

Ezk 29-32 Egypt “Who Do You Trust?”

In these chapters, God delivers 7 oracles against Egypt, the last of 7 nations who God was declaring judgment against. I’m not going to cover all the details in these chapters, because there is a lot of repetition as far as our purposes go. I want to hit on just a few highlights that give us lessons in our own lives. Here are the dates and events related to the messages:

- 1) Jan 5, 587 BC (1 year after start of siege of Jerusalem) – 29:1-16
- 2) Apr 26, 571 BC (shortly after Tyre’s surrender to Babylon – after a 13 year siege & shortly before Egypt’s final defeat) – 29:17-21
- 3) Undated – 30:1-19
- 4) Apr 29, 587 BC (4 mo after first one, when Egypt, trying to defend Israel, was defeated by Babylon) – 30:20-26
- 5) June 21, 587 BC (2 mo after previous) – 31:1-18
- 6) Mar 3, 585 BC (2 mo after news of Jerusalem’s fall reached exiles in Babylon) – 32:1-16
- 7) Mar 17, 585 BC (14 days after previous) – 32:17-32

Why would God spend so much time on prophecies about Egypt? One reason is that the King of Judah, Zedekiah, was relying on Egypt’s help to stand against Babylon. Judah was caught between two nations who were vying for supremacy in the region – Babylon, who had already established themselves as the dominant power, and Egypt, who wanted to reclaim their former glory. Egypt represented the greatest threat to Babylon’s expansion, and when Judah joined Egypt in rebelling against Babylon, it was actually going against the advice of God’s prophet. These prophecies were a lesson to the people of Judah about where they put their trust. Isaiah had given the same lesson in 31:1-3 – “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord! And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.”

This is the first lesson for us – be careful where you find your help.

29:6 – “because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake.” Instead of being a stout wooden staff, God said Egypt was an untrustworthy, dangerous thing to lean on. What they thought would help them ended up hurting them. God said (v. 9) that when He broke Egypt, that would remind the Jews that He is Yahweh, and that they could not stop or sidetrack what God had started. In v. 16, God said Egypt would be a reminder to the house of Israel of their sin in turning to Egypt for aid. God alone is capable of being the staff of support when we face trials, and when we look anywhere else, that is sin. Lesson #2.

Another reason God sent this message was because of Egypt’s great pride. The Greek historian Herodotus said that this Pharaoh Hophrah had reigned in prosperity for 25 years, and was so elevated

with his own success that he said that God himself would not cast him out of his kingdom. In 29:8, God said “because you said, ‘The Nile is mine, and I made it,’ therefore, behold, I am against you...” Using the imagery of a sea monster, probably meaning one of the huge Nile Crocodiles, God rebuke’s Pharaoh’s boast that he made the Nile, and ruled over it completely. God said He would hook the monster and drag it from the river. In 32:12, God said “they shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt, and all its multitude shall perish.” God said after this judgment, He would bring Egypt back, but it would be humbled, and never rise to prominence again. This is a great reminder that pride is one of the things God says He hates. Prov 8:13 – Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.”

God said that He would allow Nebuchadnezzar to pillage Egypt as payment for the long, fruitless siege against Tyre. This gives us an interesting perspective on how God works in the affairs of men. Several times in scripture, God describes Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as His servants, doing His bidding – even though they were not aware of it, nor did they care about Him. Why, then, would God reward them? Matthew Henry, in his commentary, says “the service done for him by worldly men, with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them. Verily they have their reward.”

Then, in the 5th message, God compares Egypt’s fall to that of Assyria using the picture of a great cedar of Lebanon. Both made boastful claims about their strength and splendor, both offered protection to other nations, and both fell because of their pride. 31:10 – “Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out.” Assyria thought she was “too big to fail”, but God humbled her, and would also humble Egypt.

The final message was a catalog of the other nations which had risen and then fell as part of God’s dealings among men. Assyria, Elam, Meshech-Tubal, Edom, Tyre and Sidon, and now Egypt were all laid low, destroyed and judged. God’s statement in 32:32 – “For I spread terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord God.” – is a reminder that God indeed rules in the affairs of men, and there is no nation or ruler who is outside of His control.

This is a comfort to us today, as we see the ins and outs of politics, the boastful declarations of people who wield the temporary power of government. We can trust that God is still in control, raising up men and nations to accomplish His purposes, then casting them down in judgment when He is done with them. This is also a warning to them, lest they get lifted up with pride, thinking that they deserve the credit for being in power, or that they are beyond accountability for their actions. Looking back at the first prophecy, we’re reminded that it is God in whom we should trust, not men, armies, or nations. Psalm 20:7 is a great verse to keep us focused rightly – “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”