

**The King and His One People:  
The Oracle about Egypt**  
Isaiah 19.1–20.6

**Sermon**

Isa 19 (p. 485). Working our way through a series of oracles to the nats, today Egypt. Egypt has long history in Scr, beg w most famous acct: the 430 yr captivity of Isr in Egypt that culminated in Moses, plagues, Exodus. By time Isa writing, 700 yrs had passed & world had changed dramatically. Ergo this oracle. But something dift about this one compared to others, something missing. Look for it as I read 19.1–15.

What's missing: clear statement of Egypt's sin that would bring about this judgment. Unlike Babylon's pride (chs. 13–14), Assyria's oppression (ch. 14), Philistia's schadenfreude (ch. 14), Moab's self-sufficiency (chs. 15–16), Aram & Isr's rejection of G (chs. 17–18). Closest thing here: mention of relig paganism (3), but even that isn't given as reason for judgment, only as extent of Egypt's calamity.

What we do have here: **domestic collapse**. Four types:

- **societal collapse** (1–4). Civil strife (2), relig emptiness (3), domination by a foreign ruler (4).
- **environmental collapse** (5–7). Vivid description of Nile drying up (5), everything in it dying (6), everything supported by it withering away (7). Reminiscent of plagues on Egypt.
- **economic collapse** (8–10). Industries supported by this nat resource wither & die like the plants & wildlife. Water nec to make linen out of flax (9), everyone left destitute (10) from employer [*workers* = pillars] to *wage earner*. Prob of income inequality solved in worst way poss.
- **governmental collapse** (11–15). In view of civil strife, drying of Nile, disintegrating econ, what can leaders do? Counsel proves worthless (11), leaders confused & left staggering like a drunk (14). Sad summary: from top of soc to bottom, nothing can be done (15).

Isa's bringing this up to his peo in Judah for a very practical reason: a warning not to trust Egypt. Last wk: Cush moved north into Nile delta region, conquered Lower Egypt, established 25th Dynasty under King Shabaka. Sent msg's to Hezk of Judah to form alliance vs. Assyria. Judah tempted to join w Shabaka. Isa advises against it, even becomes a visible sign of warning. [Read 20.1–6.] No need to trust Egypt, trust G.

But imagine how Egyptians would've experienced this. Wouldn't have had this inspired commentary explaining why everything was collapsing around them. Ordinary Egyptians would've watched fams torn apart by strife & discord, fishers would've worried as they saw the water level of the mighty Nile slowly ebb away, workers would've wondered how they would spin their linen if not enough water, & Pharaoh would've searched for someone w answers to predicament. Egypt would've gone through their nat's turmoil like a story on page A1 of the news not an oped on page A18, experiencing the what w an explanation from G as to why. IOW Egypt would've experienced their nat's turmoil same way we experience our nat's turmoil: w benefit of inspired comm. **Societal:** domestic violence, human trafficking. **Environmental:** depleted resources, climate change. **Economic:** wage stagnation, income disparity. **Governmental:** polarized views, inability to listen & work tog. We don't know full story & we don't know precisely how G is at work in them.

& that's where this psg becomes particularly useful for us who read it today bc it gives us a peek behind the curtain to see who G is at work in the midst of domestic collapse. Not to say there's a one-to-one correspondence bet our sit & theirs. But one thing comes through loud & clear in these oracles: the G of Isr not a provincial deity, but claims auth over all peos & all times. If he is who he says he is, we can extrapolate what he did then & apply it to us now. Not a one-to-one correspondence bet our sit & theirs, but there is a one-to-one correspondence bet the One who K then & now. That's where rest of ch. 19 comes in. When G tells peo of Jeru to trust him & not Egypt, poss to

conclude that G simply takes sides in intl affairs, if you're not Jewish, you're out of luck. But 2nd half contradicts that notion: yes G is interested in his one peo, but he is interested in expanding that one peo to include peos of all nats. [Read vv. 16–25.]

In the face of domestic collapse G is bringing about **multinational oneness**. I'm using both of those words quite intentionally. Clearly multinational: *Egypt, Isr, Assyria*. More than that, intl foes: Judah lit caught in bet two powerful forces, Assyria & Egypt, who themselves would eventually do battle. Yet G predicts a day when his peo would include all three, i.e., true oneness: v. 25, *blessed be Egypt my peo, Assyria my handiwork, Isr my inheritance*. Might be tempted to say, "Better to be inheritance than peo or handiwork," but that completely misses the point. All three terms used to describe Isr in OT, none ever depict a second-class status. Furthermore, fascinating that G would use *Isr* here instead of Judah, bc by the time Shabaka united Egypt under his rule (715BC) northern k of Isr had already fallen & peo deported (722BC). What's in view not two or three classes of G's peo, but the inclusion of many nats into G's one peo.

In bringing about this multinational oneness, G upends two opposite ideas about how the peos of the earth could be one: fundamentalist & secularist visions for achieving intl harmony. **Fundy version**: everyone must be just like me, bel everything just as I bel, live life exactly as I would. & if they won't, well, in the most extreme forms the infidels must be killed or subjugated. But that is to rub out the multinational, multicultural vision of this psg: v. 19 a striking ill. Placement of an *altar in the heart of Egypt & monument at its border* signifies widespread expansion of G's peo among Egyptians. What started in a few towns (18) eventually grows from the center to its borders. But see what these newly included peo of G build? An *altar*—but the Jews were forbidden to build an altar outside of the Tab/Temple. & more perplexing, a *monument*, lit. "a pillar." After age of the patriarchs, hardly ever a good

thing, normally seen as a sign of pagan worship, not allowable for the worship of the 1TG. But here G says that the Egyptians who become part of his peo mark their devotion to G w an altar & a pillar, culturally-appropriate items to signify the superiority of the 1TG over surrounding pagan culture. Contradicts fundy notion of monolithic oneness: “rel must be carbon copies, only 1 way to worship G & it’s my way.” In face of that notion G says, “My 1 peo are remarkably diverse & what some cannot by conscience do, others may freely offer as worship to Me.”

Also contradicts **secularist vision**: humanity can create unity among all peos from the bottom up, belief in G or gods or no god only complicates matters, we can create oneness on our own. Leaving aside the fact that the secularist’s own belief in survival of the fittest is incompatible w their vision for world unity, this psg says that the way multinational oneness will be realized is by multinational allegiance to the 1TG (18a, 21a, 23). What creates the oneness is not the oneness of humanity but the oneness of G. Those who swear allegiance to 1TG discover a fam that transcends race, culture, time, nationality.

& don’t miss **when** G creates this multinational oneness. Don’t read this psg as if vv. 1–15 happen 1st & then, after a period of domestic collapse G brings about multinational oneness. Isa couldn’t be clearer: G brings about multinational oneness in the midst of domestic collapse. It is *in that day* (6x in these vss). Not awaiting some idyllic period when everything is as it should, but G is saying “While world is falling apart, I will expand my peo to include the nats of the world.”

But how? How will he do bring it about? G welcomes in the peos of the world by *sending them a savior & defender* who would *rescue them* (20b), someone who had power to crush every enemy but instead let himself be crushed by the enemy, someone who had every right to save himself but chose instead to sacrifice himself to save others, someone who died in the battle but rose to life to rescue his peo—Jews,

Egyptians, Assyrians, Ethiopians, Indians, Germans, Russians, Spaniards, Chinese, Argentines, Amers. G brings about multinational oneness through his Son J. & you cannot deny it. Even this wk I received news from Jewish Xians risking fam & possessions to spread fame of J, read papers detailing the horrific plight of Assyrian Xians, heard of the persecution of Egyptian Xians (Copts). In the midst of domestic collapse, G is doing what in Isa's day would've been unthinkable: uniting Jews & Egyptians & Assyrians, bringing nats of the world into his one fam. This psg is happening right now! You can bury your head in the sand & pretend like this 2,700 year old psg isn't coming true, or you can do what this psg instructs us to do: cry out to the L bc of your oppressors & he will send you the Sav.

This psg is happening right now, right here. Ill of conv w Brian C this week: came to faith a little over a yr ago. Heard sermon ("J faced mile-high, tsunami-like wall of G's wrath"), went to midtown thinking about the cross, saw billboard w Jn 3.16 on it, received text msg w same. Came to J. Cried out to G & G sent him a Sav.

What this table is all about: G sending a Sav to you, G opening doors to his fam for you, G welcoming you to himself through J. Every wk our joy to have peo who are not Xians worship w us. No pressure to take part in this sacrament. May wish to use this time to reflect, pray, ponder what you've heard. For those who are followers of J, who have renounced their own way & are trusting him alone, this table is for you to commune w your Sav. These are the gifts of G for the peo of G. Partake, for all has been prepared. [Communion]

### Post-communion **application**

1. Spread the word (21). Peo know page A1, we have page A18.
2. Be a blessing (24). Serve, give, cause others to flourish.
3. Defend your unity (25). All too often we Xians splinter apart for many reasons. Instead, let's beginw our uwX & work out from there.