

The purpose of chapter 19 was not to pronounce judgment upon a great enemy. Its purpose was to demonstrate the futility of trusting a great heathen power. Isaiah showed the ultimate weakness of such a course and sketched its future hardships. Egypt is not a safe support on which to lean; it is much wiser to trust in the Lord, especially since Egypt itself shall eventually turn to the Lord and be subject to Him. Since this is the case with Egypt, how much more should those who already know the Lord look to Him and trust Him instead of turning to this great pagan empire for help.

Isaiah 20

Ethiopia and Egypt were discussed in chapters 18 and 19. In chapter 20 both nations are considered together, with emphasis on their fate in the fairly near future. So far from being able to deliver the Israelites from Assyria, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians are themselves to be led away as prisoners by Assyria. Judah was spared from being conquered by Assyria and did not go into exile until Assyria itself had been destroyed, but Ethiopia and Egypt were conquered by Assyria.

Chapter 20 begins with an interesting heading. The giving of this portion of the Word of God is connected up with a great event in the international world. Sargon, the king of Assyria, sent his Tartan (or Turtanu, Assyrian for "commander-in-chief") against the great Philistine city of Ashdod and conquered it. Ashdod was between Judah and Egypt. In the year that this startling event occurred, God gave Isaiah the message contained in this chapter.

A little over a century ago, the very name of Sargon was unknown, except for this one mention in the Bible. Many interpreters naturally thought it must be a mistake. Surely, they said, if there had been a great king of Assyria named Sargon, there would be some reference to him in ancient records and in other parts of the Bible. Then French excavators unearthed a great palace of Sargon at Khorsabad, a few miles from Ninevah. The treasures found there, the wonderful pictures, and the long accounts of the reign of Sargon, put the whole matter in a different light. It became apparent that he was actually one of the great conquerors