

CHAPTER 29

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king; next follow four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them. Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it; and therefore, whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophecies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the 10th year of the captivity (v. 1), the second in the 27th (v. 17), the third in the 11th year and the first month (30:20), the fourth in the 11th year and the third month (31:1), the fifth in the 12th year (32:1), and another in the same year (v. 17). In this chapter we have,

- I.** The destruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel (v. 1-7).
- II.** The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold (v. 8-12).
- III.** A promise of the restoration thereof, in part, after forty years (v. 13-16).
- IV.** The possession that should be given to Nebuchadnezzar of the land of Egypt (v. 17-20).
- V.** A promise of mercy to Israel (v. 21).

~~391~~ EZEKIEL 29:1-7

THE RUIN OF PHARAOH

Here is,

I. The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the *tenth year of the captivity*, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because, in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his service

against Tyre; and *therefore* the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem and raise the siege (²⁴⁷⁵Jeremiah 37:5), but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failing of all our creature-confidences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them, that we may *cease from man*.

II. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against *Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt*, v. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it began to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

III. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the reigning Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a *great dragon*, or crocodile, that *lies in the midst of his rivers*, as Leviathan in the waters, to *play therein*, v. 3. Nilus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt, in God's account, but a *great dragon*, venomous and mischievous? Therefore says God, *I am against thee. I am above thee*; so it may be read. How high soever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a *higher than they* (²⁴⁷⁸Ecclesiastes 5:8), a God above them, that can control them, and, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God against them, that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He *lies in the midst of his rivers*, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he says, *My river is my own*. He boasts that he is an absolute prince (his subjects are his vassals; Joseph bought them long ago, ²⁴⁷³Genesis 47:23), — that he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in the government nor competitor for it, — that he is out of debt (what he has is his *own*, and none of his neighbours have any demands upon him), — that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have we have only the use of it, the property is in God. We ourselves are not our own, but his. Our *tongues are not our own*, ²⁴⁷⁴Psalm 12:4. Our river is not *our own*, for its springs are in God. The most potent prince cannot call what he has his own, for, though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd: *My river is my own*, for *I have*

made it for myself. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author and the end of his own being and felicity. He only that is the great Creator can say of this world, and of every thing in it, *I have made it for myself.* He calls his river his own because he *looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago,* ^{<2321>} Isaiah 22:11. What we have we have received from God and must use for God, so that we cannot say, We made it, much less, We made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man, to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, v. 4, 5.

(1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has *a hook and a cord* for this *leviathan*, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can (^{<3411>}Job 41:1): “*I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency and placest such a confidence.*” Herodotus related of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes that he said that *God himself would not cast him out of his kingdom;* but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy.

(2.) *All his fish* shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a dependence on him, as he thought, but really such as he had dependence upon. These shall *stick to his scales*, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But,

(3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be *meat to the beasts and fowls*, v. 5. Now this is supposed to have had its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Aricius king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces were put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left *thrown into the wilderness, he and all the fish of the river* with him. Thus issue men's pride, and presumption, and carnal security. Thus

men justly lose what they might call their own, under God, when they call it their own against him.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people. They encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them (v. 6, 7): *Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. They pretended to be a staff for them to lean upon, but, when any stress was laid upon them, they were either weak and could not or treacherous and would not do that for them which was expected. They broke under them, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they rent their shoulder and made all their loins to be at a stand.* The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which, when he failed to do, to any purpose, it could not but put them into a great consternation. God had told them, long since, that the Egyptians were broken reeds, ^{<2306>}Isaiah 30:6, 7. Rabshakeh had told them so, ^{<2306>}Isaiah 36:6. And now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is and will be the avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

^{<3208>}EZEKIEL 29:8-16

FALL AND RESTORATION TO EGYPT

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy,

I. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them is their pride, v. 9. They said, *The river is mine and I have made it;* therefore their land shall spue them out.

1. God is against them, both against the king and against the people, *against thee and against thy rivers*. Waters signify *people and multitudes*, ⁶⁷⁵Revelation 17:15.

2. Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them to destroy *both man and beast*, the sword of civil war.

3. The country shall be depopulated. The *land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste* (v. 9), the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited. The wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It *shall be utterly waste (wastes of waste, so the margin reads it), and desolate* (v. 10); *neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited* (v. 11); it shall be *desolate in the midst of the countries that are so*, v. 12. This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, *from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia*. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation.

4. The people shall be dispersed and scattered among the nations (v. 12), so that those who thought the balance of power was in their hand should now become a contemptible people. Such a fall does a haughty spirit go before.

II. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, v. 13. Egypt shall lie *desolate forty years* (v. 12) and then *I will bring again the captivity of Egypt*, v. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished,

1. That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to *return to the land of their habitation*, and give them a settlement there again, v. 14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever, no, not with them in this world.

2. That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be *a kingdom* again, but it shall be the *basest of the kingdoms* (v. 15); it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests

as formerly; it shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but, to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified: —

(1.) That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not *exalt itself above the nations*, nor *rule over the nations*, as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but of other nations.

(2.) That it may not deceive the people of God (v. 16): *It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel*; they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that *brings their iniquity to remembrance*, that is, provokes God to punish them not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or it *puts them in mind* of their idolatries to return to them, *when they look* to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are often *therefore* ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once *gave Egypt for their ransom* (^{288B} Isaiah 43:3) will now give Egypt for their cure; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks those creature-stays which we lean too much upon, and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.

~~287~~ EZEKIEL 29:17-21

A PROMISE TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquest of the Ammonites and Moabites and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years

in the siege of Tyre. During all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenians and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him that that utter destruction of Egypt which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is laid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophrah, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold ^{<448>}Jeremiah 44:30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold ^{<449>}Jeremiah 43:10. Observe,

I. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him *that land*, that he might *take the spoil and prey* of it, v. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey. He subdued it with very little difficulty; the blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconsiderable. But it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. *En! quo discordia cives perduxit miseros — What wretchedness does civil discord bring!* Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should *array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd puts on his coat*, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

II. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a recompence to him for the hard service with which he had caused his army to serve against Tyre, v. 18, 20.

1. The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work; it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure. It held out thirteen years; all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this

as! In prosecuting this siege *every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled*, with carrying burdens and labouring in the water when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. Those that have much to do in the world find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But,

2. In this service God own that they *wrought for him*, v. 20. He set them at work, for the humbling of a proud city and its king, though *they meant not so, neither did their heart think so*, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are *working for him* even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God overrule all to his own glory. Yet,

3. For this service he had *no wages nor his army*. He was at a vast expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ship their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. Therefore,

4. He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any service they do for him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought. The service done for him by worldly men, with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them. *Verily they have their reward*. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's *full reward*, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that he became the *head of gold*.

III. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was in the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he ran mad (Can. 4), was so seven years, and

within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was at the highest Israel was at the lowest; then were they in the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but *in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth*, v. 21. The day of their deliverance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage, in the honour that shall be done,

1. To their princes; they are the *horns of the house of Israel*, the seat of their glory and power. These began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel *sat in the gate of the city; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were set over the affairs of the province* (^{200B}Daniel 2:49); these were all *of the king's seed, and of the princes*, ^{200B}Daniel 1:3. And it was within a year after the conquest of Egypt that they were thus preferred; and, soon after, three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the *budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel*. And, some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, ^{252B}Jeremiah 52:31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens.

2. To their prophets. And *I will give thee the opening of the mouth*. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies, after this, are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness, when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlarges the liberties of his ministers and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.