

Egypt to Be Destroyed as God Destroyed the Assyrian Empire

Our study is from Ezekiel 31. It is the fifth of the seven prophecies about the judgment of the nation of Egypt that are given in Ezekiel 29-32. The first two prophecies were given in chapter 29. The first one announced that Egypt would be destroyed because it was a proud nation and because it did not keep its promise to protect the nation of Israel against an invading army. Yahweh also announced that the Egyptians would be scattered to other nations. The second prophecy revealed the invading army that would fulfill the prophecy was King Nebuchadnezzar's army. That occurred in 571/570 B.C.

The third and fourth prophecies were given in Ezekiel 30. In the third prophecy, Yahweh lamented the destruction of Egypt. Yahweh mourned that this would occur. In the fourth prophecy given at the end of chapter 30, God told Pharaoh Hophra that He had already partially destroyed the Egyptian army. When the Babylonian army came, it would destroy the rest of the army. Then Egypt would be scattered.

This study is from Ezekiel 31. It contains only one prophecy. It is the fifth prophecy in the series.

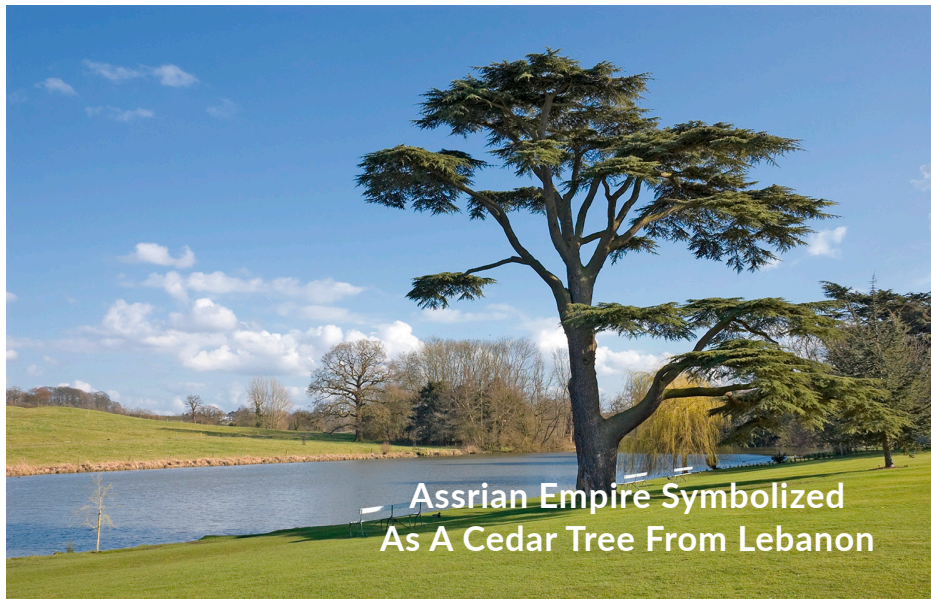
INTRODUCTION (v 1). This prophecy begins by providing us with the date it was given. It says,

[the word of the LORD came to me saying, Ezekiel 31:1 \(NASB\)](#)

The date corresponds to the year 587 B.C. The date is relative to the first year that King Jehoiachin was exiled in Babylon. It was given almost two months after the last prophecy in chapter 30, verses 20 to 26. It was also given two months before the Babylonian army finally defeated the city of Jerusalem, burned the city and temple to the ground, and then leveled any remaining buildings. In A.D. 70 the Roman army would do the same thing once again for the second time.

This prophecy is an allegory about a great cedar in Lebanon. We are going to learn a few things about cedar trees. We

will find that Eden or the Garden of Eden is mentioned three times in this prophecy. Sheol and the pit are mentioned multiple times. The opening phrase presents a question that is answered by the prophecy. The prophecy has three sections.



The first section is named "Are You Like the Great Cedar?" It begins in verse 2 and ends in verse 9. Section two begins in verse 10 and the third section begins in verse 15.

ARE YOU LIKE THE GREAT CEDAR? (v 2-9). Here are verses 2 and 3 of the first section.

"Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his

[In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first of the month,](#)

hordes,

**Whom are you like in your greatness?
Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon
With beautiful branches and forest shade,
And very high,
And its top was among the clouds.”
Ezekiel 31:2-3 (NASB)**

Immediately we are told that the Pharaoh and the hordes of Egypt are asked, “Whom are you like in your greatness?” The leader of Egypt at this time was Pharaoh Hophra. He ruled Egypt from about 589 B.C. to 570 B.C. Since the prophecy was given in 587 B.C., he was the Pharaoh of Egypt at this time. The Hebrew word that is translated as “hordes” is hamon. It means “abundance, a crowd, much greater, or masses.” That is, Yahweh was speaking to Pharaoh and the enormous pop-

ulation in Egypt. Pharaoh thought that he was great. In Ezekiel 29:9 we learned that he believed he made the Nile River. Now we are told he was the leader of a massive population. He must have thought that he was truly great.

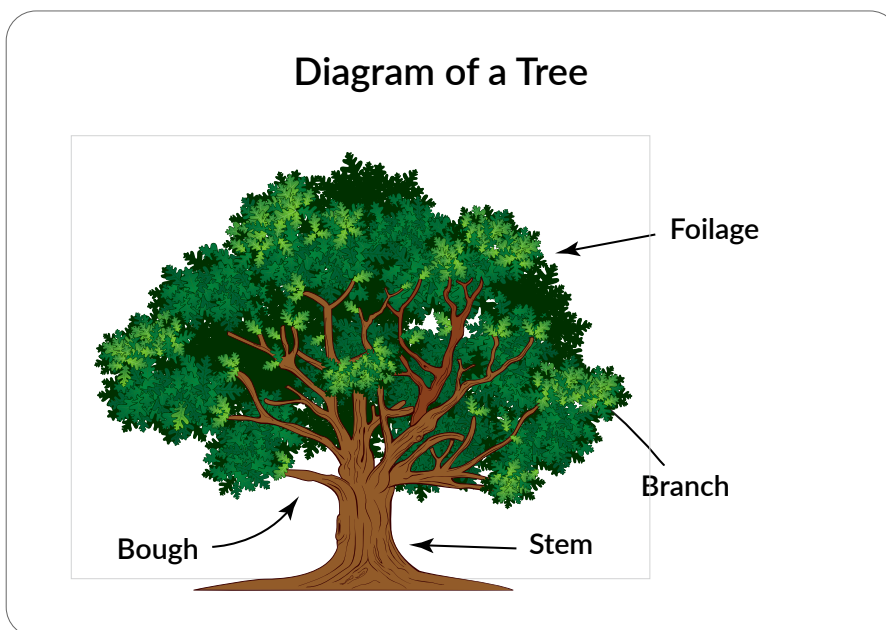
So Yahweh asked the Pharaoh of Egypt and the massive population of Egypt a question, “Whom are you like in your greatness?” The question is, “Who is like you?” Now remember that question. At the end of the prophecy we will discover the answer.

Then Yahweh started His allegory about a tree in verse 3. He said, “Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon.” The cedar tree symbolized the empire of Assyria. The reason Yahweh referred to a cedar tree from Lebanon was that cedar trees in the nation of

Lebanon were considered to be the best among all cedar trees.

The organization, The Wood Database, reports that cedar trees in Lebanon were extremely tall varying in height from 100-130 ft (30.5-39.6 m).¹ That is why verse 3 says, “And its top was among the clouds.” The top of the tree was extremely high. It is an allegorical statement. The diameter of the trunk of the cedar trees are 5-7 ft (1.5-2.1 m). They grow in the mountains at high altitudes. They are magnificent trees. So, Assyria is symbolized here by an extraordinary cedar tree from Lebanon. The message is the leader of the Assyrian Empire was proud.

Verse 4 adds,



“The waters made it grow, the deep made it high.

With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place,

And sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.”

Ezekiel 31:4 (NASB)

The Hebrew word for “channels” refers to channels or streams feeding

off from the river. Verse 5 says,

“Therefore its height was loftier than all the trees of the field

And its boughs became many and its branches long

Because of many waters as it spread them out.”

Ezekiel 31:5 (NASB)

Now we are told the cedar trees were higher than the trees of the field. That agrees with our understanding of cedar trees in Lebanon. Some people claim that the boughs and branches of a tree are the same thing. If they are correct, then Scripture is

1. The Wood Database. (www.wood-database.com/cedar-of-lebanon/).

wrong because the passage speaks of both. I did some research and discovered a helpful article titled, “Tree Anatomy: BRANCH ATTACHMENT” which was published by Dr. Kim D. Coder, a professor at the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources at the University of Georgia.² The article helps us understand that the portion of the tree that grows from the ground upward is called the stem. We usually call that the trunk of the tree. On a mature tree, the stem divides into a number of boughs. Boughs are like massive arms that divide the stem. So, the stem has boughs, which then divide into limbs. The limbs are smaller than boughs. The boughs and limbs do not have leaves. Next, the limbs have branches and the branches then have leaves. So, in summary a number of boughs grow out of the stem. The bough has limbs, which have branches, which have leaves. Therefore, the verse is correct. Trees do have boughs and branches. But the point of the verse is that the cedar had more than enough water. This allegory means God helped Assyria become a great empire.

The next verses are 6 and 7,

“All the birds of the heavens nested in its boughs,
 And under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth,
 And all great nations lived under its shade.
 So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches;
 For its roots extended to many waters.”
 Ezekiel 31:6-7 (NASB)

Now we are told that the birds and the beasts lived under the



tree, and the nations lived under the cedar’s protection. This means that peoples and nations lived under the Assyrian empire’s protection.

Verses 8 and 9 are the end of the allegory.

“The cedars in God’s garden could not match it;
 The cypresses could not compare with its boughs,
 And the plane trees could not match its branches.
 No tree in God’s garden could compare with it in its beauty.
 I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches,
 And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were
 jealous of it.” Ezekiel 31:8-9 (NASB)

When we are told “the cedars in God’s garden could not match it,” it is possible the phrase “could not match it” refers to power, but what follows suggests that the phrase refers to beauty. That is, the cedars in the garden of Eden could not com-

pare to the beauty of the cedar tree that has been described in this allegory.

I should quickly add that when this prophecy was written, the garden of Eden did not exist. Notice that Genesis 2:10-13 tells us that when the garden of Eden existed, a river flowed out of the garden and branched into four rivers: the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and the Euphrates. Two of those rivers do not exist today. That means the Garden of Eden disappeared after Noah’s flood. So, the garden of Eden was part of the allegory. In addition, two of the rivers exist today in the southern region of modern-day Turkey or the northern region of modern-day Iraq, or in the ancient center of the Assyrian empire. It appears that Yahweh used the Garden of Eden because it was once in the land the Assyrian Empire occupied, and the trees would

2. Dr. Kim D. Coder. Tree Anatomy: BRANCH ATTACHMENT, published by the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources at the University of Georgia.

have been the best and greatest at that time.

The message is the Assyrian Empire was the most magnificent empire.

ARE YOU LIKE THE GREAT CEDAR? (v 10-11). The second section of this prophecy is verses 10-14. The section is titled "The Great Cedar Was Cut Down." Verses 10-11 say,

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Because it is high in stature and has set its top among the clouds, and its heart is haughty in its loftiness, therefore I will give it into the hand of a despot of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it. According to its wickedness I have driven it away." Ezekiel 31:10-11 (NASB)

Now Yahweh announced that this most magnificent cedar tree had a heart problem. It was proud. This happens to leaders and politicians of nations. The Assyrian empire was ruled by a dictator named Ashur-uballit II. Notice that Yahweh did not condemn the dictator. Yahweh condemned the pride in his heart. We should not be surprised that Yahweh said in verse 11, "I will give it into the hand of a despot of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it". Now Yahweh did not identify the despot, but history tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed the Assyrian Empire. So, the despot was King Nebuchadnezzar.

Next, Yahweh said the cedar tree would be destroyed "according to its wickedness." He would destroy the proud Assyrian Empire according to the degree of its wickedness. This is a reminder that God judges a nation when it becomes to wicked.

This is another reminder that there are degrees of sin. Some sins are worse than others. For example, the unpardonable sin is the worst of all sins for it sends a person to hell (Matthew 12:30-32). There is a sin that will cause you to die (1 John 5:16-17). Genesis 18:20 says that homosexuality is an exceedingly grave sin. Other sins will result in sickness (James 5:13-16). 1 Corinthians 6:18 says that sexual immorality is a sin against one's body.

There are also degrees of punishment for more serious sins. Luke 10:13-15 and Luke 11:29-32 reveal that unbelievers will be judged more severely at the Great White Throne judgment when they stand before the Father to be judged for their sins. Pride is also a sin that can result in divine punishment. Why?

Because it is sinful for a person to take credit for what God has accomplished (Psalm 127:1). It is a sin to not thank Him.

In Ezekiel God has already prophesied against seven proud nations and then destroyed them. God does the same to individuals. A serious example to remember is that God humbled King Herod when he accepted the praise of people when they said he was a god. Acts 12:21-23 says immediately he was eaten by worms.

Ezekiel 31:12-14 continues describing the destruction of Assyria.

Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it; on the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade and left it. On its ruin all the birds of the heavens will dwell, and all the beasts of the field will be on its fallen branches so that all the trees by the waters may not be exalted in their stature, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand erect in their height. For they have all been given over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit. Ezekiel 31:12-14 (NASB)

Verse 12 is about alien tyrants. It says, "Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it." This means the allies of the Assyrian Empire turned against it and plundered it like thieves after it was defeated. Here they are pictured cutting up the cedar tree. The sawed-off pieces fell down into the ravines and the wood was carried away. The alien tyrants were like vultures. So after the empire was defeated, it was stripped of its wealth.

Verse 13 describes the people plundering the defeated empire. Then in verse 14 we are told that when Yahweh destroyed the Assyrian Empire, He wanted all of the other trees or nations to "not be exalted in their stature." That is, do not be proud. For just as God judges proud individuals, He also judges proud nations! This gives us the first principle from this passage. When God judges a nation or a person, He desires that other nations and people will fear being proud and wicked. For example, 1 Timothy 5:20 is about the elders in a church. Here is the passage,

Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. 1 Timothy 5:20 (NASB)

Before we leave verse 14, this passage refers to the pit. Normally, it refers to the place where the unrighteous dead go. But here it refers to the grave because a pit was dug into the ground and a dead body was placed into it. The message is these allies will be placed into a pit and not a pyramid.

SO GOD WILL HUMILIATE PHARAOH AND EGYPT (v 15-18). The third section is verses 15-18. The section is titled “So God Will Humiliate Pharaoh and Egypt.” Verse 15 says,

Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day when it went down to Sheol I caused lamentations; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers. And its many waters were stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it.” Ezekiel 31:15 (NASB)

Now Yahweh states that on the day the Assyrian Empire was destroyed and plundered, He called for lamentations or mourning to occur for the empire. He also called for lamentations for Israel, Tyre, and Egypt. Now we learn God also did it for Assyria! Why? Because the Assyrian Empire was proud and wicked. Who would have believed that such a great and powerful nation as Assyria would be destroyed? But Yahweh did it.

In verses 16-17 Yahweh continues speaking.

I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath. 17 They also went down with it to Sheol to those who were slain by the sword; and those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations. Ezekiel 31:16-17 (NASB)

Yahweh says He caused other things to happen. He made nations “quake” or “tremble.” When Assyria was destroyed, the leaders, soldiers, and many people were killed and went to Sheol, the place of the dead, or into a pit in the ground. It was a massive slaughter by the most ruthless of nations.

Verse 18 is the climax of the prophecy.

““To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword. So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!” declares the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 31:18 (NASB)

Now Yahweh asked a question directed to Pharaoh Hophra and the hordes of Egypt, “To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness?” Notice that Yahweh did not ask if they were equal to the Assyrian empire. The implication is that Pharaoh Hophra and the hordes of Egypt were inferior to the Assyrian Empire and to all the trees in Eden. This is a humbling statement. Yahweh knows how to humble nations,

But it gets worse. Yahweh adds, “Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword.” Since the Egyptians greatly valued circumcision of the males, they considered the uncircumcised to be inferior. So notice, what Yahweh did. He said you will lie down in the grave with the uncircumcised. So, not only were the Egyptians inferior but they will lie next to the uncircumcised in the grave. Then Yahweh ends the allegory with, “So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!” declares the Lord GOD.” The message is this will happen to you. You will join those you despised in the grave.

CONCLUSION. In summary, God’s purpose in giving this prophecy was to tell Egypt and other nations that no matter how great a nation may believe it is, God will punish and humiliate it if it becomes a wicked nation. When He punishes it, the destruction will be according to their wickedness. For Isaiah 14:27 says,

“For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?” Isaiah 14:27 (NASB)