

1. In the last lesson I discussed God's judgment on nations near Israel. I believe Isaiah wrote that to show us the importance of being a good witness for Jesus to others around us. A logical question to ponder is what about those who refuse to trust in God no matter what? That reminds me of an old biblical principal that the nation of Egypt symbolically represents the world. That just means "Egypt" represents everything we can live for other than for God. If we only live out our lives just to be famous, or powerful, or whatever it is we consider successful, from Gods perspective that is a waste of a life whether we realize it or not.
2. All I'm saying is as we read these two chapters about God's judgment on actual Egypt, consider if the "shoe fits" our lives in anyway. Egypt is where the nation of Israel was born. It's God's way of saying He's separated some people from how the world lives in order to be His witnesses to a lost and dying world. To state what should be obvious, that's what He's called us Christians to do.
 - a) Therefore as we study these two chapters that primarily focus on what'll happen to Egypt in the future, I don't want you to think, "Good for them or too bad for them". I'd like each of us to consider areas of our lives and ask if we have some "Egypt" in us?
 - b) If anyone reading this lesson happens to be from Egypt, this lesson is not a condemnation of who you are or your background. Egypt had a strong Christian history for the first six centuries after Christ. The influence of Islam changed that. Today the number of believing Christians there are few in number and they're being persecuted for their faith. My simple point is as we read about the fate of Egypt it's not punishment for allowing Islam to exist. It's God's way of saying a way we can tell when the Messiah begins to rule, is when Egypt will become a very "Pro-Israel" country for the first time in it's long history.
 - c) It would probably also help to realize the historical situation during Isaiah's time. The big threat was the Assyrian Empire based out of Northern Iraq. A 100-years later, the parts of Israel not conquered by the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians. My point is it would be natural for the Israelites to think, "OK, our life is in danger. Egypt is a powerful force in the neighborhood, let's all run there for safety." A big reason why Isaiah preaches so hard against Egypt is to discourage Israelites from "running back to their roots" and not trusting God to guide their lives.
 - d) The point for you and me is when things get tough, it's easy to abandon God and go trust in something else. I'm not saying we can't "veg out" after a hard day. I'm talking about if we say, get out of the practice of prayer, bible study and gathering with other Christians in order to pursue other things we think will make us happy.
3. With that tough thought in mind (I never said Isaiah's an easy book to learn), let me give some of the details about these two chapters themselves.
 - a) These chapters are full of predictions. Some of them came true during or right after Isaiah lived. Others came true over the last few thousand years. I'll argue that some of them did come true in fairly recent times. Finally, some won't happen until the Messiah comes.
 - b) As I preach a lot when I teach on prophecy, remember that prophecy is patterns. All that means is a prophet of God can make predictions with more than one "fulfillment". There are short-term fulfillments to validate the speaker as God's prophet, and events that occur much later in history if for no other reason, to make the bible valid for all ages and times.
 - i) For example, when the Muslims conquered Egypt in the 7th Century, bible experts of that era were convinced that God was judging Egypt and these predictions were being fulfilled then and there due to the fall of Christianity there and then.
 - ii) As a more modern example, there are references in these chapters to the Nile River stop flowing. One has to realize that Egypt's economy is centered on that river. In the 1960's a dam was built that did all sorts of ecological damage to that society. It is just another example of how Isaiah's predictions here apply to modern history.

4. Let me explain these chapters another way: Suppose we start thinking, I have my own problems to worry about and Egypt is a million miles from my head right now. Why do I have to study all this stuff about God's judgment on Egypt? Even if I believe Isaiah is a true prophet of God, why should I use my valuable time to learn all this stuff when I've got my own issues to deal with?
- a) So glad you asked. Let me give a few reasons to read further:
 - i) First I can say its part of the bible that God wants us to learn if that helps.
 - ii) Next I can say the purpose of bible study is not to learn history, but to learn how it can or should apply to our lives.
 - iii) Probably the most important thing I can say is consider areas of our life where we are not letting God be in charge of. Whether we realize it or not, in those cases we are like "Egypt", where God is saying, "I want to be in charge of all aspects of your life and I want that part of your life we refuse to let go be in My hands."
 - iv) What if you think, "I'm not perfect, and I know I'm saved by grace, so why should I worry about those who refuse to turn their lives over to Jesus?" The answer is it's not meant to be an exclusive club. Let's be honest, the only reason we are saved is because someone else took the trouble to preach the gospel to us. The point is God wants us to be a witness to nonbelievers, and one way of being such a witness is if we become aware of the fate of those who refuse to turn to God.
 - v) Therefore, as read about "Egypt" in this lesson, don't focus so much on the details of what'll happen to the physical location of Egypt itself, but consider how we are living like "Egypt" and consider areas of our lives that we're not living as He wants us to live.
 - vi) The side fun part of this lesson is if you're ever in the Middle East, its kind of neat to see Egypt and realize here is its destiny both good and bad. If you didn't know, God's eternal plans for Egypt aren't all bad. It's kind of like saying, because people live there who did, do, and will believe in God, some good things are planned for its destiny as well as reasons to discourage Israelites at Isaiah's time to back there.
 - b) In closing I ask you to read through the rest of the lesson as it helps us to see God's eternal plans for a location that's been a major part of history for millenniums. It teaches us about behavior to avoid, how God wants us to live as a witness for Him and as a bonus a little of future history both from Isaiah's perspective as well as our own. OK, then Verse 1.
5. Chapter 19, Verse 1: An oracle concerning Egypt: See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.
- a) First, just to make it obvious these chapters are about Egypt. Isaiah makes that obvious to start this section, as Egypt is mentioned by name. If you read the last lesson, I mentioned that the land associated with Ethiopia back then and today are different. Part of what we call Egypt today was associated with "Ethiopia" back then. All I'm saying is what we call Egypt is traditionally divided into upper Egypt (next to the Mediterranean Sea) and lower Egypt, which is the hillside/mountain area that was discussed in the last lesson.
 - b) Keep in mind life during Isaiah's time. Those living in Israel were scared for their lives as the Assyrian Empire were "knocking on their doorsteps" conquering one place right after the other through Israel. As I stated earlier, a lot of Israelites would consider moving back to Egypt for safety. Therefore, God through Isaiah wants to give a prophecy about what'll happen to Egypt and to keep it simple, it's not good. That leads us back to these verses.
 - c) Notice the phrase "The LORD (the most holy name of God) riding on a swift cloud". That is Isaiah's way of saying what he's predicting is going to happen soon. As I've mentioned in the last lesson around 600BC, there was a famous war between Babylon and Egypt. The short version is Egypt lost. While they still existed as a country after that, that's when the nation of Egypt ceased to be a great power in that region after millenniums of dominance.
 - d) That's why Isaiah's warning not to go to Egypt, as they're about to lose badly themselves.

- e) If you know much about Egypt at the time of the Israel exodus, roughly 800 years prior to Isaiah's time, Egypt worshiped a multitude of gods. The point is when Egypt loses the big war coming up all of their false gods will not be of any value to them. That's why the text is talking about the failure of the Egyptian gods in that verse.
 - f) OK John, you're wandering into ancient history again. Why should we care? Because life is tough at times, God still wants us to trust Him during such times and not return to our former lifestyle before we got saved. That's an underlying application of this verse.
6. Verse 2: "I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian-- brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.
- a) Historically, around the time Isaiah wrote this, Egypt had a weak leader. There were lots of historical stories of civil wars in Egypt back then. Again, the message to those Israelites who Isaiah is preaching to, is in effect, don't run to Egypt as life there is much worse than it is here at home. Historically another Pharaoh did come on the scene that united Egypt again, but as I mentioned that country lost bad to Babylon about 100 years later.
 - b) Again the underlying message to us is that we all have problems and God's well aware of what we're dealing with. However running back to the way we lived before we got saved isn't a solution now, then or later.
7. Verse 3: The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists.
- a) It never ceases to amaze me what people turn to, when they refuse to trust God. They'll turn to fortunetellers or those who claim they can raise people from the dead. The bible forbids such things if for no other reason, than it draws us away from God. I do believe God gives some legitimate power to such sources if for no other reason than to show how His power is greater than all other "spiritual" powers in the universe.
 - b) Which leads me back to history. The text is saying when they face destruction coming up, they will turn to everything but God Himself. Again, the point is to discourage Israelites from moving back to their "roots" in Egypt.
8. Verse 4: I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.
- a) Remember how I said Egypt went through a civil war, and then a tough king will reunite Egypt once again. By the way, all that happened soon after Isaiah's time. So how do we know this wasn't added to the text later to prove Isaiah was right? I admit, that's a tough one to prove historically. However, Verses 5-10 make a long time in the future prediction that didn't come true until the last 50 years or so. That's why I believe Isaiah predicted it.
9. Verse 5: The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. ⁶ The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up. The reeds and rushes will wither, ⁷ also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river. Every sown field along the Nile will become parched, will blow away and be no more. ⁸ The fishermen will groan and lament, all who cast hooks into the Nile; those who throw nets on the water will pine away. ⁹ Those who work with combed flax will despair, the weavers of fine linen will lose hope. ¹⁰ The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all the wage earners will be sick at heart.
- a) To understand these verses, the first thing one has to realize is just how dependant Egypt is on that river. Not only is it a source of fresh water, not only is it a way to sail through Egypt, but the silt it deposits when it overflows is essential for the crops and even for the fisherman of that country.
 - b) There is a famous modern fulfillment of these verses that I'm about to get into. Before I do start all of that, let me say that I don't know of any ancient fulfillments that fit exactly into these predictions nearly as well as the modern one does. Therefore, if another fulfillment of these verses occurred long ago, I'm not aware of it, nor could I find any reference to any other Nile River changes based on what I've read. However, I know the recent fulfillment of these verses is almost scary when one considers the accuracy of Isaiah's words.

- c) The modern fulfillment has to do with a dam project that was first built around 1900. A newer one was built in the 1960's. To say it didn't do well is an understatement. Today it is considered one of the worst ecological disasters in modern history. By damming up the river as a power source, it stopped the silt flow from spreading in the Nile basin, which is needed to grow crops in that area as well as fight off pests. The dam pretty much stopped the Egyptian fishing industry, as fresh fish couldn't go down stream. Another side effect is it wreaked havoc with the saltwater fish of the Mediterranean.
 - d) The short version is one can read of the mixed results on the Aswan High Dam in Wiki, or one can read it here in Isaiah. Since we're in Isaiah, let's read what Isaiah predicted about the drying up of the Nile River 2,700 years ago:
 - i) The riverbed will be parched and dry (Verse 5).
 - ii) The canals (where the river runs) will stink (Verse 6).
 - iii) What grew by the river will wither (Verse 6).
 - iv) The fisherman will grieve and lament (Verse 7).
 - v) Those who throw nets on the water will pine away (Verse 8).
 - vi) Those who work with flax (a plant that grew by the Nile) will lose hope (Verse 9).
 - vii) "Wage earners will be sick at heart" (Verse 10).
 - e) As I stated earlier, this prediction could have had some sort of short term fulfillment way back when, but it's almost scary to realize how accurately Isaiah described the ecological damage caused by damming up the river some 2,700 years before the project happened. It is now about 50 years since that project. Today Egypt is a poor country and a lot of it has to do with the damage caused by the Aswan Dam project.
 - f) OK so Isaiah got that one right. How does any of this affect me? If nothing else it is proof of how Isaiah is called to be God's prophet. The more immediate understanding is for us to realize "God's not to be messed with". If we too choose to turn from Him to return back to our "Egypt", we can suffer damage in ways too horrible to contemplate. Better if we just move on from here.
10. Verse 11: The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the wise men, a disciple of the ancient kings"? ¹² Where are your wise men now? Let them show you and make known what the LORD Almighty has planned against Egypt. ¹³ The officials of Zoan have become fools, the leaders of Memphis are deceived; the cornerstones of her peoples have led Egypt astray.
- a) To understand how Egypt survived as a great military power for millenniums, one has to realize they were also famous for having wise council. The Egyptian advisors to the king had a great long-term reputation. Think of that reputation with a large bunch of Israelites considering fleeing the threats from "Iraq" and wanting to go back to Egypt. To put this in our vocabulary, it'd be like thinking I don't know what to do next but this "God stuff" isn't working for me so I'll just seek the "wise council" that is famous down the road.
 - b) One of the interesting things to read is the Egyptian "wisdom" that Moses would have had to learn growing up. Remember that Moses was raised to be the next Pharaoh, but he left that to join the Israelites. The point is that the so called "Egyptian wisdom" never made it into the pages of the "Torah" and it shows how God speaking to Moses is so different than the so-called wisdom that the "world" has to offer. If you get that, you understand what it is these verses are trying to communicate.
 - c) These verses speak of two major cities in ancient Egypt: Zoan and Memphis. What Isaiah is preaching here is those "so called wise men" have no idea what God is planning for the future of Egypt. Those "wise men" can't help when the great Egypt, which has stood as a great power for millenniums, is about to come to an end as a major force in that region.
 - d) Again, the purpose of Isaiah preaching all of this is for the Israelites to not think, "We can all go to Egypt to avoid the Assyrian Empire coming our way". The issue then as well as the issue now is about trusting God and not running back to our "old ways" of thinking.

11. The LORD has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around in his vomit. ¹⁵ There is nothing Egypt can do-- head or tail, palm branch or reed. ¹⁶ In that day the Egyptians will be like women. They will shudder with fear at the uplifted hand that the LORD Almighty raises against them.
- a) I have to admit that after about twenty chapters of studying Isaiah, I've fallen in love with the way he gets colorful in analogies to describe the situation at hand. One has to admit it is funny (in a gross sort of way) to compare Egypt's wisdom to a drunk staggering around in his own vomit. The idea is to portray something so sickening it is beyond help as there is nothing one can do to fix the situation.
 - b) Remember what Isaiah's trying to accomplish here: Discourage Israelites from running to Egypt for safety from the Assyrian invasion. Again the point for you and me is the issue of not abandoning God in our time of need and to trust Him through our problems as He promises to guide us through our lives as we use them for His glory.
 - c) There's a second analogy I have to be careful with. The short version is Isaiah insults the wisdom of Egypt of "being like a woman". One has to remember in Isaiah's culture it was a very male dominant society where only men made the big decisions for a society. Again it's Isaiah's colorful way of saying, "Don't trust in the wisdom of Egypt (that is, the world's way of trying to fix things) as opposed to trusting God."
 - d) The final little point of these verses is when Isaiah is saying, "God's hand is against them". I admit it's strange to think of God as being against a group of people. The issue isn't that God loves some people intrinsically more than others. The issue is that some of us choose to live for God and some of us choose to live for other things. Because some have made a life-long choice to ignore God, He effectively "gives them what they want" which is life for eternity away from His presence. Jesus talked about the "unforgivable sin" in the Gospels. In effect, it's the same thing: Ignoring God's will all of one's life and denying Jesus as God and as coming in the flesh all of one's life is the only unforgivable sin in the bible.
 - i) The underlying point is God gives us the free will to choose to love Him back or to choose to ignore Him. He does that so we can freely choose to love Him just as He has chosen to love us. Because "Egypt" symbolically represents choosing to live for anything but God, we see the symbolism here of God "rejecting" Egypt.
 - ii) OK, what about the literalness of those people back then? Didn't a lot of innocent people get hurt when the Egypt was conquered? I'm sure that's true. That's why I believe in a God who judges people fairly. While we're at it, we can ponder of the lives of those who never had a chance or were raised in cultures naïve about God. As I just stated, I believe in a God who judges all people fairly. That concept lets me to sleep at night as opposed to injustice "getting away with it" for eternity.
 - e) I admit, I just wandered off in left field for a bit. Time to get back to Isaiah.
12. Verse 17: And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the LORD Almighty is planning against them.
- a) It's hard to picture anytime in Egypt's history where they've been scared of Israel. Even in our modern times when Israel defeated Egypt in 1948 and 1967, a national pride existed in Egypt where they think of themselves as superior due to their long history as an empire.
 - b) Realistically we cannot look at this verse and see it matching anything that occurred in the history of Israel and Egypt. The best way to see it is it's talking about Egypt's relationship with the God of the Universe. When all that destruction did come when the Babylonians conquered them they must have thought, "Our gods have failed as, as we are dying here". In short, Israel as a terror to Egypt isn't describing anything in history to date.
 - c) So if this verse is not describing anything from ancient history, what is it describing? One can argue it refers to modern times where Israel defeated Egypt twice. One can also see it as say life when the Messiah rules from Egypt as then they have to accept that Messiah as He rules over the world, which again, is symbolically represented by Egypt.

- d) The point is there have been times in modern history where Judah (a nickname for Israel) has been a terror to Egypt, but I see this verse as a future prediction about whenever Jesus returns to set up His eternal kingdom from Jerusalem. (I could get onto a whole side trip here explaining the details of that future event, but let's just say we're going to get into it a lot more of that later in this book.) In the meantime, let's go to Verse 18.
13. Verse 18: In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction.
- a) From Verse 18 to the Verse 23 (the end of this chapter), we have 3 "In that day" statements by Isaiah. The most important point to realize as we read this section is to realize it can't be describing anything in history to date. For example here in Verse 18, it says that five of the Egyptian cities will speak the "language of Canaan" (that is, Hebrew) and they'll swear allegiance to God. If you know anything about the Middle East, you'd know that Egypt's a Muslim country and how improbable it'd be for Hebrew to be the dominant language of any part of Egypt. Even when Egypt was predominately a Christian nation for 6 centuries after Jesus came in the world, there was never a historical time where Hebrew was the big language in any part of Egypt, nor any time where five cities there were mainly Jewish.
- b) My point is simply that when we see Isaiah uses the phrase "In that day", we know we are describing something future to even us. It's hard to imagine a world where Hebrew is the dominant language in any part of Egypt, but Isaiah is saying when the Messiah comes it'll affect Egypt so much the dominant language will change.
- c) That leads to a quick discussion of the phrase "City of Destruction". Modern translations of this passage will mention in the footnotes that when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1948, one of the minor difference is that this phrase is called "The City of the Sun". In the Egyptian religion of Isaiah's time, the main god was the "sun god". What I suspect all that means is when the Messiah "sets up shop" in Israel, it will affect Egypt to the point they'd stop worshipping other religions and accept Jesus' rule and the God of the Hebrews as the God of the Universe. I admit that it's hard to imagine a world where Islam "dies so much" the God of the bible wins, but that's what Isaiah is predicting will occur one day.
- i) Let me put it this way: If Isaiah could accurately predict the damage caused by the building of a dam in Egypt, we can trust his prediction about world wide religions changing whenever the Messiah comes to rule the world from Jerusalem.
- ii) To put it even another way, one reason I'm willing to bet my eternal salvation that Jesus is God, is the bible is 30% predictions for a reason: To validate the bible being from outside of time as we know it. If some of these predictions seem improbable to happen, think about Isaiah's accuracy in predictions that have come true.
- iii) All I'm saying is I'm willing to trust in Isaiah's accurate even in his predictions that haven't occurred yet as improbable as they may seem to us.
- d) Again, the underlying issue for you and me isn't about the details of what will happen to Egypt in the future, the issue is not to turn away from the God the world ignores in every aspect of their life. The point is wherever the city of destruction is or whatever that term means, it appears to be something God's going to destroy so I don't want to be close to it wherever it is, or was to be a part of that destruction.
- e) OK, if all of that wasn't weird enough, we're about to get weirder. As we read about signs in Egypt pointing to God about places and religions getting destroyed, and as we're about to read of a monument to God being built in Egypt, keep the big picture in mind first: It's all about trusting God "no matter what", and realizing He will win in the end.
14. Verse 19: In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border.
- a) In preparation of this lesson, I've heard some interesting arguments that this monument is referring to the great pyramid in Egypt, which is larger and older than all the others. It is a possible interpretation of this verse, but I don't think that's it, so let me explain it briefly.

- b) Notice the phrase "at it's border" and also the phrase "the heart of Egypt". How is it even possible to have a monument at both places? The argument for the "great pyramid" is it's located at the traditional border between "upper and lower" Egypt and therefore it's in the "heart of Egypt" at the same time. There are many fascinating aspects to the construction of the great pyramid, which again is much older and larger than all the others. To make it brief, unlike the other pyramid's it wasn't a tomb for a Pharaoh. It's full of mazes and lots of interesting calculations. Scholars who study it, are fascinated by its properties inside of it. Some say it lays out the history of mankind and even has predictions about the time of Jesus first coming.
- i) OK, before I get even weirder on you about this, let's remember that this pyramid probably existed at Isaiah's time. The text refers to this monument as one that will exist when the Messiah rules. I'll just say the "Great Pyramid" is a possible answer to these verses, but we don't know for sure.
 - ii) Remember the phrase of "in that day". A way we'll know what that monument is, is it'll be there at the time that Hebrew is a major language in Egypt and it will be a time when the Messiah rules over the world from Israel.
 - iii) All I'm saying is the theory about the Great Pyramid being that monument could be right or it could be something else. We don't know as "that day" isn't here yet.
 - iv) In the meantime, the "weirdness" of this monument section keeps going.
15. Verse 20: It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them.²¹ So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them.²² The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.
- a) It'd probably help at this point to back up and remind ourselves why Isaiah is writing all of this in the first place: Israelites at the time seriously considered fleeing to Egypt as they were in danger of being destroyed by the Assyrians. Therefore, Isaiah wanted to talk the Israelites out of fleeing there, as essentially that great empire will also be conquered.
 - b) However, Isaiah's now going way beyond the immediate future to preach, "here's what is going to happen to Egypt in the long term future, so you'll know their ultimate destiny".
 - c) Remember the goal is to get people who are, or should be trusting in God to use our lives as a witness for Him. If Egypt represents the world without God, Isaiah wants us to what will become of this land when the Messiah will rule over this world.
 - d) Keep in mind what God desires of us, a relationship with us. The reason He created us in the first place is to have an intimate relationship with people. As I like to state every now and then, if God is God, He doesn't need anything. However if He is one of love, then He must want something to express that love upon (humans). That's why He made us in the first place. OK, why am I getting into all that theology here? So that we understand that when the Egyptians cry out to God in the day when the Jesus rules over the world, they'll acknowledge Him as God and freely dedicate their lives to serving Him.
 - e) If God is so loving why didn't He help the Egyptians at other points in their history? Why wait until the Messiah comes before they willingly acknowledge Him? The answer comes back to the idea that Egypt represents the "world". That is, they represent all people who don't want God to rule over their lives. That contradicts His desire to have relationships with us. Therefore, there has to be a day where "God wins" to prove He's greater than all things mankind can choose as alternatives to Him.
 - i) So why can't life just go on forever, with some freely choosing to serve God while others choose to ignore Him? Because just as life had a beginning, it has to have an ending one day, and we're reading of the how it ends in "that day" statements.

- f) All of that theology leads us back to these verses. Again, these verses can't be talking of a historical event because nothing in history has ever matched what these verses describe. These verses are describing a day where Egypt will worship the God of Israel when "the" Messiah rules the world from Jerusalem. But if the danger of being conquered is part of the past, how is it future? Remember that prophecy is "patterns". There were short-term fulfillments of these verses when the Babylonians conquered Egypt and even when all of the centuries when Rome ruled over Egypt. However, the Messiah ruling over the world has not literally happened yet. He rules over multitudes today who honor Jesus as Lord. However, there still has to come a future day when He returns to rule over the world as all the world will honor Him as the Messiah. That future day is being described here in these verses of Isaiah.
- i) There is an old Christian expression that Isaiah is called "The Gospel according to Isaiah", and these passages are one of many examples why that is so.
- g) With that said, I'd like you to consider Verse 21 for a moment: It says that God will make Himself known to the Egyptians and they'll acknowledge Him as God. Then the verse says the proof of Egypt worshiping God is they'll offer sacrifices to Him and keep their vows they made to Him. I'd say that requires a quick explanation:
- i) It's hard for us to picture a world where Egypt or anyone for that matter making a sacrifice to God ruling over our lives. The idea of sacrifices is "to put our money where our mouth is". By willing to give to Christian causes is a way of saying we are serious about our commitment to God. One has to remember that Egypt was known as a "bread basket" for that part of the world for millenniums. In the book of Acts, Paul boarded a grain ship from Egypt to Rome. (See Acts 27:38). All I'm saying is we will know when "that day" occurs because the people of Egypt will be willing to "put their money where their mouth is" and acknowledge the God of the bible as the true God.
- h) Finally, Verse 22 describes both bad and good things that occur in Egypt in "that day". It talks of Egypt being stricken by a plague that God allowed to happen, and then He'll help them recover from that plague. As I said to start this lesson, many commentators see this as the suffering Egypt had for many centuries until Muslim rule. Others see it as a major future event where God again "plagues" Egypt for turning from Him and then helps them as they are still people God's created who He wants to have a relationship with.
- i) OK, I've now spent almost a whole page describing the future relationship between God and Egypt. The point for you and me is not so much the specifics of Egypt, but to realize what is God's ultimate plan for people who desire anything and everything other than He ruling over our lives. These verses are essentially saying God's going to win so we might as well accept it now and live to make a difference for Him. Running back to a way of life without trusting in God is a waste of a life and while God proves that every day by giving us joy as we make a difference for Him, there will also be an end time scenario played out where God says in effect, "I'm going to win, deal with it and here's the wrap up scene".
- j) It's sort of amazing to consider that if you take the bible as a whole, there is a lot more text dedicated to the events of Jesus "Second Coming" than there is to His "First Coming".
- i) Even if we add up all the text of the Gospels about all the events when Jesus lived on the earth, it's less than all the text about events of "that day" as Isaiah calls it.
- ii) Now that we know that, let's get back to Isaiah's "In that day" lecture:
16. Verse 23: In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth.²⁵ The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."
- a) The short version is the chapter ends on a blessing to Israel, Egypt and Assyria.

- b) The longer version is the proof of that blessing is there will be a highway that connects all three of those places. In Isaiah's day a "highway" was a well-traveled road. In our day we think of a highway as a place for cars to travel at high speed. I think these verses will have a literal fulfillment one day and we'll read of the Middle East "Highway 1" that goes from Egypt through Israel all the way to Iraq without checkpoints.
- i) These verses are amazing when one considers Middle East history. Even if we say Assyria no longer exists today, it does in the sense we call it Iraq. There's another old bible expression that says, "The problem with people is we regularly change the names of places." Cities that have existed for millenniums get renamed when new leaders take over a place. All I'm saying is that even though Assyria hasn't existed as an empire for millenniums, that area still exists and we call it Iraq today.
 - ii) Again if you know anything about the Middle East, you'd know that there's a long term negative history between Israel and the other major powers of that region. It is hard for us to picture a highway connecting those three places with open travel being allowed in both directions there. That's another reason why we know that Isaiah is talking about life under the rule of the Messiah when "that day" occurs.
 - iii) The reason God wants us to care about this stuff is so we realize "how all of this is going to end one day". Our world of problems will come to an end one day when the Messiah finally brings a world of peace with a single leader that the rest of the world will be forced to acknowledge as their leader.
 - iv) The reason "that day" is detailed is God wants to make sure we don't miss it when it occurs. More importantly, He wants to give us reassurance that our world with all of its sins and problems doesn't go on forever. Eventually God wins. He waits as long as He is for "this day" to occur as He wants many people to freely desire to turn to Him as God as possible before all of this "that day" stuff begins.
 - v) The point for you and me is other people took the time and trouble to witness and be a witness to us about salvation and now God wants us to return that favor by using our lives to make a difference for Him to others. That's Isaiah's message to us.
 - vi) In the meantime, I still have another short, six-verse chapter to cover.
17. Chapter 20, Verse 1: In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it--² at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, "Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet." And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot.
- a) Verse 1 is a "time stamp". It's to tell us the exact historical time when God gave Isaiah all of these predictions about "that day". The specific's is "Sargon" was the name of an army general that was leading the invasion of the Assyrian army marching south to conquer a lot of Israel and the surrounding territory. Ashdod was one of the cities controlled by the Philistines for many a century of Israel's history. Between the Assyrian army and later the Babylonians, the Philistines finally disappeared from history around that time.
 - b) For all of you that have taken the trouble to read through this whole lesson so far, I'm now going to share my favorite part of this lesson. Have you ever thought, "It'd be kind of fun to be a prophet of God. I'd get messages from God Himself and I'd get to share them with the world. I'd be famous beyond my time as people for millenniums would read what I'd written". My response is read Verse 2 here. God tells Isaiah that for three years he was to walk around naked and barefoot in public.
 - c) Many of the commentaries "lighten Isaiah's load" by saying he wasn't completely naked but he walked around in his "night shirt" or that he didn't do it every single day. The text can be interpreted that way. Personally, I take it more literal. My point is simply that if you'd want to be a prophet of God, realize what the price is, that God may put us through if we are going to be a witness for Him. As I said in previous lessons, history states that Isaiah was killed in a violent way as his message was rejected by one of the Israelite kings.

- d) One of the commentaries I read (Jon Curson) gave an argument that I really liked. What he said was, "Do you love your unsaved family enough, you're willing to go walk around naked for three years? Do you care enough about the salvation of a certain person that we would be willing to do something this dramatic just to show them just how much He does care for us? All of a sudden the "night shirt" option seems like a preferable choice. If you want to be used by God in a dramatic way, I'm not saying we have to go parade down the street naked and barefoot. I'm saying that if we really do want God to be in charge guide of our lives, we have to be willing to be obedient to Him, "no matter what".
- i) As to the salvation of our loved one's who don't currently trust in God, by far the most important thing we can do is pray for them that their hearts be open to God's truth. It may not be us who leads them to God, but we can always pray for them.
 - ii) So if God doesn't call us to be "naked and barefoot" for Him, what does He call us to do? Great question. Short version is ask what do you love to do? If money was not an issue, what would we love to do all day where we could make a difference for Him? The joy in life is to take something we just enjoy doing anyway and find a way to use that talent to make a difference for God! If you don't know what that is, just try different things and see ways where God can use us.
 - iii) However, there may be times when God calls us to "go naked and barefoot" and we have to accept that assignment as it is His will for our lives at that moment.
 - iv) Speaking of people going naked and barefoot, let's get back to Isaiah.
18. Verse 3: Then the LORD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, ⁴ so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared--to Egypt's shame.
- a) The reason Isaiah was told to walk that way, is that is how the Assyrians will defeat the nations of Egypt and Cush. If you haven't read my previous lesson, realize Cush is what we roughly call "Ethiopia" or the southern parts of Egypt today. All I'm saying is just as Isaiah had to walk around naked, so the Assyrians will defeat Egypt and relocate many of them barefoot and naked to other parts of their empire. Recall the policy of the Assyrian Empire was to relocate its prisoners so they would not reunite to overthrow that empire.
 - b) OK, John this is a sad part of ancient history. I don't want to visualize naked people being lead off into captivity anymore. Why should I care about this stuff? Because just as these Egyptians were carried off into captivity, so will the souls of all who refuse to trust in God to guide our lives will be lead off in shame into eternal hell. The reason Isaiah was called to walk around naked and barefoot for three years, is neither he, nor God Himself wants to see anyone go off to hell and he's willing to try whatever it takes to get people to realize what is the cost to turn from God. That's why I'm lecturing all of us to do whatever it will take to lead those around us away from hell.
 - c) Let's be honest, if we walked around naked, people will just think we've lost it and all that won't help people to turn to God. But praying for their hearts to be open to God's truth is putting the effort in God's hands to make a difference. A willingness to share the Gospel message may lead others closer to Him. All I'm saying is "that" is how we can be "naked and barefoot" for God without actually physically living that way.
 - d) In the meantime, we've only got two more verses to go.
19. Verse 5: Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be afraid and put to shame. ⁶ In that day the people who live on this coast will say, "See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?"
- a) Again, realize what Isaiah's trying to accomplish here: Discouraging his fellow Israelites from moving to Egypt or Cush (think Ethiopia). Isaiah's point is that Egypt will also fall to this empire. Isaiah's saying look what happened to those living next door to the Israelites, (a reference to the Philistines) and how they were just conquered by the Assyrians.

- b) The logical question back then is what should the Israelites do? If this large army is at the door threatening their way of life and running to another country won't help, how should the Israelites respond to this threat? The answer of course is about trusting God no matter the situation. As I've beaten over our heads so far in Isaiah, God's going to wipe out most of the Assyrian army before they reach Jerusalem. The point for you and me is when life's looking impossible, that's when God does His best work.
- i) Of all things, I just thought of a famous story from World War II. A small group of people on the English coastline if my memory is correct, we're surrounded by the Germans and faced certain death if they didn't surrender. They managed to get a single message off that said, "And if not". What that meant is they believed God's capable of rescuing them from an impossible situation, but "if not" they were still willing to trust in God anyway. It's a reference to Daniel 3:18 if interested.
 - ii) The point for you and me is no matter how difficult the situation is in front of us, God wants us to trust Him to guide us through that situation and not go running off to our former life or trust in anything other than Him for help.
 - iii) OK, what if we're really sick, are you saying to ignore the doctors? Of course not. All I'm saying is we trust Him through our tough situations and then we make the best decisions we can while trusting He's guiding our lives. If you study the bible miracles carefully, God never does what people can do for themselves. He works in situations where we're willing to trust in Him no matter and make decisions we base on biblical principals.
- c) All of that is good news. What does it have to do with Isaiah? He's effectively preaching the same thing: Trust in God through our difficulties and trust He'll guide us through all of those situations, no matter how bad things look. Remember that God allowed both of those empires to attack Israel in the first place. He did that because the Israelites living at that time chose to ignore God and that was their punishment. All I'm saying is that He'll sometimes allows bad things to occur in order to get our focus back on Him. How do we know if a bad thing is God ordained? We may not. All I do know is He exists, He wants us to trust Him through those bad things and He wants us to trust Him as we go through those situations in life and hopefully those things will draw us closer to Him.
- d) With that scary thought running through our head, it'd be a good time to close in prayer:
20. Father, we thank You that You're always there guiding our lives. We don't know what's going to happen to us tomorrow. Make it obvious to us what is Your will for our lives here and now and help us to use our lives for Your glory. Give us the strength to avoid the temptation to turn back to our former ways of living before we trusted in You or avoid things that we know aren't Your will for us. Help us to use our time to make a difference for You and live as You've called us to live, for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.