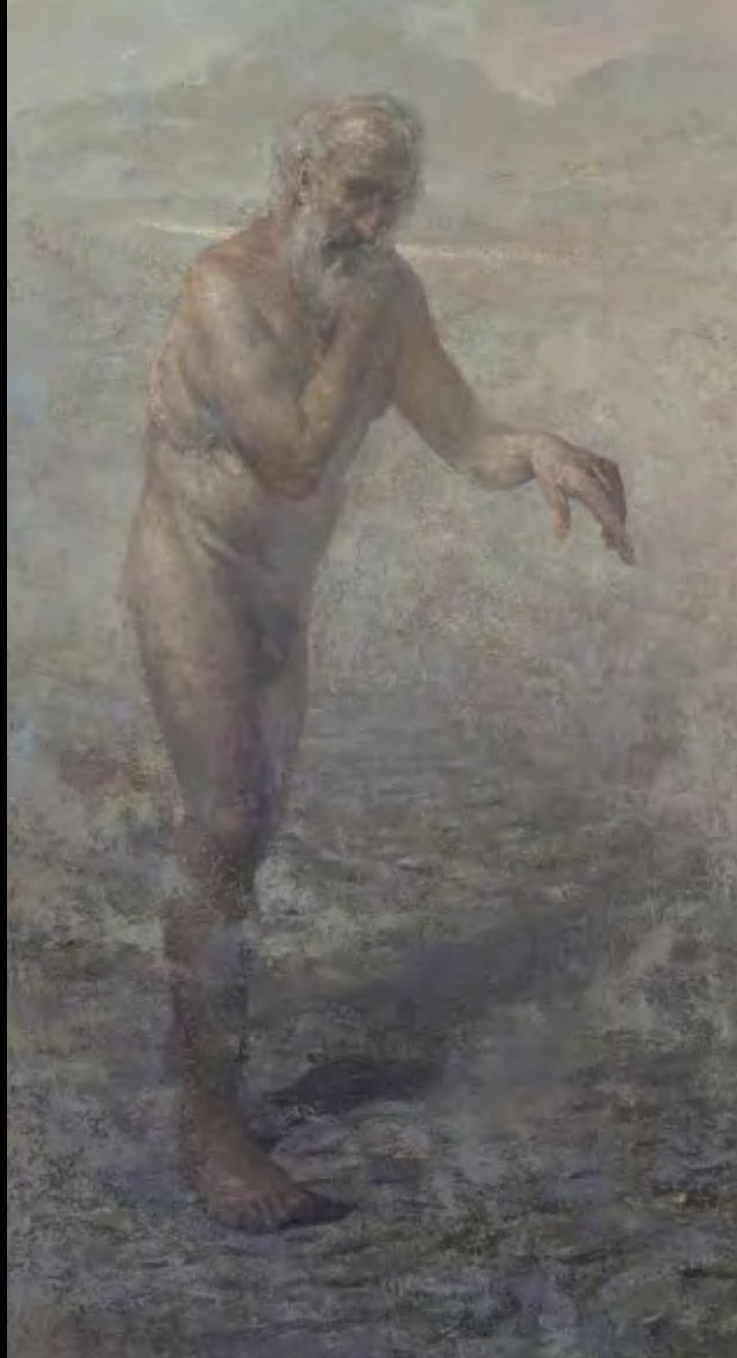


Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 42

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Isaiah Naked and Barefoot, Artist Unknown

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The Book of Isaiah

Message Forty-Two

JUDGMENT ON EGYPT PART IV

October 27, 2019

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 20:1–6

In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it; ²at that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. ³And Jehovah said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia; ⁴so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. ⁵And they shall be dismayed and confounded, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. ⁶And the inhabitant of this coast-land shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and we, how shall we escape (ASV, 1901)?

INTRODUCTION

After having conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Sargon moved south to the Southern kingdom of Judah, in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Hezekiah (II Chronicles; II Kings 18:13–19:37; Isaiah 36:1–22). The Assyrians conquered nearly all of Judah, including its fortified cities. Then Sargon was ready to attack Jerusalem with a huge army. Isaiah assured Hezekiah that the invader would have to postpone his siege because of an unexpected crisis in his homeland (Isaiah 37:7). Seeing that Sargon had left his capital relatively undefended, King Tirhakah of Cush and Egypt used the opportunity to attack Assyria (II Kings 19:8-9). This caused Sargon to temporarily abandon his siege of Jerusalem and deal with the Egyptian attack. After defeating Tirhakah, Sargon went to war against Cush and Egypt, dealt them, and was victorious. Then he returned to Jerusalem with his Egyptian Cushite captives to complete his conquest of Judah. This was a mission that ended with the great miracle when God caused the entire Assyrian army to die overnight. Earlier that year, Sargon had sent Tartan, one of his generals (II Kings 18:1–7), to conquer the Philistine city of Ashdod. Isaiah received this prophecy during that year. Tartan's conquest of Ashdod and Isaiah's prophecy took place three years before Sargon's second campaign against Jerusalem (II Kings 18:17–25; II Chronicles 32:1–15,30; Isaiah 36:2–10).

Egypt was an important political power to the southwest of Judah. Assyria, to the east of Judah was taking increasingly more control of the area, and Hezekiah was trying to gain independence for Judah from Assyria. The divine message about what God was planning for one of these three main players was extremely important. The people of Judah and their leaders needed to know how to survive in this situation.

TARTAN ATTACKS ASHDOD

Isaiah 20:1

In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it (ASV, 1901).



The Territory of the Philistines from: <https://www.bible-history.com/maps/philistines.html>

Tartan was one of the generals of Sargon. Ashdod, was a seaport on the Gaza strip next to the Mediterranean. It was one of the five cities of the Philistines, assigned to the tribe of Judah, but never conquered by them (Joshua 13:8; 15:46, 47). The temple of Dagon stood here; and this is the place the Philistines took the ark of God after they won the battle of Ebenezer (1 Samuel 5:1). Ashdod was taken by Tartan, and remained in the possession of the Assyrians until it was besieged by Psammetichus, the Egyptian king, who took it after a siege of twenty-nine years.¹ It was about thirty miles from Gaza. It was besieged and taken by Tartan in preparation to the Assyrian conquest of Egypt.

Ashdod was the strongest of the Philistine cities, and one of the most ancient (Joshua 15:47). Its name is probably derived from a root meaning “strength.” Its strength and fortitude is demonstrated as having stood on the siege of twenty-nine years.² When Ashdod is first mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions it is tributary to Sargon, having probably submitted to him in 720 B.C., after the battle of Raphia in the Gaza strip. Later the Raphians revolted against the Assyrians and reclaimed their independence. In 713 B.C. the Assyrians moved against it again, and its capture is implied by the facts that the Assyrians depose its king, and installed one of his brothers as monarch in his place (II Kings 23:34).

¹ Herodotus, translated by Aubrey de Selincourt *The Histories*, Published by The Easton Press, Connecticut 1954, ii. 157; pg. 165

² Ibid

ISAIAH INSTRUCTED TO PARTIALLY UNDRESS

Isaiah 20:2

²at that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot (ASV, 1901).

Isaiah was privately wearing sackcloth the symbol of mourning and grief. He did that in response to the destruction of the northern ten tribes. He fasted and wore sackcloth at home, thinking that Judah would be next. At that time the Lord spoke through Isaiah to partially remove it as well as his shoes. This seems what God will have His prophets to demonstrate communication. For example, Ezekiel laid on his left side for 390 days (Ezekiel 4:1-5). God did not instruct Isaiah to deliver a verbal prophecy, but a visual message. Isaiah was to appear in such a way that he would attract attention and be a living symbol of the degradation which would occur to Egypt and Cush at the hands of Sargon. This would demonstrate that their defeat was Divinely ordained.

His compatriots mocked him because they were confident that Cush and Egypt would protect them (Isaiah 20:6). But when Ashdod, a fortified city, was defeated not by Sargon, but by one of his subordinates, Tartan, his mockers recognized that they were in grave danger. God commanded Isaiah to now wear his sackcloth in public, but to loosen it, so that his upper body was exposed and he was clothed only from the waist down. Following God's instructions, he did so, going partially unclothed by wearing torn and worn clothes.

GOD PROPHECIES THE EGYPTIAN HUMILIATION BY THE ASSYRIANS

Isaiah 20:3-4

³And Jehovah said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia; ⁴so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt (ASV, 1901).

Now begins the divine explanation of the Lord's requirement for Isaiah's symbolical act. The duration of this partial nudity was for three years. He advertised the Lord's prophecy during this time that the Egyptian kingdom would fall. Cush, which is Ethiopia in this context is also mentioned in concert with Egypt as being judged.

In the prophecies which date from the reign of Hezekiah, Egypt and Ethiopia are frequently mentioned in close connection. In the nakedness of Isaiah the people would represent the naked and barren condition of that nation in which they had placed their confidence, instead of God. During the course of this period of time, then, the prophet was to carry on his prophetic ministry, naked and barefoot.

Isaiah, who is God's faithful servant carrying out a symbolical action, had gone about partially naked and barefoot for three years. The symbolism represents the humiliation which the king of Assyria would carry out on all the Egyptians who would be naked and barefoot as they were being taken into captivity. Isaiah speaks of the king of Assyria as leading the Egyptians. Egypt and Cush are to be taken captive, and this captivity is for them to be led away. This was the current prisoner of war strategy. The Assyrians would take the captives back to Assyria. The whole purpose for these whose buttocks were exposed was a humiliation by God. The message of the symbolic act was very clear: it was absolutely fruitless to rely on Egypt for salvation.

FALSE DELIVERANCE

Isaiah 20:5–6

⁵And they shall be dismayed and confounded, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. ⁶And the inhabitant of this coast-land shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and we, how shall we escape (ASV, 1901)?

And they shall be dismayed and confounded, that is, those that trusted and depended upon the Egyptians and Ethiopians, that is God's Chosen People, the Jews, shall be *afraid* that it will be their turn next, that they also shall be taken and carried away captive. Seeing what happened to the Egyptians and Ethiopians they shall be *ashamed* that they have put their trust and confidence in those nations, and not in the Lord. *Because of Ethiopia their expectation* from whom they expected assistance and protection, particularly when Tirhakah king of Ethiopia went out against the king of Assyria, that he would have been a match for him, and have overcome him. Their expectation was to be freed from this powerful enemy: *and of Egypt their glory*; who was their ally, and a very strong one at that, and in whom they depended but now should be ashamed. But the end result was when both those people on whom they relied were carried captive naked and barefoot in shame and humiliation.

The inhabitants of this island, that is referencing the inhabitants of the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is likened to an island either because it is situated on the Mediterranean coast and because it is surrounded by many hostile nations who wanted to destroy it. Therefore, it is an island in that sense. Some call the Mid-East a bad neighborhood in which the nation Israel lives.

On the day that Assyria will conquer Egypt and Cush the people of Israel will say, "How can we hope to escape? If these powerful nations were decimated by Assyria, how can we possibly think that we will escape without their help. It was this overwhelming Assyrian victory that forced the Jewish people to acknowledge that only God could save them.

And the inhabitant of this coast-land shall say in that day, Not of Ashdod, ver. 1 or the isle of Caphtor, (Jeremiah 47:4) but the land of Israel. It was so called, because it bordered on the sea, as such countries are sometimes called isles (Jeremiah 25:22; Ezekiel 27:3, 15). *Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria*; signifying that it was vain and foolish, that they had been very weak, and wicked. This was because they were expecting dependence upon the Egyptians and Ethiopians to help them against the Assyrians. It

was very plain for them to see that both nations were now being conquered by the Assyrians: *And how shall we escape?* Seeing the more militarily powerful nations had not prevailed against the Assyrians, who were more powerful than they were; and how could they think that those nations could save them, who were unable to save themselves? Therefore, if they have not delivered their themselves, how shall we be delivered by them?”

As we end the majority of the prophecies about Egypt it is important to (19:1–20:6) address three theological issues that were given to the people of Judah. They have contemporary relevance too.

1. God’s sovereign plan is to destroy Egypt (19:1–17). God will cause Egypt a period of civil war, destroying Egypt’s expectations, and causing the people to seek their useless gods for answers. Their gods will have no answers and their wise men will have no wisdom. The Egyptians will suffer under a harsh ruler, see their economy ruined because of the drying up of the Nile, and during this God will confuse their king and political leaders. The theological and political implications are clear: (a) God controls the economy and political vitality of this foreign nation; (b) Egypt will not be a strong nation for Judah to depend on in this political climate; (c) God will humble Egypt and defeat her gods. It was tempting for the Jews to depend on strong nations or people around them, but in reality, victory and power occur only to those that depend upon God and therefore whom God blesses.
2. In the Messianic Kingdom God will reveal Himself by delivering Egypt from oppression. God will be the savior of the Egyptians. In response many Egyptians will worship God and erect a pillar to celebrate the memory of what God did for them. In the end, many people from both Egypt and Assyria will become part of the people of God. God plans to bring an end to all the conflict between these nations, even connecting them by means of a special highway. Eventually, all these nations will come to worship him. God’s plan is the only hope for this world; He is the only one who can bring peace between the nations.
3. It is important to not trust in Egypt now (at the time of this prophecy). The Egyptians did not help the people of Ashdod when they trusted in them in 711 BC and they will not help Judah, for soon the Assyrians will overpower the Egyptians. The primary lesson throughout is that God is in control of all the nations on earth—including Egypt, Judah, Ashdod, and Assyria. Though the people of Judah might take some comfort in the promises that God will judge these nations (Isaiah 14:24–27; 19:1–17), the ultimate solution to their problems will happen only when God unites these nations as one people under his rule. The only secure hope for the people of God in every age is for them to trust God during all political situations, even those that that bring fear and war.

NEXT MESSAGE: GOD COMMANDS THE MEDES TO TAKE BABYLON
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