

How King Nebuchadnezzar Defeated the Pharaoh of Egypt

The study of the book of Ezekiel has been a wonderful journey. We have gained insights into the character of God and also discovered His ways. Previously we have read Psalm 103:7, and I want to read it again because it reminds us that there is a difference between knowing what God has done and knowing His ways or how He operates. The verse says,

He made known His ways to Moses,

His acts to the sons of Israel.

Psalm 103:7 (NASB)

The last part of the verse tells us that God revealed His acts to the sons of Israel.

The acts of God are what He did such as the ten plagues, parting of the Red Sea, drowning the Egyptian army, sending manna down from the sky, and causing water to pour out of a rock. But the ways of God refers to why Yahweh did what He did.

It is to understand the principles by which He operated then and operates today.

As we have been studying the book of Ezekiel, we have been asking the question, "Why did Yahweh act in these ways?" One principle that we have discovered is that Yahweh operates by a principle that has been given to us in Jeremiah 18:5-10 which describes how He responds to nations when they act wickedly or righteously. That describes one of His ways. He

operates according to principles. His ways are not arbitrary nor indiscriminate. They are rooted in His character.

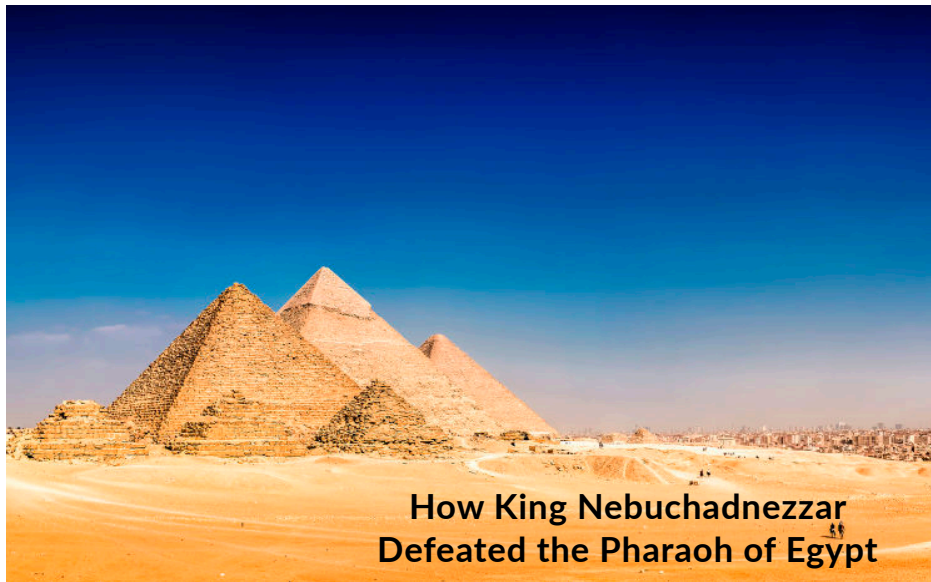
When we read a book, a chapter, or a verse in the Bible, we should ask why did the Holy Spirit share this information with us? That might reveal one of the ways of God. For example, why did the Holy Spirit have chapters 25-29 written in the book of Ezekiel? The answer is He wanted the Israelites and us to know He punished other nations also when they sinned, and not just Israel when they sinned. Yahweh is holy and He is also just. He is not a judge who plays favorites. He even punished a nation that He loved (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Beginning in chapter 25, Yahweh told us that six nations would be punished for several

reasons. The most common reasons were pride and mistreating the nation of Israel.

Beginning in Ezekiel 29, Yahweh prophesied that Egypt would be destroyed for the same two reasons: pride and mistreating Israel. The first reason

was that Pharaoh claimed he made the Nile River! It is obvious that Pharaoh thought that he was a god. The second reason was that Pharaoh did not keep his commitment to the king of Israel. As a result, we learned two operational principles. Our God punishes the proud and those who despise Israel will be cursed. So, Egypt would be humbled and destroyed.

Then verses 17-21 in the last part of Ezekiel 29 explain why



King Nebuchadnezzar was to be the one who would conquer and destroy Egypt. The answer was that the king would be given Egypt as a reward for serving Yahweh. That gave us the principle that Yahweh rewards His faithful servants.

In chapter 27 and the first part of Ezekiel 30, we discovered that Yahweh lamented the destruction of the nations of Tyre and Egypt. We discovered that Yahweh does not enjoy punishing wicked and rebellious individuals or nations. So, while He lovingly gives us time to repent, at some point He must punish unrepentant sin. Yahweh operates according to principle and those principles are based on His character.

In our study today, which is the last part of Ezekiel 30:20-26, we will discover how King Nebuchadnezzar was able to defeat Egypt even though that nation had a massive population. We are going to discover that when Yahweh must punish a nation, He will do three things. First, He will weaken the guilty nation. Second, the passage will reveal one way in which He does that. Third, we will be reminded that He selects another nation to destroy the guilty nation.

DATE OF THE PROPHECY. Now let us read the first verse of our study which is Ezekiel 30:20,

In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying . . . Ezekiel 30:20 (NASB)

As we have discovered already, the dates of the prophecies are counted from the first year of King Jehoiachin's exile. Since he was exiled in the year 597, the date is 587 B.C. since the months are relative to the Hebrew calendar. The month and day would be Nisan 7, which corresponds to the month of March in that year. If we compare this prophecy to the first one given against Egypt in Ezekiel 29:1, we learn that this one was given only 2-3 months later.

So, Yahweh announced judgment upon Egypt in chapter 29. In chapter 30, Yahweh called for lamenting or mourning Egypt's destruction. Now we will learn how Yahweh caused Egypt to be destroyed. This is the last step in Yahweh's judgment upon a nation—its destruction.

YAHWEH BROKE ONE ARM OF EGYPT. In verse 21, Yahweh announced that He had already weakened the nation of Egypt in preparation for its destruction. He said,

“Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, behold, it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, that it may be strong to hold the sword.” Ezekiel 30:21 (NASB)

Obviously when Yahweh said, “I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” He used a figurative statement. But His point was simple. He had weakened Pharaoh's ability to defend himself and his nation. Not only had Yahweh broken his arm, but He would not allow it to heal. He did not want the arm to heal because He did not want Egypt to be able to hold a sword or defend itself. It is difficult to hold a heavy sword with a broken arm!

This verse tells us that Yahweh had already broken one of Pharaoh's arms and stripped him of some power. But Ezekiel does not tell us when this happened or how in this prophecy. Therefore, we have to search Scripture to discover what happened to Egypt.

Our first hint about the meaning of the broken arm is given in Ezekiel 29:6-8. When Israel leaned on Egypt for defense against the Babylonian army, Egypt abandoned Israel. Now if we search for more information, we find Jeremiah 37:6-10 says that the puppet king, Zedekiah, had asked Jeremiah to appeal to Yahweh for help. Here is the passage.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Thus you are to say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh's army which has come out for your assistance is going to return to its own land of Egypt. The Chaldeans will also return and fight against this city, and they will capture it and burn it with fire.” Thus says the LORD, ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will surely go away from us,” for they will not go. For even if you had defeated the entire army of Chaldeans who were fighting against you, and there were only wounded men left among them, each man in his tent, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.” Jeremiah 37:6-10 (NASB)

So, King Zedekiah learned that Pharaoh Hophra would abandon Judah in order to save his army. So, while we are not told that this event is symbolized by a broken arm, it seems to be the best explanation. Pharaoh Hophra's army returned to

Egypt wounded.

YAHWEH WILL BREAK BOTH ARMS OF EGYPT. Verses 22-23 now reveal that Yahweh would break Pharaoh's other arm.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong and the broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands.’” Ezekiel 30:22-23 (NASB)

The result would be the nation would be destroyed and the people scattered.

YAHWEH WILL CAUSE KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR TO WIN. How would this happen? Verses 24-25 tell us that the king of Babylon will break Pharaoh's other arm. Notice how personal the descriptions are in these verses. It is the Pharaoh of Egypt against the king of Babylon.

“For I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand; and I will break the arms of Pharaoh, so that he will groan before him with the groanings of a wounded man. 25 Thus I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. Ezekiel 30:24-25 (NASB)

This occurred in 571/570 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt.

THEY WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD. Now notice that Yahweh said He was in total control of the events.

“When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands, then they will know that I am the LORD.” Ezekiel 30:26 (NASB)

So, Yahweh wounded Egypt's military and strengthened Babylon's military in preparation for the destruction of Egypt and the scattering of its massive population. Because Egypt sinned, Yahweh planned and executed its destruction. He wounded one nation and strengthened another nation that

would destroy the wounded nation. This reveals how God pulls up and pulls down nations. He weakens the guilty nation and empowers another nation that will destroy the guilty one.

Then they would know that Yahweh is the LORD. He is the only God. He gave the prophecies and they were fulfilled. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 tells us that is the sign that a prophecy is from God. It comes true! Now when the prophecy comes true, you will know that Yahweh exists and He is superior to the gods of Egypt. This gives us another principle. God has given us prophecies in order to help us identify the true God. At the same time, when a prophecy comes true, we know it came from Him. So, He also wants to help us know how to identify when He has spoken. He has done that for our benefit. That is another way of God. We have a very loving and caring God.

CONCLUSION. Before we close, I want to summarize the signs that reveal a nation is approaching divine judgment. There are at least nine signs for which we should watch. These were the signs that we have seen in the book of Ezekiel and in the book of Romans. They can be found throughout the Bible. They are:

Signs A Nation May Be Approaching Judgment

1. The leaders of the nation are wicked (Ezekiel 20:16).
2. A nation has a shortage of supplies they need for living (Ezekiel 16:27-29).
3. The leaders of the nation are proud (Ezekiel 20:15-16; 26:3).
4. The majority of the nation has abandoned God.
5. Worship of false gods increases (Ezekiel 20:39).
6. Sin and violence increases (Romans 1:28-32).
7. The nation is increasingly antisemitic (Ezekiel 25:6-8).
8. The nation denies that Israel has a special relationship with God (Ezekiel 25:8).
9. The nation rejoices that Israel is attacked by another nation and wants it destroyed (Ezekiel 25:3, 12-13).
10. The nation does not keep its promises to Israel (Ezekiel 30:6-8). Egypt was destroyed because it did not keep its promises to Israel.

The book of Ezekiel has also given us ten signs that God is

judging a nation. The signs develop over time and eventually God destroys the nation. Here are the signs:

Ten Ways God Can Judge A Nation

1. God allows the nation to kill its children (Ezekiel 20:26).
2. God allows sexual sins to increase (Ezekiel 22:6-12, 25-26).
3. God allows homosexuality to increase (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).
4. God uses the weather to destroy a nation (Ezekiel 30:12).
5. God allows the population to decline (Ezekiel 20:26).
6. God refuses to listen to the prayers of the leaders (Ezekiel 20:3, 31).
7. God removes the wealth of the nation (Ezekiel 30:4).
8. The foundations of the nation are removed (Ezekiel 30:4).
9. God weakens a nation in preparation for another nation to destroy it (Ezekiel 30:20-26).
10. God destroys a nation's allies, thus leaving the nation helpless when disaster strikes (Ezekiel 30:6-9).

It is fitting for us to close this study with these lists because chapter 30 tells us how God destroys a nation. He weakens it from within and strengthens its enemies.

So, what can we do? How should we respond? First, we should pray for our nation and for ourselves just as Daniel did in Daniel 9:4-19. He started his prayer by confessing his own sins and then the sins of the nation. Then He made his prayer request of God. We should ask God to remove the evil and save evildoers from their sins. However, we should remember that when the prophet Habakkuk asked God to remove the evil in Israel, God's answer was to destroy the nation.

Second, we should ask God to send out laborers to share Christ for Jesus told us in Matthew 9:37-38 to pray that way.

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38 (NASB)

Then, third, we ourselves should be willing to strive to make disciples in every nation just as Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

This is the way change comes to a nation. The Holy Spirit can change the hearts and the nation.