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

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## Isaiah 19.

(2015)

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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 19.

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### Topics.

- God is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt.
- The spirit of the Egyptians will inquire of their idols, sorcerers and mediums.
- God will give the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord to rule over them.
- The Nile River and the fishing industry of Egypt will dry up.
- Kings will be crushed and kings' counsellors will give foolish counsel.
- Egypt will stagger as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.
- Judah will be a terror to the Egyptians because of the LORD of hosts.
- An altar in the midst of Egypt and a pillar to the LORD at its border.
- The LORD will make Himself known to the Egyptians and they will know Him.
- The LORD will strike and heal Egypt and they will return to the LORD.
- Egypt my people, Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.

**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.

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**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.

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### **God is riding on a Swift Cloud and comes to Egypt, and the Idols of Egypt.**

Isaiah 19:1-2 ----- <sup>1</sup>Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. <sup>2</sup>And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.

In prophetic and poetic language God is sometimes pictured as a mighty warrior riding a chariot through the heavens bringing judgment on the nations. One of the mysteries of the universe is that because of God's eternal foreknowledge our free will works within God's sovereign will and because of this mystery which our limited and mortal minds cannot understand God is able to use kings and nations to achieve His plans and purposes. One of the ways He does this is by placing so called wise men and prideful self-serving counsellors in the kings government that give him foolish advice.

**I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians:** (v2) means I will set discord, confusion, perplexity, uncertainty, chaos, turmoil, bewilderment and panic amongst the Egyptians. They shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. They will so aggressively contend against each other that civil wars will break out and the entire empire will be divided into factions.

Since there was a great number of wars during this time the fulfilment of this prophecy has been applied to different kings and different periods of time since it can (with various limitations) suitably fit a number of Egyptian wars so it is perhaps best to allow the prophecy to embrace them all until it reaches its ultimate fulfilment. Following are some of the Egyptians wars that this prophetic prediction of Isaiah may allude to: -

- Sargon the Assyrian king who in B.C. 720 overthrew the Ethiopian power and the natural consequences that followed. Naturally when Sargon, the Assyrian king, overthrew the Ethiopian kingdom the empire would have been thrown into discord and confusion and each chief most likely would attempt to assert their independence. When Sabaco, the last of the Ethiopian dynasty was overthrown the unity of Egypt was broken up into a dodecarchy (a ruling body of twelve).

- Sennacherib the king of Assyria whose last campaign was not only directed against Jerusalem but also against Egypt and Ethiopia.
- Esarhaddon (the youngest son of Sennacherib) king of Assyria who successfully attacked Egypt.
- The Persian emperors and conquerors that eventually made Egypt subject to the authority of Persia by Ochus. This period of time would include the civil wars between Apries and Amasis at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion; the civil wars between Tachos, Nectanebus and the Mendesians, just before Ochus finally subdued Egypt. (According to historians Cambyses (the son of Cyrus) and Ochus were noted for their cruel princes).

The expression, "Egyptians will fight, each against another each against his neighbour," (v2) implies the following two things: -

1. The rebellion and civil wars and the calamities of Egypt to come upon them are brought upon them by internal quarrels, and other means, which the LORD would in judgment send among them and not by means of an outside foreign invasion.
2. The anarchy of the civil strife amongst them results in many parties being formed. This of course naturally leads to the supposition that there were more than two parties engaged.

Based upon these two facts the best application of the prophecy seems to agree much better with the many civil wars within Egypt that arose between the twelve kings in the time of Psammetichus.

**Psammiticus:** not many years after Isaiah spoke this prophecy Egypt was divided into twelve kingdoms, during this period of time there were many cruel wars within Egypt itself. Egypt was originally one kingdom, but upon the death of king Sethon who had been a priest of Vulcan there was no successor. This resulted in twelve men of nobility obtaining the kingdom by conquest and setting themselves up as kings and in this way the kingdom of Egypt was divided into twelve parts.

These twelve kings reigned in confederacy with each other for fifteen years after which there was a falling out amongst them that resulted in the eleven kings excluding Psammiticus one of the twelve from any share of government.

He in turn brought into Egypt Greek and other foreign mercenaries and gathered an army together and waged war with the eleven and subdued them and conquered all the land of Egypt to himself and ruled it with severity, harshness and inflexibility. All this happened in or soon after Isaiah's time. (During the times of Manasseh king of Judah). Psammiticus ruled the kingdom of Egypt alone for fifty four years, it is said that he was such an offence to those he ruled over that two hundred thousand of his soldiers left him, and went into Ethiopia.

### **The Spirit of the Egyptians will inquire of their Idols, Sorcerers and Mediums.**

Isaiah 19:3 ----- <sup>3</sup>and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their counsel; and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the necromancers.

The expression, "the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out," carries the idea that they are thrown into so much confusion and chaos that they have no wise kings or counsellors that can solve their many problems so they in turn seek counsel and signs from their idols, sorcerers, mediums, and the necromancers. The Egyptians, being a naturally superstitious people and at this time destitute of counsel sought to those they believed could communicate with the dead and for signs from the gods they believed in, but all their seeking was foolishness for the following three reasons: -

1. Their gods only exist in their imagination by the power of belief they give to these imaginary entities, much like a child believing in the tooth fairy or Santa Claus.

2. People cannot communicate with the dead, especially to give advice upon what will happen in the future.
3. God has determined that they should be subdued and oppressed by cruel lords and tyrants, because of their gross wickedness and worship of cult gods.

### **God will Give the Egyptians into the Hand of a Cruel Lord to Rule Over Them.**

Isaiah 19:4 ----- <sup>4</sup>and I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master, and a fierce king (a cruel lord; and a fierce king in KJV) will rule over them, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

**Cruel:** comes from the Hebrew word (*qasheh*) it literally means severe, tough, cruel, grievous, hard hearted and obstinate and carries the idea of making grievous.

**Lord:** comes from the Hebrew word (*'adown*) it literally means to rule, sovereign (i.e. controller human or divine) it can refer to a lord, a master or an owner.

This is the second calamity contained within this prophecy to threaten Egypt, since the later history of Egypt contains so many pictures of oppressive kings and governments it may be referring to: -

- Sargon, Sennacherib or Esarhaddon kings of Assyria
- Psammetichus, who brought into Egypt Greek and other foreign mercenaries and conquered the eleven ruling kings of Egypt and set himself up as king over the entire kingdom of Egypt ruling it with severity, harshness and inflexibility.
- Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, whose dominion was very grievous to the conquered nations.
- The Persian emperors and conquerors into whose hands Egypt fell and especially to Cambyses (the son of Cyrus) and Ochus who are both branded in history for being cruel tyrants and monsters of men and noted for their cruel princes.

### **The Nile River and the Fishing industry of Egypt will Dry Up.**

Isaiah 19:5-9 ----- <sup>5</sup>And the waters of the sea will be dried up, and the river will be dry and parched, <sup>6</sup>and its canals will become foul, and the branches of Egypt's Nile will diminish and dry up, reeds and rushes will rot away. <sup>7</sup>There will be bare places by the Nile, on the brink of the Nile, and all that is sown by the Nile will be parched, will be driven away, and will be no more. <sup>8</sup>The fishermen will mourn and lament, all who cast a hook in the Nile; and they will languish who spread nets on the water. <sup>9</sup>The workers in combed flax will be in despair, and the weavers of white cotton.

**The Nile River:** the Nile River is the longest in the world it covers some 4000 miles from its sources with multitudes of tributaries flowing across the land of Egypt. The river courses like a living tube through the desiccated hills and deserts of NE Africa, because of the almost complete absence of rain, the annual overflow of the Nile was of great importance to the land, for it watered the soil and provided it with new soil and sediment and some organic fertilizer. Its waters were used for drinking for bathing and for irrigation. Its stream was the main channel of commerce and travel.

**The sea and the rivers will be dried up:** (v5) when the whole scope of the passage is taken into account it demands us to understand this to be referring to the Nile River spoken of as the tongue of the sea in the following verse: -

- The LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching breath, and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead people across in sandals.(Isaiah 11:15).

The focus is the Nile and its several branches of rivers that irrigate the land. The expression, "the river shall be wasted," carries the following three ideas: -

1. It does not mean entirely, but that it would not flow at its normal level or overflow in its accustomed manner. It is well known that Egypt derives its great fertility entirely from the overflowing of the Nile. So important is this that a public record is made at Cairo of the daily rise of the water. When the Nile rises to a height less than twelve cubits, a famine is the inevitable consequence, because at this level the water does not overflow the land.

When it rises to a greater height than sixteen cubits, a famine is almost as certain. This is because the superabundant waters are not drained off soon enough to allow them to sow the seed. The height of the inundation, therefore, that is necessary in order to insure a harvest, is from twelve to sixteen cubits. The annual overflow is in the month of August. Isaiah is saying that the Nile River would not rise to the height that was desirable (i.e., the waters should fail) and as a consequence famine would follow.

The Nile was the foundation of Egypt's commerce and trade, their riches and their lands it could be rightly said that should the Nile dry up the face of the entire country would be desolate because all things would languish in the royal palace, the cities, the towns and fertile farmlands would become barren waste land.

2. The anarchy the civil wars and the dominion of Egypt's cruel lords spoken of in the previous verses would naturally result in the neglect of attending to the canals and reservoirs of irrigation, the lack of farmers to cultivate the land the fall in trade, wealth and prosperity and the shortage of food that country depended on.
3. A great drought because of a lack of rain and the failing of the Nile River to flood.

**Reeds:** (v6) commonly wither, because of a lack of water. They were used for making their boats and were divided into thin and broad leaves which they would dry out and use for writing and various other commodities of trade.

**Everything sown by the brooks shall wither** (v7) refers to everything else that was dependent upon water for its growth and survival.

**The fishermen also shall mourn** (v8) because the Nile is so low of water that the vast quantity of fish required to feed a nation as great as Egypt would be grossly lacking.

**They that work in fine flax** (v9) refers to those who make fine linen which was one of Egypt's best commodities.

The River Nile can be taken to signify the whole kingdom of Egypt while the reed, the lotus, the papyrus, and the other productions of the Nile can be seen to signify the riches, merchandise and whatever else enhanced and aided in the flourishing state of Egypt. As these things fail so too will the glory and fame of Egypt. God has the creation as well as the nations under his control; and when he chastises a nation often famine, discord, pestilence and the obliteration of industry, enterprise is brought to a halt and the cultivation of the land stops since these are all a natural consequence of internal anarchy and civil and national wars.

**Kings will be crushed and Kings Counsellors will give Foolish Counsel.**

Isaiah 19:10-13 ----- <sup>10</sup>Those who are the pillars of the land will be crushed, and all who work for pay will be grieved. <sup>11</sup>The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the wisest counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings"? <sup>12</sup>Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you that they might know what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt. <sup>13</sup>The princes of Zoan have become fools, and the princes of Memphis are deluded; those who are the cornerstones of her tribes have made Egypt stagger.

**Zoan:** the great city of the Delta (the Greeks called it Tanis), it was a famous chief Egyptian city of Lower Egypt, east of the Tanitic arms on the Nile nearest to Palestine.

It was founded, as stated (Num. 13:22) seven years after Hebron. Here the great Rameses II., fixed his capital, and the city thus acquired the name of Pi-Rameses. It was the place that the LORD did those miracles by the hands of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh and his people in order to oblige him to let Israel go (Psalm 78:12).

At that time it was the royal city, as it seems to have been now; since mention is made of the princes of it, who usually have their residence where the palace court is. Zoan was the capital of the dynasty of the Tanitish kings until the time of Psammetichus. Its ruins (called San, a slight change of the word Zoan) still exist, there are at present numerous blocks of granite, seven obelisks of granite and a statue of Isis.

- They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) (Num. 13:22).
- In the sight of their fathers he (God Holy One of Israel) performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan. (Psalm 78:12).
- When he (God Holy One of Israel) performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan. (Psalm 78:43).

**Princes:** comes from the Hebrew word (*sar*) it literally means a head person (of any rank or class) it embrace a captain as one that has rule, the chief person, a general or governor and a lord, a principal ruler, steward and a taskmaster. It can be summed up in the words, "anyone who has authority over others." In the context of these verses the word princes is taken for the rulers and counsellors of Egypt.

**The princes of Zoan are fools:** in these verses Isaiah highlights the following four underlying reasons the land of Egypt will be crushed and all who work for pay will be grieved: -

1. The folly of the prideful princes and rulers, who valued themselves for their wisdom.
2. Their trust in their idols and gods and in strong nations to protect them.
3. The leaders and counsellors of Egypt's cities were deluded with confusion and therefore their counsel was senseless
4. The lack of wisdom of the rulers who instead of humbling themselves and heeding the word of God increased national misery by their foolish and unwise counsel.

**How can you say to Pharaoh** (v11) the so called wise counsellors boasted and prided themselves that they were the sons of wise mean and ancient king's as though wisdom was hereditary. They considered themselves to be men of great wisdom and valued themselves as such. These so called wise counsellors most likely refers to the priest-princes of Zoan and priest-magicians, boasting in an attitude of superiority of their wisdom and their ancestry to the Pharaoh of the time and claiming to be the only true and wise counsellors the Pharaoh should listen to.

Isaiah here is challenging the vain opinion these so called wise counsellors had of themselves and their claim to be the wisest of all. He tells the Pharaoh to ask them if they can tell him what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt as he can and rebukes them for giving counsel to the Pharaoh that will bring their nation to ruin.

**Egypt will Stagger as a Drunken Man Staggers in His Vomit.**

Isaiah 19:14-16 ----- <sup>14</sup>The LORD has mingled within her a spirit of confusion (a perverse spirit in KJV), and they will make Egypt stagger in all its deeds, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit. <sup>15</sup>And there will be nothing for Egypt that head or tail, palm branch or reed, may do. <sup>16</sup>In that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts shakes over them.

**Perverse:** comes from the Hebrew word (*ʿav`eh*) it literally means perverse (i.e., obstinate rebellious stubborn) and carries the idea of doing what is crooked, wrong and wicked and committing iniquity and making trouble.

**The LORD has mingled within Egypt a spirit of confusion:** (v14) (a perverse spirit in KJV) it carries the idea of giddiness that has produced bewilderment, alarm, dread and trepidation among them, because their counsellors were obstinate stubborn and so lacking wisdom that they are pictured as drunkard men staggering in their own vomit signifying their spiritual blindness and the foulness of their counsel.

The whole nation is pictured as reeling to and fro, as a man is who is so intoxicated as to reel and to vomit. Nothing could more strikingly express the following two truths: -

1. How perverted and foolish their counsels and plans were.
2. God's deep abhorrence of the course that they were pursuing.

Because of the vain boasts of their own glory and their worship of the many gods and idols of Egypt the LORD gave them up to a spirit of error and giddiness and to spiritual blindness, stupidity and foolishness.

**In that day shall Egypt be like unto women:** (v16) carries the idea of the entire nation even their princes, nobles and military being feeble, weak, helpless and struck with panic, terror and dread.

**The hand that the LORD of hosts shakes over them:** (v16) signifies the LORD'S threatening and punishment about to be poured out upon Egypt by means of the invaders into their land. This is no doubt one of the reasons the entire nation was struck with fear and dread, it is certain they perceived that they were not fighting with men only, but with the LORD of hosts, who is about to lift up his hand against them, as he did against their forefathers during the ten plagues of the exodus and at the Red Sea which would have still been remembered amongst the Egyptians with awesome dread (Exodus 14).

**Judah will be a Terror to the Egyptians because of the LORD of Hosts.**

Isaiah 19:17-18 ----- <sup>17</sup>And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians. Everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the purpose that the LORD of hosts has purposed against them. <sup>18</sup>In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of Destruction.

**The land of Judah shall be a terror to Egypt:** (v17) since this is a future prophecy predicting events to come it matters not what the present situation of Judah and Egypt is, following are the four most common thoughts: -

1. When Egypt hears that Sennacherib's army fell at the siege of Jerusalem they would be filled with terror at Judah. This is possible, but unlikely because Assyria defeated all the cities of Judah (except Jerusalem, but later Babylon did) and took the people of Judah captive. Added to this Assyria wasn't overthrown by Judah, but by Babylon.
2. The Egyptians would know that the ultimate plan of Sennacherib king of Assyria was to destroy Judah which was in his path as he marched toward to Egypt. When the Egyptians heard of the advance of Sennacherib upon Judah and that he had destroyed all their cities (except Jerusalem), and being aware that his goal was to invade them; "the land of Judah would be a terror," in the sense that Judah had been removed and the fierce armies that had destroyed Judah were marching toward them.
3. When these calamities come upon the Egyptians they would remember Judah's prophets proclaiming the judgment of God coming upon Judah and Egypt and seeing that the prophecies against Judah had been fulfilled, Judah would be a terror to them in the sense that the prophets predictions had come to pass upon

Judah and therefore they were certain to come to pass on Egypt and those who had fulfilled the prophecy upon Judah were marching toward Egypt and in this way Judah would become be a terror unto Egypt.

4. When the Egyptians hear of the ravages and desolations that the Assyrians and Babylonians made in the land of Judah and the destruction Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon inflicted upon the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem they will naturally be in dread and terror that they would suffer the same calamities themselves for the following reasons: -

- Their closeness to Judah.
- Their alliance with Judah. They looked to Judah for their defence against the Assyrians and Babylonians, and when they hear that the Assyrians had marched through Judah and their defence had been removed they had just cause to fear.
- It is also probable that they had heard of the prophecies Isaiah had uttered in Judah concerning these very calamities coming upon them and wondered if the judgments of God fell so heavy on His own people, what would befall them?

**The LORD of hosts has purposed against them:** (v17) could apply to Judah or Egypt since God had purposed and Isaiah had prophesied that they would both be overthrown by their enemies, but most likely applies to Judah. Should this be so it would mean that everyone in the land of Egypt who hears of Assyria overthrowing the land of Judah would be in fear for the following two reasons: -

1. They would be aware of the prophecies of Isaiah and know that God had purposed that destruction would come upon Judah and Egypt.
2. The mighty armies of Sennacherib king Assyria were marching towards Egypt and therefore they feared an invasion themselves.

The idea is that everyone that makes mention of Judah's destruction or thinks of it, or speaks to others about what was done in the land of Judea by the Assyrian army would be struck with terror because of the fear that God was about to execute his appointed judgment against them and do what He had determined.

**The five cities:** (v18) carries the following ideas: five standing either as a certain number for an uncertain or possibly as the actual number of the chief or royal cities of Egypt or used to denote an indefinite number in the same way as five is used in the following verse: -

- Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. (Lev. 26:8).

The general idea from the eighteenth verse to the end of the chapter appears to be about the future spread of the knowledge of the true God in Egypt and Syria beginning with Alexander the Great and continuing onto the spread of the Gospel in the same countries when it is proclaimed to the world.

The statement, "there will be five cities in Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD," does not literally refer to five cities only since all who commit themselves to the LORD shall be saved so the sense seems to be, that one and all of the cities and inhabitants in them that speak the language of Canaan (i.e., the Gospel) will be saved, while all who do not will be devoted to destruction.

**The language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD:** (v18) it is called the language of Canaan either because it was spoken by the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan, or more probably because it was used by the Hebrews who occupied Canaan as the Promised Land. This is not to be understood as happening at the same time that the calamities spoken of would come upon Egypt, but of good things to come to the Egyptians (and others) in future times.

Since the language of Canaan is Hebrew it may mean that there will be one universal speech during the age of Christ's millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth, however it does not necessarily mean that all nations will speak the Hebrew language, but more likely that all would speak in their own language the language of the one true God and of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It signifies that God will restore to all people a pure faith that will bring peace to earth and not war. Though there were times in Old Testament History that many Egyptians did accept the faith of Israel the full realization is yet future: -

- By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.' (Isaiah 45:23).
- He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes. (Isaiah 65:16).
- The LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. (Zech. 14:9).

**The City of Destruction:** (v18) destruction comes from the Hebrew word (*herec*) it literally means demolition and carries the idea of destroying; pulling down; breaking in pieces; beating down and utterly overthrowing.

There has been a great uncertainty of interpretation in regard to this expression, "The city of destruction," and to the true reading of the Hebrew text, whether it is the city of destruction or the city of the sun and therefore no one can say with absolute certainty what the city was or determine what the four other cities were that Isaiah does not name. In the book of Jeremiah it is written: -

- He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire. (Jer. 43:13)

**Beth-shemesh:** comes from the Hebrew word (*bayith*) and (*shemesh*) and means house of the sun. This city was by the Grecians called Heliopolis; it was a very eminent city of priest and a chief seat of idolatry. Whether the original translation is the city of destruction or the city of the sun the idea is the same which is that whoever refuses to speak the language of Canaan (i.e., of the Gospel) and continue in their idolatry will be devoted to destruction. This idea seems to be in harmony with the following verses.

#### **An Altar in the Midst of Egypt and a pillar to the LORD at its Border.**

Isaiah 19:19-20 ----- <sup>19</sup>In that day (when Egypt gives allegiance to the LORD of hosts) (v18) there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. <sup>20</sup>It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and deliver them.

There will be an altar to the LORD in Egypt (v19) (meaning a memorial to God). This does not refer to an altar on which sacrifices are offered, but to an altar of memorial in a place of worship (Josh. 22:22-26). Following are the four most common thoughts concerning this altar: -

1. It was fulfilled about six hundred years after this prophecy when Onias, the son of Simeon the just, fled to Egypt, and obtained leave of Ptolemy king of Egypt and Queen Cleopatra to build a temple and an altar like the ones at Jerusalem in order to draw the Jews to Egypt which he did in the nome of Heliopolis, about twenty three miles from the city of Memphis and the temple and the altar continued for three hundred and forty three years.
2. After the time of Alexander the Great, large numbers of Jews emigrants settled in Egypt at Alexandria under Ptolemy I. they were favoured and openly practised their faith without fear.

They became so numerous that it was deemed necessary that their Scriptures should be translated into Greek for their use. Under Ptolemy Philadelphus the interaction and association between the Palestinians and Egyptians led to the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures known as the LXX. (The translation called the Septuagint was made). For greater detail see the title: "The conversion of the Egyptians to the Jewish faith," at the end of this document.

3. It does not literally mean that there would be an altar and temple erected in one place in Egypt. Rather the idea is that the worship of the true God would be established in Egypt and that certain places would be set apart to worship the God of Israel as a spiritual and evangelical altar that crosses all borders for the worship of God.
4. Isaiah is speaking figuratively so the altar is a spiritual one and therefore refers to Christ in that he is the altar that sanctifies every gift, and upon which the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise being offered up are acceptable to God.

**A pillar at the border thereof:** (19) a pillar of Egypt was the familiar obelisk which was commonly associated with the worship of the sun. The point of Isaiah's prediction was that the symbol should be rescued from its idolatrous uses, and stand on the border-land of Egypt and of Judah, as a witness that Jehovah, the LORD of hosts, was worshipped in both countries, much like the altar spoken of in the following verses: -

- Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, <sup>27</sup>but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD." (Joshua 22:26-27).

The pillar Isaac had in mind not only carries the idea that the people dwelling in the middle of the land embraced the faith of the God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac, but also all those dwelling upon the borders of it (signifying the entire land) of both Egypt and Judah. Though this may have been fulfilled in part at the time of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy I and Ptolemy Philadelphus and at the time of the spreading of the Gospel the ultimate fulfilment will be when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

The Holy Spirit here inspired Isaiah to see in the distant future that there will be a common faith that is not bound by a narrow minded national faith or by any borders, but flows into all nations alike. The meaning is that the God of Israel would be worshipped in even the most abhorred and unsanctified places, such as the Jews esteemed the idolatrous Egyptians to be.

**When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors:** (20) the effect of affliction and oppression often leads people to seek God. Whether Jews or Egyptians if they turn from their idols cry out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in repentance and from a humble heart and a right attitude God would hear their prayer as if it had been offered in the Temple at Jerusalem. The words, "When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors," could be seen to echo the following words of Jesus: -

- Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. (John 4:21).

Whether Jews, Egyptians or any other nation the prayers of those who worship in spirit and in truth will find immediate access to the ear of God no matter where they are or who they are.

**He will send Egypt a saviour and defender and deliver them:** (v20) the word saviour comes from the Hebrew word (*yasha'*) it literally means to be free, to be safe; to avenge, defend, deliver, help, preserve, rescue, and to get victory or bring salvation or to have salvation. This shows that the word saviour can be applied to any great and mighty king, prince, chief, or captain that delivers people from disaster, oppression or an enemy.

Some suppose this saviour to be: -

1. The angel of the LORD that struck down 185,000 warriors of Sennacherib army, (2 Kings 19:35), but this is unlikely since this angel was sent to protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem not Egypt.
2. Ptolemy the son of Lagus who had the same epithet and who was also called "Soter", meaning the saviour.
3. Psammetichus, who delivered Egypt from the tyranny of the eleven kings who were contending with each other
4. Alexander the Great, who could be called a saviour in that he delivered the Egyptians from the reign of the oppressive kings who had tyrannized them and in contrast treated them with kindness. He built the city of Alexandria and under him and the Ptolemies who succeeded him, trade revived, commerce flourished, peace and prosperity blessed the land. Added to this he not only transplanted many Jews into Alexandria, but also granted them many privileges. It is certain he was regarded by the Egyptians as a saviour and deliverer.

Though it is true that all these can be seen as saviours that at some level delivered the people from disaster and oppression this prophecy of Isaiah is not limited to the time of these kings, but foresees a far higher fulfilment and echoes the Lord Jesus Christ the true Saviour and deliver who not only brings peace and joy to those who are weary and heavy laden, but also delivers them from the condemnation of the law and from death.

**It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD in the land of Egypt:** (20) refers to the altar and pillar previously mentioned. They are signs to testify that they worship the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Being sorely distressed and finding that their idols are unable to help them they will turn to the true God and He will send them a great saviour. Isaiah here foretells that a great prince, sent by God from a foreign country should deliver the Egyptians from their Persian oppressors, and heal their country.

This could be but Alexander the Great, whose first successor in Egypt was called the great Ptolemy, and Ptolemy Soter, or the saviour? Upon Alexander's first coming into Egypt the people all cheerfully submitted to him out of hatred to the Persians, so that he became master of the country without any opposition.

He treated them with humanity and built a city after his own name which he called Alexandria. He appointed an Egyptian for their civil governor and permitted them to be governed by their own laws and customs. By these changes and prudent administration of some of the first Ptolemies, Egypt's trade revived and learning flourished and for a while, peace and prosperity blessed the land.

Though the prophecy could refer to Alexander the Great, Ptolemy and Ptolemy Soter the prophecy foretells that about the same time the true faith and the worship of the God of Israel would begin to spread and prevail in the land of Egypt. It is certain that many of the Jews, after Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jerusalem, fled into Egypt, and while there proclaimed the faith of Israel.

By these means Egyptians would have known the LORD in some degree and amongst them there would have been converts, but though this prophecy concerning Egypt might have its first accomplishment in the deliverance of the Egyptians from the Persian oppression by Alexander the Great and in the knowledge of the true God.

The prophecy has a further and far higher aspect in that it refers to that spiritual redemption and salvation which the Egyptians, among many other Gentiles, were to receive by the coming of Christ, the great and only Saviour of lost mankind, and by the publication of his Gospel to them.

This appears still more evident from the verses which follow. But the full and final accomplishment of this shall not take place completely until the earth is full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

## **The LORD will make Himself known to the Egyptians and they will know Him.**

Isaiah 19:21 ----- <sup>21</sup>And the LORD will make himself known (be known in KJV) to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering (sacrifice and oblation in KJV), and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them.

The highest of all blessings in this world is the knowledge of God. The faith of Israel was not to be the exclusive inheritance of Israel, but was to be shared even by the nation whom Israel had reason to regard as their hereditary enemy. The Egyptians shall know the Lord means they shall acknowledge him; profess faith in him; love and hope in him and embrace his Gospel and ordinances.

They shall know the LORD, partly through the following: -

- The Bible being translated into the Greek language at the request of Ptolemy king of Egypt which was then understood in that country.
- The Jews who dwelt there and by those who were converted to their faith.
- Through the Gospel being brought to Egypt by the evangelist Mark and others, by which many of them were brought to a spiritual knowledge of Christ.
- Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup>both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. (Acts 2:9-11).

**Oblations:** comes from the Hebrew word (*minchah*) it literally means to apportion, (i.e. bestow a donation) it specifically refers to a sacrificial gift offering (usually bloodless and voluntary). It embraces any offering that is not a bloody sacrifice such as a thank-offering; an offering of incense; an offering of flour and grain etc. In contrast to oblations, the word sacrifice refers to the slain victims.

Since God commanded that sacrifice only be offered on the altar at Jerusalem it is hardly likely Isaiah was thinking of such sacrifices as literally being offered in Egypt, especially since converted Egyptians would as often as practicable travel with the Jews to Jerusalem and offer them there according to God's word.

Because of these facts it is almost certain that Isaiah was looking beyond the symbolism of the sacrifices to the actual thing symbolised by them which of course would be spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, and good works, and of the presentation of themselves, as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice to God, under these the whole spiritual worship of the New Testament is signified.

The sense is that they would worship God in the following manner: -

- From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts (Malachi 1:11).

They will not only profess and promise heartfelt worship to the LORD, but will also faithfully and diligently practise it.

## **The LORD will Strike and Heal Egypt and they will Return to the LORD.**

Isaiah 19:22 ----- <sup>22</sup>And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them.

The LORD will smite Egypt in the manner described in the in the previous part of this prophecy (v2-10) which will awaken them to a sense of sin and the uselessness of their idols to deliver them.

These calamities will be the means of their conversion to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The LORD will heal Egypt when pricked to the heart of their sin and they will return to the LORD by faith and repentance, worship and obedience to His will and He will forgive and heal them with His pardoning grace and mercy and restore Egypt to more than its former splendour and prosperity as described in the previous verses (v18-20) and by sending them a saviour who will cause the true faith to flourish there.

- Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, <sup>3</sup>who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup>who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. (Psalm 103:2-4).

### **Egypt My People, Assyria the Work of My Hands, and Israel My Inheritance.**

Isaiah 19:23-25 ----- <sup>23</sup>In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. <sup>24</sup>In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup>whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."

Isaiah's vision not only now brightens, but also expands. Palestine was in his time the battle-field of the two great empires Assyria and Egypt with Judah between the two. He looks forward to a time when the long-standing discord between these three would cease

The nearest historical events to this is perhaps found in the following two periods of history: -

1. The conquests of Alexander who subjected Assyria and Egypt and they constituted parts of his empire and were united under him. There were large numbers of Jews and converts in both these countries that were united in the service of the true God. They worshipped Him in their countries and met at Jerusalem at the great feasts and in this way Judah, Assyria, and Egypt, were united in the common faith of Israel and the worship of their God.
2. The Persian monarchy, including in its kingdom the territory of Assyria, of Israel, and of Egypt acknowledging through the proclamations of Cyrus Israel's God was the God of heaven: -
  - Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (Ezra 1:2).

**In that day shall Israel be the third:** in that sacred league, whereby all of them oblige themselves to serve God. Egypt and with Assyria are named, because they were the most obstinate enemies to Israel, but this highway is not limited to these two nations only, but put forward for all Gentile who acknowledge Israel's God to be the true God.

**Israel shall be a blessing:** this is peculiar to Israel, who is not only a third party, but is the most eminent of the three, as being the fountain by which the blessing is conveyed to the other two; because Christ was to be born of them, they brought the Gospel to the world and the first Gentile church was established by and amongst them.

Like all other glorious prophecies that carry an echo of the distant future, this vision of Isaiah chiefly refers to the time of the Gospel and to sinners adopting the Christian faith and uniting together as one nation in Christ even though they may have at one time been hostile toward the God of Israel; hostile to the Gospel of Christ and enemies or one another as the Egyptians and Assyrians were.

But it's ultimate, complete and perfect fulfilment will be when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to gather the faithful to himself and establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

It is interesting to notice: -

1. Egypt is called the LORD'S people.
2. Assyria is called the work of the LORD'S hands.
3. Israel is called the LORD'S inheritance.

These three statements highlight the truth that though the world to our mortal and finite minds maybe bewildering as it would have been to the common man of the street watching the horrors of the wars between Israel, Assyria and Egypt God is nevertheless in control and has a sovereign plan and purpose that no matter how much we study we will not understand until that day we are raised to eternal glory.

- God has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes. 3:11).
- Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. (Eccles. 8:17).

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End.