians would force march the conquered Egyptians and Ethiopians (young and old) back to Assyria.

Though Isaiah may have been clothed enough to be decent, the Assyrians would be less kind to their foes. Even their buttocks would be uncovered as they marched the conquered Egyptians and Ethiopians to Assyria. Implied is terrible conquest and cruel treatment of the prisoners of war.

II. Shame and Fear to Come

Isa 20:5 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

Isa 20:6 And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

Many other nations which had looked to the Egyptians for help would be in distress. The nations in which some had trusted for their own well being were now conquered. Those who had trusted in Egypt for their help now despaired. The destruction by Assyria seemed inevitable. The greater application here is that Judah likely was the nation which had relied upon Egypt for her deliverance. See II Kings 18:20-21.

2Ki 18:20 Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

2Ki 18:21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

Hezekiah had foolishly thought his deliverance from the Assyrians would come from the Egyptians. But God had news for him. The Egyptians would soon be destroyed and Hezekiah would have to look upward for his help. That is what eventually happened. See II Kings 19 for details.

God through Isaiah sent a powerful message to not only Egypt, but also to Judah as well. The message to Egypt and Ethiopia was that impending destruction was at hand by the Assyrians. The message to Judah was to trust your God for deliverance and not in secular politics and military strength. Truly their deliverance was in Jehovah God. That same truth remains to this day.

That same message holds truth for America today. Sadly, our alliances are changing due to greed. Soon, America will no doubt suffer the same fate unless we as a Nation repent before God. In this hour, repentance is still possible but unlikely. It would serve us well to remember that our deliverance comes from God.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.