

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 13: Oracles Against Egypt -- Ezekiel 29:1–32:32

With the seven oracles that fill chapters 29 through 32, Ezekiel turns at last to the great power upon whom Judah had so often leaned. Egypt was the empire to the south, ancient and proud, the river-fed kingdom whose granaries seemed inexhaustible and whose armies seemed a sure refuge against Babylon. Again and again Judah's kings had looked that direction for help, sending tribute and forming alliances, trusting the chariots and horsemen of the Nile rather than the LORD who had once led their fathers out of that very land. These chapters are God's verdict on that trust and on the empire that invited it.

The oracles are carefully dated, several of them falling in the very years when Jerusalem was besieged and falling. While Pharaoh Hophra marched out and then withdrew, leaving Judah to her fate, the word of the LORD pronounced Egypt's own doom. The God of Israel speaks here not as a tribal deity but as the Sovereign of all nations, who raises up Babylon as His servant to humble Egypt and who will one day humble Babylon as well. No throne stands outside His jurisdiction.

The imagery is vivid and unforgettable. Pharaoh is the great dragon lying in the midst of his streams, boasting My Nile is my own; I made it. Egypt is a staff of reed that splinters in the hand of any who lean on it. The mighty cedar is felled; the great empire is dragged down to the pit to lie among the uncircumcised and the slain. Through every figure runs one theme: the proudest empires of earth are grass before the breath of God, and those who trust the arm of flesh will be pierced by the very thing they leaned upon.

For us these chapters are more than ancient history. They expose the perennial temptation to trust what we can see, count, and bargain with rather than the unseen God. Every age has its Egypt, its seemingly reliable refuge that promises security apart from the LORD. As we work through these oracles we will ask where our own confidence rests, and we will hear afresh the call to lean only on the One whose word never breaks and whose kingdom cannot be shaken.

Group Discussion: Read Ezekiel 29:1–7 aloud together, then discuss what it means that Egypt was a staff of reed to the house of Israel. Where do God's people today still reach for staffs of reed, and how can the class help one another lean on the LORD instead?

Personal Reflection: Spend time this week honestly naming the things you trust for security apart from God: a bank balance, a relationship, a job, a government, your own ability. Ask whether any of these have become your Nile, the source you secretly credit for your life. Confess that pride to God and deliberately re-anchor your confidence in Him.

Read Ezekiel 29:1–32:32

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?

7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 31:1–3, woe on those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses rather than the Holy One of Israel; Jeremiah 17:5–7, cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD; 2 Chronicles 16:7–9, Asa rebuked for relying on Syria instead of the LORD whose eyes run to and fro to strengthen the faithful; Proverbs 16:18, pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall; Psalm 20:7, some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

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