

V. Divine Blessing (24-25)

“In Egypt the word once was ‘Let my people go’ (Ex. 5:1), but now *Egypt is my people*. Nothing could more wonderfully signalize what God has wrought” (Motyer 1993: 170).

“Israel finally fulfils the destiny marked out for her in the promises made to Abraham so long ago: *a blessing on the earth* (24b). The details are startling, particularly the mention of Egypt and Assyria, the two arch-rivals whose power-plays made Isaiah’s world so unstable and war-torn in the late eighth century BC. They function here, it seems, as test cases. The day that Egypt and Assyria are at peace with one another and with Israel will be the day the whole world is at peace. And it will be a peace brought about not by human might or wisdom, but by *the LORD Almighty*, whose benediction closes the chapter, arching over the whole scene like a brilliant rainbow (25). Peace of this order can come only from him, and will be bestowed only when he is acknowledged for who he is, the sovereign Lord and creator of all. The vision of 2:1-5 has come back to inspire us again. It is the *worship* of the one true God, the God of Israel, that will finally draw all things together in perfect harmony (23)” (Webb 1996: 96-97).

Conclusion

“The point being made is that if Israel turns to the nations in trust she will be prostituting her ministry to them. Instead, she is to be the vehicle whereby those very nations can turn to her God and become partners with her in service to him and enjoy his blessings” (Oswalt 1986: 381).

SOURCES CITED

- J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 1993.
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Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, New American Commentary, 2007.
Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, The Bible Speaks Today, 1996.

ISAIAH 19: THE SUBMISSION OF THE NATIONS

OUTLINE

- I. Military Intimidation (19:16-17)
- II. Cultural Association (19:18)
- III. Spiritual Devotion (19:19-22)
- IV. International Worship (19:23)
- V. Divine Blessing (19:24-25)

NOTES

The Context

Isaiah 1-12: Immediate Judgment on Judah, but Future Hope

Judgment through Assyria, Salvation through Immanuel

Isaiah 13-23: Judgment on the Nations

Foolish to trust those whom God will defeat

Isaiah 19:1-15: Judgment on Egypt

“To join with Egypt would be to associate with a nation under divine wrath (1), trust the promises of a divided people (2), look for help to a collapsing economy (5-10), expect wisdom where there was only folly (11-13) and believe that those who were unable to solve their own problems (15) could solve the problems of others!” (Motyer 1993: 166).

“Verses 1-15 have negated all the Egyptian attributes which might draw Judah to Egypt. Verses 16–25 are saying it is foolish for Judah to turn to Egypt when Egypt is one day going to turn to Judah’s God. In short, Judah already has the only thing of a positive nature which Egypt will one day have. Furthermore, because the Lord will be Egypt’s God, there will be no trouble at all in achieving the second Exodus” (Oswalt 1986: 374-75).

The Submission of the Nations (19:16-25)

I. Military Intimidation (16-17)

“Learning to fear God has a positive side to it, because it brings the person who fears God to the place where they recognize the power and glory of Almighty God. Pride and self-sufficiency are removed and a humble attitude of submission arises. Thus the threatened punishment of God is not just designed for the purpose of fulfilling the demands of his justice. God’s plan is to use his discipline to teach men and nations to fear him as God” (Smith 2007: 360).

II. Cultural Association (18)

“Like all language groups, the Egyptians were proud of their language, so the move to speak Hebrew would only develop from a deep heart’s desire to read and study the Scriptures and to participate in worshipping God. The fact that five cities (particularly Heliopolis, where the sun god Re was worshiped) worship God demonstrates that a large number of Egyptians radically changed and turned to God. Such promises should encourage missionary agencies to send missionaries to Egypt, for they know for certain that many people in Egypt will eventually fear God” (Smith 2007: 361).

III. Spiritual Devotion (19-22)

“When Abraham wished to express his gratitude and allegiance, he built an altar (Gen. 12:8), and when Jacob wished to formalize his acceptance of God’s covenant-offer, he set up a pillar (Gen. 28:22). So too Egypt will express gratitude to God and enter into covenant with him, not necessarily by building altars and pillars, but in ways appropriate to the day and time when the turning takes place” (Oswalt 1986: 379).

“This recalls the altar built by the returning Transjordanian tribes (Jos. 22) lest in the future the barrier of the Jordan might separate them from the unity of the people of God. Their altar was a witness (Jos. 22:34) to the reality of their membership of Israel. So it will be for the Gentiles, symbolized here by Egypt” (Motyer 1993: 169).

IV. International Worship (23)

“A *highway* is a favorite metaphor in this book for the removal of alienation and separation (11:16; 33:8; 35:8; 40:3; 49:11; 62:10). In rough and hilly Israel, the force of such a figure is obvious. God’s longing is for swift and open communication between himself and all peoples, but also among all peoples. His promise is that it will be so one day” (Oswalt 1986: 380-81).

“To adequately understand the radical nature of this prophecy, one has to remember that Egypt and Assyria were strong international political empires while Judah was a small insignificant state. All these nations were far more interested in defending their borders than building bridges of peace and highways of communication.... The highway...symbolizes a close spiritual bond between peoples who are in constant contact. Walls keep people out and ensure that they will be kept separate; roads connect people and allow them to interact” (Smith 2007: 363).