

Is. 18:1 Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

Is. 18:2 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 is trying to get the attention of a specific people; their land is identified by three things:

- 1) It is a land shadowing with wings. One commentary indicated a reference to lots of insects, which I thought made good sense.
- 2) It is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia. Eerdman's - The rivers of Ethiopia are commonly accepted as the White and the Blue Niles along with the Atbara.
- 3) It sends ambassadors by the sea in vessels of bulrushes upon the water.

"beyond" = a region across, on the opposite side

This would seem to indicate west of "the rivers" since the main land mass of Ethiopia is on the eastern side of the rivers and the reference is to land across or on the opposite side of the rivers. This would seem to include the western half of Africa and possibly even parts of Europe.

Sea = a large body of water, the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes a large river

Ethiopia = Cush

- 1) Easton's - corresponds generally with what is now known as the Sudan (i.e., the land of the blacks)
- 2) Borders Egypt - *Ezekiel 29:10 Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.* (Syene = Aswan, Eerdman's)
- 3) Eerdman's - The geographic area S of Egypt and immediately E of the Red Sea, encompassing areas of modern Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

I was reading in Ezekiel and found some verses that were interesting in light of this chapter.

Ezekiel 29:3 Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

This verse seems to be describing Egypt as a land of many rivers, so maybe it is the "land the rivers have spoiled."

The ambassadors/messengers are sent to:

- 1) A nation scattered (to be tall, extend, stretch out) and peeled (obstinate, independent, rash, perverse).
- 2) A people terrible (causing fear / dread) from hitherto (far back, to the distance) [Note: "their beginning" is not in original]
- 3) A nation meted out (stalwart = brave, bold, strong, daring, violent) and trodden down (trampled, polluted)
- 4) A nation whose land the rivers have spoiled (cleaved = parted, divided).

This seems to be referencing a nation whose people have been known for their independence, fierceness, and bravery for a long time. The nation either covers a lot of territory (is stretched out) or is known for tall people. It is a nation divided by rivers (plural). A nation trampled or polluted—Could this mean it had been conquered or invaded?

Could it mean that these messengers from Egypt are sent to Ethiopia? I think that would fit the description given above. Ezekiel again might shed some light.

Ezekiel 30:1–9 "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Howl ye, Woe worth the day! For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh."

When studying prophetic scripture, it is important to remember that the prophets often saw events in the future merging without reference to the passage of time. They also prophesied regarding events relative to their time that would have further application to events in the future—e.g., the abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel that was fulfilled by Antiochus Epihanes but declared by Jesus to have future fulfillment.

This section of scripture in Ezekiel is especially interesting in light of current events. The Arab Spring uprisings have impacted every country listed above in Eerdman's definition of Ethiopia as well as in the passage in Ezekiel. Following is a pertinent quote from my study in Ezekiel: Biblical Ethiopia is also known as Cush and encompassed much of what we know today as black Africa. Libya could also be a reference to Somalia (cf note at 38:5). Lydia was a nation in Asia Minor in the land today known as Turkey. Research for the land of Chub produced nothing definitive; it is generally accepted as being part of the African continent. The Hebrew for "mingled people" made reference to a dusky sundown and to be darkened. This must be a general reference to some other

dark skinned peoples from different nations that allied themselves to Egypt; JFB identified them as mercenaries in league with the Egyptians. Some of the translations identify the “mingled people” as from Arabia. All these people identified with Egypt would also “fall with them by the sword.”

Could it be that we are witnessing the beginnings of the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy?

I must say again—only the future will reveal the truth.

Is. 18:3 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 continues in his poetic style, which seems redundant to me as I read it. He expands his message to all people on planet earth.

“see” = advise self, behold, consider, discern

“ensign” = flag, a sail, a signal

“hear” = to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.)

My first thought is that the messengers being sent on this mission are the ones being referenced who will give the signal and sound the trumpet. It would seem that the message being sent to this nation would impact all peoples of the world. This makes much more sense today considering how connected we are economically and technologically.

Is. 18:4 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.

Is. 18:5 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.

Is. 18:6 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 is emphasizing that this message is from the Lord. It seems to picture the Lord in a posture of unhurried thought. Verse 5 seems to be depicting a time of pruning, which is done to make a plant more fruitful. These discarded branches are left for the birds and beasts to pick from; they have no other usefulness. The Hebrew for the words *summer* and *winter* state “to clip off” and “to pull off” respectively. It would seem that Isaiah intends the nation receiving this message to make a comparison between themselves and the plants needing pruning. This would be a message of purging with the hope of renewal; a time of punishment followed by a time of fresh opportunity before the Lord.

Is. 18:7 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.

This verse seems to be stating that this nation will respond in the right way to their opportunity for a new beginning. They will take a present to the Lord to Jerusalem to Mount Zion, which would seem to indicate the temple. It also seems to be saying that they will recognize the Lord as their Lord.

My guess is that this will find fulfillment in the millennium when Jesus is reigning on the throne of David.