

delivered all those who through *fear* of death were subject to lifelong bondage” etc. So you see, God has rebuked His enemies, He has defeated them and scattered them and, like whirling dust before a storm, they are no longer to be feared. What God has actually accomplished (victory) and what we appropriate by faith and obedience, awaits only the consummation at the end of time.

QUIZ

1. What is probably the initial fulfillment of these verses?
2. What is their ultimate fulfillment?

C. INCESSANT EGYPTIANS - CHAPTERS 18-20

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. ETHIOPIA

TEXT: 18:1-7

- 1 Ah, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia;
- 2 that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide!
- 3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth; when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye.
- 4 For thus hath Jehovah said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling-place, like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.
- 5 For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the

flower becometh a ripening grape, he will cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches will he take away and cut down.

6 They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

7 In that time shall a present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts from a people tall and smooth, even from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion.

QUERIES

- a. Why were the ambassadors told to "go"?
- b. Why is Jehovah going to "be still"?
- c. Who is going to bring a "present" to Jehovah?

PARAPHRASE

Ah, yes, O distant and enchanting land of Ethiopia, land beyond the upper reaches of the Nile where winged sailboats glide, which sends its ambassadors in fast boats! Go, you swift messengers from Ethiopia. Return to your homeland, a land of supple, bronze-skinned warriors, feared far and wide, a conquering, destroying nation whose land the upper Nile divides. Go with this message: Jehovah-God has said, Let all the world look and listen when God begins to raise up the sign of His mighty work in the earth. Jehovah has decreed, Let my enemies now advance against my land. I will watch quietly and serenely from my place, as unperturbed as one does on a pleasant summer day or a lovely autumn morning watching the grain field mature unto harvest. I have everything under control, says Jehovah. My enemies are like a field ripening unto harvest. But before they

have begun the attack, and while their plans are ripening like grapes, I will cut them off as though with pruning shears. I will snip the spreading tendrils. Their armies will be left dead on the field for the mountain birds and wild animals to eat; the vultures will tear bodies all summer, and the wild animals will gnaw bones all winter. But the time will come when that strong and mighty nation, a terror to all both far and near, that conquering, destroying nation whose land the rivers divide, will bring gifts to the Lord of Hosts in Zion, where He has placed His name.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 **TERROR:** Ethiopia was noted far and wide for the abundance of insects populating its territories. "Beyond" means the land extending far to the south which is bordered by the great rivers of Egypt (the White Nile, the Blue Nile and the Atbara) which is Ethiopia. Ethiopia had apparently sent envoys (ambassadors) to Judah. They had come in boats constructed of papyrus, a famous reed which grew in abundance along the Nile. This reed was light and would be very bouyant as well as pliable. The craft would probably be made watertight with pitch. The word "saying" in the text is italicized indicating that it is a word supplied but not a part of the original text. It was not the Ethiopians who said to the ambassadors, "Go," but Isaiah the prophet who was saying, in effect, "Go back home!" The Ethiopians were little known to most of the world in Isaiah's day. There was an aura of mystery about them which tended to make them feared. Their bronze, sleek physique and their efficiency (swift messengers) all contributed to the stories told about their fearsomeness. But why would Isaiah tell them to "Go back home"?

v. 3-6 **TRIUMPH:** Apparently Ethiopia had sent ambassadors to Judah to offer treaties of alliance with Judah against her immediate foes, the Syria-Israel coalition, or perhaps, Assyria. Such treaties of alliance would involve some form of compromise by Judah to Ethiopia's demands. It would probably involve Judah in pagan practices. An alternative suggestion is that the

ambassadors were sent with threats to Judah from Ethiopia herself. Whatever the case, the prophet of God, as much for the benefit of the people of God as for the Ethiopians, bids them "Go home" and watch and listen for a signal announcing that Jehovah God, the God of Judah, was entering into battle with His enemies. The warning is to the whole world that Jehovah will, in due time, take the situation in hand. There were those of God's people who probably were getting impatient with Jehovah's postponement of disaster upon their enemies. Twice before the prophet Isaiah had predicted Jehovah's judgment upon Assyria (10:5-34; 14:24-27). The Lord was apparently doing nothing about all those massive empires threatening Judah on all sides except predict their overthrow. Isaiah portrays Jehovah dwelling quietly, serenely, observing unperturbed as His enemies prepare for the attack. What else befits the Sovereign God of Creation! He has all things completely under His control. He is simply allowing all circumstances to ripen unto His harvest. He is allowing these circumstances and purposes of men to come to fruition in order better to serve His own omniscient purposes. As men prepare their schemes to carry out their own evil purposes, God waits. He wants to give men time to repent. But when they deliberately exchange the truth of God for a lie and deliberately refuse to have God in their knowledge, He gives them up to their own self destruction. What else can He do. They are "cut off." They become carrion. They reap what they sow. Almighty God triumphs over them just as He warned He would.

v. 7 TREASURE: This verse is futuristic. As usual the future is not defined whether it be the immediate future or the remote. More than likely both are thought of as involved. We have here another of the manifold instances of "shortened perspective" where the prophet sees the mountain peaks of God's redemptive activity but he does not see the valleys in between the peaks. Those "valleys" unexplored (centuries of time elapsing between great events) by the prophet's eye must also remain unexplored by the reader's mind. Isaiah may have reference initially to the more immediate future when some in Ethiopia watched developments as they took place round about Jerusalem, and when the

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