

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

Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

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

QUERIES

- a. Did Isaiah go completely naked for three years?
- b. What does "buttocks uncovered" mean?
- c. Who are the inhabitants of "this coastland"?

PARAPHRASE

In the year when Sargon, king of Assyria, sent his commander-in-chief of the army against the city of Ashdod and captured it, the Lord told Isaiah, son of Amoz, to take off his outer clothing, including his shoes, and to walk around barefoot clad only in his under-tunic. And Isaiah did so. And the Lord said, My servant Isaiah has walked barefoot and stripped shamefully to his underclothing for three years symbolizing the awesome troubles I will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia. Just so, the king of Assyria will take away the Egyptians and Ethiopians, young and old, as prisoners, defeated, stripped of their possessions and shamed in their wretched condition. And the inhabitants of this Palestinian "coastland" will be depressed and confused because they had expected to get help from Egypt and Ethiopia. So the people of Palestine will say in that day, Look! If this is what the king of Assyria does to Egypt and Ethiopia, what hope do we have to escape from him?

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 SIGN: The year Sargon II subdued Ashdod was 711 B.C. *Tartan* is not the name of a person but a title of office. It is probably from the Akkadian word *turtanu* which was the title of one of three great officers of state in Assyria. He was the king's viceroy, probably commander-in-chief of the army. Isaiah is probably writing this after the event but employing it, as directed by Jehovah, as a prophetic sign of events to come. In addition to the defeat of Ashdod (a city on the Philistine plain), Isaiah employs a personal exhibition as a symbol of Egypt's imminent humiliation. The Lord told Isaiah to take his *saq* (a hairy mantle sometimes worn by prophets to give proof of the fact that they were not men to pamper their bodies, Cf. Zech. 13:4; Mark 1:6) off and his sandals off and go about stripped. This disrobing would still leave Isaiah clad in the typical undergarment, a kind of linen tunic. Out of doors and in public men were not accustomed to go about dressed so unconventionally. To go clad thus did not offend all moral decency but did bring offense against customary modesty. It symbolized shame and said, "After mourning (sackcloth) comes disgrace (underclothing)."

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) was an Assyrian king who is mentioned by name in the Bible only in Isaiah 20:1. Up to a century ago, no evidence of the existence of such a king had been found in any other available historical records. Destructive critics of the Bible stoutly maintained the Bible was in error in Isaiah 20:1. Some even insisted that there had been deliberate falsification of the biblical text here in order to give the Bible "historical flavor." In 1843, Botta discovered the ruins of Sargon's palace, in Khorsabad, on the north edge of Nineveh, with treasures and inscriptions showing him to have been one of Assyria's greatest kings. In recent years the ruins of Sargon's palace have been excavated by the Oriental Institute. From inscriptions it is learned that Shalmaneser died while besieging Samaria, and that he was succeeded by Sargon, who completed the capture. Furthermore, an inscription of Sargon, verifying the statement in Isaiah 20:1, was found: "Azuri, king of Ashdod, planned in his heart not to

pay tribute. In my anger I marched against Ashdod with my usual bodyguard. I conquered Ashdod, and Gath. I took their treasures and their people. I settled in them people from the lands of the east. I took tribute from Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab." The spade of the archaeologist has authenticated the veracity of the Bible and stopped the mouths of the critics! Sargon was murdered in 705 B.C. and succeeded by his son Sennacherib against whom Hezekiah revolted.

v. 3-6 SIGNIFICATION: The defeat of Ashdod and Isaiah's humiliating appearance were to signify to the inhabitants of Palestine (the Jews) that Assyria was about to defeat Egypt and Ethiopia and that only mourning and shame would come to the Jews should they continue to hope in their alliances with them. Evidently the people of Judah had been solidifying political and economic alliances with Egypt against Assyria for years (II Kings 18:21). But they had also been making alliances with Assyria against Syria and Israel (Cf. II Kings 16:8ff). They tried to play both ends against the middle. Egypt and Ethiopia, in whom the people of Judah had built such high hopes will be openly reduced to impotency, disgrace and shame. Egyptians and Ethiopians, whose glory and power had continued for centuries, would be taken captive and exiled, and all of them will be stripped of their outer garment and be barefoot, as was proverbially the case with captives and exiles. Those too young and too old for military service will be taken as well. Some will be stripped even of their undergarment (leaving perhaps some kind of loin cloth) so that they went with "buttocks uncovered"—involving the highest measure of disgrace for this once proud and arrogant people. This took several decades to see its fulfillment, but it did come to pass.

All this is to make the people of Judah dramatically aware of the folly of placing any trust in Egypt and Ethiopia as a protection from Assyria. "The Egyptians are men, and not God"; (Cf. Isaiah 31:3). But what success did Isaiah have? Whatever it was it was only temporary for we find a very strong and pervasive movement in Judah for Egyptian alliance in Jeremiah's day (Cf. Jer. 44:24-30). The people of Judah put so much reliance on

Egypt and Ethiopia on account of their armies and horses and chariots. Judah took no account of the fact that it is righteousness, truth and justice that makes a nation strong. These are the inner strengths of societal structure that protect nations against their worst enemies—theirselfes.

QUIZ

1. Who is "Tartan"?
2. What was Isaiah told to remove? What clothing did he have on?
3. What was Isaiah's condition to symbolize?
4. Who was Sargon? How has his existence been verified?
5. Whom had the people of Judah allied themselves with?
6. What was to happen to Egypt and Ethiopia?
7. What lesson should nations and peoples learn from this?

D. IRREVERENT ENEMIES - CHAPTERS 21-23

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. BABYLON, EDOM AND ARABIA

a. BABYLON

TEXT: 21:1-10

- 1 The burden of the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the South sweep through, it cometh from the wilderness, from a terrible land.
- 2 A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous man dealeth treacherously, and the destroyer destroyeth. Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.
- 3 Therefore are my loins filled with anguish; pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman in travail: I am pained so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I can-