

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

J. Vernon McGee, Th.D., LL.D.

Copyright @ 1960

CHAPTER 18

THEME:

The Burden of the land beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.

REMARKS:

The exact nation that Isaiah had in mind in this chapter has not been definitely ascertained. This is obvious from the many interpretations that sound scholars give to it.

It could hardly be Egypt since the description of its location does not fit Egypt. **“Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia”** is not an apt location of Egypt. There is a separate burden in chapter 19 concerning Egypt, and it would be unusual to have two. We believe that Ethiopia best suits the text and the tenor of Scripture. Surely we must dismiss England or the United States as a possible interpretation.

Another problem arises at this point—which Ethiopia is intended? There are two in the Scriptures. The word for Ethiopia is Cush. There is one on the Euphrates in Asia (Genesis 2:13) and another in Africa (II Kings 19:9). Again we conclude that the Ethiopia in Africa is intended.

Missionaries to that land tell us that it is known and noted as the land of birds, and is called the *“land of wings.”* This section is not actually a burden as we shall see (See COMMENT verse 1). Many favorable things are said in Scripture concerning Ethiopia.

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there (Psalms 87:4).

Ethiopia will be with Antichrist at first, but will be born again at the last siege of Jerusalem and will enter the Kingdom.

Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord, have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? (Amos 9:7).

Here God proves His love to His people by saying He loves them as He does the Ethiopians.

It is interesting to note also that the first Gentile who was saved in the church, as recorded in Acts 8, was the Ethiopian eunuch. The intent of the Bible student should be such that he will use a concordance and look up every reference to Cush and Ethiopia. It will prove profitable and enlightening.

OUTLINE:

1. **God Calls the World's Attention to ETHIOPIA.** Verses 1-2
2. **God Calls the World's Attention to ISRAEL.** Verses 3-7

COMMENT:

Verse 1—**Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:** (See REMARKS for identification of nation).

Verse 2—**That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!**

It is assumed, from the statement that the ambassadors are sent by sea, that this is a great sea power. Some have held this sea power to be England. “**Vessels of bulrushes**” has likewise been a stumbling block in interpretation. Dr. Jennings, in his profound work on Isaiah, makes a good case for the “steamboat” but, since modern ships use oil, this seems to have no place in our day.

Since vessels of bulrushes would be too flimsy for ocean travel, others have sought to identify this with the airplane. In the “**shadowing wings**” they find written confirmation of this, however appealing this may appear, it is a highly speculative interpretation, nothing that is accurate can be positively asserted at the present time.

“**A nation scattered and peeled**” is Israel. This is potently evident, and most of the sound students of the Word concur in this.

“**Whose land the rivers have spoiled**” presents a difficulty. There is only one river in Palestine, and it has never flooded the land. Dr. Jennings presents a good interpretation when he suggests that the Asian Cush on the Euphrates River and African Cush where the Nile rises, refer to the nations that have spoiled Palestine. Surely Palestine has been their battlefield.

Verse 3—**All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.**

God calls the world to pay attention to this. Many students of the Word consider “**the ensign**” mentioned here as the ark which was in the tabernacle and later transferred to the temple of Solomon. It disappeared at the time of the Babylonian captivity. There is a tradition that it was carried to Ethiopia.

Verse 7—**In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.**

This is evidently a reference to the time when the Kingdom of Christ will be established on this earth and the Ethiopians will come again to Jerusalem to worship.

THE SINKING SUN

The nation's sun is sinking in the west.
God's bounteous day of grace will soon be o'er
The fleeting hours of the world's unrest
Are filled with deepest sin, and sorrow sore.

To millions now our hearts are strangely drawn:
Men looking for the light in every land.
Their restless hearts are waiting for the dawn.
And lo! the day is past—the night at hand.

With worldwide armies training for the fray.
False prophets still speak forth the words of peace.
And Brown-shirts. Black-shirts. Red shirts hail the day
Of their great glory with its swift increase.

“O fools, and slow of heart.” why will ye spurn
All that the prophets and their Lord proclaim?
Man's day is dying! Turn, ye people, turn.
Before the night shall end man's boasted fame.

Though men His Word of prophecy despise.
Yet God hath spoken—and His Word is true:
Our Christ is coming! Christian, lift your eyes
And pledge your life and love to Him anew.

—Albert Simpson Reitz

~ end of chapter 18 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
