

to go back to the nation that sent them and give it God's answer to the situation that confronts it. God says that it is not necessary for them to scurry about, trying to get help in order to resist the onrush of the Assyrians, for He plans to deliver His own people from the Assyrian attack by a marvelous supernatural intervention. For the time being Assyria will not be a menace to the people of Ethiopia. This is perfectly clear if we omit the word "saying," which is not in the original.

The principal difficulty in correctly understanding the chapter comes from the latter part of verse 2 which contains a number of rather obscure phrases. This makes it easy to misinterpret the entire verse. The question, of course, is whether the verse describes the Israelites or the Ethiopians.

It is remarkable how differently the King James Version and the American Standard Version render the latter portion of the verse. The King James Version reads, "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!" The American Standard Version translates it as follows: "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide!"

At first sight one wonders how the Hebrew words can be translated in such different ways. This will be made a little clearer if we see the fairly literal translation which is given by Delitzsch in his commentary on Isaiah, (4th edition) Vol. 1, page 352: "Go, fleet messengers to the nation long stretched and beautifully polished, to the terrible people far away on the other side, to the nation of command on command and treading down, whose land rivers cut through."

The first phrase, which Delitzsch translates "long-stretched and beautifully polished," could be rendered "scattered and peeled" with the King James Version or "tall and smooth" with the American Standard Version. It can describe either a race that has been oppressed or a handsome race somewhat different in appearance from that of the writer. Thus it can be either applied to the Jews or the Ethiopians.

The King James Version and the American Standard Version agree in general in the phrase, "terrible from their