

### God's Judgment Against Egypt

#### Ezekiel 29

Ezekiel 29:1-16 – *“In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> ‘Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Speak, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God:*

*‘Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, ‘My River is my own; I have made it for myself.’*

*<sup>4</sup> But I will put hooks in your jaws, and cause the fish of your rivers to stick to your scales;*

*I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, and all the fish in your rivers will stick to your scales. <sup>5</sup> I will leave you in the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; you shall fall on the open field; you shall not be picked up or gathered. I have given you as food to the beasts of the field and to the birds of the heavens.*

*<sup>6</sup> ‘Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> When they took hold of you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders when they leaned on you. You broke and made all their backs quiver.’*

*<sup>8</sup> ‘Therefore, thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will bring a sword upon you and cut off from you man and beast. <sup>9</sup> And the land of Egypt shall become desolate and waste; then they will know that I am the Lord, because he said, ‘The River is mine, and I have made it.’ <sup>10</sup> Indeed, therefore, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia. <sup>11</sup> Neither foot of man shall pass through it nor foot of beast pass through it, and it shall be uninhabited forty years. <sup>12</sup> I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate; and among the cities that are laid waste, her cities shall be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries.”*

*<sup>13</sup> ‘Yet, thus says the Lord God: “At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered. <sup>14</sup> I will bring back the captives of Egypt and cause them to return to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. <sup>15</sup> It shall be the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations, for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore. <sup>16</sup> No longer shall it be the confidence of the house of Israel, but will remind them of their iniquity when they turned to follow them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord God.’”*

#### Background Notes

Ezekiel 25 began a subsection of the book that could be entitled “Prophecies against the Foreign Nations.” In these chapters God pronounced judgment against seven foreign nations that surrounded Israel: Ammon, Moab and Edom to the east (chapter 25); Philistia to the west (chapter 25); the city state of Tyre to the north (chapters 26- 28; and Egypt which was south of Israel and Judah (chapters 29-32).

This prophecy of judgment upon Egypt is actually a series of seven prophetic oracles, and each one is introduced with the phrase *“the word of the Lord came to me.”* The first prophetic oracle is found in chapter 29, verses 1-16. The second prophetic oracle is from verse 17 to the end of the chapter. The third prophetic oracle is in chapter 30, verses 1-19, and the fourth oracle is from verse 20 to the end of the chapter. The fifth oracle is in chapter 31. The sixth prophetic oracle is verses 1-16 of chapter 32, verses 1-16, and the seventh and final oracle is from verse 17 to the end of the chapter.

Notice that each of these prophecies begins with the phrase, *“the word of the Lord came to me.”* Look at the beginning of the first two oracles in chapter 29: *“In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying” (v1),* and *“And it came to pass in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying” (v17).*

The dates for the two prophetic oracles of chapter 29 are given in verses 1 and 17. The first oracle would have been given in January of 586 BC, during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem and seven months before the fall of Jerusalem. The second oracle would have been given in March/April of 571 BC, after the thirteen year Babylonian siege of Tyre, and three or four years before Babylon conquered Egypt.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The Lord judged Egypt with the military forces of Babylon.

The particular pharaoh in the first prophetic oracle against Egypt was Pharaoh Hophrah, who ruled Egypt from 588-569 BC. He was a proud king, as was the nation of Egypt at that time. This pharaoh is likened to a giant monster, probably a crocodile, who lived in the Nile River, and who actually claimed that he had *made* the Nile (v3&9). God would not allow this proud claim by Egypt, and her pharaoh would not go unjudged.

Continuing the imagery, God pronounced through Ezekiel that He would put hooks into this proud pharaoh, and drag him and his allies (represented as fish) out of the Nile and into the wilderness where they would be food for the beasts of the field and for the birds of the sky.

Verses 6-7 reveal that besides pride, another reason why God was judging Egypt was that they had not supported the Jewish people when Judah had needed Egypt's help against Babylon. Of course we know that Judah should have been looking to the Lord for help rather than looking for help from Egypt, but God still held Egypt accountable for not keeping her agreements with Israel. Jeremiah 37 records Egypt's half-hearted efforts to help Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege. Sure enough, Pharaoh Hophrah and the Egyptian army retreated and allowed Jerusalem to fall to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian forces.

No wonder Egypt was likened to a weak and broken reed, giving no support for God's people (v6-7). Therefore Egypt was to be conquered. God said He would make Egypt a desolate wasteland (v9 -10). Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered Egypt in about 568 BC, and for forty years the land of Egypt was desolate because the Egyptians were either scattered or captured as slaves (v12).

After forty years as captives, under the Persian government the Egyptians were allowed to return to Egypt, just as the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. But Egypt never regained the power and worldly glory that she once had, even to this present day (v14-15). The Lord judged Egypt with the military forces of Babylon.

## **2. The Lord rewarded Babylon with the spoils of Egypt.**

*Ezekiel 29:17-20: "And it came to pass in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>18</sup>"Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to labor strenuously against Tyre; every head was made bald, and every shoulder rubbed raw; yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the labor which they expended on it. <sup>19</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Surely I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he shall take away her wealth, carry off her spoil, and remove her pillage; and that will be the wages for his army. <sup>20</sup>I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor, because they worked for Me,' says the Lord God.*

The second of the seven prophetic oracles of judgment shows that the destruction of Egypt predicted in the first prophecy would come at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 18 predicted that when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city-state of Tyre, his army was not paid by the spoils of war because the siege lasted thirteen long years, from 585 BC to 572 BC. During that time Tyre moved her wealth off the mainland to the island city of Tyre. Ezekiel 26 revealed that Nebuchadnezzar would conquer the mainland city, but not the island city. The city's wealth was either stored in its island city or shipped it off to safety. Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers literally had "bald heads and raw shoulders" as a result of long use of helmets and shoulder loads during the prolonged siege, in which they received no spoils of war.

So the Lord said that the spoils of Egypt would be the wages for Nebuchadnezzar's army, because they were doing the Lord's work in besieging the proud city-state of Tyre (v20). That's an interesting biblical truth, isn't it? The Lord is no man's debtor, even when He uses foreign armies to do His work! He does not take unfair advantage of those who serve Him. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian forces conquered Egypt in about 568 BC, and the Lord rewarded Babylon with the material spoils of Egypt.

## Practical Application

### Let's reap the benefits of fulfilled prophecy!

Ezekiel 29:21 - *"In that day I will cause the horn of the house of Israel to spring forth, and I will open your mouth to speak in their midst. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."* "That day" (v1) is the day when the prophecies Egypt would be fulfilled. Notice three results that would take place as a result of this fulfilled prophecy.

**1.** The horn of the house of Israel will spring forth.

"Horn" here is symbolic of power. As a result of this fulfilled prophecy, Israel would gain strength in the midst of her enemies.

**2.** Ezekiel's mouth would be opened.

Ezekiel would no longer be dumb, as in chapter 3, and his words would carry more weight and authority before the people because his prophecies were being fulfilled.

**3.** The people would know that God was in control.

Four times in this chapter we read, *"Then they shall know that I am the Lord."*(v6, 9, 16 & 21.

Do you see the practical application? As we study fulfilled prophecy and see that God has been true to His word *down to the last detail*, we will gain strength and confidence and trust in Him and His promises to us. In addition, our testimony will be backed up with weight and authority, and the people to whom we minister will come to know the sovereign control of the Lord in all things.

This has certainly been true in my own life as I've studied and taught fulfilled prophecy as evidences of Christianity. So let's reap the benefits of fulfilled prophecy!