

# THE ETHIOPIAN FULFILMENT, PENTECOST AND ISRAEL



מעבר לנהרי-כוש



Rod Adamson

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An exegetical presentation of Psalm 68.31, Isaiah 18.7 and Zephaniah 3.10 as prophecy of God's African gospel plan under Acts 1.8 with Acts 8. 26-39 and Romans 11.21-25, necessitating a missiological review of gospel progress in Ethiopian Africa from Mark the evangelist onwards, and a theological review of the emergence of authentic African theology in post-colonial modernism.

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# 1. THE ETHIOPIAN FULFILMENT PROPHECIES

Nations not named and without direct reference in revelation are often referred to by imagery. “The islands/coastlands” is one such usage, usually in Hebrew יַיִם *ee* (mostly plural, and often with qualifying adjectives or possessives like יַיִם הַגּוֹיִם *eeyee hagoyim* ‘coastland/maritime peoples/gentiles’ of Gen 10.5 and Zeph 2.11 or the ‘many coastlands’ of Ps 97.1, Is 11.11, Is 40.15, Jer 31.10, Ezek 39.6), of which the Tyre sea peoples were the most immediate example to the Hebrews (Ezek 27.35). By wider application, these peoples were generally any peoples reached by sea from Palestine, globally applicable even to the Americas, China and Australasia in later times.

Ethiopia is both a geographic direct reference and a collective peoples direct reference in revelation by the Hebrew כּוּשׁ *cush*, from Gen 2.13, 10.6 onwards in multiple Old Testament usage. The Ethiopian geographic region of the Old Testament has wider correspondence with the current nation of Ethiopia and including Eritrea and Nubian parts of Sudan, but basically the upper reaches and wider headlands areas of the two Niles. In revelation the Ethiopian peoples are best described in Is 18.1-7, imaging a ‘tall and smooth skinned’ genetic profile. This passage is also interesting for its inclusion of similar genetic profile peoples beyond the geographic Ethiopian area who would approximate the heritage of sub-Saharan black peoples, as Jeremiah 13.23 indicates. The Hebrew prophets addressed revelatory futurology to the wider Ethiopians as African ‘ends of the earth’ peoples. The prophetic range, in particular of the positive futurology and the role of Ethiopians toward Israel in any Ethiopian fulfilment, must be given focus.

In the global era of Christianity after Pentecost, the various nations or peoples named in Old Testament revelation are upheld historically and in revelation when named, whether the nation survived on into New Testament and Church times or not. Ethiopia not only survived but thrived. It’s place and purpose in revelation, in particular when applied to black Africans ‘ends of the earth’ peoples, has prior Biblical Studies, historical and futurology place in academics.

## 1.1 Psalm 68.31 <sup>1</sup>

*Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.*

*Psalm 68:31*

Psalm 68 uses a general preponderance of *Elohim* for God, while the contribution of the Yahweh name – I AM rules the rise and fall of nations - directs the synonymous use of the other divine names. They are used singly as in El, Yah, Yahweh, Adonai and Shaddai by itself, and are also used in combination. God is also אל ישראל *El Yisrael* God of Israel in verse 35. God is ruler over all nations globally and inclusively, none are excluded, but God is also always the One of the Shema.

The centrality of the Jerusalem temple in the message of the Psalm as the place of the presence of the forgiveness and power of God is also key to the coming of the nations to God. Because the imagery is either Exodus-Sinai linked, or temple linked for many of the tribes in which case David would be anticipating the temple he had vision of, the Psalm could be Davidic or is pre-exilic of the early kingdoms phase.

Verse 31b prophesies the Ethiopian Fulfilment in the Hebrew as כוש תריץ ידיו לאלהים *kush tarits yadayu leElohim* and translated variously yet in semantic equal as “*Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God*” (ESV), “*the Ethiopians will raise their hands in prayer to God*” (GNV), and “*Kush hastens to come before God with hands full of gifts*” (Weiser, *A Psalms. p 479*). As among the global nations, it is God’s specific future intention that the Ethiopian peoples come as worshippers to the place of the presence of the forgiveness and power of God.

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1. Anderson, GW. The Psalms; Okorochoa, C. Psalms; Tombs, LE. The Psalms; Weiser, A. The Psalms

## 1.2 Isaiah 18.7 <sup>2</sup>

*A time is coming when the LORD Almighty will receive offerings from this land divided by rivers, this strong and powerful nation, this tall and smooth-skinned people, who are feared all over the world. They will come to Mount Zion, where the LORD Almighty is worshiped. Isaiah 18:7*

Egypt successfully dominated and imposed a governor in ancient Ethiopia from about 1500BC, Ethiopia then corresponding to its Nubian leadership. Far fewer Ethiopian overlords arose, during Egyptian internal strifes. 2 Chr 14.9-15 records a lesser known foray of Ethiopian Zerah into Palestine Judah and defeat by Asa (910-870 BC). From the 715 BC “Piankhi Ethiopian” 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty in Egypt, Ethiopian leader/pharaoh Taharqa/Tirhakah (of 2 Kgs 19.9/Is 37.9) attempts a use of allies including Judah to restrain Assyria under Sennacherib in 701 BC. With prophetic insight Isaiah had anticipated this would fail, and did, but that God would not fail Judah and Hezekiah, as the 2 Kgs 18.13-19.37/Is 36.1-37.38 parallel ultimately recorded.

This is the background to the Isaiah 18.1-7 prophecy, the last futurology verse 7. The consequence of God’s victory against Assyria persuades the Ethiopians from then on to keep on pursuing their observance of worship of the Lord at Mount Zion.

With Tirhakah’s messenger exchange to Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18.21/Is 36.6 linked to Is 18.2), Ethiopia has minor role in the Hezekiah-Isaiah-Assyria history, but the event is a major target of secular-liberal Bible scepticism with consequent ‘religious studies/ history of religions’ re-mythologisation. [So 2 Kgs 18.14-16 is regarded as real history – Hezekiah paid tribute, upon which Sennacherib ‘took’ but did not war against Jerusalem, then withdrew back to Assyria – which the Isaiah parallel omits. Thus

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2. Ackroyd, PR. Book of Isaiah; Bright, J. Isaiah – 1; Harrison, RK. Introduction 190f; Kaiser, O. Isaiah 13-39 89f/367-397; Motyer, JA. The Prophecy of Isaiah 161f/276-286; .Nsiku, EK. Isaiah; Young, EJ. Book of Isaiah V 1,474f/V 2,457-569.

all 2 Kgs 18.17-19.37/ Is 36.1-37.38 and 2 Chr 32.1-22 are not subsequent development after 2 Kgs 18.14-16, but the prophetic myth propaganda to protect the 'integrity' of the failed Hezekiah and Yahweh at the 'taking' of Jerusalem.] Implied for Ethiopian fulfilment is that Isaiah 18.1-7 is also consequent myth without futurology realism.

This paper upholds the Biblical Studies view by dating and archeology. [The tribute paid just emboldened Sennacherib to attack which the miracle plague ended, but which the annals writer of Sennacherib omitted as inglorious]. The Ethiopian fulfilment is real prophecy expecting futurology outcome.

Motyer points out the significance of the Isaiah 18.1 and Zephaniah 3.10 Hebrew phrase parallel מעבר לנהרייכוש *me'eber le'nah'are kush* 'beyond the rivers of Cush'. Both for the original phrasing and the theological significance, a pertinent reliance relationship of Zephaniah on the Isaiah original is indicated. This will be looked at under Zephaniah 3.10.

### 1.3 Zephaniah 3.10 <sup>3</sup>

*From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. Zephaniah 3:10*

Josiah reigned 639-609 BC. Zephaniah was a cousin, great-great grandson of King Hezekiah via Gedaliah and Amariah and as the 'son of Cushi' meaning 'Ethiopian' gentile, probably of the Piankhi Ethiopian phase in Egypt (Zephaniah's prophecy contains no reference to Egypt). Deut 23.7-8 required his mother be four generation Jewish, the relation to Hezekiah. In modern speak, he was an Ethiopian-Hebrew person of colour. When Josiah was a teenager, Zephaniah prophesied before Josiah's reform as possible contemporary of Jeremiah, Nahum and Habbakuk.

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3. De Vries SJ. The Book of Zephaniah; Harrison, RK. Introduction 939f; Hyatt, JP. Zephaniah; Keil and Delitzsch. Commentary on the Old Testament. Yilpet, Y. Zephaniah1071;

After the Lord of hosts leads Zephaniah in an oracle of negative against the global nations in general, but including Ethiopia (Zeph 2.12) as also in Isaiah's prophecy, Zephaniah 3.10 prophesies the Ethiopian fulfilment in terms linking to the prophecy of Isaiah. With the Isaiah 18.1 and Zephaniah 3.10 Hebrew phrase parallel מַעְבֵּר לְנַהַר־כּוּשׁ *me'eber le'nahare kush* as from 'beyond the rivers of Cush/Ethiopia', it is indicated Zephaniah knew the prophecy of Isaiah. The geography expression retains the two fold application of the Ethiopian peoples, as well as a reference to global peoples of earth's most distant regions (Est 1.1/8.9). The theological link which Isaiah applied to the Tirhakah messengers as well as in futurology is applied only in futurology by Zephaniah.

The Keil JCF and Delitzsch F Commentary on the Old Testament expresses the futurology well: "The meaning is therefore the following: The most remote of the heathen nations will prove that they are worshippers of Jehovah, by bringing to Him the scattered members of His nation, or by converting them to the living God. We have here in Old Testament form the thought expressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11, namely, that the Gentiles have been made partakers of salvation, that they may incite to emulation the Israelites who have fallen away from the call of divine grace." Ebed-melech (Jer 38.7-13) is an example.

#### 1.4 Ethiopia in Negative Prophecy

In the major and minor prophets, Ethiopia as one of the global gentile nations with direct Israel contact, is prophecied to sin and suffer in its relationship with the Lord and with Israel. (cf Isaiah 18.1/20.3-6; Jeremiah 46.9; Ezekiel 30.4-9/ 38.5; Nahum 3.9 and Zephaniah 2.12). In different historical events Ethiopians aligned against Israel, earning both immediate judgment as in the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian conquests, or futurology outcomes. Ezekiel has only adverse prophecy concerning Ethiopia, some within his "Gog/Magog" futurology. Despite the negative, however, the enduring prophetic message for the 'beyond the rivers of Cush' wider sub-saharan peoples is to be the people bringing offerings to the Lord of Hosts of Zeph 2.9.

## 1.5 Pentecost, Acts 8.26-39 and Romans 11.1-36 <sup>4</sup>

Under the useful teaching saying “Jesus fulfils the Old Testament, the New Testament witnesses how”, it is Jesus Christ who directs the Ethiopian prophecies into their realised ‘Ethiopian Fulfilment’. Jesus’ crucifixion-resurrection inauguration of the New Covenant rendered the geographic temple, Jerusalem and Israel obsolete, for the place of the presence of the forgiveness and power of God is now Jesus, in whom redemption centers and who is the gospel, making the gospel message global.

**Acts 1.8:** Pentecost and the age of Pentecost is the applied Holy Spirit era of global gospel history. Jesus’ commission of the apostles and Christians with the Acts 1.8 words: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”*, εσχρατου της γης *eschatou tys gys*, is obviously inclusive of African ‘ends of the earth’. Verse 8 focuses the issue of verses 6-7. The geographical centrality of Israel and Jerusalem is confirmed to be obsolete in the Pentecost age. The gospel commission on the apostles and Christians is global and of enduring priority. Verses 9-11, Jesus’ Ascension, indicates the priority remains in place till Jesus’ Return.

**Acts 8.26-39:** The Ethiopian eunuch conversion account is the first real gentile conversion in Acts and of the new Church, prior even to the Peter and Cornelius conversion event. The event is all Pentecost: the Holy Spirit moves Philip into place for a ‘Spirit-led coincidence’ of individuals unknown to each other yet ‘ripe for gospel harvest’. Philip as witness and the prophecy-using Ethiopian become agents by which the Ethiopian is led to faith in which it is known that the Hebrew revelatory prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. Ethiopia is anticipated to come to know God in a manner that is in full continuity with the Ethiopian Fulfilment prophecies in the now New Covenant context.

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4. Baird, W. Acts of the Apostles; Bruce, FF. The Acts of the Apostles 189f; Kisau PM. Acts of the Apostles 11314f; Marshall, IH. Acts 160f.

**Romans 11.21-25:** <sup>5</sup> The fullness of Israel belongs to the later eschatological discussion. From Pentecost until Jesus' Return - *αχρις ου το πληρωμα των εθνων εισελθη* *achris ou to pleroma ton ethvon eiselthe* 'until the fullness of the gentiles/nations has come in' - prevails as the Spirit's priority (also Mark 13.10/Luke 21.24/Rev 11.2).

In Old Testament and New Testament scripture, God has purposed specifically concerning Cush in both the black senses of 'Ethiopia national' and the wider sense of 'from beyond the rivers of Cush' as the African 'ends of the earth'. "Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God" (Psalm 68.31) is the prophetic message anticipating fulfilment. The apostolic message flows from Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the 'greater Exodus' and New Covenant centered in it, and the global overflow from Pentecost of the simultaneous age of the Spirit. Out from Jesus from Pentecost, through the Ethiopian eunuch to Cush, the apostles anticipate the completed Ethiopian fulfilment is both come in Jesus and is coming as the wider Cush comes to God.

The Ethiopian Fulfilment prophesied in the Old Testament is the gospel regeneration movement activated in Jesus' death and resurrection, and overflowed by the Holy Spirit to bring Africans 'from beyond the rivers of Cush ends of the earth' to personal faith in Jesus Christ in growing Christian commitment.

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5. Bruce, FF. *Romans*; Cranfield, CEB. *Romans Vol 1*; Kasali, DM. *Romans*; Manson, TW. *Romans*;

## 2. THE ETHIOPIAN FULFILMENT IN HISTORY

The historical origins of Cushite Christianity are via Egypt and John Mark of the New Testament. This relative of Barnabus whose mother housed a lead apostolic group, who fell out with Paul, became scribe to Peter and later reunited to Paul, then wrote Mark's gospel as the culminating record of Peter's preaching. Outside the Bible, widespread post-apostolic documents record Mark as journeying to Alexandria in Egypt, founding the African Church among converts and individual Christians who had also arrived there, and becoming its first bishop before his martyrdom in Alexandria. The resulting progresses are next looked at, not as history of the Church in Africa which others have presented (Groves, CP. The Planting of Christianity in Africa; Latourette, KS. History of the Expansion of Christianity; Ross, KR ed. Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Johnson, TM and Ross, KR. Atlas of Global Christianity; etc), but as a presentation of the Ethiopian Fulfilment.

### 2.1 The Ethiopian Mission from Alexandria <sup>6</sup>

The resulting Egyptian Church emerged as initially 'Orthodox' rather than 'Roman Catholic', but fiercely upholding its own independence. From Egypt, early gospel mission included Nubian 'Nile confluence' Christians and Axumite Ethiopians.

The Axumite mission grown from Frumentius' slavery c.316 AD, developed into the Alexandria-linked Ethiopian Orthodox Church of which Frumentius (d 383 AD) was the first bishop. The Church continues today as the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (<https://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/>), the official Christian Church of the geographic state of Ethiopia. Part of its promotional presence is depicting itself as the fulfilment of Ps 68.31. Part of its Biblical discipline was gospel manuscript production, of which the two Garima Gospel manuscripts are the most ancient (translations from the Greek into Ge'ez language, dating c.450-500 AD; very early textual validation of the Greek New Testament). Own language Bible and worship remains a

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6. Hildebrandt, J. History of the Church in Africa 21-42; Neill, S. A History of Christian Missions 52f; Walker, W. History of the Christian Church 144. Botha, CJ. The Extinction of the Church in North Africa. J TSA December 1986.

mainstay of Pentecost overflow; which the Ethiopian Church achieved.

From Chalcedon 451 AD, the Monophysite and non-Roman primacy of the Egyptian Church developed into the African unique Egyptian Coptic Church with its own pope, and with its linked Ethiopian Church. The Coptic Church continues today as an independent African Christian witness from euro-centric Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches.

### 2.1.2 **Ethiopian Binary: Coptic Church, Ethiopian Royal Lines** <sup>7</sup>

The early Tigray/Axum kingdoms of today's northern Ethiopia bordering Egypt, Nubia, Eritrea and the Red Sea, were the precursors of the Menelik kings. King Ezana of Axum was taught by the young slave Frumentius, and in 325-328 AD made Christian conversion with acceptance of Christianity as official religion of his kingdom which became the first to use the image of the cross on its coins. (Constantine's Edict of Milan was the first Roman imperial proclamation of tolerance of Christianity, the Nicene creed dates 325 AD; Constantine died 337 AD).

Christian Axumite influence began to lead in the Amhara area of geographically isolated Ethiopian highlands from c700-800 AD. With the ascension of originator king Yekuno Amlak, the Amhara Menelik royal line eventually became the imperial house over all of national Ethiopia from 1270 AD, with the religious partnership of the Ethiopian Coptic Church from the Istifanos Monastery.

*[In the Kebra Nagast, the dynastic myth builders claimed links to Solomon through impregnation of the Queen of Sheba (claimed to be Makeda who gave birth to first in the dynasty Menelik 1). There is no archeological external historical validation for this. However, the Beta Israel 'Falasha' Ethiopian Jews are of Torah but not Talmud practice, claim diaspora origin either fleeing from Rehoboam or Assyria, and have genuine genetic Jewish origins as a kind of 'living archeology' of Jewish immigration among*

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7. Hildebrandt, J. History of the Church in Africa 21-42;

*Ethiopians. Their canon favours the Torah, showing little use of the Prophets or Writings, and no use of the Ethiopian prophecies. They have given no Pentecost overflow to Gentiles.]*

### 2.1.3 **Bastion against Sharia Babylons and Ancestralism:** <sup>8</sup>

The 'Coptic Church-Ethiopian Kings Binary' not only kept the dynasty as one of the most viable in human history, but kept national Ethiopia as the centuries-long bastion against Islamic invasions and ancestralist expansions.

From Daniel's four beast kingdoms controlling Babylon as imperial commercial hub, with their own propagandising – Babylon (*gateway of the gods*), Medes-Persians (*Cyrus pluralism*), Greeks (*pan-Hellenism*), Romans (*pax Romana*) - the Book of Revelation presents Rome as initiating a cycle of successor beast 666 empires dominating the Mediterranean via Europe or the middle east. With the 641 AD Islamic invasion of Egypt onwards, waves of Islamic expansionism spread out from the caliphates/dynasties with their respective propagandas of '*ummat al-Islām*' *global community of Islam* and Sharia law, and the move into 'Pact of Umar' repression of *dhimmis* non-muslims:

- the *Rashidun* Arabian 632-661 AD of Makkah/Mecca
- the *Ummayyad* Arabian 661-750 AD of Damascus (Cordoba offshoot, 756-1031 AD),
- the *Abbasid* Persian 750-1258 AD of Baghdad, (Mamluke offshoot in Cairo, 1261-1517 AD, alongside the Shia Fatimids 909-1171 AD. (Ended by *Pax Mongolica* Mongol Empire); and
- the fourth the *Ottoman* Turks of Istanbul 1517-1924 AD Istanbul.

Rome/Byzantium persecuted non-Catholic/Orthodox churches whereas Islamic history claims Caliphate tolerance for churches, but this was initial grooming propaganda before the weight of

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8. Hildebrandt, J. History of the Church in Africa 25-31; Neill, S. A History of Christian Missions 62-65; Walker, W. History of the Christian Church.  
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/omar-covenant> ; <https://www.islamweb.net/en/article/200191/the-covenant-of-umar> ; <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-covenant-of-omar> ;