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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 20.

(2015)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Isaiah 20.

Topics.

- Sargon the king of Assyria sends his commander to capture Ashdod.
- The LORD tells Isaiah to take his sackcloth off and walk naked and barefoot.
- The coastland will be dismayed when Assyria takes Egypt and Cush captive.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C.

He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).
3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

Sargon the King of Assyria Sends His Commander to Capture Ashdod.

Isaiah 20:1 -----¹In the year that the commander in chief (Tartan in KJV) who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and captured it.

Tartan: the word Tartan comes from the Hebrew word (*Tartan*) it refers to an Assyrian and was an official title borne by the generalissimo (the highest-ranking of all generals) of the Assyrian armies, who was next in authority to the king, because of this it is better read, "In the year the Tartan came to Ashdod."

Sargon: it is difficult to pinpoint with absolute certainty who this particular Sargon is. This is because oriental princes often had several names which make it difficult at times to identify them, because of this many feel that Sargon here was: -

1. The same as Sennacherib because Sennacherib sent a Tartan against Hezekiah therefore some have naturally supposed that Sargon here is the same as Sennacherib.
- The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rab-saris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Washer's Field. (2 Kings 18:17).
2. Shalmaneser (the father of Sennacherib) who after taking the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria, might also by Tartan have marched on to take Egypt and Cush/Ethiopia.
3. Sennacherib who, took all the fortified cities of Judah (2 Kings 18:13) of which Ashdod could be counted as being a city in the tribe of Judah (Josh. 13:3) (Josh. 15:47), since it seems very likely Ashdod would have been taken by Hezekiah king of Judah from the Philistines when he struck them down as far as Gaza and its territory, from its watchtower to its fortified city (2 Kings 18:8).
4. A king who reigned between Shalmaneser and Sennacherib.

After Assyria had conquered the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and prior to their invasion of Egypt and Cush/Ethiopia the Assyrian king sent his general, Tartan, to attack the Philistine city of Ashdod,

Ashdod: (called by the Greeks Azotus (Acts 8:40). It was a seaport on the Mediterranean Sea in the utmost part of the land of Canaan toward Egypt, between Askelon and Ekron and about thirty miles from Gaza. It was one of the five major cities of the Philistines assigned to the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15:20, 46-47). The temple of Dagon stood in Ashdod and when the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. (1 Sam. 5:1).

Ashdod was a stronghold in that region and the Philistines were allies of Egypt therefore it was necessary for Assyria to take Ashdod prior to their invasion of Egypt. After taking the city of Ashdod the Assyrians fortified it so strongly that it stood a twenty-nine years' siege, until it was eventually retaken by the Egyptian Psammetichus. Ashdod is now a small village called Esdud.

The LORD tells Isaiah to take His Sackcloth off and Walk Naked and Barefoot.

Isaiah 20:2 ----- ²at that time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet," and he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

At that time refers to the year the Assyrian Tartan captured Ashdod (v1)

Naked: comes from the Hebrew word (*‘arowm*) it literally means partially or totally naked, to be or make bare. Figuratively it carries the idea of dealing subtly, cunningly or being crafty (usually in a bad sense). When the Bible uses the word naked it does not mean a prophet or man of God was walking around with no clothes on, it simply means the man of God did not have his robe on.

During the era of the Old and New Testament to have your upper body and legs uncovered in public was considered as being naked. The New Testament says Peter was naked while he was fishing, the apostles certainly would not have been out in public with no clothes on. Naked in this context means, they had taken their robes off to be able to work.

The King James Bible says: -

- Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. (John 21:7).

The English Standard Bible says: -

- That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. (John 21:7).

The following verses show that naked can also mean poorly dressed.

The King James Bible says: -

- Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. (1 Cor. 4:11).

The apostles certainly would not be in public without some form of covering

The English Standard Bible says: -

- To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless. (1 Cor. 4:11).

The King James Bible says: -

- If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food. (James 2:15).

A sister of the Lord would certainly not be in public without some form of covering.

The English Standard Bible says: -

- If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food. (James 2:15).

Summary: the Hebrew word naked can literally mean totally without clothes or men who have their robes off for work and when applying to those who lack money it means poorly dressed. It is the context and common sense that tells the reader which of these meanings apply to the word naked.

The LORD tells Isaiah to walk around without his robe (i.e., naked from the waist up and the thighs down. This would have aroused the curiosity of all who saw him and raised the question amongst the people, "Why was this man of God walking around without his cloak?" Isaiah would tell them why, and in this way the word of God would quickly spread throughout the land because of Isaiah bizarre behaviour.

Remember unlike us today who have instant global communication these people had no radio, newspapers, global media or internet and because of this God at various times would do something extremely bizarre to our natural thinking so that it would arouse curiosity and cause the townsfolk to talk about it and in this way new quickly spread.

The Coastland will be dismayed when Assyria takes Egypt and Cush Captive.

Isaiah 20:3-6 ----- ³Then the LORD said, "As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush. ⁴so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt. ⁵Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope (their expectation in KJV) and of Egypt their boast (their glory in KJV). ⁶And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?'"

Cush: (Ethiopia in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word (*Kuwsh*) which is probably a foreign origin of the word Cush (or Ethiopia). It is the name of a son of Ham and of his territory and also the name of an Israelite.

Isaiah commonly wore a robe of sackcloth as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world. He was to remove this and wear no upper garment and to go barefoot by this unusual dress he was to be a continuous sign against the people wherever he travelled. This sign was to signify, that the Egyptians and Cush/Ethiopia will be led away captives by the king of Assyria stripped bare of all that they treasured and valued. The expression, "with their buttocks showing," expresses extreme humiliation.

Cush/Ethiopia their hope: (v5) (their expectation in KJV) the people of the Coastlands had expected Cush/Ethiopia to assist and protect them against their enemies.

Egypt their boast: (v5) (their glory in KJV) glory here comes from the Hebrew word (*tiph'arah*) in this context it carries the idea of the nations of the coastlands boasting in the power and majesty of Egypt and the might of their armies to protect and save them from their enemies.

But now when they hear of the defeat of Egypt and Cush/Ethiopia who they had relied on all the surrounding nations on the coastline will be in fear that they themselves will suffer in the same way by the mighty armies of Assyria especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who instead of trusting in God, were trusting in help from Cush/Ethiopia and Egypt against Assyria their common enemy.

End.