

Isaiah 19

This chapter, like many prophecies, is broken down into segments of present and future. Verse 1 ties directly with verses 16-25. Those verses provide a view as to where God is taking Egypt over time. Verses 2-15 tell us how he will begin to transform these idol-worshippers. God is not merely wiping out bad actors in the book of Isaiah. He is salvaging whatever he can from all of mankind.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

We turn from last chapter's destruction of the Cushite kings to Egypt's de-commissioning by God. Egypt had been the picture of power and prestige and wealth. Egypt was now in chaos; which had allowed the Cushite Black Pharaohs to step in. The Cushite Nubian kings tried to restore stability to a fractured Egyptian society by allowing various Egyptian cultural practices. The Cushite kings were called *the black pharaohs*. They were also called *the Nubians*. They shared the conveniently same idols with Egypt. We could chronologically reverse the order of chapters 18 and 19 if we were history students. This chapter predates and postdates the prior chapter's events.

We are reading about an Egyptian civil war that was taking place as Egypt was invading and staking claim to Israel and Judah. They were unraveling at their peak (just like the Romans).

Egypt had taken over what we currently refer to as the Israeli coastal *Gaza strip*. They captured Sidon, Ashkelon, Ekron and Lachish. Egypt is described here as an outward-creeping grapevine; until the Assyrians began to systematically take these foreign acquisitions and gains.



The bible describes the mystery of how evil empires seem to flourish for a while. God is using his *sea monster* (Egypt the leviathan) to control Judah. Once God's people were turned around, he disposed of this Egyptian monster and relegated it to becoming a 3rd-world nation ever since. Below describes what the Babylonians did to Egypt in 568 BC.

⁸ 'Therefore the Lord God says this: "Behold, I am going to bring upon you a sword, and I will cut off from you human and animal life. ⁹ The land of Egypt will become a desolation and place of ruins. Then they will know that I am the Lord. "Because ^[u]you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made it,' ¹⁰ therefore, behold, I am against you and against your ^[m]canals, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and as far as the border of ^[n]Cush. ¹¹ A human foot will not pass through it, nor will the foot of an animal pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. ¹² So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of deserted lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate for forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands." ¹³ 'For this is what the Lord God says: "At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples ^[o]among whom they were scattered. ¹⁴ And I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom. ¹⁵ It will be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will not raise itself above the nations again. And I will make them small so that they will not rule over the nations. ¹⁶ And it will no longer be a kingdom on which the house of Israel relies, ^[p]bringing to mind the guilt of their having turned ^[q]to Egypt. Then they will know that I am the Lord God.'"" (Ezekiel 29)

The Egyptians were the primary world power up through the 7th century. Once they started harming Judah, they experienced total confusion and they turned on each other. The oppression to Judah had to be done; but woe to those who harm God's people.

Idolatry is like a dog chasing its tail. It seems like progress, but it causes confusion and chaos. The void in Egyptian leadership and a disregard for truth is what created the chaos and opportunity for Cush to step in and take control. God is equating their *godless strategy* with an incapacitated nation. Our nation is also experiencing division and spiritual warfare as we try to remove some false doctrines.

Read Isaiah 19:1-15: The Egyptians were steeped in idol worship and cycles of nature. One main god was the Nile River. God begins this chapter like a spiritual invasion upon this spiritual people. He arrives riding on a swift-moving cloud. We could just dismiss this as poetic hyperbole. In truth, the Egyptians viewed the clouds as the realm of the gods. Arriving clouds symbolized the arrival of a cosmic intervention, blessings and a new beginning. This much is true. Things were about to get real.

There are no such things as other gods or even real idols...but demons do manipulate men's hearts and minds to attribute meaning to them.

¹⁹ What do I mean then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is ^[g]anything? ²⁰ No, but I say that things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons. (1 Corinthians 10)

To say that these non-existent *idols tremble* at God's presence is an indirect reference to demons and people. Afterall, demons are all manmade.

You believe that ^[u]God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19)

The Tower of Babel is a relevant example of men seeking spiritual recognition apart from God. It always leads to utter chaos and confusion and division among men. The endeavor to go against God's direction to seek personal greatness produces the opposite effect. Instead of national gains and stability, these false

notions created national fractures and confusion. We read here about civil war, societal discord and historic losses.

All of these territorial gains outside of Egypt were lost, city by city to Assyria. Meanwhile, the nation of Cush usurped the domestic government and took control. The losses in conquered land in Israel (and beyond) fell to Assyria one by one: Egypt lost its grip on Sidon, then Ashkelon, then Ekron, then Lachish around 673 BC. So much for all of those revenue-generating outposts. Assyria then invaded Egypt's homeland from 671 BC until 663 BC, until the conquest was complete. In God's poetic justice, the captors got captured themselves.

God is saying in advance: Let's see how well your dark powers and nature-based gods protect you from the one who rides on swift clouds! Checkmate. Game over.

The *cruel master* overlord mentioned here is probably not the local competition Cushite/Nubians. The Cushites had actually tried to make the Egyptians *feel at home in their native culture*. They were easy rulers. This cruel master over Egypt mentioned in these verses was likely the brutal and fierce Assyrians. Beyond this, it would happen again. In 605 BC, the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II broke the back of Egypt abroad at the battle of Carchemish. They would go on to pillage, destroy and sack Egypt in 601 BC. The Babylonians would keep marching well into Egypt in 586 BC.

Once again, God uses poetic justice. You will reap what you sow. The feared and harsh Egyptians were getting *tossed around like a rag doll*, between Cush, and then Assyria and then Babylon. You could say, in retrospect, is that the underlying best national defense would have been to be nice to Jews.

These Egyptian counselors, magicians and wise men idols oversaw the loss of their far flung massive empire, as well as their own homeland. Beyond the military and economic losses, this chapter describes natural disasters, famine, drought, agricultural devastation, economic stoppages, and a dead economy.

Ultimately, idols are about what we need. In their case, it was about food and sellable goods. The Nile was one of their primary gods, because it sustained their life. In effect, it died like it did in the 10 Plagues of Moses. There was no fishing, no farming, and no water. So much for their god 'Hapi'. Hapi was depicted as a

big bellied man with breasts with blue or green skin who lived in a cave at the source of the Nile. God is telling them that Hapi is dead.

Read Isaiah 19:16-25: Now we fast-forward to the LORD's return and Egypt's final state. In the millennial kingdom, Egypt becomes uncooperative towards Jerusalem's world headquarters and Jesus.

¹² Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. ¹³ And it will come about on that day that a great panic from the Lord will ^[f]fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will ^[g]be raised against the hand of another. ¹⁴ Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. ¹⁵ And just like this plague, there will be a plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey, and all the cattle that will be in those camps. ¹⁶ Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷ And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of armies, there will be no rain on them. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹ This will be the ^[h]punishment of Egypt, and the ^[i]punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. (Zechariah 14)

God will allow many Egyptians to be killed; sparing a few border cities who build an altar to honor God. God will send them a rescuer. God will hit Egypt hard, but he will salvage, rescue and heal a part of it. There will be a highway from Assyria to Egypt that passes through Jerusalem. People will take the trek to celebrate the holy feasts on foot.



