

Message #34

Ezekiel 31:1-18

Less than two months after God said Babylon would destroy Egypt (30:20), God gave another prophetic message. This one came on June 21, 587 B.C., which was the eleventh year in the third month on the first day. This revelation came about 20 years after Assyria had been completely obliterated.

Ezekiel was told to address Pharaoh, the king of Egypt and all those aligned with him. This is the way this begins in **verse 2** and it is the way it ends in **verse 18**.

Now the Egyptians believed they were invincible. They were proud and arrogant. They saw themselves as the dominant force of the world. In fact, God says in **verse 2** ask Pharaoh a question, "Whom are you like in your greatness?" Now the reason why God did this was because Pharaoh saw himself as a great, majestic, sovereign power. There was none greater or bigger.

So God decided to send Pharaoh a message, by using what happened to Assyria as an example. From about 911 B.C. to 605 B.C., the Assyrian nation was the dominant power of the Middle Eastern world. She was once powerful and proud.

She controlled territory that included the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. She controlled territory from Iraq, to Turkey to Egypt. She appeared to be unstoppable. She attacked one territory after another. She burned down cities and she tortured people. Nothing looked like it could stop Assyria. But God could and did. He wanted this arrogant Pharaoh to remember that.

But when you go down through this, you can use any nation or individual who sees himself in the same proud and arrogant way. The metaphor God uses is Assyria, but it is about more than just that nation.

ANY ARROGANT POLITICAL POWER WHO DEMEANS ISRAEL WILL BE COMPLETELY OVERTHROWN AND BROUGHT TO NOTHING BY GOD JUST LIKE ASSYRIA.

Now what God does in **verse 3** is compare Egypt with Assyria. God was going to do the same thing to Pharaoh that He did to Assyria. At this point, God had already destroyed Assyria, so He uses her as an example of what He would do to Pharaoh. This would be meaningful to the Egyptians for at least three reasons:

- 1) Assyria had previously invaded Egypt and massacred many Egyptians in 633 B.C. (Nahum 3:8-10). Assyria did destroy the capital of Thebes.
- 2) Assyria had been destroyed by Babylon and it would be Babylon that would be used by God to attack Egypt.

3) Assyria had been a proud and arrogant power, just like this Pharaoh.

Assyria was a proud and powerful nation but God brought her down. God had used Babylon to topple Assyria. He would do the same thing to Pharaoh. Because of his arrogant pride, God would drop her.

So God uses what He did to Assyria as an example of what He will do to Egypt. This is what God will do to any power or person who sees themselves as some high and mighty power.

ALLEGORICAL POINT #1 – Assyria was at one time the most dominant power in the world.
31:1-9

At the height of Assyria's power, she dominated the Middle East. Ezekiel makes some key points concerning Assyria:

Point #1 - At one time Assyria was like a cedar in Lebanon. **31:3-4**

Moshe Greenberg makes an interesting point when he says that Pharaoh was so arrogant that he didn't even compare himself to another human, so God used a cedar tree (*Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 637).

The cedar tree is the most majestic tree there was in the Middle East. It grew to great heights and the branches were long and thick. There was an enormous trunk on the tree. The cedars of Lebanon were the most majestic trees of all.

The beauty of the tree is seen in the branches. The branches were long and strong. In fact, this tree was known to be the tallest and the strongest (Jud. 9:15; Ezra 3:7; Ps. 92:12)

It was a beautiful tree with beautiful long branches. She offered shade to the neighbors. It was known worldwide as the tallest and strongest tree in existence.

Its roots were deep and it was able to draw water from subterranean moisture that was deep in the ground and, as a result, it grew to be tall and strong. While other trees barely survived, this one flourished.

Assyria was like that once. She was known worldwide to be the strongest and tallest power on earth.

H. A. Ironside brings out an interesting point. He said this image was not only used of Assyria, but also of Babylonia and also a similar figure was used by Jesus Christ pertaining to the church. The Church grew to become something that God never intended. It became corrupt and political and was like a tree that housed every evil bird imaginable.

Point #2 - At one time Assyria was the tallest and loftiest power in existence. **31:5**

The cedars towered higher than all the other trees. The tree of Assyria was more impressive than all the trees in the Garden of Eden. The tree was not in the Garden of Eden, which actually means it was not nearly as blessed as it considered itself to be. Being in Eden meant one was right with God. Being out of Eden meant one was not right with God.

Now the Garden of Eden originally existed somewhere between the Tigris and Euphrates (Gen. 2:14) and Assyria controlled this part of the world.

But this tree was fed by many waters. Many Gentile nations fed into the welfare of the Assyrians.

But this kind of thinking that our tree is more loftier than the trees in Eden is very arrogant. God was the one who made the trees on day three of His creation (Gen. 1:12). Just because a tree had grown taller than when created does not negate the fact that without God, the tree would not even be in existence.

Point #3 - At one time Assyria dominated the entire Middle East and its neighbors. **31:6**

God let Assyria rule the other nations. From a small beginning, God let this power grow and become a vast empire. All nations sought shelter and protection from her. Many nations considered their Assyrian existence to be home. The image of “birds” and “beasts” refers to various nations and powers who associated themselves with the Assyrians.

Point #4 - At one time Assyria was beautiful and great. **31:7-8**

At the time, there was not another power on earth that came close to her beauty and power. According to **verse 8** the trees that God had in His Garden of Eden were no match for this tree. In fact, no other trees made by God were as beautiful and as great as the cedar.

Point #5 - At one time Assyria was made great by God. **31:9**

When God permitted Assyria to rise to power, there had been no power like it. The Egyptians did not have the power of the Assyrians. The greatness was God’s doing. Assyria felt their greatness was due to them. But the truth is God was actually the one who made Assyria great. He blessed it so much that the other nations were jealous of her.

ALLEGORICAL POINT #2 – Assyria became so arrogant that God destroyed her. **31:10-15**

Assyria became so proud that God decided to not only stop blessing her, but to demolish her. God aims these verses straight at the arrogant leader of Egypt.

Fact #1 - Assyria became haughty and arrogant. **31:10**

Because God had lifted up Assyria, she grew haughty. She started to think more highly of herself than she should. The nation became proud of itself and exalted itself. It lost sight of the fact that God was the one who had elevated her to power.

The sin of the Assyrians was pride. The sin of Satan was pride. The sin of the Pharaoh was pride. No matter how impressive or dominant the power, pride always goes before destruction.

Fact #2 - Assyria will be given by God to Nebuchadnezzar. **31:11**

God would not only use Nebuchadnezzar to dominate Assyria, but He would also use him to dominate Israel and then dominate Egypt.

The capital of Assyria was Nineveh and God caused Nabopolassar (Nebuchadnezzar's father) to take that city in 612 B.C.. Then God caused Nebuchadnezzar to take the rest of Assyria in 609 B.C..

God literally took away Assyria's greatness. He brought her down from her privileged position. Just as He exalted her, so He decided to drop her.

Notice carefully who it is that is causing all of this to happen. This is all caused by God. God says, "I will" do this.

God is using a ruthless Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

Fact #3 - Assyria will be infiltrated by aliens. **31:12a**

God brought the most ruthless and foreign nations and tyrants into the land of Assyria under the Babylonian control and they cut down Assyria like a chopped down tree. God can sovereignly cause foreign things to dominate people.

Fact #4 - Assyria will be abandoned by all the people. **31:12b**

All those who once depended on her left her and abandoned her.

Fact #5 - Assyria will be inhabited by birds and beasts. **31:13**

God's blessings will not dominate Assyria, birds and beasts will.

Fact #6 - Assyria will not flourish again. **31:14-15**

Assyria has had a goal of being the dominant power in the Middle East but she will not succeed. God says I am the one who is causing you to mourn. Assyria never did rise again to power. The people scattered to Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. They have never flourished to this day.

ALLEGORICAL POINT #3 – Assyria will be brought to the grave. **31:16-18**

We may observe in **verses 15 to 18** the word “sheol” is used three times. Proud and arrogant people are heading to Hell.

God says I will bring the nation to death and to the pit. Psalm 9:17 says the wicked will return to Sheol or Hell, **even all the nations who forget God.**

This nation that once saw itself as a strong cedar will be chopped down and brought down and burned and then where will its greatness be?

It will not be able to compare itself to Eden anymore because all trees that exist in Eden will flourish. But you will be in Sheol.

Now in **verse 18**, Ezekiel brings it right back to Egypt. He is basically saying this is what is going to happen to you.

There are those who live their lives in total arrogant defiance of God and His Word. God will ultimately destroy them.

The most arrogant thing that any can do is to trust in their own greatness and goodness to go to heaven. Any who proudly trusts in themselves will end up in hell.