

Judgment and Future Worship from Ethiopia / Cush (18:1–7)

- “Ethiopia” in the KJV refers to ancient Cush, a kingdom centered in the Upper Nile region (modern Sudan, southern Egypt, and parts of northern Ethiopia). The Cushites descended from Cush, the son of Ham (Gen 10:6–7). Cush was powerful in Isaiah’s day and even ruled Egypt. Judah was tempted to trust Cush against Assyria, but Isaiah’s message was clear: God’s people were to trust the LORD rather than human alliances.
- The Call to Cush (18:1–2). Isaiah begins with a “woe,” but here it is a call for attention rather than condemnation.
 - Cush is described as an active & influential nation (cf. Isa 20; 2 Kgs 19:9).
 - It sent ambassadors in papyrus boats, seeking alliances with surrounding nations against Assyria.
 - The Cushites are described as tall & striking in appearance (Jer 13:23).
 - They were known as a people of strength and influence.Although Cush appeared powerful, Judah’s security was never found in political alliances. God’s people were to trust in the LORD (Ps 20:7).
- God’s Watchful Judgment (18:3–6). Isaiah calls all nations to witness God’s sovereign rule over history. The raising of the ensign and sounding of the trumpet picture God’s public intervention. Historically, this points to God’s dealings with Assyria, the great threat of Isaiah’s day. Yet the universal language appears to extend beyond Isaiah’s immediate setting and anticipates God’s future dealings with the nations during the Day of the LORD, ultimately culminating in Christ’s Kingdom (Joel 3; Zech 14; Rev 14).
- In contrast to the restless activity of nations and diplomats, God declares His calm and sovereign posture. While nations hurry and make their plans, God remains calm and waits for His appointed time to act. God’s “rest” is not inactivity but sovereign control (Ps 2:1–4).
- *“I will consider in my dwelling place...”* God sees all things from His heavenly throne. He is fully aware, fully engaged, and perfectly timed in His actions. Isaiah uses agricultural imagery, like branches cut off before harvest, to show that Assyria would be judged before achieving its purposes. Judah did not need Cushite alliance because the LORD Himself would deal with Assyria. God alone determines the rise & fall of nations.
- This passage contains no direct condemnation of Cush itself. The issue is not primarily Cush’s sin, but Judah’s temptation to trust Cush rather than God. For Judah, the lesson was clear: Judah was to trust in the LORD. The LORD alone would deal with Assyria in His time and in His way.

- Tribute to the LORD (18:7). Cush, which once sent ambassadors seeking alliances, will one day bring tribute to the LORD in Zion. This anticipates the inclusion of Cush among the worshippers of the LORD. A partial foreshadowing of this future hope may be seen in Acts 8 through the conversion of the Ethiopian official. Its ultimate fulfillment looks ahead to the future Kingdom when the nations will worship the LORD (Zech 14:16).
- Key Lesson: Human alliances & earthly power cannot save. God alone rules history, judges the nations, and will one day bring them to worship Him.

Notes