Review

God has been pronouncing judgment upon the nations around Israel. He has addressed the Ammonites in the northeast, the Moabites in the east, the Edomites in the southeast, the Philistines in the west, and Tyre and Sidon in the north. Now, God is going to spend four chapters looking to the south of Israel, to the nation of Egypt.

29:1-2 Prophesy Against Pharaoh And Egypt

This prophecy came to Ezekiel one year and two days after Nebuchadnezzar had put Jerusalem to siege.

The prophecy was going to address the Pharaoh specifically and all of Egypt generally (v.2). The Pharaoh during this time was Pharaoh Neco's grandson, Pharaoh Hophra (Jer. 44:30).

29:3-5 The Great Monster And The Fish

Egypt's pharaohs were looked upon as god-kings, who had power over life and death. God addresses this Pharaoh as "the great monster" who claimed to have made the Nile. Like God's pronouncement against the prince of Tyre, who claimed to be a god (Eze. 28:2), the Pharaoh was also going to die.

"The fish of his rivers who would cling to his scales and die with him" either refers to the people of Egypt or the armies.

29:6-7 A Staff Made Of Reed

The reason God is going to judge Pharaoh and all Egypt is because "they have been only a staff made of reed" to Israel.

A staff is something you lean on, that helps you walk as you go on your way. It should be made of wood, giving you stability as you walk. You would never want to use a reed as a staff, for it would break when weight was put on it, and would cut your hand.

When did the Jews rely upon Egypt, described as a staff made of reed? Several years after the Assyrians carried the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, they moved down into the southern kingdom of Judah. Messengers from the king of Assyria came to Jerusalem and said,
2Kings 18:19-21  ...“Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, “What is this confidence that you have? You say (but they are only empty words), ‘I have counsel and strength for the war.’ Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.”

Hezekiah had been relying upon Egypt, but it was the Lord who delivered Jerusalem that day (2Kings 19:35).

About a hundred years later, when the enemy was the Babylonians, Judah again tried to turn to Egypt for help. As we have covered a number of times in our study of the book of Ezekiel, Babylon had carried into captivity many of the Jews, and Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Zedekiah as king of Judah (2Ki. 24:17). God had warned Zedekiah to serve Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:6-13), but instead, Zedekiah had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2Chron. 36:13) and had turned to Egypt as an ally against Babylon.

When Jerusalem was put to siege by the Babylonians, Zedekiah fully expected Egypt to deliver Judah. Egypt did in fact send some help (Jer. 37:5), but quickly bailed out and went back home when the Babylonian army came after them (Jer. 37:7). Egypt had once again proven itself to be a staff made of reed.

29:8-12  A Desolation And Waste

For failing to support the Jews, the land of Egypt will suffer. It will become a desolation and a waste. Once again, God would use Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument of judgment. When Babylon's army conquered Egypt, the Egyptians would be scattered for forty years, being dispersed throughout the other nearby nations.

29:13-16  Egypt's Future

God says that Egypt would not be done forever. However, even
though they would be regathered, they would never be restored to the level which they had attained previously as a world power. They would always be a "lowly kingdom."

This was one way God would insure that Israel would never again turn to them for help as an ally. It would never again be "the confidence of Israel."

29:17-20 Egypt Given To Babylon

In our previous study, we read of God's prophetic words of judgment against Tyre (Eze. 26-28). Remember that while Nebuchadnezzar was besieging the city, the Tyrians essentially relocated the entire city to an island a half offshore. Needless to say, by the time Nebuchadnezzar got into Tyre after the 13-year siege, there wasn't much left.

God tells Ezekiel that because of this, God was going to give Egypt's wealth to Babylon. After all, they had been doing God's work in judging Tyre, and the Lord says,

Matt. 10:10  "...the worker is worthy of his support."

29:21 A Horn Will Sprout For Israel

The word "horn" is used very often in the Old Testament in an analogous sense. Unfortunately, in our day and age its meaning is not very clear. Back in the days before mankind invented tanks and automatic weapons, it was the animals who had horns, tusks, and teeth that were looked upon as the creatures with the most power.

Understanding this, we see that the horn was a symbol of strength. That's what David meant when he prayed,

2Sam. 22:3  My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence.

And so here, God is saying that when Egypt is made low, Israel will sprout a horn. Israel will become more powerful than Egypt.

30:1-19 The Day Of The Lord

A lot of people get confused when they read the phrase "the Day of
They imagine that it refers to either the Rapture, the Tribulation period, the Second Coming, or the end of the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, there are Scriptures where we find these assumptions to be true.

Looking at the entirety of the Bible, we see that "the Day of the Lord" is a generic term, used to describe any time that God brings judgment.

In this case, I cannot identify with certainty which of the judgments of Egypt are being referred to here. But it is reasonable to assume from the context that the Lord is continuing His statement about Egypt's fall at the hands of Babylon. They will be wiped out, along with any ally who stands with them against Nebuchadnezzar.

30:20-26  I Will Break The Arms Of Pharaoh

God promises to break both arms of Pharaoh. Notice that one is broken already, and the other one will be. This is a figure of speech, referring to Egypt's strength for holding the sword. What arm had been broken already? About 18 years before, Pharaoh Neco had been defeated by Nebuchadnezzar when he took his army to meet the Babylonians at Charchemish on the Euphrates (2Chron. 35:20; Jer. 46:2). That was the first arm being broken.

The second arm would be broken when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt in the near future.

31:1-18  Assyria And Egypt Are Trees

God says to Egypt that they can be likened to Assyria. Both could be equated with tall trees, prideful in their beauty, height, and strength. And because God hates pride, He will give Egypt over to the nations in the same way He gave Assyria over.

32:1-10  Pharaoh A Monster

God again returns to the analogy of Pharaoh as a monster who will be caught and killed.

32:11-16  The Sword Of The King Of Babylon Will Come Upon You
God again names Nebuchadnezzar specifically as the instrument of judgment that He will be using against Egypt: "The sword of the king of Babylon will come upon you."

32:17-32 Pharaoh In Sheol

This final section is quite interesting to me. You see, God goes beyond the simple, "Egypt will be destroyed" message and lets them know something else: "You will have consciousness when you die and descend to Sheol, the abode of the dead."

Many societies and belief systems explain death as being the end. The end of consciousness, the end of existence. However, we see that God's Word makes it clear that we continue to exist after our bodies die. Our spirits exist eternally, with full consciousness.

In Pharaoh's case, he will be going to the same place that so many others went before him. He will see those who were considered strong and mighty, fallen heroes.

And the only thing even remotely resembling comfort for Pharaoh will come in the form of, "Oh well, at least I'm not the only one who died in judgment and ended up down here." And the others who see him will realize that in Sheol, everyone is the same - those who were terrified at Pharaoh during life will see that he is just another soul who is also suffering the punishment for his iniquity.