

The Book of the Prophet ISAIAH

Chapter 20

Theme: God taught Judah by Isaiah's attire and by fulfillment not to look to Egypt or Ethiopia for help.

Outline:

- 1-2 Isaiah's Symbolic Lesson for Judah
- 3-4 Fulfillment of the Symbolic Lesson
- 5-6 Faithless Jews Have Hope Removed

Preparatory Reading: Isaiah Chapters 10,36-38 (Sennacherib)... 20 (Egypt and Ethiopia) ... 30-31 (Egypt).

Related Links:

- A. *Exposition of Isaiah 18 ...*
- B. *Virgin Daughter of Zion (slides) ...* <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/virgin-daughter-of-zion.pdf>.
- C. *Hezekiah – His Life and Lessons ...* <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/hezekiah-lessons.pdf>.
- D. *Chronological Table and Notes for Prophets ...* <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/prophets-table-with-notes.pdf>.
- E. *Interpreting Bible Prophecies (slides) ...* <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/prophecy-interpretation.pdf>.
- F. *One of many, many links for Sennacherib ...* <https://www.varchive.org/tac/701.htm>.

Introduction:

- A. Keep in mind a few of many factors that hinder specific application of obscure prophecies to events.
 - 1. We would like to take each chapter and each verse and apply a specific historical event to each.
 - 2. We would love a timeline with every event in its proper place with names, outcome, details, etc.
 - 3. We would love the Bible, extra-biblical texts, archeology, and iconography all reconciled for us.
 - 4. Some prophecies are so obscure we cannot date or name them with certainty (Is 18:1-6; 21:11-12).
 - 5. Some events and parties to them are so distant with only Bible hints that they are obscure to us.
 - 6. The prophets used similitudes, so there is also the constant translation of dark sayings (Hos 12:10).
 - 7. Large periods of time are covered so that many different events could be considered as solutions.
 - 8. Until men unearth hidden facts, there has been silence e.g. Hittites, Sargon, Darius the Mede, etc.
 - 9. The historical record may have errors that contradict the Bible record e.g. Ptolemy's 82-year error.
 - 10. Different names are used in the Bible e.g. Tirhakah of Ethiopia is Pharaoh of Egypt (25th dynasty).
 - 11. Different names are used in the historical record of nations with some kings having many names.
 - 12. Bible chronologers and historians have given many years and their lives without certain solutions.
 - 13. Time limits and audience limits force us to abbreviate explanations and simply supply sources.
 - 14. Some historical details are lost – ten and three horns of Daniel 7 – but we know the certain lesson.
 - 15. Moab, Ammon, Philistines, and such nations are unknown today, so we are limited to the Bible.
- B. We have distinct advantages over others when we study to discover the true sense of obscure passages.
 - 1. They change the text, like textual critics, but their effort destroys truth and faith (Clarke, Barnes).
 - 2. They research the use of a Hebrew/Greek word elsewhere, rejecting others' translations (Barnes).
 - 3. They compare single word usage for sound rather than compare information for sense (I Cor 2:13).
 - 4. They value context, which is important, but they limit it to that next door, ignoring the same street.
 - 5. They prefer the literal, whether a single word or passage, rather than the contextual or spiritual.
 - 6. We trust our English Bible (KJV) to study by its internal rules, exalting its small and large contexts.
- C. The situation here is quite simple – God had to teach Judah not to trust in the arm of flesh – Egypt.
 - 1. The enemy at hand is might Assyria under Sargon and Sennacherib as clearly stated (Isaiah 20:1).

2. Israel and Judah often foolishly looked to Egypt (Ethiopia and others) for help against their enemies (II Kgs 17:4; 18:21; Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jeremiah 37:5-10; Ezekiel 17:14; 29:6-7; etc.).
3. This lack of faith is seen over and over in these people e.g. Ahaz looking to Assyria (II Kgs 16:7).
4. They would trust anything they could – like Solomon’s mere temple building (Jeremiah 7:1-15).
5. This basic lack of faith greatly angered Jehovah for their trust in mortal man but not eternal Him.
6. Sennacherib knew or presumed that Hezekiah or Judah was looking to Egypt/Ethiopia (Is 36:6).
- D. Egypt and Ethiopia were often connected by location, race, and culture, but especially the 25th dynasty under Ethiopia (Ps 68:31; Isaiah 20:3-5; 43:3; 45:14; Ezek 29:6-7,16; 30:4-5; Nah 3:9; Zeph 3:10).
 1. The nations will be alternated at times, for Egypt usually ruled Ethiopia, but here it was opposite.
 2. The 25th dynasty had the king of Ethiopia also Pharaoh and king of Egypt; Tirhakah = Pharaoh.
- E. Isaiah 18 shows God protecting His church without help; Isaiah 20 shows God humiliating the helpers!

***** *Isaiah’s Symbolic Lesson for Judah – Verses 1-2* *****

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

- A. Starting with Sargon the sending king, we have an Assyrian king by divine revelation.
 1. For 25 centuries this was the only reference to this king of Assyria – only this verse.
 2. But Assyrian monument inscriptions reveal Sargon II as one of its greatest rulers.
 3. So much for this world’s thinking. Believe the Bible and wait for them to catch up.
- B. Tartan is a title for a commander of the Assyrians, likely Sennacherib, son of Sargon II.
 1. We find this term, title, or name used only one other time in the Bible (II Kgs 18:17).
 2. We conclude Tartan = Sennacherib by both Bible and Assyrian record of the events.
 3. There is quite clear and valid dated information about these two Assyrian kings.
- C. Two or three years before Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem, he took the city of Ashdod.
- D. We appreciate God dating this event, thus giving the start of Isaiah’s three-year lesson.

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.

- A. The prophets wore rough garments and even sackcloth in time of trouble (Zech 13:4).
 1. Elijah the Tishbite wore rough clothing and was known for his attire (II Kings 1:8).
 2. John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah wore similar things (Matthew 3:4).
- B. God told him to strip down to undergarments (II Sam 6:20; Job 1:20-21; John 21:7).
 1. The word *naked* is determined by context; Isaiah was not entirely nude in public.
 2. Other uses of *naked* are grasped the same way, minimal attire for role and activity.
 3. If you force *naked* in these verses to be total nudity, you end up with an absurdity (Job 22:6; 24:7; Isaiah 58:7; Ezek 18:7,16; Matt 25:36; I Cor 4:11; James 2:15).
 4. We defend the integrity of God and His greatest men by putting a construction on the word like when we use *naked* for persons underdressed in certain situations.

- C. Object lessons can be powerful tools when properly presented and correctly applied.
- D. Sometimes we need constant reminders, even visual, to build and maintain our faith.

***** *Fulfillment of the Symbolic Lesson – Verses 3-4* *****

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;

- A. Judah! Do you see the attire of Isaiah? Egypt and Ethiopia will soon look the very same.
 - 1. See the introduction at the beginning of these notes to know Judah's vulnerable fear.
 - 2. Egypt and Ethiopia often joined forces, especially during the 25th Egyptian dynasty.
- B. God gave signs and wonders (plural) earlier in Israel by Isaiah's sons' unusual names.
 - 1. *Shearjashub* = the remnant shall return; this prophecy is declared later (Is 10:21-22).
 - 2. *Mahershalalhashbaz* = speed to take prey and spoil; Assyria the hunter (Is 8:3-4).
- C. Thus, *sign and wonder* here (singular) means a symbolic prophecy on those two nations.
 - 1. God decreed for Sennacherib to meet Tirhakah for several reasons – one, this lesson.
 - 2. His arrival was the rumor God promised, and then He killed 185,000 to save Judah.
- D. It is a common error for us to condense Sennacherib's campaign to a few weeks or so.
 - 1. But God had Isaiah dressed like this for three years commencing with his arrival.
 - 2. And the conclusion in the following verses does not allow for the death angel yet.
 - 3. Therefore, the campaign in one way or another was stretched over at least 3 years.

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.

- A. Observe the *as...so* connection and relation between these two verses – in the same way.
- B. The comparison and similarity is attire of captives – no outer garments, no shoes, etc.
 - 1. When an invading army captures soldiers or inhabitants, they do return for clothes.
 - 2. The prisoners and captives would not be fully clothed, as David's time (II Sam 10:4).
 - 3. The extreme of buttocks uncovered did not necessarily apply to Isaiah. Compare.
 - 4. Egypt, which prided itself on its attire as history shows, would be greatly shamed.
- C. We do not read details of an event in sacred or natural history at the time of Hezekiah.
 - 1. Sargon had defeated Egypt (battle of Raphia) before this, but no account of captives.
 - 2. Assyria defeated Egypt again (at Eltekeh); dates are uncertain by ten years or so.
 - 3. However, we know this defeat included Egypt and Ethiopia by these three verses.
 - 4. Egypt and Ethiopia were often together, esp. in the 25th dynasty of an Ethiopian king.
 - 5. Sennacherib did lift his siege of Jerusalem for Tirhakah king of Ethiopia (Is 37:8-9).
 - 6. Isaiah's object lesson likely lasted from Ashdod's siege year to Ethiopia's defeat.

7. Otherwise, it could have been any known or unknown invasion of Egypt/Ethiopia by Assyria, for several major defeats occurred under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.
8. There is no record, sacred or natural, of Assyria fighting Egypt again for 20 years.

***** *Faithless Jews Have Hope Removed – Verses 5-6* *****

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

- A. Israel and Judah often looked to Egypt for help (II Kings 17:4; 18:21; Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jeremiah 37:5-10; Ezekiel 17:14; 29:6-7,16; etc.).
- B. Egypt and Ethiopia were often connected, but especially the 25th dynasty under Ethiopia (Ps 68:31; Isaiah 20:3-5; 43:3; 45:14; Ezek 29:6-7,16; 30:4-5; Nahum 3:9; Zeph 3:10).
 1. This fundamental lack of faith is seen over and over e.g. Ahaz looking to Assyria.
 2. This basic lack of faith greatly angered Jehovah for their trust in man but not Him.
 3. They would trust anything they could – like their temple building (Jeremiah 7:1-15).
 4. Sennacherib knew or presumed Hezekiah or Judah trusted Egypt/Ethiopia (Is 36:6).
- C. This general and indefinite pronoun may refer to most anyone, but especially the Jews.
 1. When the Jews knew the Egypt-Ethiopia combine had been defeated, they were lost.
 2. They considered Egypt glorious in wealth and might, but not glorious when defeated.
 3. They expected Ethiopia’s large numbers to rescue them, but not when taken captive.
 4. Their shame is obvious – their fear was of Assyria for easily handling the combine.

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?

- A. The *inhabitant of this isle* is a collective noun for the Jews of Judah in their location.
 1. The context demands it so, for the prophetic lesson was for the Jews and no others.
 2. Isaiah by the Spirit used the nearby demonstrative adjective *this* for his own nation.
 3. If the language troubles you, the rest of Isaiah, like 21:1,11 and 22:1, surely will.
 4. They were an island – surrounded by water (think!) and also by many enemy nations.
 5. Recall God’s analogy of enemy nations (Assyria) being overflowing water (Is 8:8).
 6. The future Seleucid-Ptolemaic wars would really make them feel totally surrounded.
- B. In the day Assyria defeated the Egypt-Ethiopia combine, they would be totally hopeless.
 1. Look! We made plans with a powerful friend, but their defeat ruined our expectation.
 2. Look! Where else can we turn, and how shall we escape, if even this combine failed?
 3. Be like Hezekiah, who, unlike them, trusted in God more than others (II Kings 18:5).
- C. This is the clash of the titans for God’s glory, fulfilled prophecy, and lessons for faith.
 1. Comparing the first verse and this last verse, we have a timeline and order of events.

2. Isaiah began wearing his warning attire when king Sargon arrived to take Ashdod.
3. This verse ends a 3-year campaign by Assyria beating the coalition – thus the fear.
4. If Egypt-Ethiopia were not defeated, they would still hold out expectation and glory.
5. If the death angel had killed the 185,000, they would not worry about their escape.
6. Thus, there is chronological help here to line up the events of the clash of the titans.