

who ruled the mighty Assyrian Empire. When Sargon was marching forth with his armies, conquering nations hundreds of miles away from his headquarters, the God of Israel seemed to him a very small factor indeed. He probably never even heard the name of Isaiah. Yet all the greatness of Sargon disappeared from human knowledge, except for this one mention in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah makes an interesting comment on this and other similar occurrences in 40:7-8: "Surely the people is grass. The grass withers, and the flower fades; but the word of our God shall stand forever." It is even more pointedly expressed in 1 Peter 1:24-25: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls away; but the word of the Lord endures forever." God gave His word through Isaiah. The mighty Assyrian conqueror disappeared and was completely forgotten except for his use as a peg to date a portion of the Word of God.

Yet we must realize that the reference to the conquering of Ashdod by Sargon is not given in this first verse simply to tell the date at which the message came, but rather to connect it up with the general subject under consideration. Here is the Assyrian army conquering great cities, even on the opposite side of Judah from the Assyrian homeland. The Israelites must have been filled with terror and have immediately begun to wonder where they could find help. Their desire to seek help from Egypt and Ethiopia would naturally have been greatly intensified by this news.

In such a situation it would have seemed unpatriotic to speak against Egypt or Ethiopia, just as it was thought unpatriotic in America during the Second World War to make any criticism of Russia, which was regarded as America's great ally against Germany.

In order to get his message across, Isaiah used a device which is found a number of times in Scripture. God ordered him to make use of an object lesson. He said, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot." Isaiah was a man of considerable prestige. Some even think that he was connected by blood with the kings of Judah. For him thus to go without his outer garment would almost seem as if he were naked. When the people would see Isaiah in this condition, they would ask, "What is the matter?"