

PROPHECIES CONCERNING SEVERAL GENTILE NATIONS (Isa. 13-23) – Part 3

Ch. 17 – Judgment Will Come Upon Syria & Ephraim

God holds all world power accountable for national righteousness.

I. Damascus Doomed (17:1-3)

- A. Syria was overthrown by Assyria in 732 B.C., and Israel fell to the same power ten years later.

II. Israel to be Brought Low (17:4-6)

- A. The decline of the nation is pictured in three ways:
 1. A terrible disease (17:4)
 2. The reaping and gleaning of a grain field (17:5)
 3. The gathering of olives (17:6)

III. Judgment's Lesson Learned (17:7-8)

- A. Israel would turn from her idols and look to God, but it would be too late.

IV. Doom Seen as Idolatry's Harvest (17:9-11)

- A. Verse 10 probably refers to pagan cult worship. "They had sown the seeds of heathenism and cultivated them well, but the day of harvest would be one of grief and sorrow (v. 11)" (Jackson, 32).
- B. See Woods, 80 for more on the Tammuz-Adonis fertility cult.

V. Conqueror Rebuked and Destroyed (17:12-14)

- A. 17:14 is very significant.

Ch. 18 – Ethiopia

I. Ethiopia Counseled (18:1-7)

- A. Palestine was sandwiched between Egypt in the southwest and Assyria in the northeast. Assyria loomed as a threat on Israel's eastern horizon. Therefore, it was tempting to form an alliance with Egypt and her neighbors for protection (rather than trust in God as their Savior).
- B. About 715 BC, the Ethiopian king established control of all Egypt. Thus, the Ethiopian travelers to Judah represented a formidable world power.
- C. Isaiah tells them that Judah must rely upon God, not upon alliances. God's decisive intervention would cause the foreigners to praise Him.
- D. Jackson: "It is not unlikely that such activity was characteristic of Ethiopia. Ancient history record the fact that Judaism did make a significant impact in Ethiopia. An illustration of this fact is seen in the New Testament record of that eunuch, a Jewish devotee, who was treasurer under Queen Candace of Ethiopia (Acts 8:27)" (p 33).

Ch. 19 – Egypt’s Judgment and a Vision of Salvation

I. God Will Punish Egypt (19:1-17)

- A. God’s punishment of Egypt (19:1-4):
 - 1. The hearts of the people will melt when they observe the inability of their gods against the God of Judah (19:1).
 - 2. Civil strife breaks out (19:2) – Common means of punishment from God.
 - 3. The mystical superstitions on which they depended would fail them (19:3).
 - 4. God would deliver them into the hands of a harsh king (19:4).
 - a. Likely fulfilled when Egypt was conquered by the Assyrians (671 BC).
 - b. Archaeologists have discovered a stone monument that represents Esarhaddon (cruel king) holding Taharqu, king of Egypt and Ethiopia, on a leash!
- B. God’s judgment would also be seen in nature (19:5-10):
 - 1. The Nile River (the life force of the nation) would dry up (19:5).
 - a. Because of its essentiality to the prosperity of the country, it came to be worshipped as a god. Religious celebrations were conducted at the beginning of the annual flooding of the river.
 - 2. Therefore, there would be no agricultural productivity by the river (19:6-7).
 - 3. The fishing industry would suffer (19:8).
 - 4. Textile people who wove cloth from the flax that grew in the region of the Nile would also suffer (19:9).
- C. Egypt’s “wisdom” was no more than foolishness (19:11-15).
 - 1. Egyptians took pride in their country’s ancient wisdom tradition. They considered themselves capable of dealing expertly with any crisis. In this instance, however, they could not even tell the Lord’s purpose (19:12).
- D. The Egyptians will tremble before the menacing hand of Jehovah (19:16-17).
 - 1. The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt, though not because of any inherent political power in that little kingdom; rather, it would be due to Judah’s God and the purpose He purposes (19:17).

II. God to Bless Egypt (19:18-25)

- A. The language here is implicitly Messianic, and its fulfillment is in Christ.
 - 1. Five cities would speak the language spoken in Canaan (Hebrew).
 - a. This is clearly symbolic language because no Egyptian Jewish settlements, apostate Jewish altars or literal highways can satisfy the exalted demands of this vision.
 - 2. The importance of the Jewish religion in Egypt is evidenced by the presence of “an altar to the LORD in the midst of the Land” (19:19).
 - a. Though this may simply assert a worship of the true God, it is nonetheless a fact that a temple was built at Leontopolis by a Jewish priest, Onian IV (ca. 160 BC). Josephus records that permission for the project was granted due to the influence of this very passage, which was shown to Ptolemy VI Philometer (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.3.1).
 - 3. The altar, accompanied by a pillar at the border of the land, would serve as a

sign and witness of the coming Savior.

- a. Young: "Isaiah knows of only one Deliverer for the heathen nations, namely Christ. To this the whole Messianic tenor points" (quoted by Jackson, 35).
4. As a result of the Deliverer's mission, Egypt would know God, and many would worship the true God (19:21).
5. Because of its sin, Egypt must be smitten by the Lord (19:22). This is so they will "return to the LORD" and be healed.
6. 19:23-24 speak of a time when both Egypt and Assyria would worship together with Israel.
 - a. It seems those common enemies have beaten their swords into plowshares (2:4)!
 - b. Through the mission of the Messiah who comes out of Judah, Gentile nations would find a mutual bond in serving God.
 - c. Jackson cites Hengstenberg, who says that this unity demonstrates that the "Savior" of 19:20 has to be more than a human deliverer, for such "saviors" accomplish their goals by the infliction of injury on the enemy (Jackson, 35).