

Handout: Ezekiel Lesson 11

On the empire of the Egyptians: ... *they too were very powerful, destroying their adversaries like an inundation, and rendering them totally undone. They themselves would be subject to an inundation from him and would be crushed; and not they alone ...*

Theodoret, Bishop of Cry (393-466)

Now the city [Jerusalem] was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah ... he set fire to the temple in the fifth month, the first day of the month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, and in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar; he also burnt the palace, and overthrew the city.

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.8.135, 146

In 31:1-18, Ezekiel gives Oracle 5 of the 7 Egyptian oracles. He introduces the oracle with the date notice (equates to May/June 587 BC, a month before the fall of Jerusalem) followed by the word-event formula (*the word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows*). It also has the divine announcement formula in verses 10 and 15 (*The Lord Yahweh says this...*) that identifies the divisions in the oracle and the signature formula in verse 18 (*declares the Lord Yahweh*) that concludes the oracle. The “great tree” in the oracle is a symbolic image of the Egyptian Pharaoh:

Part 1: the allegorical poem of the great tree (verses 2b-9)

Part 2: the indictment and judgment against the great tree (verses 10-14)

Part 3: the descent of the great tree to Sheol (verses 15-18)

32:19-32, Egypt will join the nations and their warriors in Sheol who were destroyed in previous wars:

-Assyria occupies first place for *spread terror through the world of the living*. The Babylonians conquered Assyria and Media during the period 627-609 BC.

-Isaiah portrays the Elamites as a fierce people skilled in archery and chariotry who destroyed everything in their path, showing no mercy (Is 22:6; Jer 49:35-39). The Assyrians destroyed Elam in the mid-7th century BC.

-Meshech and Tubal were two kingdoms in Asia Minor that were probably conquered by Assyria. They also *spread terror through the world of the living*.

-The Babylonians conquered Edom and they assisted Babylon in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

-“All the princes of the north” probably refer to the Aramaean tribes and city-states.

-Sidon was Tyre’s sister city-state on the Mediterranean coast conquered by Babylon.

-Egypt and her Pharaoh join the ranks of the dishonored in Sheol.

With the completion of Ezekiel’s Oracles Against the Nations, Chapter 33, begins a new phase in his ministry with seven oracles in Chapters 33-39. Once Ezekiel hears about the fall of Jerusalem (33:21-22), his mission changes. He receives oracles and visions of the restoration of Israel (33:21-39:29) and visions associated with the Temple (Chapters 40-48). Following the announcement of Jerusalem’s fall, the prophetic word formulas identify seven oracles associated with the purification of the land and the restoration of the covenant people in Chapters 33-39.

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Oracles after the fall of Jerusalem in Chapters 33-39:

- Oracle 1 in 33:1-20
- Oracle 2 in 33:23-33
- Oracle 3 in 34:1-31
- Oracle 4 in 35:1-36:15
- Oracle 5 in 36:16-38
- Oracle 6 in 37:15-28
- Oracle 7 in 38:1-39:29

Between the first and second oracles, Ezekiel receives the message announcing Jerusalem's capture and destruction by the army of Babylon (33:21-22). Between the sixth and seventh oracles (37:1-14), Ezekiel receives the vision of the dry bones (37:1-28). In the first Oracle (33:1-20) Ezekiel receives the same mission statement that he received after his inaugural vision in 3:17-21 and in almost identical words.

After word-event formula in verse 1, the oracle in 33:2-20 divides into three parts:

Part 1: The oracle begins with Yahweh listing the duties and responsibilities of a watchman, and continues with Ezekiel's duties as a watchman to the exiles (33:2-9).

Part 2: God calls for the repentance and conversion of the exiles (33:10-11).

Part 3: God addresses personal accountability for sins and acceptance of His justice (33:12-20).

In Oracle 1 (33:1-20), God recommissions Ezekiel as the "Watchman," but this time his mission is to the Jews in exile. God lists Ezekiel's responsibility to sinners in two steps:

1. If Ezekiel fails to warn the sinner and the sinner forfeits his life because of his sins, Yahweh will hold Ezekiel responsible.

2. However, if Ezekiel fulfills his duty to the sinner by warning him of the consequence of his sins, Ezekiel saves his life even if the sinner fails to repent and forfeits his life.

Oracle 2 in Chapter 33:23-33 divides into two parts:

Part 1: The continued ravaging of the holy land of Israel by the unrepentant Judahites the Babylonians left behind and God's judgment on them (33:23-29).

Part 2: The exiles' realization that Ezekiel is a true prophet of Yahweh (33:30-33)

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