

**CALVARY PANDAN  
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 18**

**THE BOOK OF ISAIAH**

**CHAPTER 18**

**Theme:** "Hope Always Follows  
Judgement!"

**THEME VERSE**

**Isaiah 18:7** (KJV) "In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion."

**INTRODUCTION**

The next nation to be judged by God is the nation of Ethiopia or Cush. This was a judgement unlike previous judgements against other Gentile nations. Ethiopia was not mentioned in relation to what she had done against God's people. Ethiopia was evaluated by God for what she was. This is the judgement that belongs only to the Creator.

Every nation on this earth is filled with pride in her own sovereignty. She answers to no one but her own citizens in the case of democratic countries. Whilst countries ruled by a monarchy

or a dictator answer to only one or a select few in power. More often than not these leaders believe that they are above the law! They abuse their absolute power because absolute power corrupts absolutely. Man is sinful to the very depths of his wicked soul.

Injustice in these Gentile countries, whether ruled by democracy, monarchy or dictatorship, is often not dealt with by the prevailing laws of the lands. The reason is that they bend the laws or cover them up by stealth or threats. The victims in these countries are frustrated and often feel totally helpless and disheartened as rulers seem to get away with murder and other criminal acts. It is Bible passages like Isaiah 18 that bring comfort to the hearts of believers who know that their God will hold these nations and their leaders accountable on the Day of Judgement. They will not escape the omnipotent long arm of God.

However, the LORD is not a God of justice void of compassion and mercy. In Isaiah, the LORD reveals the turning of the Ethiopians to the LORD in repentance. This is the purpose and desire of the nation of Israel as the light to a world in spiritual darkness! Israel's existence on earth is for this singular spiritual purpose and no other. If she fails to do this, she fails God as to the very purpose of her existence.

**OUTLINE**

1. A Mighty Nation is Warned (vv.1-3);

2. A Mighty Nation Brought Low (vv. 4-6);
3. A Humbled People Turn to God (vv. 7);

## COMMENTARY

### A Mighty Nation is Warned

Woe to the land that sails around the world to enlarge her influence, trade and power. The phrase “shadowing with wings” has the idea of the many sails of ships that are like wings that cast wide shadows over the seas and land that they dock in. The next part of verse 1 seems to support this understanding. The phrase used is “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.” These ships of Ethiopia sail via the rivers casting their shadows. Sea travel was the main mode of distant transportation if one were to cross the Mediterranean Sea instead of taking the overland route. This sea route cut the journey time by more than half.

Accompanying these ships were ambassadors from Ethiopia. The ambassadors represent the nation of Ethiopia and their purpose was no different from the role of today’s ambassadors. When a foreign country accepts an ambassador into their country, it is equal to accepting the country itself. Ethiopia was not enlarging her country by war but by trade. She adopted the way of peace and prosperity to grow.

The message of these ambassadors was to go to “a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a

nation whose land the rivers have spoiled!” It is true that the word “saying” is in italics and some commentators argue that it should not be there. If it is taken out then the words, “Go, ye swift . . . spoiled!” does not refer to the message of the Ethiopian ambassadors but someone else. Matthew Poole in his commentary suggested that it should be the words of Isaiah himself, who was the Lord’s messenger to the Ethiopian ambassadors. Albert Barnes also suggests that these are probably the words of Isaiah or God. He inserted the word “return” after the word “messengers” implying that Isaiah was telling the Ethiopian ambassadors to go back to their own country in haste and tell their king who dispatched them that the LORD was about to punish Ethiopia. He links this interpretation to Ezekiel 30:9.

We know that the chapter and verse divisions in the Bible are manmade and not part of inspiration. To those who agree with the KJV translators and their insertion of “saying”, then these would be the words of the Ethiopian ambassadors. The difficulty in this interpretation is that the identity of the nation that they were sent to bring this message cannot be identified. The question is why would God keep the identity of the nation from the readers? Could this be the nation of Israel? But Israel did not begin as a terrible people and had not been spoiled by rivers as it has only one river, the River Jordan.

Poole’s interpretation seems quite possible. The “message” was not

“from” the Ethiopian ambassadors but rather “to” them from Isaiah or the LORD. This being the case, then the ambassadors were commanded to go – return back to their own nation, warn them of their impending judgement, and stop the desire to expand economically. What would be the point of seeking economic prosperity when the judgement of God will soon befall Ethiopia? Gold, wealth, fame and political alliances will come to naught when calamity comes! The sooner Gentile nations realized this, the faster they turn from their sins and to God through Jesus Christ!

Based upon the above interpretation, verse 3 makes good sense. Isaiah continues his word by declaring to all the inhabitants of the world to see as the LORD lifts up an ensign on the mountains. The act of lifting up an ensign means “to raise a military standard.” Thus a military standard will befall Ethiopia and the whole world was called by the LORD to witness the fulfilment of God’s prophecy against Ethiopia! When the trumpet is blown, listen closely for Ethiopia will fall as the LORD predicted and the rest of the Gentile nations are to take note and not follow in her footsteps!

### **A Mighty Nation Brought Low**

Verse 4 continues the word of the LORD to Isaiah as Isaiah testifies: “For so the LORD said to me, I will take my rest,..” “I” refers to the LORD. The LORD will take His rest. It is not the word for Sabbath here but the Hebrew word meaning “stillness” or “quietness.” The LORD patiently waits

for the time when He will take action against nations like Ethiopia. He will not interpose or interfere at this time. Perhaps their sins were not yet full as was the case of the Canaanites before the LORD punished them. He will consider in His dwelling place, heaven. The word “consider” means “to look intently”. He will watch intently. When the right time comes to pass, He will punish! The LORD patiently waits while sinful men do their utmost to gain material possessions to their folly. Two illustrations are used to describe the quietness of the LORD waiting in heaven as He gazes down onto the earth at the Gentile nations!

The first is that of “a clear heat upon herbs,…” This means that like the sun shining brightly and clearly on the herb without interference or hindrance, so will the LORD view these Gentile nations. Calmness may seem to be present in the affairs of man but the LORD sees them all. The second illustration is that of “a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.” This refers to the calmness of the LORD in heaven as he watches the plotting and planning, and evil of sinful men conquering and killing one another in this sin-sick world! A cloud of dew refreshes the men from the heat when they go out during harvest time. The disposition of the LORD is described here as one of refreshing calmness even though the earth might be in great turmoil! A similar passage is found in Psalms 2:4-5 “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

Verse 5 is definitely figurative. In the time of the harvest when sinful men feels that they will succeed and all is according to their evil plans, the LORD will intervene. This picture is described as when the bud is perfect i.e. the plants are blossoming to perfection or the sour grapes begin to ripen and turn to sweetness in their flowers, then the LORD will cut off both the sprigs i.e. the twigs with pruning hooks and take them away, and cut down the branches as well. The LORD will stop sinful men and though allows them to do so much evil, this is not beyond what He determines! Psalm 76:10 captures this truth very well: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Man is not the captain of his own destiny. He thinks that he is but he deceives himself and has been deceived by the evil one.

Verse 6 continues to describe this devastation from the LORD. Their carcasses shall be consumed by the creatures of the earth. They will not be buried for there will be no one to bury them. They will be food for the fowls of the mountain which are birds of prey. They will also be food for the beasts of the field. Throughout summer and winter these birds and beasts will take turns consuming their carcasses! The sad end of sinful men is described here!

### **A Humbled People Turn to God**

During that time there is hope! "That time" refers to the time of judgement against the Ethiopians. Verse 7 described the Ethiopians the same way God described their

punishment in verse 2. In their state of devastation by the LORD, the Ethiopians will bring gifts to the LORD. The word for "resent" here refers to "gift." The "singular" for gift is probably used in the generic sense. Only those who are converted to Christ can bring any gift. They must bring to the LORD of hosts, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, which was mount Zion. In the Old Testament the saints worshipped the LORD in spirit and in truth, and in location. This was definitively made clear when Solomon prayed unto the LORD asking Him to hear all Israelites who prayed to Him facing Jerusalem. He did this during the inauguration of the Temple in 1 Kings 8. Since that momentous prayer and event, all of God's children including Daniel in Babylonia would face Jerusalem whenever they prayed.

When the Ethiopians are converted to Christ in their time of great devastation, they would bring their gifts to the LORD in Jerusalem.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

*All Gentile nations will be judged* – The judgement of the Ethiopians is representative of the LORD's judgement against all nations of the world. He is the Creator of all mankind and this universe. There is no one on this earth that will not have to answer to God. Man and their nations ignore the LORD today, but they will surely have to answer to Him one day. God will do to any nation what He so desires. A nation rises and falls according to His sovereign will. As easily as He raises up a king, just as

easily can He remove him and raise another. The leaders of nations do not make themselves kings. There are no legitimate king makers on this earth. God is the only true king maker.

This passage from Psalm 75:6-8 supports the sovereignty of God over all leaders of the world, “For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, and drink *them*.” The judgement is for sins committed on this earth. They will be devastated in the manner which Ethiopia was.

*Seek not to enlarge earthly wealth* – The philosophy of the world is to increase material wealth. This is the name of the game out of the breath of every father, mother and child today. From the moment a child comes into this world, the persistent drive of every parent is the obsession to push their child toward educational excellence measured by paper qualifications. This may culminate with a post graduate diploma from a prestigious university and then further onto a multinational organisation making millions of dollars replete with an office on top of the world in one of the major capital cities. When a son or daughter arrives at this ‘top-of-the-world’, the parent believes sincerely that he is a good parent! Such delusion was seen in the Ethiopians who sent their many ambassadors to enlarge their

economic and political influence. The aim is to gain!

However, the LORD made it abundantly clear that material gain is not a gain but a failure. Materialism can never be the real yardstick to measure true wealth. The evidence can be seen in past generations where the richest man keeps changing! Above all else, when the richest man on earth dies he brings nothing with him. He is no better than the poorest man as his body will rot like everyone else’s. His body is eaten up by worms like all dead bodies. Modern embalming seems to preserve the bodies of great men but the cold dead carcasses testify to their impotence and the icy finger of death that has already claimed their soul!

*The LORD waits calmly and patiently in heaven* – As Ethiopia is busy with her enlargement, the LORD remains in heaven calmly and patiently observing the affairs of man. The LORD will not be rushed. Just because judgement is not immediate, sinful man thinks that there is no God and he can live anyway he likes. He commits evil upon evil and does so with abandoned recklessness, refusing to repent and learn from the lessons of history. The LORD sent His prophets with the Word of God to rebuke and exhort but these nations turned a deaf ear.

In His time, He judges at will but always with an outstretched hand of hope to return. God is not mocked by man’s waywardness. While it is still day let all nations taken heed how they live. Ecclesiastes 8:11-13 declares

aptly the warning that all mankind must hear with their ears, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his days*, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." AMEN.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Isaiah 18:1-7.

**TUESDAY:** Isaiah 18:1-7.

**WEDNESDAY:** Isaiah 18:1-7.

**THURSDAY:** Isaiah 18:1-7.

**FRIDAY:** Isaiah 18:1-7.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Will there ever be a Christian nation that will turn its heart to the LORD today? Explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Should Christians seek after material wealth and use this as their motivation for excellence? Explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Will God wait calmly and patiently for a true believer who has gone wayward to repent and turn back to Him, or will he take active steps to bring him back as soon as possible? Explain your answer with Biblical support.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. What is the true wealth that you want for your children, friends and loved ones? What steps have you taken to bring this to pass?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. How soon do you return back to the LORD when your sin is pointed out to you? Please share one example.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6. Do you seek to be rich in the things of the world for yourself and your children? Is it a sin if you do so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---