

October 14

Scriptures: Read Ezekiel 30 & 31

Key Verse: "... Wail, 'Woe to the day!' for... the day of the Lord is near." (Ezekiel 30:2,3)

Overview

In chapter 30, Ezekiel once again prophesies that it will be Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who will wield the Lord's sword against Egypt (29:19; 30:10, 24-25), take away all her wealth, and carry many of the inhabitants captive; thus her pride shall fall and her arrogancy cease. Not only Egypt, but all the allied nations will likewise fall at the same time. It will be a time of general judgment upon the Gentiles ("the day of the Lord"; 30:3). In the course of His wrath, God would dry up the waters that Pharaoh thought he had owned and made. They were to know that the Lord alone owns and created the rivers (29:9; 30:12).

The chronology of the second oracle in chapter 30 follows 29:1-16 and was uttered in the same year that Jerusalem fell (30:20). The Lord explained to Ezekiel that He had ordained that Egypt be defeated by the Babylonians some twenty years earlier at the battle of Carchemish. Egypt returned from that battle severely wounded and never regained her former strength. Pharaoh's "broken arm" from this battle had not healed (30:21) and now his remaining strength, his only good arm, was also to be broken by the Babylonians (30:22-23). Again it is stressed that Egypt would know that God is the Lord, for when they saw all their idols destroyed, they would know, as they did centuries before at the time of the Exodus, that their gods were powerless before the God of Israel.

In chapter 31 we find a parable about the fall of the mighty and proud cedar, representing the Assyrian empire. Through this parable, Ezekiel warns Egypt that they, who were not as great as the Assyrians, would also fall at the hands of the same "mighty one" (Babylon) when the army of the "most terrible" of the nations came against them (31:11-12). Assyria, like the highest and most beautiful tree on earth, had been exalted over all other nations (the other trees that envied it, 31:9), and Assyria had subjugated the nations, including Egypt. How then could Egypt expect to conquer those who had conquered their conquerors? How can any individual or any nation resist whatever the Lord has purposed? A great and terrible day of judgment will surely come upon the earth, and not even the mightiest nation, nor a coalition of the mightiest nations, will be able to prevent it. At that time the Lord will say, just as He said of Assyria, "I have driven it out for its wickedness" (31:11).

The wicked nations that had previously been cut down by the judgment of the Lord and were in the Pit (sheol or hell) will, at the time of Assyria's fall, be comforted to know that the justice and will of God had prevailed (31:16). The Lord, who never changes, would not allow Assyria to go unpunished when she too was full of iniquity. Egypt, then, also being full of iniquity, was to be cut down. Pharaoh and his army would soon join the slain Assyrians (the uncircumcised) in the Pit (31:18; cf. Ps. 9:17). The Lord's plans for Egypt, however, were not finished. Therefore, unlike the Assyrian nation, Egypt would not disappear. Many centuries later, Egypt would be the place of refuge for the baby Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we lift our great nation before You and ask that You guide our leaders in their decisions, that they would lead with righteousness, justice, and purity of heart.