

The Death and Eternity of Pharaoh and the People of Egypt

This study in the book of Ezekiel is very unusual. I have never before encountered a passage of Scripture like this one. So, before we start digging into the passage, I want to first lay some background.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that God made man in His own image. Then Genesis 1:27 repeats the message that God made man in His own image when it says,

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NASB)

That is a terse summary of the creation of man. In Genesis 2

we are given an expanded version of how God created the first male and female. Now we are never told what Scripture means when it says God made man in His image. But we believe it means that we have intellect, will, and emotions just as God does. We were

also given dominion over the planet earth. But it also is clear from chapter 3 that God allowed or gave man the freedom to choose to sin. Genesis 3:1-7 then gives us horrible news. We are told Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The reason that is horrible news is that Genesis 2:17 says God told Adam that in the day that he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. When he disobeyed, he caused

both himself and his wife, Eve, to die. We usually think that means they would eventually become old and die a physical death. But there was more that happened than just dying physically. They died in three ways.

First, they lost their spiritual relationship with God. Genesis 3:8-11 says that when God visited them in the garden after they had eaten, they were afraid of Him. That is why we are afraid of God today when we sin. In our conscience we know when we have done something wrong. Then we are told they hid themselves from God when He came walking in the garden of Eden. I believe His appearance was a theophany of Christ or a Christophany. Also, we are told they knew they

were naked and they started blaming others for their disobedience. Rather than honestly admitting their own sin, they wanted God to think they were perfect—they had not sinned.

As a result, they lost the Garden of Eden and their face-to-face relationship

and conversations that they once enjoyed with God. The last three verses of Genesis 3 state that God drove man out the Garden of Eden. Losing the relationship with God they once had is the first way Adam and Eve died. Nor can we have that type of relationship with God because Ephesians 2:1-2 says,

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you for-



merly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB)

The only way we experience the relationship they once had with God is to believe in and trust Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Then someday when we die, we will see Him face-to-face in heaven. In fact, Revelation 21:2-3 says that God will dwell with believers in the eternal heaven.

The second way Adam and Eve died was that they lost their eternal life and were destined to spend eternity in hell or the lake of fire. But God had a plan to rescue them and their descendants so He promised them that a male offspring would become the Savior of the world, the perfect Lamb of God who takes away our sins. He would save those who believe in the Messiah—the Christ. That promise was first given in Genesis 3:15 when God was speaking to the serpent. I believe that Adam and Eve understood and believed that would occur and we will see them in heaven one day.

The third way Adam and Even died is that they began to die physically. Genesis 5:3-5 says that Adam did not live forever. His body was designed to live forever, but he only lived nine hundred and thirty years and died. What a sad conclusion to such an incredible beginning of life. We can imagine all of the regrets, sorrow, and sleepless nights that couple experienced. We can imagine the remorse Eve felt for wanting to eat the forbidden fruit. No wonder so many men hate vegetables and fruit!

They died in three ways. 1) They lost their relationship with God, 2) were temporarily destined to eternal punishment, and 3) died physically. They experienced the pain and suffering of old age and death. They died three ways.

Now you probably wonder why I began this study with a theology lesson about how Adam and Eve died due to their sin of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first reason is so that everyone will understand what it means that we are dead when we are born into this world. The second reason I began this way is that our study is about both physical and spiritual death.

DEATH OF PHARAOH AND THE EGYPTIANS (v 1-10). Our study in Ezekiel 32:1-32 has three sections. The first section is verses 1-10. It is a lament or mourning about the death

of Pharaoh king of Egypt. The first verse gives us the date that Yahweh gave the prophecy to the prophet Ezekiel. It says,

In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying . . . Ezekiel 32:1a (NASB)

Since the Jewish or Hebrew calendar was a lunar based calendar and the first month of the Hebrew year was Nisan, which corresponds to March and April in our calendar, the date is somewhere in March or April of the year 585 B.C. Once again, the date is relative to the first year of King Jehoiachin's exile to the city of Babylon. This means the prophecy was given about five to sixth months after the Babylonian army had conquered the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Verse 2 tells us that the prophecy is a lamentation or a mourning over the Pharaoh of Egypt. It is also another allegory. The book of Ezekiel has many allegories.

“Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him,

**‘You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations,
Yet you are like the monster in the seas;
And you burst forth in your rivers
And muddied the waters with your feet
And fouled their rivers.’” Ezekiel 32:1b-2 (NASB)**

Yahweh told Pharaoh that he thinks he is like a young lion. A young lion would have had great strength compared to an older lion. Yet, Yahweh said instead he was like a monster in the seas. When he entered the rivers, he would burst forth or rush into the river, muddy the waters with its feet, and foul the rivers. The description most likely refers to a crocodile. Crocodiles rush into rivers by swiftly moving their feet and in the process muddy the waters, otherwise, the description is that of a sea monster.

Verses 3-8 now describe Pharaoh's death.

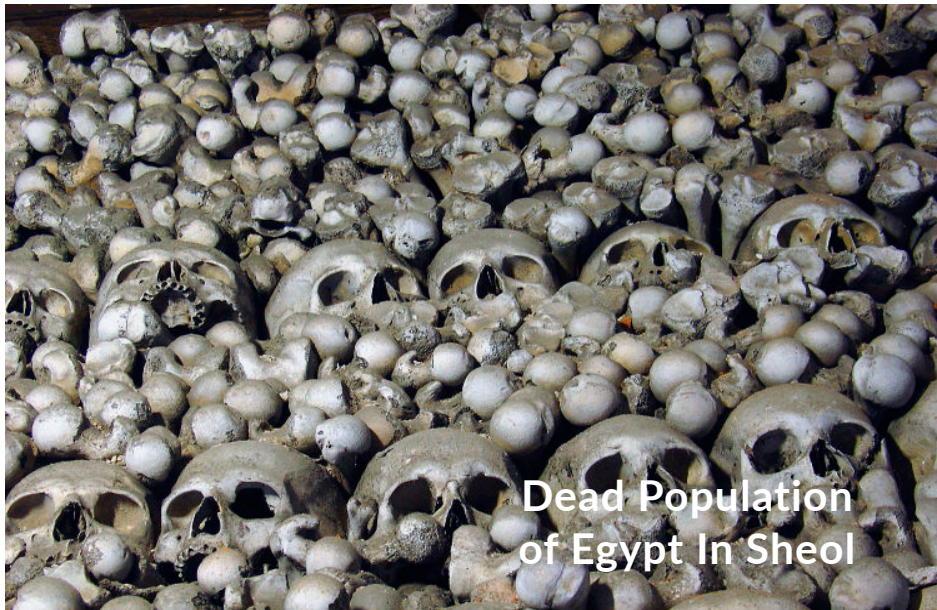
Thus says the Lord GOD,

**“Now I will spread My net over you
With a company of many peoples,
And they shall lift you up in My net.**

“I will leave you on the land;
 I will cast you on the open field.
 And I will cause all the birds of the heavens to dwell on you,
 And I will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with you.
 “I will lay your flesh on the mountains
 And fill the valleys with your refuse.
 “I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood
 As far as the mountains,
 And the ravines will be full of you.
 “And when I extinguish you.

“I will cover the
 heavens and darken
 their stars;
 I will cover the sun
 with a cloud
 And the moon will
 not give its light.
 All the shining
 lights in the heav-
 ens
 I will darken over
 you
 And will set dark-
 ness on your land,”
 Declares the Lord
 GOD

Ezekiel 32:3-8 (NASB)



Dead Population
 of Egypt In Sheol

That agrees with what we are told here. Yahweh said I will spread My net over you with the help of many people and then leave you on the land. Then verses 4-7a describe the animal’s death on the open field. The birds and animals will eventually eat the animal for a meal. The description is symbolic. It is an allegory, but the message is clear. Yahweh would have Pharaoh killed. The last part of verses 7 and 8 appears to refer to the deaths of Pharaoh and the people of Egypt. When we die, we no longer see anything (Job 10:21). The grave is darkness and

gloom. The body is dead.

Verses 9-10 reveal that Yahweh planned to cause the surrounding nations to become appalled, or horrified, fearful, and tremble when the Babylonian army invaded Egypt

and killed Pharaoh. Most likely the other nations responded this way because they did not know what King Nebuchadnezzar would do next.

DEATHS OF PHARAOH AND THE EGYPTIANS (v 11-16).

Verses 11-16 are the second section of the chapter. It reveals the army that will kill Pharaoh and the massive population of Egypt. I will not read the verses. Instead, I will just summarize them. Verses 11-12 reveal the army that will do the killing is the Babylonian army led by King Nebuchadnezzar. His army is called “the mighty ones” and the “tyrants” in verses 11-12. The soldiers were the tyrants of the nations.

Verses 13-14 states they would humble Egypt and destroy Pharaoh, the population, all the animals, and leave the land desolate. The result would be that the waters would become

When verse 3 refers to a net being spread over this animal, that is how crocodiles were hunted in Egypt at that point in history. Diodorus Siculus (80–20 B.C.) tells us that Egyptians captured crocodiles in the Nile River by using very heavy nets. He wrote,

In early times the Egyptians used to catch these [crocodiles] with hooks baited with the flesh of pigs, but since then they have hunted them sometimes with heavy nets, as they catch some kinds of fish . . .¹

1. Diodorus Siculus. Library Of History. Loeb Classical Library edition, 1933. Book 1. Sect. 35. (penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus

Siculus/1B*.html)

calm or still because of the massive slaughter. Verse 15 adds that all that was living would be killed.

Verse 16 reminds us that this was a lamentation or a mourning the Egyptian population would chant. As they chanted this dirge, they relived these horrible events. So, Yahweh lamented the death of Pharaoh and the massive population of Egypt. We should notice that Yahweh does not strive to avoid civilian casualties in war. It was a part of judgment on the nation. Verse 16 says,

This is a lamentation and they shall chant it. The daughters of the nations shall chant it. Over Egypt and over all her hordes they shall chant it,” declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 32:16 (NASB)

LIFE AFTER DEATH (v 17-32). The third section of this chapter is actually a second prophecy in this chapter. It begins in verse 17 and ends in verse 21. It is another prophecy. It is about the hordes of the massive population of Egypt. I will read verses 17-21 and then summarize the rest of the chapter because it contains a lot of repetition.

In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and bring it down, her and the daughters of the powerful nations, to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit;

‘Whom do you surpass in beauty?

Go down and make your bed with the uncircumcised.’

They shall fall in the midst of those who are slain by the sword.

She is given over to the sword; they have drawn her and all her

hordes away. The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of

him and his helpers from the midst of Sheol, ‘They have gone

down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’” Eze-

kiel 32:17-21 (NASB)

Immediately we are told the prophecy was given about one month later in 585 B.C. following the previous one. This is the worst of all of the lamentations. This prophecy describes what life after death is like in hell. While it is focused on the massive population of Egypt and their Pharaoh, we will learn a few things.

I suspect that most of us have been to a funeral. We mourn the death of those who die and leave this life because they

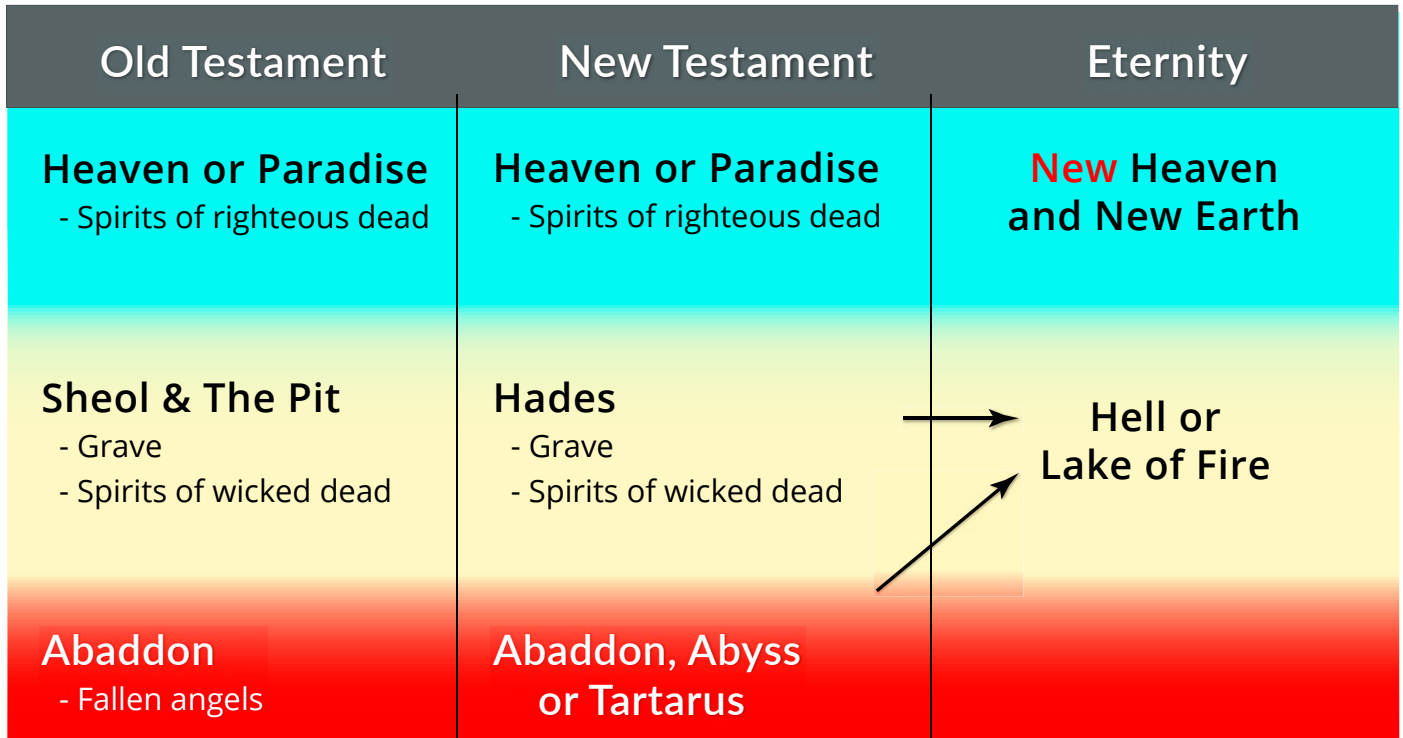
never return. In our study of Ezekiel, we have been reading about the physical deaths of Israel and seven nations for thirty-two chapters. Frankly, it has been difficult at times, but the benefit has been that we keep learning important biblical principles and discover some of the ways of God. That has helped, but the killing has been terrible. It should cause us to lament what happened.

But the description in verses 18-21 of what life is like after death for the unrighteous person who rejects God is vastly much worse. It is worse than reading about animals being killed, babies dying, and the rest of a population begin slaughtered or butchered by tyrants of a ruthless and fearsome army.

Verses 17-19 is powerful for it says that those who are already in Sheol will taunt Pharaoh, his hordes, and “the daughters of Egypt,” or her allies. The taunt is “Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down and make your bed with the uncircumcised.” It is a question that implies Egypt and its allies were not more beautiful than any other nation. It was a greeting from hell. It was a welcome from the nether world and the pit. Verse 21 adds that the strong among the mighty ones already in hell would welcome them from the midst of Sheol. This reveals that there is hierarchy among those in hell, almost like a gang. If so, the gang controls hell and the prophecy said these mighty ones would taunt Pharaoh, the hordes of Egypt, and her allies. They will taunt with the words, “They have gone down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.” From an Egyptian perspective, that would be disgusting. So after the Egyptians, Pharaoh, and their allies die, their spirits will be sent to the nether world or Sheol and join the spirits of other wicked dead already in the pit or the grave—the uncircumcised dead and those slain by the sword of other nations.

Verses 22-30 tell us which nations will taunt them. They include peoples from Assyria (v. 22), Elam (v. 24), Meshech and Tubal (v. 26), Edom, and the chiefs of the north and the Sidonians. Those in Sheol will welcome Pharaoh and his people with taunts.

This prophecy reveals that after death we will be alive and conscious. Jesus taught us the same truth in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Both men were conscious after death. The wicked rich man was in hell and righteous Lazarus was in heaven. Both of them continued to think, speak, hear, and move. The dead in this prophecy are the wicked dead who



went to hell. So, hell is not an enjoyable place. In hell the spirits of the wicked dead will harass and insult others and be harassed and insulted. They will be tormented in the flames of the eternal fire and burned by brimstone (Revelation 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). They will know what is occurring and will know one another. Eventually, hell becomes the lake of fire in Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8.

In verses 17-32, we are told that Pharaoh, the hordes of Egypt, and the people from other nations died and went to the grave. In some verses we are also told that some of the dead went to Sheol, the pit, the nether world, the remotest parts of the pit (v.18, 23), or the lower parts of the earth (v. 24). I want to briefly explain each term. We understand the word grave (v. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26) to be the place where the bodies of dead people are buried or their ashes are placed in an urn. The Hebrew word for pit normally refers to a hole in the ground (v. 18, 24, 25, 29, 30). Pits are dug and bodies are placed into what we call the grave, but it is just a dirt pit. So, there were dead from all of these nations in the grave.

In the Old Testament, Sheol (v. 21, 27) usually refers to the grave. Everyone's body goes to the grave or Sheol. Then their spirits either go to heaven or to the pit. The pit is located somewhere in Sheol or the lower parts of the earth (v. 24). The

remotest parts of the pit (v.18, 23) appears to be a distant location within the pit. Probably the more wicked dead are there. In verse 18, the netherworld appears to be Sheol.

Here in verses 21 and 27, it is clear that both the bodies of the righteous dead and the wicked dead go to Sheol, which is the grave. But the spirits of the righteous dead go to heaven. In contrast, the spirits of the wicked dead end up in the pit which is a compartment within Sheol. So, when verses 21 and 27 imply the spirits of the wicked dead are in Sheol, that is true because the pit is within Sheol. In the New Testament the pit is called hell or Gehenna. It is a place of torment by eternal fire, flames, brimstone, and darkness (Matthew 5:22; 25:30; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 16:23-24). People will be wailing from the torture of the fire and the verbal abuse of those in hell. The worst is that no one ever dies in hell.

CONCLUSION. The last two verses of the prophecy are verses 31-32. They say,

“These Pharaoh will see, and he will be comforted for all his hordes slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his army,” declares the Lord GOD. “Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down among the uncircumcised along with those slain by the sword, even Pharaoh

and all his hordes,” declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 32:31-32
(NASB)

Sadly, we are told that Pharaoh will be comforted when he knows that his hordes from Egypt are with him in Sheol and the pit. He will lie down with those whom he despised. The proud Pharaoh will be humbled.

This prophecy is incredible. It provides us insight into what the New Testament calls hell. Hell is the place where the spirits of the wicked dead go. The righteous in both the Old and New Testaments go to heaven or paradise. So, hell is a horrible place. There the wicked dead will suffer torment for eternity. It is their just reward for rejecting God, not repenting of their sins, and refusing to trust Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. I trust that you have asked Christ to forgive your sins and take you to heaven when you die and your body enters the grave.