

disastrous defeat of the Assyrians occurred, this news penetrated to Ethiopia and induced some to acknowledge Jehovah (Cf. II Chron. 32:23). However, one has only to remember the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) to realize this prediction also has a distant future fulfillment and focuses on messianic times. In a context definitely messianic (Zeph. 3:10) Ethiopia is depicted bringing offerings to the Lord. Zion is symbolic to designate the dwelling place of God and the church of Christ is His ultimate dwelling place (Cf. Heb. 12:18-24; Eph. 2:11-22). This verse parallels the many predictions of Isaiah and other prophets that in messianic times (the church) God and/or God's people will possess peoples (as treasure) from every nation of the world. Isaiah portrays the future glorious Zion (kingdom of God) to be a universal kingdom. All the nations will flow to it (Isa. 2, etc.). This is another expression of the universality of the messianic kingdom (the church). The treasure is the people themselves, converted to Jehovah.

QUIZ

1. What is the reference to the "rustling of wings"?
2. Who is saying "Go" to the ambassadors?
3. What are they to wait to see and hear?
4. Why is God not dealing with His enemies immediately?
5. What N.T. incident may be referred to in verse 7?
6. What are the "presents" brought from Ethiopia?

CHAPTER NINETEEN

2. EGYPT

TEXT: 19:1-15

- 1 The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall

- tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.
- 2 And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.
- 3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.
- 4 And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.
- 5 And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry.
- 6 And the rivers shall become foul; the streams of Egypt shall be diminished and dried up; the reeds and flags shall wither away.
- 7 The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all the sown fields of the Nile, shall become dry, be driven away, and be no more.
- 8 And the fishers shall lament and all they that cast angle into the Nile shall mourn, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.
- 9 Moreover they that work in combed flax, and they that weave white cloth, shall be confounded.
- 10 And the pillars of Egypt shall be broken in pieces; all they that work for hire shall be grieved in soul.
- 11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counsel of the wisest counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?
- 12 Where then are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now; and let them know what Jehovah of hosts hath purposed concerning Egypt.
- 13 The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived; they have caused Egypt to go astray, that are the

cornerstone of her tribes.

- 14 Jehovah hath mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her; and they have caused Egypt to go astray in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.
- 15 Neither shall there be for Egypt any work, which head or tail, palm-branch or rush, may do.

QUERIES

- a. When did the Egyptians fight against one another?
- b. What caused Egypt's economic downfall?
- c. Why did Egypt's wise men cause her to go astray?

PARAPHRASE

This is the destiny of Egypt. Behold, the Omnipotent God descends from heaven surely and swiftly upon Egypt. Egypt's gods and her religion will be impotent to help her. Her whole populace will be gripped with paralyzing fear and confusion. I, God, will cause them to fight against each other—brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city and province against province. The national spirit of Egypt will be broken. I will cause all her plans to be frustrated. They will run in utter helplessness and confusion to their stone and wooden gods, to their magicians and sooth-sayers and to their sorcerers. But it will be useless for I will give them over to be ruled by a cruel despot. A fierce king will rule them. Furthermore, the waters of the Nile shall fail to inundate the fields and will practically waste away. The irrigation channels will become foul and useless; they will dry up and the reeds and rushes will wither away. The pasture-land along the Nile and all the grain fields will dry up and their soil will be blown away and they will not be cultivated any more. Fishermen will weep for lack of fish to catch. Those who fish with hooks and those who fish with nets will all be unemployed. Weavers of cloth will find their industry in a state of

collapse for the crops of flax and cotton will disappear. The rich and influential and the wage earners will be frustrated and dismayed. What fools the princes of Zoan will be shown to be when this happens. The wisest counselors of Pharaoh will be shown to be as dumb as animals. Will all those wise men then dare to tell Pharaoh about the long line of wise men they have come from? Where are the wise men of Egypt? If they are so wise, let them predict what is going to be the destiny of Egypt. The leadership of the country in Zoan are acting foolishly. The leaders in Memphis are deceiving themselves. Those men who are the cornerstones of the nation have duped the whole country and given it stupid counsel. The Lord has caused a spirit of arrogant perverseness and warped judgment to pervade the land of Egypt. This has brought confusion and failure in every attempt of Egypt to perpetuate her world supremacy. She staggers stupidly and mindlessly as a drunken man staggers in his own vomit. No plan or program Egypt can devise will save her. No person, neither high nor low will be able to save her.

COMMENTS

v. 1-4 CIVIL DISORDER: Egypt was a constant and powerful enemy of the Hebrew people. In Isaiah's day, however, there were Jews advising the kings of Israel to form political alliances with Egypt and thus gain protection against Israel's enemies on the other side of her in Mesopotamia (Assyria, Babylon, etc.). So, whether the threat of Egypt toward Israel be invasion or alliance, Isaiah was warning his people that they should trust God. God is going to execute His justice and judgment upon an idolatrous nation. God's first step in judgment will be civil strife within Egypt herself. Governments founded on falsehood in any form, have the seeds of instability and self-destruction sown within them. Where there is falsehood there will be injustice. Where there is injustice there will be civil strife. These are divine moral laws which govern in the affairs of men. Only when a nation is governed by the principles of truth, honesty, justice

and human dignity can there be national unity. This prophecy was fulfilled many times over in Egypt. Herodotus states that there were civil wars in the days of Psammetichus (cir. 655 B.C.). Daniel predicts periods of civil strife, brother against brother and brother against sister, in the days of the Ptolemies (cir. 300-200 B.C.) (Cf. our comments on Daniel 11). There is still much civil strife in Egypt.

The "giving over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king" may parallel Ezekiel 30:13 where the prediction is that there shall no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt. Ezekiel's predictions of Egypt's downfall are found in Ezekiel chapters 29-31. There it is said Egypt would be ruled by strangers. Since the days of Assyrian domination (722 B.C. following) Egypt has been ruled (or at least dominated) by a succession of foreign powers or persons. It has been subjugated by Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Turks, English and Arabs. Even today the political ruler of Egypt is an Arab.

Now when a nation's leadership is engaged in civil war and when its counselors turn to wizards and magicians for advice, that nation's spirit is broken. False religion and false philosophy makes all standards of human conduct relative. There can be no absolutes built on a basis of falsehood. When relativism reigns, social structures disintegrate.

V. 5-10 COMMERCIAL DEPRESSION: God has both spectacular and non-spectacular ways of bringing about the demise of civilizations. When He would obliterate the Edomites He simply had to re-route the great caravan route from east to west around Edom. Edom soon disappeared. God, in a non-spectacular way, gradually reduced Egypt to an insignificant and lowly people by drying up her great "sea" (the River Nile). The Arabs today still call the Nile the "sea" (probably because of the way it used to inundate so much of the valley). In the great days of Egypt's glory (3,000-1,000 B.C.), she was the "Breadbasket of the world." It was a highly developed civilization in the sciences of medicine, architecture, art and commerce. It was a powerful, world-controlling empire. They made linen so fine that there

were 540 threads to the inch. They knew secrets of manufacturing glass still unknown today. They practiced dentistry, treatment of the eyes, brain surgery and other medical skills. Their astronomers and mathematicians were familiar with principles which would do credit to mathematicians of today. Their mechanical skills are unparalleled even today!

Once again the reader should refer to Ezekiel's parallel passage on Egypt (Ezek. 29-31). There it is predicted that Egypt would become desolate in the midst of desolations. The River Nile is far from being completely dried up. However, for many centuries now it has not produced the massive flooding of the Nile valley which was so necessary in ancient times to prepare the lowlands for pasture and crop. Windblown sand dunes and stony, sandy plains comprise 90% of Egypt's land. The government fights a constant battle with the slowly creeping, encroaching Sahara desert. Tiny plots of vegetation are worked today with tools differing little from those of Pharaoh's time. Today the foliage of reeds and rushes have, compared with ancient time, almost disappeared. This was one of Egypt's largest industries in ancient times. Another of the chief industries of Egypt was its fisheries. Down to the time of the Roman invasion they had lost none of their productiveness. Today the fisheries have ceased to be important, and the fish in the river are few. Before the Russians supplied Egypt with some weapons of war, they were so powerless that a small, Israeli army could defeat them totally in a six-day-war!

The irrigation system, in spite of all the modern attempts to restore it to its former glory and efficiency, carries water to only a small fraction of the former territory served by the ancient canals. Many of those canals of ancient Egypt are today only soggy, foul-smelling bogs, unusable. Egyptians today attempt to irrigate using hand-made, wooden, water-screws—a method out of the ancient past. Over-population and superstition and absence of mechanization intensifies and increases Egypt's desolation generation after generation. The "pillars" of Egypt, the men of influence and wealth, as well as the common wage earner, will grieve in their soul over Egypt's humiliation to a

lowly, grovelling, emaciated people from such a powerful and glorious past.

But God said it—and it is so!

v. 11-15 COUNSELING DISASTERS: Zoan was an ancient city, near the mouth of the Tanis branch of the Nile River (probably synonymous with Tanis), built seven years after Hebron (Num. 13:22). It was the capital of the 21st and 23rd dynasties of Egyptian history. Israelites who sought alliances with Egypt would probably have entered into negotiations with these princes. But the point is they gave Pharaoh "stupid" "brutish" counsel. They were as dumb as animals. How could they be expected to know any wisdom from Jehovah? Evidently God's divine power and deity are clearly enough seen "in the things that have been made" (Cf. Rom. 1:18-23) that all men may have enough knowledge of Him to conduct the affairs of human and social relations wisely. But when men do not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, they become futile in their thinking and their senseless minds are darkened. Although they claim to be wise with human philosophies, they are fools. Their stupidity is seen in their exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Isaiah represents the stupidity of men who will take a tree and cut it in half, use half of it to build a fire and cook their meal and take the other half, carve a face on it and set it up as a god and worship it (Isa. 44:9-20). The remaining verses of Romans 1 show what happens when they exchange the truth of God for a lie (Cf. Rom. 1:24-32). The word *perverseness* in the English translation would better be rendered from the Hebrew as *dizziness*. When men deliberately and persistently believe and practice falsehood there is an inevitable stupor which settles into all human and social structures. God gives them up and they "receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error," (Cf. Rom. 1:27). Men who cannot govern their own lives cannot govern a nation. Men who do not wish to practice truth and justice for themselves cannot legislate it for others. The princes of Zoan were drunk with the wine of rebellion against truth and morals. Sooner or later, however, the wine of rebellion and falsehood is vomited up and those

who have drunk it are forced to stagger in the regurgitation of the filth they have swallowed. There is nothing that either "head" or "tail" of the nation can do. Social and national structures will cease to function properly. One is reminded of the disintegration of Germany after World War II. Totally helpless to function after defeat by the allies, she was saved only by the "Marshall Plan." God's moral principles remain true in every age.

QUIZ

1. Why does idolatry inevitably result in civil and social disorder?
2. How was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled in the case of Egypt's civil disorders?
3. How "developed" was Egypt's civilization in Isaiah's day and earlier?
4. Describe the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of Egypt's economic disasters.
5. What causes national leaders to give foolish leadership?

3. EGYPT

TEXT: 19:16-25

- 16 In that day shall the Egyptians be like unto women; and they shall tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which he shaketh over them.
- 17 And the land of Judah shall become a terror unto Egypt; every one to whom mention is made thereof shall be afraid, because of the purpose of Jehovah of hosts, which he purposeth against it.
- 18 In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Jehovah of hosts; one shall be called The city of destruction.
- 19 In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah.

- 20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they shall cry unto Jehovah because of oppressors, and he will send them a savior, and a defender, and he will deliver them.
- 21 And Jehovah shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day; yea, they shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto Jehovah, and shall perform it.
- 22 And Jehovah will smite Egypt, smiting and healing; and they shall return unto Jehovah, and he will be entreated of them, and will heal them.
- 23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians.
- 24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth;
- 25 for that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

QUERIES

- a. What is the language of Canaan and why would the Egyptians speak it?
- b. In what way would the Egyptians "worship" Jehovah?
- c. Why does Isaiah predict that Assyria and Egypt and Israel will someday be united?

PARAPHRASE

When Jehovah culminates His judgment upon Egypt she will be humbled. Her great and powerful men will be as timid as women and be afraid at the evident hand of the Lord in her judgment. Just the mention of the name Judah will remind Egypt

of Judah's God and cause Egypt to remember that Judah's God keeps His word. In the day that Egypt is brought to such a humble relationship to the God of Judah great portions of the people of Egypt will speak the language of faith and allegiance to Jehovah. Some portions of the people, however, will remain in rebellion against Jehovah and thus destined for destruction. In that day Jehovah shall be worshiped in Egypt's midst and a sign of His presence there will be manifested. He will make a witness to His presence there as He defends and delivers those oppressed Egyptians which have become His through a savior He will send them. God will make Himself known to the Egyptians and they shall know Him in that day. Indeed, they will worship Jehovah in truth and they will do so willingly and freely. They will make commitments to Jehovah and keep them. Jehovah will alternately chasten these Egyptian worshipers of His and heal them. In that day also there will be a peaceful unity accomplished between peoples formerly at enmity with one another. Believers from Egypt and Assyria shall worship together as one people. And even believers in Israel, a major bone of contention between Egypt and Assyria, will be joined with believers of Egypt and Assyria and this united people will be a blessing in the midst of the earth, because Jehovah has united them as one people—His people.

COMMENTS

v. 16-17 **PERSUADED:** These verses are transitional. They form the bridge between the former predictions of Egypt's judgment and the following predictions of Egypt's turning to Jehovah. In other words, when the day comes that some of the Egyptians realize that Judah's God is the only true God, as a result of "receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error," they will begin to seek Jehovah's purpose in their lives. The time will come, says Isaiah, when the mere mention of Judah will remind Egypt of Judah's God and cause some of her people to remember that Judah's God keeps His word. They will fear Him.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Egypt's wisdom had evaporated. But it will come back when they fear Jehovah. At last, some Egyptians will be persuaded of the sovereignty of Judah's God.

v. 18-22 PENITENT: Persuaded of Jehovah's sovereignty, many Egyptians will some day ("In that day") repent, change their minds and actions, and worship Him. *In that day* can only, as we shall develop, refer to the Messianic age, the church. "Five cities" is probably a figure of speech meaning a considerable number of people. Amos uses the phrase, "For three transgressions, yea for four," and does not intend to say Israel had committed only four transgressions. Isaiah does not mean to say only five cities. While there are five cities speaking the language of Canaan, a sixth city shall be called "destruction." In other words, there will still be some in Egypt who will not repent just as the "rest of mankind did not repent" after the judgments portrayed in Revelation 8:20ff. Speaking "the language of Canaan, and swearing to Jehovah of hosts" is to speak the language in which the God of the Israelites is worshiped. That, of course, does not mean the Egyptians would speak Hebrew any more than it means they would speak Greek (the language of the New Testament). It means they would speak truth as opposed to falsehood. It means they would give allegiance to Jehovah—they would come into covenant relationship with Him. They would become citizens of Jehovah's kingdom (the church). It is doubtful that it could mean great numbers of the Egyptians would become Jewish proselytes.

We take the "altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt" to be prophetic of the worship of the one true God being established when the gospel was preached there and people became Christians in the first century A.D. The statement that sacrifices (v. 22) will be offered does not limit the meaning of this passage to Old Testament practices for there are certain sacrifices to be offered in the New Testament church (Cf. Heb. 13:15-16). The "pillar" is in Hebrew *matztzevah* which is a stone pillar resembling an obelisk. Such a "pillar" was erected by Jacob (Gen. 28:16-22) to memorialize the presence of God. The

“pillar” in Egypt is figurative of saying that when one approaches the border of Egypt he comes to a land that is also the Lord’s for the presence of Jehovah is here (in the church). This is an especially vivid figure for Isaiah’s Jewish audience. It is being predicted to them that one day Palestine will not be the only land where the presence of Jehovah dwells. The universal kingdom of Jehovah (the church) will extend into Egypt as well as Palestine!

The Jews who wrote the Septuagint (cir. 300 B.C.) thought this prophecy of Isaiah (and Ezekiel and Jeremiah) against Egypt was fulfilled in the days of Onias, a Jew of great distinction and a high priest. In 160 B.C. Onias IV, was compelled to flee Palestine. He fled to Egypt and sought and received permission from the Egyptian monarch, to build a temple like that in Jerusalem and even pointed the king Ptolemy to this passage in Isaiah for authority to build it. Josephus, the Jewish historian records this for us. Titus Vespasian destroyed this temple in Egypt in 70 A.D. when he destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. We believe this passage has a much larger and grander fulfillment than that, as subsequent verses will show.

Whatever the language of Canaan, the altar, the pillar, they were to “be a sign and for a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt.” These things were to signify and testify that these Egyptians were God’s people and He was their God. For now, as God’s people, they who were formerly oppressors would become the oppressed. As Jesus said, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Jn. 15:19). But now these Egyptians are in covenant relationship to Jehovah and they may “have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19ff) and cry unto God and He will strengthen them, save them and deliver them.

Jehovah shall be known to Egypt and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah, “in that day.” Their relationship shall be experiential as well as mental. They will enter into a life-style of belief. It will be done willingly. The offering of vows is done not by way of obligation or legislation but by willingness (Num. 30:1ff). Furthermore, since these Egyptians are true children of God,

they will be treated like His children. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, etc. . . ." (Heb. 12:3-17). If God does not chasten, they are "illegitimate" children. Jehovah will smite and heal in order to turn them constantly to Him.

v. 23-25 PEACEFUL: Now we have portrayed in figurative language the consequences of God's redemptive work in Egypt. Egypt and Assyria were inveterate enemies for many centuries. But when the universal kingdom of God is established (the church) men out of every tribe and tongue will join together in peace and unified worship of Jehovah. The reference is not to any literal highway or literal Egypt and Assyria. These two nations stood at opposite poles geographically and opposed each other politically. They represent or symbolize the conversion of all the heathen and the formation of those converted into a kingdom of peace. What God will accomplish in His redemptive work, in establishing His kingdom of peace, will be a divine reversal of what occurred at Babel. At the tower of Babel the world was dispersed, and a division of mankind occurred. Languages were confused. Ideologies grew and competed and opposed one another and wars ensued. This divided mankind fought to maintain individuality and rebellion against God, each nation characterized by this in common, that it did not know nor worship Jehovah. Many nations fought one another proposing that their ideology was what would be best for the whole world and so empires rose and fell in attempting to unify the world under one human ideology. Jehovah called out a people (the Jews) and began His work of redeeming and unifying all who would in a kingdom of men once again be ruled over by God and Truth. But even this "called out people" (for the most part) rejected God's Messiah and His Messianic kingdom. But God's new kingdom of unity and peace was intended to be universal from the very start. And so the prophets, especially Isaiah, predicted it. We believe Ephesians 2:11-22 are the precise fulfillment of this passage as well as that of Isaiah 2:1-4 (see our comments there) and many other "universalized" passages of the O.T. Prophets.

If this be the proper application of this passage, then the "Israel" joined as a "third" party with Egypt and Assyria in

verse 24 is "the Israel of God" of Galatians 6:16 which is none other than the New Testament church. It would take a Jew who is one "inwardly" (Cf. Rom. 2:28-29) to ever agree to a unity such as is described in verses 24-25.

The ultimate fulfillment of this passage is, therefore, Messianic. It has to do with Christ and the Church. This has come to pass and they who were strangers and foreigners in Egypt and Assyria, and yes, even in Israel, will be found in that building, "fitly framed together, which groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:11-22).

It is interesting that these three areas, Egypt, Israel and Assyria are the three areas where we find some of the earliest of the missionary endeavors of the infant church. At the beginning of the 4th century (300-400 A.D.) parts of the Scriptures had been translated into more than one of the Egyptian vernaculars and the foundations had been laid of a native Egyptian church known as "Coptic." By the end of the 5th century the Christian faith had become rooted among native Egyptian stock and in time was the dominant religion of the land. The Coptic church, numbering 22,000 members at the turn of the 20th century, still flourishes in parts of Egypt and Ethiopia.

At Dura-Europos, on the river Euphrates (where ancient Assyria was located) on the great road between Antioch and Ctesiphon, 20th century excavation has revealed a building which was used as a Christian church as far back as the year 232 A.D. There are still many Christians in Armenia (Assyria).

There were people from Egypt and parts of Libya and Mesopotamia in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-13) and some of them were converted. Here the seeds were sown in the hearts of men who returned to their homelands with the gospel of peace and thus the prophecy of Isaiah came to pass (see also the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:26-40).

QUIZ

1. In what way do verses 16-17 form a transition from one section of this chapter to the other?
2. Why does Isaiah say "five cities" will "speak the language of Canaan"?
3. What is the "altar" and "pillar" that is to be found in Egypt?
4. How will Jehovah "smite" and "heal" the Egyptians?
5. How will the Egyptians and Assyrians worship Jehovah together?
6. In what way is Israel included with Egypt and Assyria in blessing the earth?
7. Why is it apparent that this section of Isaiah is Messianic?
8. What are Coptic and Armenian Christians and where may we trace their beginnings in the New Testament?

CHAPTER TWENTY

4. EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA

TEXT: 20:1-6

- 1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it;
- 2 at that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.
- 3 And Jehovah said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia;
- 4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.
- 5 And they shall be dismayed and confounded, because of