

Series: Isaiah

Lesson # 38

Title: The Work of My Hands

Scripture: Isaiah 19

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Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

The prophets were written, not for us to try to determine when the world shall end, but to bear witness of Christ. Before the Lord Jesus ascended to the Father:

Acts 1: 6: When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7: And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

It is not for the Lord's saints to know times and seasons. It is for you to bear witness of the Christ, the Son of God, the King and Savior, Jesus who shall save his people from their sins.

So what is the purpose of this prophecy? Ezekiel gave the same prophecy and listen to what the LORD said his purpose is:

Ezekiel 29: 6: And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they [Egypt] have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7: When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand. 8: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9: And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the LORD...16: And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord GOD...21: In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD...30: 8 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... 19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

If you and I give our attention to that which our King has emphatically told us is none of our business then we not only miss the message of the prophet but we refuse to obey the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Our text begins:

**Isaiah 19: 1: The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud. And the LORD shall come into Egypt.**

While religious folks busy themselves with comparing these happenings with modern day happenings, while they busy themselves with attempting to identify these nations with modern day nations, these current events with modern day current events, the LORD declares...no...the LORD commands who it is that we are to behold in this passage.

**Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud. And the LORD shall come into Egypt.**

The LORD's triumphant dealings with Egypt sets forth that he is that, "I AM" the LORD of heaven and earth who shall deliver his chosen children from the false refuge of this world into Christ our Sanctuary.

Proposition: I hope you leave here this morning, not speculating about times and seasons, but knowing that the one whom you must face in the blink of an eye is the LORD. I hope you leave here having been turned by the Spirit of God from trusting in the comforts of this Egypt and trusting him who alone is all our salvation. May he give us the grace to know that I AM, the LORD of heaven and earth.

WHO IS EGYPT? The Egyptians stand before us in Isaiah 19 as a representation of all sinners who make up that one nation which opposes God, who looks to the strength of their own hands, who would cause his people to seek refuge anywhere but Christ alone. The LORD will destroy them for the sake of his own glory and for the salvation of his people.

The key comes in:

**Isaiah 19: 17: And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.**

The Lord redeemed his people out of the house of bondage, out of Egypt long before this. Then, all these many years later, in a time of great distress, when the threatening of the Assyrians became great, Judah looked to Egypt for help.

Isaiah 30: 1: Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: 2: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! 3: Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.

## **I. HE IS THE LORD, POWERFUL OVER ALL (V1)**

**Isaiah 19: 1:...Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.**

In this opening verse we have a general description of what the LORD has been doing in the salvation of his people since time began. We will see in the passage that Egypt would experience:

- Civil wars in their nation
- Their counselors would be destroyed
- The economy would fail
- Every purpose the people attempted to recover would come to nothing
- A fierce king would take over

We know when things of this nature come about that there are multitudes of minute, day-to-day workings that take place in the government, amongst the people of the nation, and personally with each individual.

Yet, the LORD takes out all the middle men, all the mundane workings that played out as all these things came to pass, and declares, I the LORD have done it.

**Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.**

## **II. HE IS THE LORD WHO DESTROYS EVERY FALSE REFUGE IN WHICH HIS CHILDREN VAINLY TRUST.**

The LORD gives great detail concerning each of these calamities that shall come upon those who oppose him. But notice in all of them the LORD did it and he did it to remove the false hopes of his elect remnant.

First, concerning civil wars:

**Isaiah 19: 2: And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3: And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof;**

Notice who did this: "I will set." Why would the LORD do this? When his children sought peace within Egypt from their enemies without, the LORD made war to break out within Egypt. No peace can be found in Egypt, only in Christ Jesus the Son of God.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Secondly, concerning the civil and religious leaders:

**Isaiah 19: 3...and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards....11: Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? 12: Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. 13: The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. 14: The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.**

Who did this? "The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof." Why did the LORD do this? The apostle Paul quotes Isaiah and gives us the reason:

I Corinthians 1: 20: Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe....27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28: And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Thirdly, concerning the king who would take over their nation which would result in their commerce and economy completely brought to nothing:

**Isaiah 19: 4: And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts. 5: And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. 6: And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. 7: The**

paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no *more*. 8: The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9: Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. 10: And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices *and* ponds for fish.

When God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt the first time, their rebellious fathers lusted after the temporal, momentary gratification they received from Egypt, saying in the wilderness:

Numbers 11: 5: We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6: But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

So, too, this generation in Judah lusted to be filled by Egypt. So the LORD took it all away.

Fourthly, concerning all their strivings and purposes which came to nothing:

**Isaiah 19: 15: Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. 16: In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17: And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.**

God elect remnant in the midst of this Egypt must be brought to fear because of these false hopes in which they have put their trust. Everything that comes to pass in this world is under the direct control of the LORD of hosts. The LORD brings this to pass against Egypt to break their chains from off his elect remnant, to draw his people to himself, and causes us to rejoice in his Son, the King of our salvation.

- Have you found that all your desires for peace have only resulted in civil wars?
- Have you found peace seeking to the idol god of your imagination, to your counselors
- Have you established peace in business, in your riches and wealth?
- Have any of your purposes really been successful in bringing you peace
- Have you been able to deliver yourself from that fierce king who accuses your conscious of sin?

How thankful we should be that when we put our trust in Egypt the covenant LORD God of heaven and earth brings to nothing all vain refuge.

**III. HE IS THE LORD WHO THEN REVEALS HIS GRACE.** Look at how verse 18 begins:

**Isaiah 19: 18: In that day...**

Throughout the book of Isaiah this phrase points to the day that Christ is exalted before his people. So it is here.

- Isaiah 4: 2-4;
- Isaiah 11: 10, 11
- Isaiah 12: 1-4

**Isaiah 19: 18: In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction.**

The number 5 signifies SOME, a definite number. In that day there shall be some in the land of Egypt which shall speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts. The word "Canaan" comes from a root word which means "to be humbled, subdued, brought down, brought into subjection." This what the LORD does by grace.

At the city and tower of Babel:

Genesis 11: 4: And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth....6: And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7: Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8: So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

But in the day of grace, the LORD makes each of his elect, no matter what language they may speak, to speak one language, the same language, the language of Canaan.

Zephaniah 3: 9: For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

In judgment, by one miracle the tongues men were confounded. By the miracle of grace, God's people are brought to speak the language of grace.

- The language of Canaan is the language of repentance towards God, and faith in Christ,
- The language of love to God and all saints
- A language of free grace instead of free will.
- It is a self-abasing language and a Christ exalting language
- It is a pure language
- To swear by him--to profess allegiance to the LORD, to trust him alone.

**Illustration:** Preaching in Mexico--all smiles!

In verse 18 we see God's grace is not only irresistible in that he produces the pure language in his people, brings them to faith in Christ, but we also see that God's grace is particular, distinguishing grace.

**Isaiah 19: 18: In that day shall five cities [some] in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one [another] shall be called, The city of destruction.**

First, election does not mean that God has shut some people out of heaven. Election means that God has opened the gates of heaven and arranged that a great multitude of undeserving sinners shall enter into everlasting life. In our text the Lord God avows that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, in Egypt, Assyria, Israel and all the world, who must be saved.

Secondly, God's electing grace causes the believer to thank God

II Thessalonians 2: 13: But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, some think the doctrine of election does not encourage the preaching of the gospel or the work of missions, but the Lord's electing grace is the very reason he told Paul to preach at Corinth:

Acts 18: 9: Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

We will look at the rest of the chapter next time, but drop down to verses 23-25:

#### **IV. HE IS THE LORD WHO GIVES HIS ELECT AMONG ALL NATIONS THE PEACE THAT ONLY HE CAN GIVE.**

**Isaiah 19: 23: In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24: In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land: 25: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.**