

# *The Millennium Forecast*

*The Book of Isaiah*

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Text

Isaiah 18:1-20:6

Topic

Isaiah preaches naked to dramatize the news that Egypt & Ethiopia will be taken captive as slaves.

Title

***“Have I Got Nude for You”***

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***Oh, yes, they call him the Streak  
(Boogity, boogity)  
Fastest thing on two feet  
(Boogity, boogity)***

Ray Stevens' song was #1 on the music charts at the height of streaking. In February of 1974 the press labeled it an epidemic. By the first week of March, college campuses across the country were competing to set streaking records.

The most memorable streak occurred on national television at the 46th Academy Awards in April. During one of the presentations, Robert Opel streaked naked across the stage of The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles flashing a peace sign.

Appearing naked in public has a storied history, including religious protests and warnings. Seventeenth century Quaker Solomon Eccles walked nude through London with a chafing dish of fire burning upon his head, crying, *“Repent!”*

**He was doubtless influenced by Isaiah.**

"The LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking **naked and barefoot... three years** for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia" (20:1-2).

Isaiah's nudity was a visual of "the king of Assyria lead[ing] away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt" (20:4).

When you saw Isaiah's 'newsflash,' you were seeing Egypt and Ethiopia as naked captives.

### **Unbelievers today are naked captives.**

Jesus told the Laodiceans in the letter He wrote them in the Revelation, you "do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, **and naked**" (3:17).

Should we be walking around naked today? No.

Spiritually, however, we **are** told to "bear [Christ's] reproach,"<sup>1</sup> "partake of Christ's sufferings,"<sup>2</sup> share "the fellowship of His sufferings,"<sup>3</sup> and "fill up in [our] flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ."<sup>4</sup>

With the help of God the Holy Spirit, people can "see" their spiritual captivity and nakedness and their need to be clothed as we are, with the righteousness of the sinless Son of God.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 God Has A Message For The Naked Nations, and #2 You Are The Messenger To The Naked Nations.

### **#1 - God Has A Message For The Naked Nations (18:1-19:25)**

We are in a long section in which God reveals His future dealings with nations who are not particularly interesting to us. He mentions Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Damascus (Syria), Ethiopia, and Egypt.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:13

<sup>2</sup> First Peter 4:13

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:10

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:24

What if Isaiah was talking about 20<sup>th</sup> century Czechoslovakia? We likely would still be uninterested. But that's only because we are not prone to look into the unseen realm to discover God's remarkable providence.

Israel officially became a nation in May of 1948. They received aid from an unusual source. Russian strongman Joseph Stalin supported Israel because he thought the Jewish state would be communist. Russia supplied Israel arms through Czechoslovakia. This infusion of weapons was crucial to Israel's survival.

It was God, using nations to accomplish His purposes. I wonder how he set that one up!

God has different purposes He has purposed for each nation, but there is one message for all of them: The Savior of the world promised in the Garden of Eden came in the fullness of time through His chosen nation, Israel, in order to redeem and restore His creation and redeem mankind. God provides for His plan by His providence using nations. Whether a nation cooperates or not, God's program will succeed to its completion.

Isa 18:1 Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings, Which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,

Isa 18:2 Which sends ambassadors by sea, Even in vessels of reed on the waters, saying, "Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth of skin, To a people terrible from their beginning onward, A nation powerful and treading down, Whose land the rivers divide."

Their motto, on their "vessels of reed" was, "The land shadowed with buzzing wings." Insects were aplenty.

Epic description of Ethiopians. They were taller than Jews, and not genetically inclined towards facial hair. They enjoyed a good reputation as patriotic, fierce when necessary.

Ethiopia had sent ambassadors to Judah, seeking to form an alliance with them against Assyria. Isaiah said, "Go away," sending them home treaty-less.

Isa 18:3 All inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth: When he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see *it*; And when he blows a trumpet, you hear *it*.

I love that scene in *The Return of the King*, when Pippin lights the beacon to call Rohan to help Gondor. God needed no such help. When the time came, God dealt with the Assyria on his own terms. There would be no "banner," no "trumpet," calling for aid.

Isa 18:4 For so the LORD said to me, "I will take My rest, And I will look from My dwelling place Like clear heat in sunshine, Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

While nations make their political alliances and conduct back room diplomacy, God rests.

The indication is that God's people can rest with Him.

Face it - We may well believe the weapons God has provided us are powerful, but when it comes to it, we are more comfortable with the weapons of the world. Otherwise the apostle Paul would not have needed to warn us that having begun in the Spirit, we ought to continue in the Spirit.

Isa 18:5 For before the harvest, when the bud is perfect And the sour grape is ripening in the flower, He will both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks And take away *and* cut down the branches.

Isa 18:6 They will be left together for the mountain birds of prey And for the beasts of the earth; The birds of prey will summer on them, And all the beasts of the earth will winter on them.

Two metaphors describe the severity of God's dealings with Assyria:

- God would "prune" back the Assyrians.
- Their carcasses would be food for beasts.

Isa 18:7 In that time a present will be brought to the LORD of hosts From a people tall and smooth *of skin*, And from a people terrible from their beginning onward, A nation powerful and treading down, Whose land the rivers divide - To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, To Mount Zion.

We see a partial fulfillment of this in the Book of Acts when an Ethiopian came to worship the LORD at Jerusalem, and then trusted in Jesus at the preaching of Philip.

Further out, Isaiah saw the Millennial Kingdom when Ethiopians and peoples from all nations will worship the Lord.

Nations don't always survive. Czechoslovakia, for example. I don't know its history, but I think it's safe to say that God had His hand of providence on it so that they could be available in 1947.

Isa 19:1 The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, And will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.

Isa 19:2 "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, And everyone against his neighbor, City against city, kingdom against kingdom.

Isa 19:3 The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst; I will destroy their counsel, And they will consult the idols and the charmers, The mediums and the sorcerers.

Isa 19:4 And the Egyptians I will give Into the hand of a cruel master, And a fierce king will rule over them," Says the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

Satan constantly tries to infiltrate the Church with occult influences and practices. He's gotten pretty good at it.

Grave soaking. It's not what happens when the cemetery groundskeeper forgets to shut the water. Also known as *grave sucking*, it is the act of lying across the physical grave of a deceased preacher or evangelist for the purpose of *pulling out* the residual power of the Holy Spirit, a power that was purportedly trapped within the body upon the person's death. Perhaps you've heard of the wildly popular Bethel Church in Redding. Grave soakers.

Isa 19:5 The waters will fail from the sea, And the river will be wasted and dried up.

Isa 19:6 The rivers will turn foul; The brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up; The reeds and rushes will wither.

Isa 19:7 The papyrus reeds by the River, by the mouth of the River, And everything sown by the River, Will wither, be driven away, and be no more.

Isa 19:8 The fishermen also will mourn; All those will lament who cast hooks into the River, And they will languish who spread nets on the waters.

Isa 19:9 Moreover those who work in fine flax And those who weave fine fabric will be ashamed;

Isa 19:10 And its foundations will be broken. All who make wages *will be* troubled of soul.

It would not take much for Egypt to fall from *power* to *poverty*. In their case it was their dependence on the Nile.

We depend upon electricity. Renowned author and military historian William Forstchen told the *Washington Examiner* that the blast from an EMP would devastate the US because America's electrical infrastructure is outdated and ill-equipped to handle the sudden loss of electricity caused by the blast.

In a linked article, intelligence officers said, "High-altitude balloons are considered a key 'delivery platform' for secret nuclear strikes on America's electric grid."

Isa 19:11 Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools; Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. How do you say to Pharaoh, "I *am* the son of the wise, The son of ancient kings?"

Isa 19:12 Where *are* they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now, And let them know what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.

Isa 19:13 The princes of Zoan have become fools; The princes of Noph are deceived; They have also deluded Egypt, *Those who are* the mainstay of its tribes.

Isa 19:14 The LORD has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; And they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

Isa 19:15 Neither will there be *any* work for Egypt, Which the head or tail, Palm branch or bulrush, may do.

What was that? "The LORD has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst?" There is a similar incident described in First Kings 22:19-23.

1Ki 22:19 Then [the prophet] said... "I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

1Ki 22:20 And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

1Ki 22:21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

1Ki 22:22 The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'

1Ki 22:23 Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

Do you know who or what is meant by "spirit," or a lying spirit, or a perverse spirit? It doesn't seem to be a fallen angel. Or a demon. If it was a demon, that wouldn't help us because the Bible nowhere tells us what a demon is. We can't reverse the words and call it "the spirit of lying." All we are sure of is that the "spirit" is some kind of supernatural entity.

The word for "spirit" is the common Hebrew word for *wind* or *breath*. Notice, too, and this is important: This spirit is not described as evil. We assume that it is because of the strategy he suggests. Is it, though? God permitted the "spirit" to provide misinformation so that wicked King Ahab would be fooled. It's a common military strategy.

In the next few verses, sixteen through twenty-four, feature the phrase, "In that day" six times. William MacDonald writes, "The first fifteen verses have already been fulfilled. The rest of the chapter is still unfulfilled."

Isa 19:16 **In that day** Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He waves over it.

Isa 19:17 And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts which He has determined against it.

Isa 19:18 **In that day** five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.

Isa 19:19 **In that day** there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border.

Isa 19:20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them.

Isa 19:21 Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD **in that day**, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform *it*.

Isa 19:22 And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal *it*; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them.

The LORD will wound them and then heal them and bring revival - a revival which will be intimately connected with Israel.

Isa 19:23 **In that day** there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

Isa 19:24 **In that day** Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria - a blessing in the midst of the land,

Isa 19:25 whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

This is mind-blowing, futurist prophecy. Israel, Egypt, and Assyria (modern Iraq) will be the three Mideast Amigos. Finish this thought: "A Jew, an Egyptian, and an Assyrian walked into the Temple..."

**E**gypt & Assyria will be nations in the future Kingdom.

### **What about us? Are we in Bible prophecy?**

We are, but only in the sense that every Gentile nation is. I keep returning to Jeremiah 18:7-10.

God told Jeremiah, "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it" (18:7-10).

Is the US doing evil in God's sight? Tragically, Yes. Where is Solomon Eccles when you need him??

### **#2 - You Are The Messenger To The Naked Nations (20:1-6)**

It was not unusual for God's prophets to dramatize prophecy. Ezekiel and Jeremiah did some wild stuff. With Isaiah, God pushed the limits.

Isa 20:1 In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it,

Isa 20:2 at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

Isa 20:3 Then the LORD said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia,

Isa 20:4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

Isa 20:5 Then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation and Egypt their glory.



Isa 20:6 And the inhabitant of this territory will say in that day, 'Surely such *is* our expectation, wherever we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and how shall we escape?' "

Isaiah exchanged his normal *business* attire of sackcloth for his *birthday* suit. Yes, he was totally naked. The word means naked, and it only means naked. Critics don't like that, citing the fact that it is so shameful. But that is the whole point. There would be no mercies when the nations were taken captive and led away naked by the Assyrians.

**U**nbelievers are slaves to sin and to Satan. They are captives, and like all captive slaves, they are naked. No amount of this earth's goods can cover the kind of spiritual nakedness we are talking about.

### **A naked person needs clothing.**

The Bible says that when Jesus died on the cross, He took upon Himself your sin and shame, and gave you His righteousness in exchange. His righteousness is often illustrated by Him giving you a perfect, pure, white robe of righteousness. It is the garment you need to be recognized by the Father, as being in Christ, and to gain entry into Heaven.

We are not called upon to walk around nude. However, God does ask us go naked in this sense: We must be willing to bear His shame.

The apostle Paul told us to follow him as he followed Jesus. He provides great examples for us:

- Arrested in the city of Philippi, Paul and his companion, Silas, were beaten and thrown into the dungeon. The next morning, when the officials came to release them, Paul declared that he was a Roman citizen with rights, and that they had violated his rights.
- On another occasion, he demanded his rights as a Roman citizen to plead his case before the Cesar.

Paul did not always demand his rights, nor did he always surrender his rights. He was led by God the Holy Spirit to *act in the way that would bring the most good attention to Jesus and the Gospel.*

Paul used a clothing metaphor to encourage us about how to reach naked captives. "Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according

to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

He went on to say we can remove "wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking... with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (4:31-32).

Think of some of the situations of your life. How did you respond? How are you responding?

**As a rule of thumb, ask yourself what answer, or behavior, or course of action, will bring the most good attention to Jesus and the Gospel; then do it.**