

The Prophecy about Cush (Ethiopia)

Isaiah 18:1-7

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

This chapter is one of the most obscure in Scripture; it is certain that much more of it was understood by those to whom it was addressed. The message we should take from it is that though we may not understand God's ways on earth, He is in control of all things. We should never think that God has no awareness of the affairs of nations, governments and rulers/leaders of the earth, but believe that He has wise reasons for allowing things to continue as they do. We cannot understand at the present time, but it will appear clear on that Great Day of Christ's return in glory to gather the faithful to Himself and reward each one of us accordingly.

Biblical Context

The prophet pronounced woe (doom) on the land of Ethiopia (Cush) which rose to such power that it overran Egypt in 715 B. C. Cush was a country that today forms part of southern Egypt and northern Sudan. This chapter foreshadows the impending judgment and destruction that will befall this foreign nation as well as the eventual restoration and worship of the one true God by all peoples. This highlights the sovereignty of God over all nations and His ability to use even powerful empires like Assyria to fulfill His purposes. God's message through Isaiah is one of profound warning but also of watchfulness, providing an important lesson for Cush and all nations who will not heed God's word.

II. The Lesson: The Prophecy about Cush (Ethiopia)

1. Verses 1-2.

The verses 1-2 call out to the land beyond the rivers of Cush, a region south of Egypt. This was a land with seas and water features. The mention of “whirling wings” symbolizes a swift messenger or a nation coming with speed and power or a tool in the hand of God, carrying out His divine plan. Isaiah called it a land of buzzing or whirling wings, not just because of the insects there, but more as a metaphor for the frantic diplomatic activity as Judah sought out alliances to protect themselves against Assyria.

Christians can draw a lesson from these verses about the importance of being attentive and receptive to the messages God sends, whether through His word, through others or through circumstances. The people with smooth skin in Cush sent messengers (ambassadors) to invite Judah to join in a force against Assyria. However, Isaiah’s message told them to return home. God’s people must trust the Lord alone for success. When we put our trust in the ways of man, God is offended. Either God is our everything because He is first in our lives or He is nothing to us.

2. Verses 3-6.

Many people use high places to send important news quickly and over vast distances. In these verses, signs and alarms gave a picture in words. The Lord remained calm.

What happens between nations did not bother Him in any way. God was not surprised or shocked by what was going on. The text teaches us that there is nothing that God does not see. He sees the way we live our lives when we think He is not looking. He is also privy to how leaders decide to act for peace or conflict.

When He sees that the time is right, God will act; nothing and no one can stop Him. The Lord God rejected the alliance with Ethiopia. He was more than able to deal with the Assyrians Himself. Judah was to trust in the Lord, not in an alliance with Ethiopia, and He can take His rest without the help of the Ethiopians. If God wanted to raise an army against the Assyrians, He would have raised a banner or sounded a trumpet. He was fully able to do it when the time was right.

At the right time, God would reap the harvest of judgment on Assyria, the ripening vine. Before the crop would be harvested, the enemy would come and cut the plants, break the vines and throw them away. The Lord will prune the shoots and branches spreading out from Assyria who was seeking empires. He will destroy the Assyrian army so completely that “they will be left together for the mountain birds of prey”(V. 6). The death of this human population will become a banquet for the birds of prey and wild beasts.

3. **Verse 7.**

Isaiah announced a day when Ethiopians, who were feared far and wide, that powerful nation that defeated other countries and whose land was divided by rivers, will come to worship the Lord and bring gifts to Him “to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, to Mount Zion” (V. 7). The

nation that was a great threat would now bring tribute to the Lord of Hosts because they were more than likely defeated. Instead of Israelite messengers bringing news to Ethiopia of an alliance against the Assyrians, the day will come when Ethiopians will come and worship at Mount Zion. This prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 8:26-39, when an Ethiopian came to worship the LORD at Jerusalem and then trusted in Jesus at the preaching of Philip.

III. Conclusion

- a) It is always best to wait on the LORD and not run ahead and try to take things into our own hands as the Ethiopians did. We need to learn to operate on God's timetable and not on our own. We should never try to take care of our enemies, but let God take care of them in His own time. He will do a much better job than we can ever do.
- b) How does the prophecy of Isaiah 18 encourage you in times of waiting for God's intervention?
- c) How does Isaiah 18 challenge our perception of God's justice, especially in times when His actions seem delayed?
- d) In light of this lesson, how should we as Christians approach our responsibility to call nations to recognize God's sovereignty?