

BIBLE LECTURE 31. 05. 2022 **THE BIBLE AND AFRICA**

From the beginning of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th raiders from the coast of North Africa, known as the Barbary Coast, including Morocco,



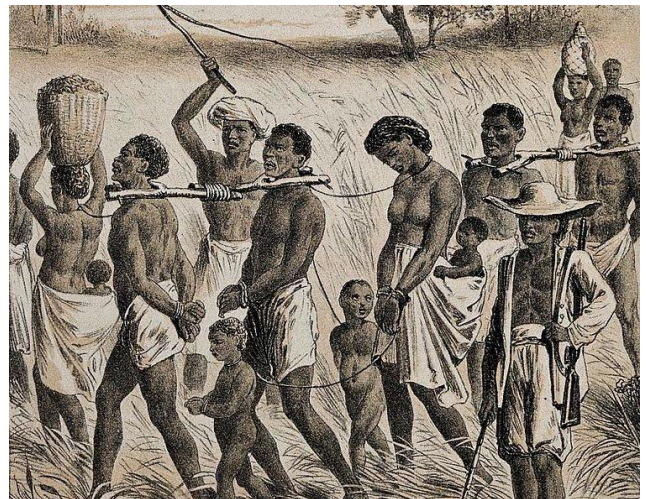
Algeria and Tunisia, sailed in ships to the coast of Europe and the British isles searching for white people and children to capture and make slaves. They raided the coasts from Italy to the coast of the Netherlands; from the south coast of Britain to Ireland and as far north as Iceland and also into the Eastern

Mediterranean. Over a period of 250 years it is estimated that over 1.5 million Europeans were made slaves and sold in the markets of the Barbary Coast and Constantinople, capitol of the Ottoman Empire.

Similarly the East Coast and hinterland of Africa was raided by Islamic slave traders for Black slaves. Arab Muslims in North and East Africa sold captured Africans to the Ottoman Empire, to labour as field workers, teachers or harem guards, which is why the castration of male slaves was common practice.

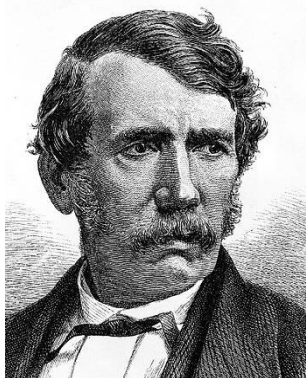
The island of Zanzibar was East Africa's slave hub from the 17th century. More

and more Arab merchants from Oman settled in Zanzibar. The island became a centre of international trade of goods due to the large trade at the Swahili coast, including the slave trade. This is how the largest slave market in East Africa was created. No one really knows how many Africans were sold from East to North Africa and the Arab Peninsular. Few records actually exist but the fact is



that many of the slaves perished. Scientific research reckons that about three out of four slaves died before they reached the market where they were to be sold, because of hunger, illness or exhaustion after long journeys.

Enter David Livingstone



David Livingstone, the Scottish explorer, abolitionist and physician who is famous for being the first European to discover Victoria Falls, initially he hoped to go to China as a missionary, but the first Opium War broke out in September 1839, and he decided to go to Africa instead. He went to Africa in 1841 as a “medical missionary”. However, he was actually a terrible missionary with only one convert, a tribal chief named Sechele. He felt that his calling lay in exploration (with the aim of finding commercial trade routes to displace those of the slave trade), eventually he resigned from the London Missionary Society.

Livingstone became great friends with local tribal chiefs, and speaking several African languages. Livingstone travelled lightly with only a few servants and porters, bartering for supplies along the way. During his explorations, David Livingstone survived malaria, dysentery, sleeping sickness and several other diseases, even concocting a malaria cure along the way. Livingstone actually suggested the association between mosquitoes and malaria some 30 years before Ronald Ross established the link. He also observed the connection between relapsing fever and tick bites, as well as the link between environment and diseases such as pneumonia, typhoid and dysentery.

Livingstone was a disorganised expedition leader, criticised by his expedition members for being secretive, self-righteous and moody. Following the death of his wife and the loss of his assistants – who either deserted him or perished – Livingstone uttered his most famous quote: “I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward.”

Livingstone had one regret, he had been a terrible husband and father, His obsession for exploring affected his family life. He was married to Mary Moffatt, the daughter of a missionary, and though living in the same house for only four of the 17 years of their marriage, the couple had several children. When Livingstone’s mother-in-law learned he had taken her daughter and grandchildren on another dangerous expedition, she wrote him a stinging letter of disapproval. Livingstone’s one regret, in later life was that he didn't spend enough time with his children.

During his first visit back to the British Isles, Livingstone became a national hero. He was awarded a gold medal from the Royal Geographical Society, an honorary doctorate from Oxford University, and a private audience with Queen Victoria. Those eager to shake his hand also mobbed him in the streets as he became somewhat of a celebrity.

It was during this time that he wrote 'Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa' and during the latter part of 1857 went on a public speaking tour. By this time, his book had appeared and the first edition of 12,000 copies was sold out in advance of the November publication date with 30,000 copies sold in Britain by 1863. Between 1858 and 1864 he returned to Africa. This time he had been asked to explore the Zambezi River and the land around it by the British Government. Books of his travels were available to a wide audience and in them he introduced Africa, its environment, cultures and wildlife to his readers and discussed emotive political issues like slavery. Livingstone returned to Africa once again in 1866 and died there in 1873. His body was returned to England and he was buried in Westminster Abbey, but his heart was buried in Africa

Though he did little traditional missionary work while he was alive, Livingstone inspired hundreds of men and women to give their lives for African missions. Mary Slessor, for example, decided to follow in the footsteps of her hero and, in 1875, arrived in Calabar (present-day Nigeria). Peter Cameron Scott, founder of the African Inland Mission, was inspired to return to Africa after his first mission failed when he read the inscription on Livingstone's tomb in Westminster Abbey: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring." On 16 November 1855, David Livingstone first laid eyes on the waterfall that would define his life story, which he named the Victoria Falls to honour his Queen.



However it must be emphasised that Livingstone was passionate about the slave trade. While searching for the source of the Nile, Livingstone witnessed a slave massacre at Nyangwe, where some 400 people were killed. Livingstone was so shattered by this experience at Nyangwe that he abandoned his mission. He said that "The only way to fight the slave trade in Africa, was through "Christianity, commerce, and civilization". Livingstone's published letters, books, and journals stirring up public support for the abolition of slavery.

So it was that the myth arose among Protestant Churches that Livingstone had brought Christianity and the Bible to Africa. The idea developed that before

Livingstone, there was no connection between the Bible and Africa. This is quite untrue as the Bible itself makes clear.

European interest in Africa did not occur until the 1880's when what became known as the "scramble for Africa" took place. Before then Britain and the other European states confined their ambitions in Africa to the odd coastal colony. British activity on the West African coast had been centred around the lucrative slave trade. Between 1562 and 1807, when the slave trade was abolished, British ships carried up to three million people into slavery in the Americas. However Britain and the European States colonized Africa for its riches. The worst example of this was the 'Belgian Congo' when King Leopold II claimed to be the **owner and absolute ruler** of what he called the **Congo Free State**. Leopold's administration was marked by atrocities and systematic brutality; torture; murder; and the amputation of the hands of men, women and children when their quotas of rubber were not met. Congo obtained independence in 1960. One small consolation was that British Missionaries were permitted into Congo and Bibles were printed in some of the languages used. Two missionaries were supported by the Baptist Church where I went to Sunday school.

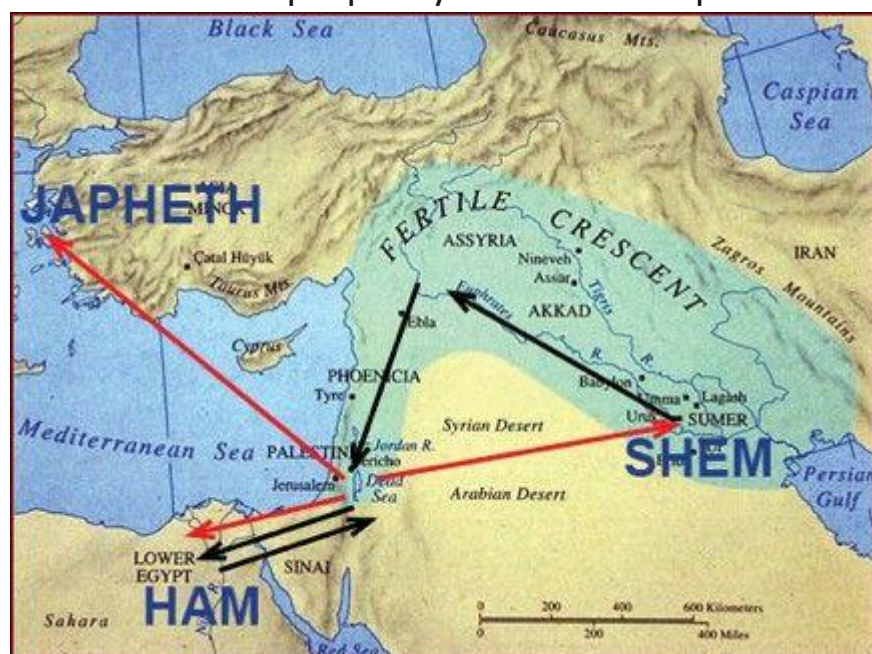


The word Africa came into existence in the late 17th century. Initially, it was used to only refer to the northern part of the continent. Around that time, the continent had been colonized, and the Europeans ruled over its people as slaves. Previously it was known as Alkebulan but this was limited to some tribes. There are around 3,000 tribes and 2,000 languages and dialects in Africa, a continent with fascination around every corner. Other continents of the world lack

Africa's natural diversity. There are 54 countries in Africa largely established in the last century. Liberia was the first country to become a republic in 1847 the majority of countries gained their independence in the 20th century. The republic of South Sudan gained its independence on the 9th of July 2011.

Both the Greeks and the Romans had interests in Africa, mainly along the Mediterranean coast. Ancient History records how Carthage a city in Tunisia was founded by the Phoenicians of Tyre, and rapidly became a thriving port and trading centre, it eventually developed into a major Mediterranean power and a rival to Rome. Tyre was a city on the Mediterranean coast of Lebanon and Israel

and it is mentioned first in the Bible in the book of Joshua (19:29). It appears again in the reign of King Solomon in connection with trade supplying Cedar timber from Lebanon for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. After Solomon, the Israel-Tyrian alliance did not last, but in the ninth century Tyrians established a new trading city in North Africa **on the eastern side of the Lake of Tunis in what is now Tunisia**. Carthage was one of the most important trading hubs of the Ancient-African Mediterranean and in one of the most affluent cities in the Greek and Roman world. It also became an enemy of Rome, but in 586BC the mother city Tyre was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar for 13 years as recorded in the prophecy of Ezekiel chapters 26 to 28. The city fell one year



after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 -586 BC. Having come to Africa by the Carthaginian route, 6760 miles to the east we come to the city Jerusalem, where for a thousand years before the birth of Jesus the Sacred Scriptures were kept, studied and copied.

In the first book of the Bible, we find the record of the survivors of the Flood,

Noah and his family including his three sons, Shem Ham and Japheth. Genesis chapter 10 describes the replenishment of the earth with mankind, providing a genealogy of descendants of Noah's three sons, and stating that by these were the nations divided after the flood. One aspect we need to consider is Noah's curse upon his grandson, Canaan. The reason is explained, how Noah planted a vineyard and he drank the wine and became drunk and fell asleep. He was found naked in his tent by Ham, who saw what Noah had done and Ham went and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth were more respectful of their father and they covered Noah with a Garment without looking at his nakedness. When Noah awoke he realised what his younger son had done to him and cursed his younger son's own son, Canaan, but blessed the Lord God of Shem and Japheth and predicted that Canaan would be their servant. Now this scripture has been distorted among many people and it has been called the curse of Ham and has caused many false interpretations used to **justify the slavery of black people**; it has been used by Jews, the Boers in South Africa and the subsequent apartheid,

Muslims, Europeans and Americans and the Mormon Church, for this very reason.

It is a horrible distortion of the text, because a straightforward reading of the scripture reveals that though the sin was Ham's, Ham was not the object of Noah's curse, nor the three other sons of Ham, Misraim, Phut or Cush (Sudan) but Canaan was. If the offspring of Canaan is examined it contains the following names:- The Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arvites, Arkites and Sinites

Many of these occupied the land that Yahweh promised to Abraham and because of their behaviour they were an abomination to the Almighty. He hated their evil practices in serving their gods, which included the burning of their sons and daughters in the fire to appease them. (Deut. 12:31)

But what of Ham's other sons, Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut? The Psalms recall Israel's association with the land of Ham:-

Psalms 78:51 "And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham"

Psalms 105:23 & 27 "Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham."

Psalms 106:22 "...wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.

Consider Ham's son, Mizraim for example, it is a Hebrew word and it translates into 'Egypt'. Egypt occurs in the Bible 611 times only 22 of these is in the New Testament. Mizraim is an African country, and deeply related to the history of the Old Testament. Abraham went down into Egypt, Joseph was sold to an Egyptian and later under Pharaoh he became the ruler of that land. The Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years, during which they were enslaved by Pharaoh.

What then of Cush? It appears in the Old Testament eight times, but in 19 instances it is translated as Ethiopia, which is to the south of Egypt. The word 'cush' actually means 'black', but the Greek word is **Αἰθίοψ** meaning 'Burn' and ὤψ 'face', "burnt face" i.e. Dark skinned. Historically Cush or Kush is mentioned not only in the Bible but also by the Assyrians and Persians in 2600 B.C

The 'Kush' of the Bible is not the same as Ethiopia today. It appears that the translators of the King James Bible were not familiar with the African continent. This is not surprising seeing that Europeans including the British were unaware of the vast remains of Ancient Egypt until Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, with his army of 135,000 soldiers and 160 French scholars who catalogued their discoveries in Egypt, which indicated an ancient civilization equivalent to those

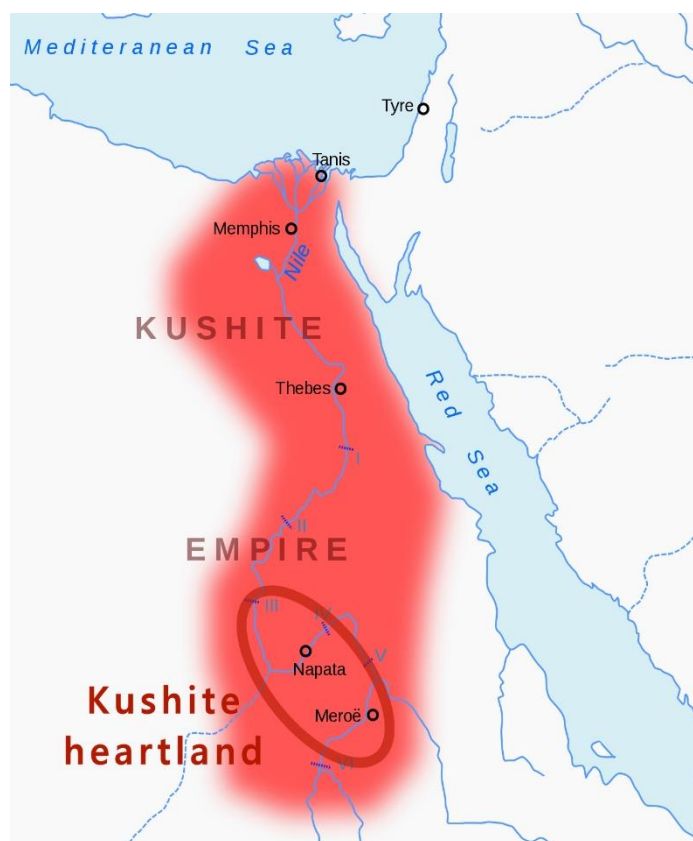
of Greece and Rome. Unfortunately for the French a British squadron of ships turned up and at the battle of Aboukir Bay, defeated the French army and insisted that the French hand over their collection of Egyptian antiquities, the French refused and Britain relented but acquired the famous “Rosetta Stone” which enabled the Hieroglyphic writing to be deciphered. It is now on display at the British Museum in London.

So returning to the ‘Kush’ of the Bible, it refers to a region south of Egypt, Nubia or South Sudan. In time the descendants of Kush established a city called Kerma located just south of the third cataract of the River Nile. The Kushites here were advanced in the use of bronze and the production of pottery. Doctor Shadia Taha of the University of Cambridge, has carried out extensive research on the archaeology of these people and shown that it was an advanced society, skilled in glazed pottery and the making of glass. It’s most important products were gold and silver, and these were black Africans.

The power of these people is illustrated by the Bible in 2 Chronicles 14 where we read:-“And there came out against them Zerah the Kushite (Ethiopian KJV) with an army of a thousand, thousand men, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Kushites before Asa, and before Judah; and the Kushites fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his army; and they carried away very much spoil. (2Ch 14:9-13). It seems that some of the Kushites at some early stage immigrated to Arabia perhaps integrating with the Arabs. Such a development was described by Strabo, the Greek historian indicating that the Kushites lived on either side of the Arabian gulf.

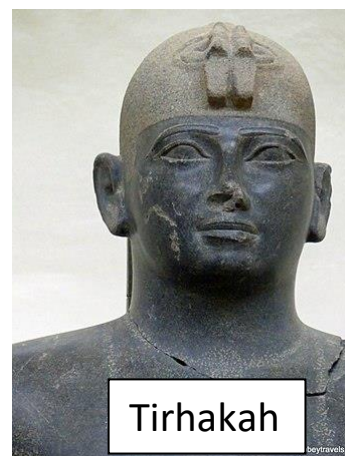
In the time of King David a rebellion against him was instigated by his own son Absalom. A great battle ensued between the army of Absalom and that of his father. The king’s top general was a warrior named Joab and in those days the progress of the war was reported by messengers, usually men who could run very fast. Joab had such a messenger and his servant, named as Kushi, and nothing else. His name indicates that he was black, and some of the fastest

runners today are black men and women from Kenya, known for their endurance. Kushi was not afraid of the King but delivered his message faithfully. Another man, Ahimaaz, taking a different route actually arrived before Kushi, indicating to David that the fighting was very intense, so preparing the king for the worst. Kushi was direct but was unharmed for his truthfulness, though it was a bitter loss. King David, a true man of God, had respect for him even though he was black.



The Pharaohs of Egypt were not always Egyptians. In 2Kings 17:1-5 reference is made to **So**, King of Egypt. The Bible tells us that in the twelfth year of the reign of Ahaz king of Judah Hoshea began to reign over Israel in Samaria. Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant. However Hosea sent secret messages to **So** king of Egypt, but Shalmaneser found out about this conspiracy and invaded Samaria, besieging it for three years and put Hoshea in prison. In 722 BC, the ninth year of Hosea, Assyria took all the people of Israel captive and settled them in the cities of the Medes.

So was a Nubian who came from a country just north of Kush and is one of several black Pharaohs. Those that came after **So** were Kushites and in 715 BC king Hezekiah began to rule over Judah. His advisers were keen for Judah to make an alliance with Egypt, whose Pharaohs were Kushites at the time, but Isaiah counselled otherwise, "Surely the princes of Zoan (ancient city on the lower Nile) are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh has become harsh: how do you say to Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where *are* they? Where are your wise men? And let them tell you now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts has purposed upon Egypt. (Isa.19:11-12) Tirhakah who was a Kushite is referred to in 2 Kings 19:9 and Isaiah 37:9. He was minded to assist Judah, but his army was not reliable and was beaten by Sennacherib. Judah was not protected by any army but by the hand of God, whose intervention



slaughtered 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Sennacherib was forced to return to Assyria by the hand of the God he had blasphemed, only to be slain by his own sons, in the house of Nisroch his god.

One Kushite mentioned in the 38th and 39th chapters of the book of Jeremiah is Ebedmelech the Ethiopian (in Hebrew “עֶבֶד־מֶלֶךְ הַכּוּשִׁי”) meaning ‘servant of the King, the Kushite’. Ebed-Melech was an appointed official to King Zedekiah. At that time Pharaoh Hophra (44.30) an African tried to come to Zedekiah’s aid, because Jerusalem was being besieged by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) at that time as described in the 37th chapter. But God instructed Jeremiah to inform Zedekiah that Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. (37:7) The Jews would not escape for the Chaldeans would return. Now the KJV describes Ebed-Melech as a eunuch, general supposed to mean a man who has been castrated, but Josephus the Jewish historian living in the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, stated ‘that castration was not practiced by the Jews on men or animals as the spirit of the Law of Moses was opposed to such treatment’. So it is possible that Ebed-Melech was a Kushite official in the Egyptian army, sent to co-ordinate a response against the Chaldeans, consequently he would be regarded by the Jewish rulers as a man of authority, which would explain his easy access to King Zedekiah. Ebed-Melech had seen how badly the prophet Jeremiah had been treated by the King’s counsellors, who had thrown him into a mud filled cistern where he was likely to die unless Zedekiah ordered his release. Clearly the King respected Ebed-Melech and gave him permission to rescue Jeremiah, which he did with the help of thirty men he had mustered to haul Jeremiah out of the foul mud and providing old rags and discarded clothes to use as pads under his arms, so he could be pulled out without injury. Evidently this black African thought very highly of Jeremiah, even though he risked assault from the frustrated counsellors. God did not forget this African but blessed him, and God instructed Jeremiah to go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus says the Yahweh Tzvaoth, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city (Jerusalem) for evil, and not for good; and they will take place before you on that day. But I will deliver you in that day, says Yahweh: and you shalt not be given into the hand of the men you are afraid of. For I will certainly deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but you shall have your life as a reward: because you have trusted in me, says the LORD. (Jer. 39:15-18) So in these instances in Jeremiah we see an African, Pharaoh Hophra, who was unable to come to the aid of God’s people, even though he had a powerful army, because of their disobedience. But in the following

chapter we have an African who saved the life God's prophet because of his mediation with the king and his courage and his trust in the God of Israel.

The nation of Israel was brought to an end in two stages, the first occurred in 722BC which saw the Assyrians carry away the Israelites to Assyria and placed them in the cities of the Medes. The second occurred when the Babylonian



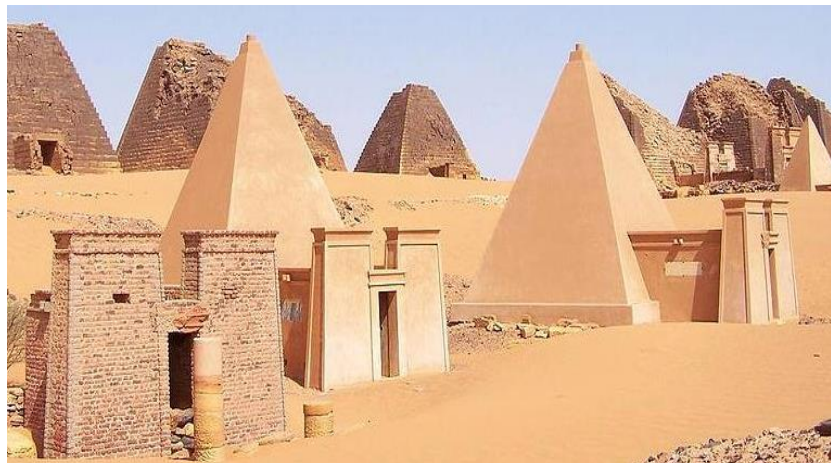
A Kushite Queen of
Egypt



Kushite Pottery from Meroe the
Kushite Capital



Golden
shield ring



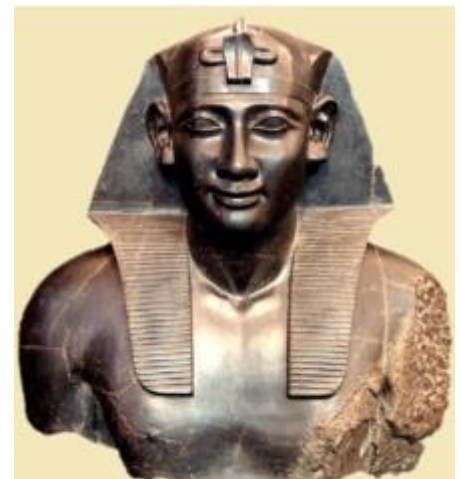
Cushite Pyramids near Meroe

King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took the Jews into captivity for 70 years. The events that were to occur subsequent to Nebuchadnezzar are to be found mostly in the prophecies covering events such as the return of the Jews from Babylon, the expansion of the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire. Under Darius the Great the Persians forces reached Libya and Egypt and in 2009 it was reported that hundreds of bleached bones and skulls found in the desolate wilderness of the Sahara desert that might be the remains of the long lost Cambyses' army.

Josephus in his history of *The Jewish War*, refers to Onias, the last priest in the line of Aaron, who was murdered in 171 BC. In his book 'Antiquities of the Jews' he refers to the son of Onias who fled to Egypt with other Jews and they took refuge on the island known as '*Elephantine*' on the opposite side of the River Nile, to Aswan. This Jewish colony settled, built houses and a temple or

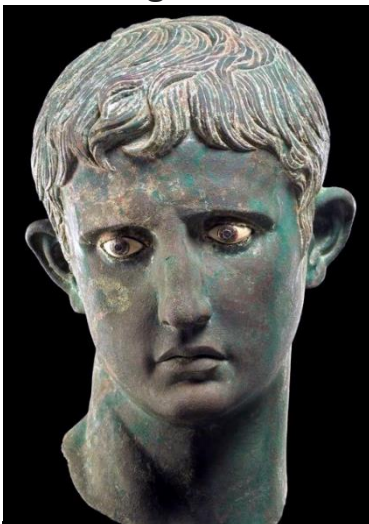
synagogue. These Jews had acted as mercenaries to the Persian colonizers, so when the latter were ousted by the Egyptians, in about 400 BCE, the Jews were in danger and possibly fled to the South. Archaeologists in 1911 had come across Papyrus documents referring to these Jewish colonizers and several unsuccessful expeditions to find the site were made. Due to both World Wars interest was lost, but in 1967 another expedition was undertaken to search for all temples in the vicinity. Ruins of an ancient village were discovered and due to the Israeli professor Bezalel Porten's research, the site of the Jewish colony with mud brick houses and a small temple was identified as recorded in the Jerusalem Post in 2013.

The prophecy of Daniel shows how the Empire of Alexander the Great was divided between his four generals. Ptolemy, a Macedonian, became the ruler of Egypt and head of a dynasty and his successors ruled Egypt until 47 B.C. when the Romans took over. The Greeks were familiar with black Africans but usually referred to them as Ethiopians. Mostly the Greeks were traders along the northern coast of Africa, like the Carthaginians.



Ptolemy I

Augustus became the first Roman Emperor in 27 BC after defeating Mark



Bronze head of the Emperor Augustus found under a Kushite temple entrance so the Kushites could tread on their enemy

Antony and the Pharaoh Cleopatra VII. When the Romans conquered Egypt, from 25 to 21 B.C. they found themselves at war with Amanirenas, a Queen or *Kandake* of the Kingdom of Kush, who achieved what many rulers were unable to do, by pushing back a Roman invasion. The term *Kandake* is found in the New Testament (Acts 8:27 referring to a similar Queen. Amanirenas had, 30,000 soldiers under her command of the ancient Kingdom of Kush (located in southern Sudan). Her forces drove back the Roman invaders from Egypt. The Romans had encroached on the fertile lands of Nubia and enforced high taxation on the people of Meroë—the capital of Kush. Her forces managed to capture the Roman-occupied cities of Aswan, Philae and Elephantine. The Kushite forces plundered the cities and enslaved the Romans, before retreating to El-Dakkeh where the first skirmishes of the four-year Meroitic-Roman war

began. Eventually the Queen decided to negotiate with Augustus, and he granted Amanirenas two important concessions. First, the cancellation of the tax on the Meroë, the second was that Roman's would withdraw from the Second Cataract, almost back to the border of Egypt. The treaty lasted 300 years.



THE ROMAN EMPIRE BETWEEN AD.14 AND AD 117

This then brings us to the New Testament, where the four gospels are dealing with the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, chiefly among the Jews. In fact Jesus stated himself that “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24). But when his mission was accomplished with his death on the cross, His resurrection and his receiving of eternal life, he discussed with his disciples the reasons for his suffering, his resurrection from the dead, and that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name **among all nations** beginning at Jerusalem. This was emphasised with the giving to his disciples of the Holy Spirit when he charged them to be his witnesses, in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria and to **the uttermost parts of the earth**. Matthew records how the disciples were instructed to go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe whatsoever he had commanded them. All nations embraces all races without exception.

The apostles began their witnessing on the day of Pentecost. Previously Jesus had appeared to them and set before them the work which they would now engage in, saying ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit 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. (Act 1:8) The apostles returned to Jerusalem and gathered all the disciples together about 120 in the house, when like a rushing mighty wind the Holy Spirit came upon them and they all began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak. On the day of Pentecost there were devout Jews from every nation, and many of them heard the disciples speaking in their own languages. Acts provides a list of all these different people :- Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia; Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of **Libya near Cyrene**, and visitors from Rome, as well as Jews, and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs (Act 2:9 & 10). Not since the confounding of language at Babel had such a miraculous event occurred. But our interest in this study is **Libya near Cyrene** because these places are in Africa, and the people must have been Israelites assimilated in Africa and visiting Jerusalem for the feasts, or African converts to Judaism who had gone up to the feast. Moreover this demonstrated that the Kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus Christ, was intended to have a multi-racial appeal. Peter then proclaimed the gospel to the multitude, warning them that the things proclaimed by the prophet Joel to Israel were coming to pass when the wrath of God would fall on this generation of Jews in blood, fire and vapour of smoke, as it did in AD70 when the Jewish nation was abolished by the Romans. That day 3000 persons responded and were baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, so establishing the first ecclesia in Jerusalem.

Alexandria and Cyrene, though African cities, were founded by Greeks and had significant Greek populations. Ptolemy II (285-246 BC)) was responsible for the translation of the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah, into Greek from the Hebrew. The Greeks and Egyptians had many lasting impacts on one another. The early Greeks studied the Egyptians, and took numerous of their ideas and philosophies and incorporated them into their own culture, but the Egyptians were still Africans. Never the less Alexandrians and Cyrenians were not always supportive of the gospel message, for we learn from Acts that some instigated the stoning of Stephen, "Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke." (Acts 6:9-10) These men were probably Jews who lived in these African cities.

Acts chapter 8 shows how the apostles were not discouraged by the death of Stephen, but followed the course that the Lord Jesus had set before them. Philip for instance went back to Samaria where the apostles had witnessed Jesus teaching the Samaritans and how some accepted that he was the Christ the saviour of the world. (John4:42) Philip returned there to complete the work that the Lord Jesus had begun, by preaching Christ to them and performed miracles in his name and there was great joy in that city. When the apostle in Jerusalem heard about this, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.

Philip however was instructed to go south to the road that leads from Gaza to Jerusalem. Philip duly arrived there and saw a man of great authority seated in his chariot, reading the prophecy of Isaiah! The man is described here as a eunuch and from the subsequent conversation it seems that he was emasculated. Philip asked him if He understood what he was reading, and he replied, "How can I except some man should guide me?" As a man who could not have children, the eunuch was probably wondering, how a man having been cut off from the land of the living, could ever expect to see his seed and prolong his day. How was that possible? A eunuch would want to know. Philip gave him a full explanation of the scripture after which the eunuch requested to be baptised, and Philip did as he requested. Now the interesting aspect relating to Africa is this, he is described as an Ethiopian, and as we have shown this does not refer to the Ethiopia of today which until the 1940's was known as Abyssinia. But as we have shown the Old Testament name for it was Kush. The point however is this that the Eunuch, seems to be the first Gentile to have accepted the gospel message and become a true Christian, even before the Roman centurion Cornelius who appears in Acts chapter 10. It seems highly significant that the first gentile Christian should be a black man from Africa. It endorses the Apostle Peter's observation when he said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is accepted with him. (Act 10:34-35 KJV)

True Christianity is certainly not the white man's religion.

The apostle made it absolutely clear when he said "Truly I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: **But in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is acceptable to him.** The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, you know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the adversary; for God was with him. And we are witnesses

of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.² And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was appointed by God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Act 10:33-43)

What happened after the Apostles died? The inspired apostle Paul told the elders of Ephesus as he was about to leave them, “Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God, which he (Jesus) has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Act 20:28-3)

Now Encyclopedia Britannica informs us that Christianity grew much more rapidly **in Africa** than in any other western province. It was firmly established in Carthage and other Tunisian towns by the 3rd century and had produced its own local martyrs and an outstanding apologist in Tertullian (c. 160–240). During the next 50 years it expanded remarkably; more than **80 bishops** attended a council at Carthage in 256, some from the distant frontier regions of Numidia. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage from 248 until his martyrdom in 258, was another figure whose writing, like that of Tertullian, was of lasting influence on **Latin Christianity**. (Roman Catholicism ^{DH}) During the next half-century it spread extensively in Numidia (there were at least **70 bishops** in 312). The reasons for its exceptionally rapid growth are disputed. In northern Tunisia urban communities provided a social and economic environment similar to that in which Christianity had first spread in Anatolia and Syria, and much the same can be said about smaller communities in which early Christianity can be identified. It has been held that the intermingling of religious currents of Libyan, Carthaginian, and Roman origin tended toward monotheism, but—even if this were true, which is debatable—pagan monotheism was not a necessary stage toward the adoption of Christianity for more than a few. It does, however, appear that African Christianity always included a vigorous and fanatical element that must have had its effect in spreading the new religion, even though there is little evidence of positive missionary efforts.

Here is a list of those known as the African Church Fathers:-

Tertullian of Tunisia (then Carthage), wrote about a lot of theological issues and is remembered for his apologetics and polemics, exploring Christianity and culture. Tertullian was the first known theologian to coin the term *trinitas* ("trinity") to explain the Godhead.

Athanasius of Alexandria was crucial to the development of the early church's *Trinitarian theology*. In the Arian controversy he defended the Son's divinity.

Augustine of Algeria (then Hippo) is arguably the most significant theologian in the early church.

Aurelius of Tunisia (then Carthage) emphasised teaching new Christians, played a role in the **monastic** movement, and established an early seminary for Christians in his monastery!

Clement of Alexandria engaged with Hellenistic (Greek) philosophy and encouraged Hellenistic communities to adopt Christianity.

Cyprian of Tunisia (then Carthage) contributed significant pastoral writings and focused on the body of the church.

Origen of Alexandria boasts a comprehensive literary corpus. Much of it is devoted to exegesis, homiletics, and textual criticism.

These "Fathers" were the very wolves that the Apostle Paul warned the Ephesians who "would not spare the flock".

Here is the estimation of Brother John Thomas concerning these corrupters of Truth:-

"The Fathers," as they are styled by the Apostasy, such as Tertullian, Clement Alexandrinus, Origen, Cyprian, etc., succeeded to their work of perverting "the way of truth." The perversion was not concluded all at once, but gradually. Their foolish hearts having become darkened by the mixing of Judaism and Platonism (Greek Philosophy) with the doctrine of the apostles, they lost sight of "the knowledge of God, by which are given to us *exceeding great and precious promises*; that by (faith in) these we might become *partakers of the Divine Nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:3, 4). They ceased to look to faith in these promises, as regenerative of the inner man of the heart; but attributed it to the physical agency of the Spirit diffused through "the Bath of Water" in which they immersed their converts. The quotation from Tertullian proves this. He says, that "all waters acquire by the invocation of God, *the sacramental virtue of sanctification*." If you ask him "how?" he tells you, "by the Spirit descending from heaven and resting upon them, and making them holy by itself;" and that in this way, "they acquire the power of sanctification," or of making them holy to whom they are applied! Tertullian's teaching was the Romanism and Anglicanism of the third century; and may be summarily stated as *sanctification*

by Holy Water! The water was made holy by prayer and spirit, and the person by the water; not by water alone; for says Cyprian, "water alone cannot cleanse away sin and sanctify the man, *unless the water have the Holy Spirit.*" A wonderful thing is holy water! It has done great things in the hands of the clergy. "The Devil," they say, "hates it;" and the witches, and evil spirits in the air, are scared out of their wits when they hear the village bells, sanctified with holy water at their "baptism," sounding forth their sacred chimes! A baptismal regeneration of bells! Quite as reasonable, and altogether as scriptural as the regeneration of babes and sires by holy water without faith in "the things of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ".

Brothers and Sisters of Christ in Africa and in Britain having found the Truth as it is in Jesus, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:11-12).

The **Kingdom of Kush** was an ancient African kingdom which existed from 1070 BC to 350 AD. With the discovery of Iron the Bronze Age came to its end about 1200 BC. The collapse of the New Kingdom of Egypt, it paved the way to the strengthening of the Kushite Kingdom centred at Napata. The Kushite kings ruled as pharaohs in Egypt but with the fall of Ramesses XI in 1077BC when the Assyrians brought Egypt under the rule of Esarhaddon in 673 -655 BC. The Kushite kingdom survived until the Roman Empire expanded onto their territory. The fade of Kush started by the 1st or 2nd century AD when it was sapped by the war with the Roman province of Egypt. Later, Christianity began to gain hold over the old religion.



Kushite tablets from Meroe
near to the
5th Cataract on the River Nile

Brother Derek
27th May 2022



