

The Book of Ezekiel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: Oracles Against Egypt

Ezekiel 29:1-32:32

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Help the class see that the oracles against Egypt proclaim God's sovereignty over the proudest empires and expose the folly of trusting any power apart from Him.

Lead each member to identify the staffs of reed in their own lives and to re-anchor their trust in the LORD rather than the arm of flesh.

Connect the certainty of Egypt's judgment to the certainty of God's word, encouraging confidence that what He has spoken He will surely perform.

Question 1

Student Question:

According to Ezekiel 29:3, what specific boast does Pharaoh make, and what does that claim reveal about how he viewed his own power and God's? What does Scripture teach about the true source of every nation's strength?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the class to Ezekiel 29:3, where Pharaoh is addressed as the great dragon lying in the midst of his streams, and the boast itself is given in his own mouth: My Nile is my own; I made it. Help the class feel the staggering arrogance of that claim. The Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt, the source of every harvest, the very reason the empire could exist in a desert land. Yet Pharaoh credits himself with what only God gives. The boast reveals a heart that has confused the gift with the giver and the steward with the Sovereign.

Pharaoh viewed his own power as self-originating and self-sustaining, owing nothing to anyone above him. This is the root posture of all idolatry: not always the carving of an image, but the inward claim that I am the source of my own life and strength. By contrast Scripture insists that every nation's strength is on loan. Daniel 4:17 says the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will, and Acts 17:26 declares that God determined the times and boundaries of every people. Egypt's might, real as it was, hung entirely on the patience and permission of God.

Press the contrast between how Pharaoh viewed his power and how Scripture views it. The teacher should draw out that God is not against Egypt merely as a rival nation, but against the lie that any creature is the author of its own greatness. Psalm 24:1 reminds us the earth is the

LORD's and the fullness thereof. The Nile that Pharaoh claimed to have made was a river God had set flowing long before any Pharaoh drew breath.

Finally, anchor the lesson in the certainty of judgment. The same God who gave Egypt her river can dry it up, and these chapters announce exactly that. The boast invites the response: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt. When a man or a nation forgets the true source of its strength, God in mercy and justice acts to make that source plain again.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The boast My Nile is my own; I made it is the essence of practical atheism, living as though God were not the source of life and provision.
- Scripture consistently teaches that God grants and removes the strength of nations (Daniel 4:17; Acts 17:26), so no empire is self-made.
- Idolatry is not only carved images but the inward crediting of self for what God supplies.
- God's opposition to Pharaoh is rooted in His justice toward pride, not in mere national rivalry.
- The dragon imagery pictures Pharaoh's arrogance and the chaos of his rule, not a literal sea creature.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Pharaoh's exact boast in 29:3 reveal about how he understood the source of his power?
- How does Scripture answer the claim that any nation's strength is self-made?
- In what subtle ways do we repeat Pharaoh's boast about our own lives?

Question 2

Student Question:

Examine your own heart: in what area of your life are you tempted to say in effect my Nile is my own; I made it, taking credit for what God has actually provided?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the self-examination question that turns Pharaoh's boast inward. The teacher's task here is to move the class from condemning an ancient king to confessing a present temptation. Few of us would say out loud that we made our own Nile, yet many of us live as though our security flowed from our own hand. The question asks each person to locate the specific area where that pride hides.

Help the class see how easily credit drifts from God to self. A good income begins as God's provision and quietly becomes my earning power. Health begins as a gift and becomes my discipline. A stable family becomes my parenting. None of these things are evil; the danger is the

silent transfer of credit. Deuteronomy 8:17–18 names this exact drift, warning the people not to say my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth, but to remember the LORD who gives the power to get wealth.

Encourage honesty rather than vague generalities. The most useful answers will be concrete: a particular skill, a particular relationship, a particular account or position that the heart secretly leans on. Pride is rarely confessed in the abstract; it is repented of in the specific. James 4:6 reminds us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, so naming the Nile is the first step toward grace.

Close by pointing the class toward gratitude as the cure. The opposite of Pharaoh's boast is the thankful confession that every good gift comes down from the Father of lights (James 1:17). When we receive our provisions as gifts rather than achievements, the heart is guarded against the very arrogance that doomed Egypt.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Taking credit for God's provision is a quiet, respectable form of the same pride that ruined Pharaoh.
- Deuteronomy 8:17–18 warns against saying my power and might have gotten me this wealth.
- Lawful blessings such as income, health, and family can become idols when we credit ourselves for them.
- Genuine repentance of pride is specific, not vague.
- Gratitude is the practical antidote, receiving all things as gifts from God (James 1:17).

Discussion Prompts

- In which concrete area of your life are you most tempted to say My Nile is my own?
- How can the habit of giving thanks expose and weaken hidden pride?
- What would change if you consciously received your strengths as on-loan gifts from God?

Question 3

Student Question:

Egypt is called a staff of reed in 29:6–7. What does this picture teach about the nature of misplaced trust and the harm it brings to those who rely on it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ezekiel 29:6–7 gives one of the most memorable images in the book: Egypt is a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When Israel grasped it for support, it broke in the hand, tore the shoulder, and made every loin to shake. The teacher should help the class picture this vividly. A staff of

reed looks like a staff; it has the shape of strength. But the moment real weight is placed upon it, it splinters and the jagged end pierces the very hand that trusted it.

The picture teaches the nature of misplaced trust. It is not merely that Egypt failed to help; it is that leaning on Egypt actively wounded those who leaned. Misplaced trust is not neutral. It promises support and delivers injury. Judah's kings had repeatedly sent to Egypt for horses and chariots against Babylon, and Egypt's reliability proved to be reed, not oak. Pharaoh Hophra marched out, then withdrew, leaving Jerusalem to fall.

Connect this to the broader biblical witness. Isaiah 31:1 pronounces woe on those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses but do not look to the Holy One of Israel. Jeremiah 17:5 calls cursed the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. The staff of reed is every refuge that has the appearance of security but cannot bear the weight of our lives. The harm comes precisely because we trusted it.

Finally, help the class see the mercy hidden in the warning. God exposes the reed before the full weight of crisis arrives, so that His people will transfer their trust to the staff that does not break. The Lord Himself is repeatedly called Israel's rock and refuge, and unlike the reed, He never splinters in the hand of those who lean on Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Misplaced trust is not merely ineffective; it actively wounds those who rely on it.
- Egypt looked like strength but proved to be reed, mirroring every refuge that promises more than it can give.
- Isaiah 31:1 and Jeremiah 17:5 condemn trusting the arm of flesh rather than the LORD.
- The reed pierces the hand precisely at the point of trust, so the harm is proportional to the reliance.
- God exposes false supports in mercy, to redirect trust to the rock that does not break.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the reed pierce the hand rather than simply fail to help?
- What modern staffs of reed wear the appearance of dependable strength?
- How does naming a false support as reed help us lean instead on the LORD?

Question 4

Student Question:

Think of a time you leaned on a staff of reed and it pierced your hand. What did that experience teach you about where security truly lies?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question invites personal testimony, asking each member to recall a time they leaned on a staff of reed and felt it pierce their hand. The teacher should be ready to share first, modeling the kind of honest, specific reflection that opens the class. The aim is not to wallow in past failure but to harvest its lesson about where security truly lies.

Guide the class to identify what the reed had promised and how it failed. Perhaps it was a job that seemed permanent until a layoff, a relationship that promised to complete us, a savings plan that evaporated, or a reputation that could not survive one hard season. The wound of the broken reed is often the very thing God uses to teach us that He alone is unbreakable. Romans 8:28 assures us that God works all things together for good to those who love Him, and the splintered reed is frequently one of those things.

Help members move from the pain to the conclusion. The point of remembering is to draw a settled lesson: security is not found in any created thing, however reliable it appears, but in the living God. Psalm 62:6 confesses, He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress; I shall not be greatly moved. The broken reed teaches by contrast what the unbroken rock is worth.

Encourage gratitude even for the painful lessons. Many believers can say with the psalmist, it is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes (Psalm 119:71). When the class can thank God for exposing a false support, the wound becomes a teacher and the heart is anchored more deeply in Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The pain of a broken reed is often God's tool to relocate our trust onto Himself.
- Created supports, however reliable they seem, cannot bear the full weight of a life.
- Psalm 62 and Psalm 119:71 teach that affliction can deepen our reliance on God.
- Remembering past failures of trust should produce a settled conviction, not lingering despair.
- Gratitude for hard lessons turns wounds into instruction.

Discussion Prompts

- What had the staff of reed in your story promised, and how did it fail?
- How did that experience reshape where you now look for security?
- Can you thank God for a broken reed that drove you closer to the rock?

Question 5

Student Question:

In 29:17–20 God gives Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as wages for his labor against Tyre. What does this reveal about God's sovereign use of pagan nations to accomplish His purposes, and how should that shape our view of world events?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ezekiel 29:17–20 contains a striking arrangement: God gives the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as wages for the hard service his army performed against Tyre. Because the long siege of Tyre yielded little plunder, God says He will hand Egypt over to Babylon as payment. The teacher should help the class grasp the boldness of this: the LORD calls a pagan, idolatrous king His instrument and pays him for his labor.

This reveals God's sovereign use of nations that do not know Him to accomplish His purposes. Babylon did not march against Egypt to serve the God of Israel; Nebuchadnezzar served his own ambition. Yet over and beneath that ambition, God was governing the outcome. The same truth runs through Scripture. Isaiah 10:5 calls Assyria the rod of God's anger even while Assyria intended only conquest. Isaiah 45:1 names pagan Cyrus the LORD's anointed. God rules even those who never acknowledge Him.

Be careful to state what this does and does not mean. God's use of Nebuchadnezzar does not approve Babylon's cruelty or excuse its idolatry; Babylon will face its own judgment in due time. Sovereignty over a nation's actions is not endorsement of its sins. God overrules human evil for His ends without sharing in its guilt, as Joseph confessed to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

Apply this to how we read world events. If God governed the rise of Babylon and the fall of Egypt, then no headline lies outside His reach. This should produce neither panic nor passivity but a steady confidence. Daniel 2:21 says He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings. The believer watches nations rise and fall knowing the throne above every throne is never vacant.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God sovereignly uses even pagan, idolatrous nations to accomplish His purposes (Isaiah 10:5; Isaiah 45:1).
- God's use of Nebuchadnezzar does not approve Babylon's cruelty; sovereignty is not endorsement.
- God overrules human evil for good without sharing its guilt (Genesis 50:20).
- Daniel 2:21 affirms that God removes and sets up kings according to His will.
- Recognizing God's hand in history should produce steady confidence rather than fear or fatalism.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God paid Nebuchadnezzar with the land of Egypt?
- How can God use a wicked nation without approving its wickedness?
- How should this oracle shape the way you read today's news of nations rising and falling?

Question 6

Student Question:

When you read the headlines and watch nations rise and fall, do you instinctively see God's hand at work, or do you forget that He governs history? How would a firmer conviction of His sovereignty change your anxiety level?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application question asks the class to examine their instinctive response to world events. When they read the headlines and watch nations rise and fall, do they see God's hand at work, or do they quietly assume history runs on its own apart from Him? The teacher should help members notice the difference between confessing God's sovereignty on Sunday and forgetting it when the news alarms them on Monday.

Many believers hold a doctrine of providence in theory while living in practical anxiety. The disconnect shows up in the pit of the stomach when an election, a war, or an economic report dominates the headlines. The oracle against Egypt insists that the God who toppled the ancient world's superpowers still governs every nation. Proverbs 21:1 says the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He will. Nothing in the news escapes that hand.

Draw the class toward the practical fruit of conviction. A firmer grip on God's sovereignty does not make us indifferent to the world's troubles, but it dethrones the fear that magnifies them. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 24:6 that they would hear of wars and rumors of wars but were not to be alarmed. The settled knowledge that no empire moves without God's permission is a direct cure for the anxiety that the headlines breed.

Encourage members to translate conviction into a changed inner posture. Instead of doomscrolling in dread, the believer can pray for rulers (1 Timothy 2:1-2), entrust outcomes to God, and rest in the unshaken kingdom. Philippians 4:6-7 promises that the peace of God will guard the hearts of those who bring their anxieties to Him in prayer. The remedy for headline anxiety is not ignorance but trust in the God who reigns over history.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Many believers affirm God's sovereignty in doctrine yet live in practical anxiety about world events.
- Proverbs 21:1 teaches that even rulers' hearts are directed by the LORD.
- Jesus commanded His followers not to be alarmed by wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6).
- Confidence in God's rule dethrones fear without producing indifference to suffering.
- Prayer for rulers and trust in God replace dread with peace (1 Timothy 2:1-2; Philippians 4:6-7).

Discussion Prompts

- When the news alarms you, do you instinctively remember that God governs history?
- How would a firmer conviction of God's sovereignty change your anxiety level?
- What practice could replace dread with trustful prayer when you read the headlines?

Question 7

Student Question:

Chapters 31 and 32 picture mighty Egypt felled like a great cedar and dragged down to the pit among the uncircumcised and slain. What do these images teach about the end of all earthly pride apart from God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapters 31 and 32 give two great pictures of Egypt's end. In chapter 31 Egypt is a towering cedar, taller and more beautiful than all the trees, even envied by the trees of Eden, until pride lifts its top among the clouds and God hands it over to be felled. In chapter 32 Pharaoh and his multitude are dragged down to the pit to lie among the uncircumcised and the slain. The teacher should let the class feel the height of the cedar before the shock of its fall, because the loftiness is the whole point.

These images teach the end of all earthly pride apart from God. The cedar's greatness was real, but it was given by God and held only at His pleasure. When the tree forgot that its height was a gift and exalted itself, the very greatness that should have produced gratitude produced its ruin. Proverbs 16:18 states the principle plainly: pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Egypt is that proverb written across an entire empire.

The descent to the pit, lying among the uncircumcised, pictures national death and disgrace, the final leveling of every boast. The teacher should clarify that this language depicts the humiliation of the grave for proud nations rather than laying out a detailed doctrine of the afterlife. The point is that the terror Egypt spread in the land of the living counts for nothing in the place of the dead. Every empire that ever frightened the world ends in the same dust.

Apply the lesson personally and corporately. What is true of empires is true of every proud heart. James 4:6 says God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, and 1 Peter 5:5-6 calls us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time. The felled cedar warns that greatness pursued for self-exaltation is greatness marked for the pit, while the humble are lifted up by God's own hand.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Earthly greatness is a gift held at God's pleasure, not an achievement that secures itself.
- Pride is named as the precise cause of the cedar's fall (Proverbs 16:18).
- The descent to the pit pictures national death and disgrace, not a developed doctrine of the afterlife.

- The terror a nation spreads in life counts for nothing in the grave.
- God resists the proud but exalts the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5–6).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Ezekiel build up the cedar's grandeur before describing its fall?
- What does the descent to the pit teach about the final worth of earthly pride?
- How does the fall of proud Egypt warn the proud heart in every age?

Question 8

Student Question:

Where in your life has pride crept in, perhaps in success, reputation, or accomplishment, and what would humbling yourself before God look like this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries the cedar's fall into the heart of each member, asking where pride has crept in: perhaps in success, reputation, or accomplishment. The teacher should help the class see that pride rarely announces itself. It hides inside legitimate things, dressing up as confidence, ambition, or a sense of having earned our standing. The felled cedar of Egypt is a mirror in which to examine our own height.

Encourage specific self-examination rather than general admission. Pride may show up as taking quiet credit for a good outcome, as resentment when others are praised instead of us, as defensiveness when corrected, or as a subtle looking down on those who have less. Romans 12:3 warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but to think with sober judgment. The honest believer can usually find the cedar growing somewhere if he looks closely.

Move the class toward what humbling oneself before God actually looks like this week. Biblical humility is not self-loathing but a true estimate of ourselves before God, receiving everything as gift and giving Him the glory. Practically it may mean confessing a specific instance of pride, apologizing to someone we wronged in our self-importance, serving quietly without seeking notice, or deliberately praising God for a success we had been crediting to ourselves.

Close with the gospel shape of humility. 1 Peter 5:6 calls us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. The way down is the way up in God's kingdom. The proud cedar was cut down, but the humble heart is lifted by God Himself. Help the class leave with one concrete act of humbling to practice before the next meeting.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride hides inside legitimate success, reputation, and accomplishment.
- Romans 12:3 calls for sober self-judgment rather than inflated self-estimate.
- Biblical humility is a true view of self before God, not self-loathing.

- Humbling oneself takes concrete forms: confession, apology, hidden service, giving God credit.
- God exalts the humble in due time (1 Peter 5:6), so the way down is the way up.

Discussion Prompts

- In what area, success, reputation, or accomplishment, has pride quietly crept into your heart?
- What is one concrete way you could humble yourself before God this week?
- How does knowing God exalts the humble change your willingness to take the low place?

Question 9

Student Question:

These oracles repeatedly declare God's purpose: then they will know that I am the LORD. Egypt trusted the Nile, Judah trusted Egypt, and both were brought low. Trace through these chapters how God exposes misplaced trust, then weigh the warning in Jeremiah 17:5-7 and the call to trust the LORD. What does it look like, concretely and daily, to trust the arm of the living God rather than the arm of flesh, and what must you tear down in your own confidence to do so?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, and the teacher should give it the most weight. The refrain rings through these oracles like a hammer on an anvil: then they will know that I am the LORD. It appears again and again as God topples Egypt, dries the Nile, breaks Pharaoh's arms, and fells the great cedar. The purpose of every judgment is revelation. God acts so that the nations, and His own people, will know that He alone is God, the living Sovereign over all the earth. Help the class trace this refrain through the chapters and feel its cumulative force.

Set before the class the chain of misplaced trust the oracles expose. Egypt trusted the Nile, boasting My Nile is my own; I made it. Judah trusted Egypt, leaning on a staff of reed. Both were brought low by the same God who governs both. The lesson is layered: the empire that trusted in its own resources and the people of God who trusted in that empire fell together, because all misplaced trust, whether in our own power or in another's, rests on what God can break in a moment. Egypt's broken arm (30:21-22) stands against the unbreakable arm of the LORD.

Bring Jeremiah 17:5-7 alongside as the inspired commentary on the whole oracle. Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the LORD; he is like a shrub in the desert. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD; he is like a tree planted by water that does not fear when heat comes. Here are the two trees set side by side: the cursed shrub of fleshly trust and the blessed tree of trust in God. Egypt was the cedar that fell; the one who trusts the LORD is the tree that stands. Psalm 20:7 sharpens it: some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Now press toward the concrete daily question. What does it look like to trust the arm of the living God rather than the arm of flesh? It looks like beginning decisions with prayer rather than calculation alone, like giving generously instead of clutching our security, like obeying God's word when it costs us, like refusing to compromise to secure an outcome we could grasp by other means. It looks like Asa, who in 2 Chronicles 16:7–9 was rebuked for relying on Syria when the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. Trusting God is not passivity; it is active reliance that obeys and waits.

Finally, ask what each member must tear down in his own confidence to do this. The oracle is not finished until the idol is demolished. For Judah it meant abandoning the Egyptian alliance; for us it may mean dismantling our trust in a bank balance, a position, a relationship, or our own competence. God will not share the throne of our confidence with the arm of flesh. The refrain then they will know that I am the LORD is finally fulfilled in us when we know Him so truly that we lean on nothing else, and that knowing is meant to come gently through repentance now rather than painfully through ruin later.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The refrain then they will know that I am the LORD shows that the goal of God's judgments is His own self-revelation and the certainty of His word.
- All misplaced trust, whether in our own power or in another's, rests on what God can break in a moment (30:21–22).
- Jeremiah 17:5–7 sets the cursed shrub of fleshly trust against the blessed tree of trust in the LORD.
- Psalm 20:7 contrasts trusting chariots and horses with trusting the name of the LORD.
- Trusting God is active reliance that obeys and waits, not passivity (2 Chronicles 16:7–9).
- God's sovereignty over the proudest empires means no nation or refuge stands outside His rule.
- True knowledge of God requires tearing down rival confidences; He will not share the throne of our trust.

Discussion Prompts

- Trace how Egypt's trust in the Nile and Judah's trust in Egypt were both brought low by the same God.
- How do the two trees of Jeremiah 17:5–7 picture the choice every believer faces daily?
- What specific confidence must you tear down so that you lean only on the arm of the living God?

Question 10

Student Question:

Having seen the folly of trusting Egypt, write one sentence naming the single most important shift God is calling you to make in where you place your trust, and one step you will take this week to make that shift real.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone question, asking each member to write one sentence naming the single most important shift God is calling them to make in where they place their trust, and one concrete step to make that shift real this week. The teacher's goal is to ensure the lesson does not evaporate into general agreement but lands as a personal, written resolve. Having seen the folly of trusting Egypt across these chapters, each person now names their own Egypt and turns from it.

Help the class understand why writing it down matters. A vague intention to trust God more is easily forgotten by Monday, but a single written sentence has weight and can be revisited. Encourage specificity: not I want to trust God more, but I will stop checking my account balance for security and begin each morning thanking God as my provider. The narrower and more concrete the resolve, the more likely it is to become real obedience.

Guide members to pair the heart-shift with a tangible step. Biblical repentance always moves from the inward turn to outward action. If the Nile is financial security, the step might be a deliberate act of generosity that loosens the grip of money. If the reed is a relationship or reputation, the step might be a choice to obey God even where it risks that approval. James 1:22 calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

Close the class by inviting members to commit their written sentence to God in prayer, asking Him for the grace to follow through. Remind them that the whole point of the oracles against Egypt was that God's people would know Him and lean on Him alone. Sending each person out with one clear shift and one clear step turns the study into the beginning of a changed walk, anchored not in the arm of flesh but in the living God who never breaks in the hand that trusts Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A written, specific resolve resists the fading of vague good intentions.
- Biblical repentance moves from an inward turn to a concrete outward step.
- James 1:22 warns against being hearers of the word who never become doers.
- Naming one's own Egypt makes the abstract lesson personal and actionable.
- Committing the resolve to God in prayer seeks His grace to follow through.

Discussion Prompts

- What single sentence captures the most important shift God is calling you to make in your trust?
- What one concrete step this week will begin to make that shift real?

- How will you invite God's help and a fellow believer's encouragement to follow through?