

Isaiah 19-20

19:1 God proclaims judgment on the gods of Egypt, just as he did in Exodus 12:12. The true God will allow no competitors. If Egypt's gods were a real help, then the Lord would lose his glory as God alone. They must tremble before him and their worshippers likewise. The Lord rides the clouds; he is in control. Riding here indicates that God is moving or acting. Vv. 2-4: Egypt will have civil war, discouragement, frustration, and even turn to mediums in desperation. Some think v.4 indicates a dictator.

19:5-10 Its entire infrastructure will crumble. This part shows the suffering of the people. They depend on the Nile, and it will be so low that the irrigation canals cannot supply water for crops. There are no fish. With no flax product, there will be no production of linen. The country is in distress, one that began in the opening of this oracle by Egypt having false gods.

19:11-15 Their leaders are confused. The advice of its wise men is confounded by the Lord who says, "the wisdom of the wise will perish," (29:14; 1 Corinthians 1:19). What they suggest fails, and all along it is the Lord who has a plan concerning Egypt. No plan of God is ever frustrated, and no plan by man that ignores him ever succeeds. Cornerstones are leaders, as in 28:16 and Ephesians 2:20. The staggering of a drunkard illustrates the confusion of its leaders. Isaiah spoke of head and tail, as in 9:14-16. In other words, both leaders and people are in despair.

19:16-17 As women cry out in anguish, Egypt will be overwhelmed with fear. The Lord's uplifted hand will be against them. And since this is a fear instilled by the hand of the Lord, bowing to it involves a fear of both the Lord and his people Judah. There is no salvation that is simply a matter between a repentant sinner and God, for the Lord joins all who believe in him together in His church. No one can be united to Christ the Head without being united to the body of Christ. (Compare 14:1,2).

19:18 Isaiah loves to make a sudden shift. This one, like 43:24,25, switches from judgment to salvation. V.17 is an odd kind of wonderful judgment. The Egyptians experience terror, they come to fear Judah because of Judah's God. God's plan against them is to subdue them, and in doing so they are saved! They speak a new language with words that swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty. We cannot be saved without being subdued before the One we confess as Lord. For rebels against God, making such a confession is a terror. They can see nothing but defeat in it, a loss of autonomy. But the one who confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart will be saved, (Romans 10:9). God "terrorizes" by making them bow at the feet of a mighty Conqueror. But he is that Conqueror and in his mercy they are saved. This salvation is presented as expanding: five cities, the nation (vv.19, 20); and finally, the world (vv.23-25) composed of its chief competing factions.

The Salvation of Egypt 19-22: With an altar in the heart of the land and a monument at the border to advertise the new allegiance of Egypt, the picture of its salvation is vivid. It is Egypt that erects these. They have come willingly; they too are part of the stream coming to Mount Zion in chapter 2. They are really saved, so in their trouble they do not make an alliance with other heathen nations as they once did; they cry out to the Lord. (The One you call to for help is your real God.) God will send them a Savior when they call upon him. 700 years later a Savior born in nearby Bethlehem, would be a Savior for all people, (Luke 2:10,11). Building the altar means that sacrifices would be offered, offered for the purpose of reconciliation with the Holy One of Israel, who now is willing to be the Holy One of the Egyptians. But it is never stated that way as if God is the God of Israel and then in a detached way the Lord of different people. Gentiles will come to Zion; they will be brought to Israel's God. "*There will be one flock [Israel] and one shepherd [Christ]*" (John 10:16). They all become one people, speaking the same language. This shows that the divisions of mankind at Babel are over (Genesis 11:1-9); all are united in a

common language, worship, confession and allegiance to the Lord. The Lord strikes them down, and they are healed. Many times the first way sinners will acknowledge the Lord is to feel His rod, and then knowing Him in this sense, the Lord turns them to Himself and they are saved.

19:23-25 A Highway between Egypt and Assyria In this way we learn of God's saving mercy to even more who lived under His wrath. Israel's first oppressor (Egypt) will be saved. Then in the lifetime of Isaiah when Assyria was tormenting Judah and blaspheming its God (36:18-20; 37:4), God spoke of the salvation of Assyrians. They will not use this highway for war, because they are reconciled and made one people under one Lord. They will worship together, with Israel joining in – all being a blessing as promised through Abraham and his seed in Genesis 12. Terms once used of the covenant people (my people, my handiwork, and my inheritance) are now used of Gentiles too. [For Israel – *people*:10:24; *handiwork*: 60:21; *inheritance*: 63:17.] Earlier this prophecy had a remnant from Aram (17:3) and Cush (18:7). God's eternal intention in salvation is unfolding in a gracious embrace of the entire world.

20:1-6 Isaiah switches back to the current reality. Before this salvation comes, Egypt must be shown the futility of its gods. She must fall to Assyria. Sargon is getting close; Ashdod, a Philistine city in SW Judah, has fallen. Soon the Assyrians will enter Egypt. Like the prophet in Ezekiel 4, Isaiah will be on display as a physical illustration. The point is that the Egyptians will be taken captives and even the poor Cushites who agreed to help them. It ought to be very clear that putting trust in Egypt is a bad idea. Poor Egypt cannot save itself!