

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 236 – *Woe To The Land Beyond The Rivers Ethiopia (Isaiah 18:1-7)*

1. Who is given the “woe” in this chapter?

“Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia” (Isaiah 18:1).

- It is unclear whom, exactly, we are discussing in this chapter.
 - Some might conclude that it is Ethiopia.
 - Because of the next chapter, some may conclude it is Egypt (**Isaiah 19:1**).
 - However, consider that it could even be the remnant of Israel (**Zephaniah 3:8-13**).
- The word “woe” (Strong’s # 1945) has already been used several times in Isaiah (**Isaiah 5:8, Isaiah 5:11, Isaiah 5:18, Isaiah 5:20, Isaiah 5:21, Isaiah 5:22, Isaiah 10:1, and Isaiah 17:12**).
 - We will see that same Hebrew word translated woe as we continue as well (**Isaiah 28:1, Isaiah 29:1, Isaiah 29:15, Isaiah 30:1, Isaiah 31:1, Isaiah 33:1, Isaiah 45:9, and Isaiah 45:10**).
- “Shadowing with wings” could refer to God (**Psalms 36:7, Psalms 57:1, Psalms 61:4, and Matthew 23:37**), an invading army (**Isaiah 8:7-8**), covering angels (**Ezekiel 1:4-25**), or even a land full of birds for destruction (**Jeremiah 15:3**).
- There are things that SEEM to appear as one nation or another, but we have to be careful about what things SEEM to be (**Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25**).

2. What did that land given the woe send ambassadors to say?

“That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled” (Isaiah 18:2)!

- Many nations used ships (**I Kings 9:26, II Chronicles 8:18, Isaiah 23:1, Isaiah 43:14, Ezekiel 30:8-9, Daniel 11:40, Jonah 1:3, etc.**).
- “Bulrushes” (Strong’s # 1573) is a porous material, papyrus. Same material used to send Moses down the river (**Exodus 2:3**).
- The nation scattered and peeled could be Israel (**I Kings 14:15, I Kings 22:17, II Chronicles 18:16, Jeremiah 9:12-16, and Jeremiah 50:17**).
- However, that language also applied to others like Egypt (**Ezekiel 29:12**), Assyria (**Nahum 3:18**), etc.
- The destruction of or from rivers is broad too (**Jeremiah 46:9-10, Ezekiel 6:3, Ezekiel 29:9-10, Ezekiel 32:11-16, and Nahum 1:1-4**).

3. Who was supposed to listen when the ensign on the mountain appears and the trumpet was blown?

All the inhabitants of the world: *“All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye” (Isaiah 18:3).*

- God lifts up this ensign [flag] for all to see (**Isaiah 5:25-26**).
- When a statement is made by God, through Judgment or otherwise, everyone should listen (**Isaiah 34:1-2, Jeremiah 22:29, Micah 6:1-2**; cf. **Mark 16:15-16**).

4. Does God ever sit back and consider what is going on in His earth?

Yes: *“For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest” (Isaiah 18:4).*

- This image portrays God sitting back like heat that comes from sun on the herbs and like dew in the heat of harvest.
- There are times where God steps away for a reason (**Hosea 5:15**) and then comes out of His place to act (**Isaiah 26:21**).
- Sometimes He is very distant (**Hosea 5:6**).
- When we get to **verse 7**, it would appear God has retreated to the temple in Mount Zion (**Jeremiah 8:19, Joel 3:17, and Zechariah 2:10**) at Jerusalem (**Zechariah 8:3**).
- Regardless of where God states His dwelling place is (knowing He is not limited to dwelling in a literal, physical place [**Psalms 139:1-12**]), He is always aware of what man is doing (**II Chronicles 16:9, Job 34:21, Psalms 11:4, Proverbs 5:21, Proverbs 15:3, Jeremiah 16:17, and Hebrews 4:13**).

5. In this prophesy, was the Lord going to continue observing or was He going to take some action?

He was going to act just before “the harvest” [plans came about]: *“For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches” (Isaiah 18:5).*

- Just when this nation was about to flourish, God was going to step in and destroy so that nothing grew (cf. **Jeremiah 48:29-40** and **Jeremiah 50:9-16**).

6. When these people are cut down, what were they going to be left to?

The fowls and beasts of the earth: *“They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them” (Isaiah 18:6).*

- **Deuteronomy 28:1-26, Jeremiah 7:33, Jeremiah 16:4, Ezekiel 32:4, and Ezekiel 39:17-20.**

7. What “present” was going to be brought to the Lord?

The destruction of this people this obscure prophesy is discussing: *“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” (Isaiah 18:7).*

- Nations brought gifts to God (**Psalms 68:29-31**).
- The present is whomever the Lord is punishing here coming to Him for mercy (**Isaiah 45:14**).

****There are certainly unanswered questions when you study this chapter, however the significant points are clear. Let’s not forget them...**

- Sometimes God does not judge immediately and people may get bold because God is not doing anything immediately (**Ecclesiastes 8:11**).
- Let’s not forget that God is angry with the wicked every day (**Psalms 7:11**).
- Let’s not forget that though the Judgment Day is not today, that does not mean it is not coming (**II Peter 3:3-14**).
- Let’s remember that all nations need to know that they’ll be judged and ignorance will not be excused (**Acts 17:30-31**).
- Though the wicked may seem at times to be prospering, consider their latter end (**Psalms 73:1-28**).