

## Notes

### The Judgment Against Egypt (19:1–20:6)

- Situated southwest of Judah, Egypt is one of the great powers of the ancient world. From the Exodus onward, Egypt played a paradoxical role in Israel's story: the land of bondage from which God delivered His people, yet a recurring temptation whenever Israel sought security apart from Him.
- During Hezekiah's reign, pro-Egypt factions encouraged an alliance with Egypt against Assyria (30:1–7; 31:1–3). Isaiah warned that dependence on Egypt was rebellion against God. Egypt appeared strong but she herself needed deliverance. True refuge is found in Him alone (Ps 46:1; Prov 18:10).

#### 1. Egypt Under Judgment (19:1–15)

##### *(i) Internal Collapse, 19:1–4*

- Isaiah opens with a majestic picture: *"Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt"* (v1). The image of God riding upon the clouds pictures divine intervention and judgment (cf. Ps 18:10–11; 68:4). At His presence, Egypt's idols tremble and the people melt in fear. Egypt was saturated with idolatry. Animals, insects, the Nile, and even Pharaoh were worshipped. Yet all these gods collapsed before the living God. As in the Exodus plagues (Exo 12:12), God judges Egypt's false gods.
- V2: *"I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians..."* Civil war would break out: city against city, kingdom against kingdom, neighbour against neighbour. Egypt would weaken from within. V3 shows spiritual collapse. Egypt loses courage and turns to idols, charmers, familiar spirits, and wizards, but God destroys their counsel. Finally, Egypt falls under *"a cruel lord"* (v4), anticipating periods of foreign domination.

##### *(ii) Economic Ruin, 19:5–10*

- *"The waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up"* (v5). The Nile sustained agriculture, trade, transportation, fishing, and industry. If the Nile failed, Egypt failed. Isaiah describes the devastation:
  - Canals dry up and vegetation withers (v6).
  - Papyrus disappears (v7), affecting writing, trade, and boat-making.
  - Fishermen mourn because the river no longer sustains life (v8).
  - The flax and linen industry collapses (v9).
- V10 summarizes the result: *"They shall be broken in the purposes thereof...."* Egypt's foundation would crumble. Egypt's sacred river cannot save her. Why trust a nation whose survival depends on a river controlled by God?

(iii) *Failed Wisdom, 19:11–15*

- Egypt prided herself on wisdom and ancient learning. Isaiah declares: *"Surely the princes of Zoan are fools."* (v11). Zoan and Noph were important political and religious centres. Egypt's counsellors boasted in their heritage and wisdom, yet Isaiah asks: *"Where are they? where are thy wise men?"* (v12). Like Babylon's wise men in Daniel 2, they could not discern God's plan. True wisdom begins with *"the fear of the LORD"* (Prov 9:10).
- V14: *"The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof."* Egypt staggers like a drunk man, confused and directionless. From rulers to labourers, the entire nation fails. Rejecting God's truth leads to deception (2 Thess 2:11). True wisdom is found in Christ (Col 2:3).

2. Egypt Under Grace (19:16–25)

- This section contains one of the most astonishing prophecies: Egypt, long defined by idolatry & opposition to God will one day worship the LORD.

(i) *Fear and Awakening, 19:16–17*

- Egypt, once mighty, becomes fearful and helpless: *"Egypt shall be like unto women"* (v16). Egypt trembles not before armies but before the hand of the LORD. V17 gives a striking reversal: *"The land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt."* Once Judah feared Egypt; one day Egypt will fear Judah because God's purposes for Judah are fulfilled. True security comes from God's presence and purpose, not human strength.

(ii) *Conversion and Healing, 19:18–22*

- Egypt, once devoted to idols, will worship the LORD. V18 speaks of 5 cities speaking *"the language of Canaan."* This likely symbolizes identification with the worship and truth of the LORD. One city is called *"The city of destruction"* (or possibly *"City of the Sun,"* linked with Heliopolis). Either reading highlights the transformation from idolatry to true worship.
- V19 describes: *"An altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt."* Egypt, once filled with idols, now worships Yahweh. V20 promises: *"He shall send them a saviour, and a great one."* In the near term, this may point to a deliverer God raises for Egypt; ultimately, it anticipates Christ, the Redeemer of the nations. Egypt will not merely know about God—they will know Him personally (v21). This prophecy points to a future where all nations will worship God (cf. Zech 14:16).

- V22 summarizes God's purpose: *"The LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it."* God strikes not merely to destroy but to restore. Judgment leads to repentance. Repentance leads to healing. God's discipline aims at restoration. He wounds to heal and humbles to restore.

(iii) *Kingdom Blessing, 19:23–25*

- Isaiah closes with a breathtaking vision of the future Kingdom. *"There shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria."* The highway pictures peace and reconciliation. Former enemies become fellow worshippers.
- On that day, Israel becomes "the third" with Egypt and Assyria. The nations once hostile to God now share in covenant blessing (Gen 12:3).
  - Egypt - *"My people."* Once the oppressor, now embraced by covenant grace.
  - Assyria - *"The work of My hands."* Once the rod of judgment, now a recipient of mercy.
  - Israel - *"Mine inheritance."* Israel retains her unique covenant role, not replaced but joined by redeemed nations.

This breathtaking prophecy points forward to the Messianic Kingdom when Christ reigns and the nations worship together.

3. The Folly of Trusting Egypt (20:1–6)

- Isaiah 20 serves as a dramatic conclusion to the prophecy against Egypt. God gives Judah a vivid sign not to trust Egypt or Cush. Around 711 BC, Ashdod rebelled against Assyria expecting help from Egypt and Cush. Egypt never came and Ashdod fell. This incident exposed the weakness of Egypt's promises and Judah's misplaced confidence.
- God then commanded Isaiah to remove his outer garment and sandals and walk *"naked and barefoot."* This was a sign of humiliation and captivity. For three years Isaiah walked *"naked and barefoot,"* a living sign of Egypt and Cush's coming shame. The prophecy was fulfilled progressively through Assyrian campaigns under Esarhaddon (671 BC) and Ashurbanipal (667 BC), when Egypt suffered conquest & humiliation (cf. Nah 3:8–10; Ezek 30:4–5).
- The lesson for Judah was clear: *"They shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory"* (v5). Judah's "expectation" and "glory" could not save themselves, much less Judah. The people would ask: *"How shall we escape?"* The answer was clear: only the LORD saves (Ps 118:8; Jer 9:23–24).