

ETHIOPIA FROM WOE TO SALVATION

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Ethiopia is one of the first lands named in the Bible (Gen 2:13). It is mentioned several more times in the scriptures. Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Num 12:1). The Ethiopians joined with the Egyptians to fight against Rehoboam king of Judah as part of God's punishment (2 Chr 12:2-5). Asa king of Judah defeated Ethiopia in battle (2 Chr 14:8-15; 16:7-8). Tirhaka the Ethiopian king fought against mighty Assyria (2 Kgs 19:9). It was at this time that Ethiopia sent ambassadors to Israel seeking to make an alliance with the Lord's people against Assyria. Isaiah 18:1-2 says, "*Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: 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!*"

God pronounced woe upon the Ethiopians for this, but also foretold of a day when that nation would bring presents to the Lord.

God the deliverer of Israel from Assyria

God had strongly rebuked Israel on numerous occasions for making alliances with other nations instead of trusting in Him (Isa 8:5-18; 9:13; 10:3-4,20-21; 20:1-6; 30:1-7,15-18; 31:1-6; 39:1-8). Therefore, God told Israel to reject the invitation to form an alliance with Ethiopia because God was going to defend Israel and defeat the Assyrians and, therefore, Israel needed to trust in God and turn to Him for help, not man. God said, "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifts up an ensign on the mountains; and when he blows a trumpet, hear ye" (Isa 18:3). This is an announcement to all the world about what God was going to do when the Assyrians came against Jerusalem. "*For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them*" (Isa 18:4-6). God was watching the Assyrians, and at just the right time, God was going to cut them down and leave them to lie on the ground as food for the birds and animals. There would be so many corpses that they would provide food for several months. This is precisely what happened when God sent His angel and killed 185,000 Assyrians in their camp

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(continued)

around Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:35; 2 Chr 32:21; Isa 37:36).

Ethiopia bringing presents to the Lord

After God delivered Israel, God said that the Ethiopians would bring presents. God said,

“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” (Isa 18:7; see also Psa 68:31; 87:3-6). When God destroyed the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers that were encamped against Israel, presents were indeed sent to the Lord and to Hezekiah king of Judah. “And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land” (2 Chr 32:21). “Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. *And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth*” (2 Chr 32:22-23). Isaiah’s prophecy would have been fulfilled by Ethiopia being among these nations who sent presents after God delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

Ethiopia hearing the gospel of Christ

But the prophecy of Isaiah 18:7 may have been looking beyond the immediate future to the time of the New Testament. In that time, God saved spiritual Israel through Jesus Christ and the Ethiopians were included in that “holy nation,” the “Israel of God,” which is the church of Christ (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16; 1 Pet 2:5-9; Heb 12:22-23). An Ethiopian eunuch who served Candace queen of Ethiopia and who was a Jewish proselyte, was baptized into Christ by Philip (Acts 8:26-39). Furthermore, in later years, the gospel was preached in every region, including Ethiopia (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8; 13:47; 17:6; 24:5; Rom 1:8; 10:18; Col 1:5-6,23). This ancient nation that we begin to read about in Genesis was ultimately called by the gospel of Christ. Revelation 7:9 foretells the future inhabitants of Heaven: *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”* Heaven is a place for Ethiopians, Americans, and people of all nations who will believe and obey the Lord. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus Christ is the author of eternal