

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 19

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 19

Theme: "One Salvation for All!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 19:24-25 (KJV) "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

INTRODUCTION

The next nation to be judged by God is the nation of Egypt. There is no Middle Eastern nation more involved in God's plan of salvation than Egypt. This began from the first book of the Bible even as early as the days of Abraham (Genesis 12:10). Whether voluntarily or otherwise, Egypt has and will always be intractably part of Israel existence, even to this very day! If not for the spiritual significance, her geographical proximity to the Land of Promise makes her Israel's neighbour for life. The cross border relationships bound to exist whether peaceable or warlike depends on the rulers at that time. Solomon's first wife was an Egyptian princess (cf. 1 Kings 3:1).

However, in this chapter of Isaiah, Egypt will be judged by the God of Israel for her many sins and what she did against Israel. Chapters like these in the Scriptures teach every Bible student the truth of God's sovereignty over the affairs of all mankind. There is no nation on earth that is not under God's authority. The God of Israel is the one and only living and true God, and beside Him there is no other. Man may make God in his own image and even deny Him as God, but this does not in any way affect God's absolute jurisdiction over man, not even in the slightest. Egypt was a nation with a very long and celebrated history from her pyramids and kingdoms that transcend many centuries.

Regardless of her super power status and military might, Egypt is just another pawn in God's over plan of salvation for mankind that will eventually culminate in the coming of Jesus Christ. This chapter of Isaiah is instructive from the perspective of God's absolute control over Egypt's destiny and very existence! It is very comforting to know that this same God is the God of Christians only.

OUTLINE

1. Egypt will be Given Over (vv.1-10);
2. Bad Counsel, Speedy Destruction (vv. 11-17);
3. Gracious Salvation upon Egypt (vv. 18-25);

COMMENTARY

Egypt Will Be Given Over

The destruction upon Egypt will be quick. The swiftness of her destruction is described by the use of the imagery of the LORD riding on a swift cloud. It is significant at this juncture to note that the name used to describe this swift judgement is the covenantal Name given only to Israel and not to Egypt. The reason is to inform Egypt and Israel that it will be Israel's God who will punish Egypt and must not be misconstrued as an accident or some other god that punishes Egypt. The word for "swift" has the idea of lightness, like something floating off the ground. The movement is swift because of zero resistance. The use of the word "cloud" means that the LORD will come from heaven swiftly and quietly! The destination of the swift approach of the LORD is Egypt! Egypt is doomed for judgement for her many sins. The destruction of Egypt is mentioned in the next few verses.

Before this happens, the LORD describes the reaction of the Egyptians. The idols of Egypt shall be moved i.e. tremble or stagger. There are many gods in Egypt. These gods would include Osiris and Isis, Apis, Serapis, Vulcan, Bubastis, and many others. They will tremble before the presence of the LORD. The heart of the Egyptians shall melt in the midst of the LORD. When hearts are turned to liquid it refers to total and abject fear. This kind of fear is crippling and it devastates a person.

Internal strife will turn into civil war. How painful to see brother killing brother as the punishment from God. The magnitude of this civil war is described vividly in verse 2. The battle will be brother against brother, everyone against his neighbour, city against city and kingdom against kingdom. All relationships are destroyed. All past fellowship and friendships are ignored, replaced by fighting and killing. In the midst of this implosion of a great nation, the spirit of Egypt shall fail. It is painful to be called an Egyptian when brothers are killing brothers. There can only be shame.

The LORD will destroy the counsel or plan of the Egyptians. Whatever they might plan to avert the LORD's judgement will all fail. The LORD will destroy all their plans. They will seek idols, charmers, those with familiar spirits and the wizards to help them but all to no avail. They LORD will surely thwart all their evil plans. Instead the LORD will give the Egyptians over into the hand of a cruel lord. This cruel lord could refer to either the Assyrians who will soon come and defeat the Egyptians as the next superpower of that region, or the Babylonians, or even the Persians. The identity of this cruel king is not mentioned here. All of the next three superpowers will defeat the Egyptians and are cruel kings. The Bible describes these kings as fierce each in their own way. Be this as it may, this prophetic judgement came to pass in the near future from Isaiah's perspective.

The next four verses describe the extent of the destruction of Egypt. The River Nile is Egypt's life source. Her major cities are all built along this river that carries water from inland and the mountains flowing into the Mediterranean Sea through seven tributaries. If the River Nile dries up as the LORD declares here, then the economy of Egypt is ruined and the people will suffer great famine and drought. Note the language of Isaiah 19:5-8 "And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away; *and* the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no *more*. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish." The entire nation of Egypt will suffer great catastrophe and death by these calamities.

Those who depend entirely upon the river to survive, their trade of weaving fine flax and net works will be confounded. They will be dumbfounded and find no explanation for the devastation. They will be helpless and simply have to resign themselves to suffer. There is absolutely nothing they can do to prevent the destruction of their livelihoods. They shall be broken in their purposes is how the LORD describes their failures. All those who make sluices i.e. canals for the flood of

released water, and ponds for fishes will be without jobs.

The word for fish is "nephesh" which means living things or living souls. In the context of sluices and ponds it is correct to translate it as "fish" for fish are found in ponds. The literal sense would be "sluices and ponds for living thing."

Bad Counsel, Speedy Destruction

The LORD turns His attention now to the leaders of fortified Egyptian cities. Zoan was a city of great longevity as she was mentioned even in the days of Moses (Num. 13:22). As one of the major cities in Egypt her leaders would be filled with pride and arrogance that they could achieve anything they wanted and they probably prided themselves in their ability to remain so strong after hundreds of years of existence! Their history alone would be enough to fill them with pride in themselves and their ancestry. This was precisely what they did as verse 11 reveals. The princes of Zoan are called fools here by the LORD. The counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh who probably lived in Zoan are described here by the LORD as brutish – foolish or stupid. They gave counsel to Pharaoh such as "I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?"

How can man be so foolish to believe that their past glory can protect them from the present destruction? Just because one was not destroyed in the past does not mean that he will not be destroyed in the present. History has proven over and over again that empires come and go. There are no

exceptions. Every empire founded and ruled by sinful man will rise and fall. No matter how mighty and great they might appear at the height of their glory and splendour, they will inevitably fall. It is only a matter of time. This evidenced by the fall of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Grecians, Romans, including the mighty empire of Great Britain that was the largest of them all. It was said that at the height of her glory in the 1920's, Great Britain ruled a quarter of the Earth's total land area. Where is the mighty Great Britain today? It is a shell of a nation that is no longer seen as a superpower today. How foolish can the "wise" men be to flatter Pharaoh with such empty assurances? It is true that the above superpowers occurred after Isaiah, but there were past superpowers that these wise men were aware of and they thought such decline could never happen to them only others.

The LORD demanded from these men by using a series of two rhetorical questions. (v.12) "Where *are* they? where *are* thy wise *men*?" and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt." Let these wise men challenge the LORD. "Their wise words against the word of the LORD," will forever be the contention between God and evil men. This was true in Isaiah's time and it is still true today! This is where faith is perpetually tested. Today's tests are the same. It is either the wisdom of sinful finite men that we believe in or the very Word of God. It is no wonder that Satan never

stops attacking and undermining the perfect Bible.

The LORD calls these princes of Zoan who thought themselves to be very wise "fools"! They have *become* fools by their counsel to Pharaoh. The princes of Noph are deceived. Noph was the capital city of Upper Egypt where decisions made there. The wise men of Zoan have deceived these power brokers by their foolishness. They will pay a heavy price for listening to them. These wise men of Zoan have also seduced Egypt even those who were the stay e.g. bulwark or chieftain of tribes. They were the lay leaders of the many different tribes who comprised Egyptian society. The impact of their foolish counsel was nationwide.

Ultimately from the LORD's high viewpoint, it was Him who confounded all of Egypt. This is not to say that the princes of Zoan were not guilty for their foolishness. They will be judged by the LORD for their foolish counsel. However, the LORD was in absolute control even in the evil deeds and foolish counsel of wicked men. The LORD is never the direct cause of foolishness and sin. Sinful wicked men are responsible for their foolishness and sin. It is another example of the sovereignty of God and responsibility of man displayed in these verses. The Bible declared in (vv.14-15) that "The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken *man* staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, which the head or tail,

branch or rush, may do.” The LORD mingled e.g. mixed into the Egyptian society a perverse spirit that caused Egypt to err in everything she did. This is not fatalism but the sovereignty of the LORD of Israel at play here. All Egypt from the most powerful to the weakest, from the richest to the poorest shall have no work to do. This was how absolute the drought and famine will be when the cruel and fierce ruler-king descends upon Egypt! There is no escape for anyone.

Egypt in this day is likened to women who are easily frightened. They will be afraid of the devastation that will come upon Egypt. The reason for their fear and trembling is because “of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it.” Fear is something that man needs in this life. This keeps him from doing wrong and committing evil. Man is in serious trouble when man stops becoming afraid. He lives a life of unrestrained sin and debauchery. Here the Egyptian will become very afraid because of the LORD’s doing. Hopefully with this kind of fear, the Egyptians will turn to the LORD. Egypt will know that it is the LORD of Judah who devastated them. They will become afraid of Judah in that day. They will be afraid in themselves by the mention of the name “Judah!” This is due to the counsel of the LORD of hosts who has determined it to be so! The LORD can make sinful men afraid of God’s people if He so desires! This is how powerful the God of Judah is.

Gracious Salvation Upon Egypt

The phrase “in that day” does not necessarily refer to the period of devastation and calamity that is described in the preceding verses. The reason is the content of the following verses. The phrase “in that day” is cited four times, in vv. 18, 19, 23 and 24. The contexts therefore argue for a time period that is in the future. It is not a reference to the period of the previous judgement. In the case of the first “in that day” the Bible reveals that five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan. The language of Canaan at that time was Hebrew, the language of Israel. The number five refers to an uncertain number just as the number seven refers to perfection at times, and the number ten refers to completion. What it means is that a certain number of cities will receive the LORD of Israel as their God. One of these five cities is called the city of destruction. The city will be saved by the grace of God. The actual identity of this city is debated by commentators. Some say that it refers to Heliopolis but others say that it could refer to Leontopolis. The exact identity is not the emphasis here but rather her conversion by the grace of God. A city of destruction will be saved by the LORD. This gives hope to those who minister the gospel for there is no obstacle that is so great nor so high that the gospel of the LORD cannot overcome.

The second instance of the phrase “in that day” refers to worship of the LORD in Egypt. There will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of Egypt where in past centuries there was

idolatrous worship of a pantheistic magnitude. But now it will be a place of the worship of the one true and living God! This altar is placed in the midst of Egypt signifying the centrality and sole worship in Egypt. A pillar at the border to the LORD will indicate the extent of the worship of the LORD. The moment one sets foot onto Egyptian territory the worship of the LORD begins. This altar will become the symbol and witness of Egyptian life of worship. They shall cry to the LORD when they come under attack by oppressors and He will send them a great saviour who shall deliver them. The identity of the saviour is difficult to ascertain with certainty. Some commentators say that it was Alexander the Great who delivered Egypt and others that it refers to Christ. The identity of the oppressors will help us to define the time of the oppression. In this instance it is not possible for us to know with certainty who the oppressors are. Be that as it may, the deliverance will come from the LORD and the Egyptians will know that it is the LORD who delivers. I am inclined to believe that it refers to Jesus Christ. This is the only certainty that the Egyptians might know it is none other but the LORD who has delivered them.

The next verse (v. 21) reveals that the LORD shall be known to Egypt and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day. The Egyptians are sincere with the LORD as seen in the seriousness of their worship and vow keeping. They will have to be believers for these deeds to occur. The LORD shall smite Egypt and then heal it. This describes the process of reconciliation

between the LORD and Egypt. Egypt has to be devastated first so that she will reject all her idolatrous worship before she can then turn to the LORD and receive Him as her God. This is true of us today as well. Then, Egypt turns to the LORD in genuine repentance. He shall be entreated of them and shall heal them! The LORD will receive their worship and hear their cries and will heal the Egyptians. What a wonderful prophecy to read of such great salvation throughout a land now covered and immersed in centuries of idolatry. This gives hope to all believers never to give up on the salvation of hardened sinners. The power of the pure gospel must be recognised and unashamedly declared forever.

The third “in that day” refers to the spreading of the gospel message. There will originate from Egypt a highway to Assyria (about 2000 km distance) and the Assyrians will come to Egypt and vice versa and there will be peace between the two countries. The country that both of these countries have to pass through is Israel. This means that Canaan will be the bridge that links these two great nations as one. The Assyrians will also be converted through the ministry of the gospel by the Egyptians in that day! What a great day it will be. How can one keep the gospel to himself after he has found it is mind boggling! The good news is so great and wonderful that one cannot help but tell others about it! Peace will spread throughout the Middle Eastern region. Peace which only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring and the world has

been seeking for centuries and could never find, unless they turn to Christ.

The fourth “in that day” refers to Israel being the bridge as previously mentioned. Israel will be the blessing amidst this transformation of peace between Egypt and Assyria. This is the most wonderful verse in the entire chapter, v. 25 “Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” These three enemies become friends. All of them are called God’s people. Egypt is blessed by the LORD where the meaning of blessing is understood as having a personal relationship with the LORD. The LORD called them “his” people. The Assyrians were called the work of the LORD’s hand! And Israel was called the LORD’s inheritance. What a wonderful conclusion of hope in this chapter which began as a burden and now becomes a blessing!

PRACTICAL VALUE

God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility in tandem

The burden of the LORD on Egypt reveals the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man working in tandem. There is no contradiction. It is not fatalism that believes in a faceless god. Here we see the LORD in absolute control over all the affairs of man, both good and evil. The LORD’s almighty power is seen in His absolute sovereignty over all mankind including the evil works of sinful men. Once the LORD reveals future events that the Bible calls prophecies, it will surely

come to pass. Whether these prophecies could be devastation or blessings they matter not to the LORD. He determines and they are sure to come to pass.

However, evil men and their deeds are not excused. They will be judged by the LORD. They cannot argue before the LORD that they did them because the LORD had sovereignly predetermined them to commit these evil deeds. Man is totally accountable for his every action. There is no diminishing of his culpability when he sins, not even one bit.

Man is to accept these two truths and not attempt to reconcile them as man is too finite to. His mind is too small and his thoughts are infantile compared to the high thoughts and revelations of God.

Sinful Man is Helpless to stop the LORD

Whatever the LORD wills will happen. There is nothing that the LORD declares in Holy Scriptures that are not true, past, present and future. There is no nation so powerful that will last for eternity. All superpowers come and go as the LORD wills. He decides and not sinful men. All the nations of sinful men have their day in the sun where they shine brightly. The sad fact is that when these rulers enjoy their time in the sun they think that it will last forever. It does not. Sinful foolish men allow pride to grip their hearts priding themselves as great monarchs or presidents when they are nothing but little fish in their tiny little ponds. Very soon they die and their deeds will soon be forgotten.

However, sinful men try to leave their mark behind by their works or be remembered via mausoleums. All this is foolishness to God. He will judge and man will be judged by God's standard and there is nothing sinful man can do to stop God. This whole earth will soon end in a fiery destruction and cease to exist. Foolish men who try to save this earth have a better chance is putting out the fires of Hell with a garden hose! If he cannot even save himself, how can he save the earth in which he lives in? What foolish notions have crept into the minds of puny men. Just because he has sent men to the moon he thinks he has conquered space and has the power to save the earth! Man must humble himself before God and turn to Christ who can save him from his sins and let God save this earth since He has created it and not man.

The LORD saves all to the uttermost

The salvation of the Egyptians and the Assyrians and how they lived and served the LORD together is most encouraging. When it is in the will of the LORD and in His time He will save. These nations seem so *beyond* salvation today. Yet the LORD revealed more than 2,500 years ago that there will be this great salvation visiting these great nations that played such an important role in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

The gospel is indeed the power to save all mankind without exception. If these Egyptians and Assyrians can be saved so marvellously, all can be saved. God's people must never give

up but keep praying to the LORD and sharing the gospel. When it is time the LORD can save anyone to the uttermost. His duty is to save with the gospel and our duty is to share the gospel. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 19:1-10

TUESDAY: Isaiah 19:1-17

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 19:1-25

THURSDAY: Isaiah 19:1-25

FRIDAY: Isaiah 19:1-25

Discussion Questions

1. What is your view of America as a present day superpower? Do you think that it is a very great and powerful nation? Do you think that it will fall? Explain your answer.

2. How do you compare the super powers of the past like the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks and Romans with today's super

powers like Great Britain, Russia, China and America? Explain your answer.

3. Do you have trouble accepting the twin doctrines of God's sovereignty and Man's responsibility as revealed in Holy Scriptures? Do you have trouble understanding them?

4. Do you like to give counsel? Do you think you are good enough to give counsel? What does it mean to give counsel to someone? What guides your counselling?

5. What should characterize a good counselor? Please cite biblical examples or verse to support your answer.

6. How do you feel inside your heart when you read verses 18-25?

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
