

1. My title for this lesson is "understanding why people are sent to hell." It's important to ask that question if for no other reason, to avoid it for ourselves. ☺ It's not as simple as "accepting Jesus or not accepting Jesus". We're in the Old Testament and the issue is why people turn from God. In the New Testament times, it would apply to judgment of those who never heard of Jesus.
 - a) Remember this is the final of three lessons dealing with the issue of "Salvation and the Gentiles in the Old Testament". From Chapters 25 through 32, are messages to seven countries (or city-states) that surround Israel.
 - b) If you just read these studies as being about the fate of people who lived long ago around Israel, than you have missed the key point of these messages.
 - i) Yes, these messages are written "to" and about these people. God intended for these messages to be studied about what God He of people regarding salvation.
 - ii) When it comes to salvation today, the key issue is did one accept Jesus as their Savior and what one does with their salvation. For the nonbeliever who is not familiar with Jesus, we'll read of God's condemning judgment in this lesson.
2. This lesson covers four chapters all on the topic of Egypt. That country was the greatest power ever in the history of the Middle East as they dominated that area for millennia. Even Rome in all its glory had greater territory, but the length of time that Rome ruled that area is still much less than the time frame that Egypt was the central power of that region.
 - a) The focus is on the sins of Egypt and its leader called Pharaoh. These chapters not only describe their downfall, but there is text describing their future in hell.
 - b) Remember this lesson is the final part of a three-lesson section describing the fate of seven nations around Israel. Ezekiel spends as much text on Egypt as he did on the other six nations combined. That is probably due to Egypt's great power and the fact that their leader "Pharaoh" is an example of a leader not giving God the credit for his success.
 - c) Let's face it; most of us will never be the leader of a great empire or some sort of great political or business leader. One's "position" is not the point. One can be self-centered on one's one "pride" no matter what is one's status in life. To give ourselves the credit and not God for our success is the downfall (yes, hell) of any person, regardless of stature.
 - d) One more thing on hell: If you survey most people today, they will say they deserve to go to heaven because they believe their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, as if God works on some sort of sliding scale. The problem with "the sliding scale view" is one never knows what it takes to be saved. If we know God has a standard of perfection, then we know what it takes to be admitted into heaven. If that is true, one has to be perfectly forgiven and it has nothing to do with "good deeds outweighing bad deeds". This is why having Jesus pay the price for our sins is a necessity to be in heaven.
3. It's time for a quick Egypt history lesson:
 - a) I told myself before I started this lesson to not make this lesson all about learning the history of Egypt. However, in order to understand what Ezekiel is preaching, it is best to understand, every so briefly what Egypt was at this time and a little of their history.
 - b) One must understand that for millennia Egypt was the most powerful entity around.
 - c) Egypt dominated the region by sending out its army to surrounding places, attacking and "taking people's stuff" (to put it nicely) and they dominated that world in wealth.
 - d) For Ezekiel to predict the downfall of Egypt (which he does in this lesson) is to preach the downfall of the greatest and longest reigning power for millennia. As powerful as Tyre was at that time, they don't have the history of dominance that Egypt did. Tyre made its wealth by trade. Egypt simply dominated and controlled who ever they wanted.

- e) Remember that Ezekiel doesn't condemn Babylon as Ezekiel sees Babylon as God's instrument for judgment of these seven nations. This lesson discusses Ezekiel's prediction of Babylon defeating Egypt. Egypt then became part of the Babylonian Empire.
 - f) After the rise and fall of the Babylon Empire, came the Medo-Persian Empire. They controlled the territory conquered by Babylon including Egypt. Next came the Greeks and next came the Romans. Egypt existed, but as part of these Empires.
 - g) After the Romans, Egypt became part of the Muslim world although there is still a significant Christian population (About 10% to 15% of Egypt is Christian today). Of course, the country of Egypt exists today, but as Ezekiel correctly predicts in this lesson, they never again dominated anyone and are the "lowest" of nations.
 - h) In this lesson, I summarize a lot of details about Egypt's history. There are good bible commentaries that focus on just about every detail. My goal is to focus on applications.
4. This leads us back to Ezekiel. In this lesson we have four chapters that cover six separate visions about the country and the fall of Egypt and its leader.
- a) God "laments" their fall. As I've stated in previous lessons, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. That pattern continues here including a dirge for Egypt's fall.
 - b) The key to reading this section is not to focus on history, but to focus on what we can learn about the fall of Egypt. In summary, it is about "pride" causing their downfall.
 - c) With all that said, it's time for a trip to Egypt! ☺
5. Chapter 29, Verse 1: In the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day, the word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. ³ Speak to him and say: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: " `I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams. You say, "The Nile is mine; I made it for myself."
- a) This prediction is dated. To set the time, this is about a year after the siege of Jerusalem had begun. The actual attack of Egypt is still years away from the date of this prediction.
 - b) God, through Ezekiel compares Pharaoh to a water-based "monster". Some translations say "alligator", but the idea being conveyed is that God is insulting the Pharaoh for daring to say the "Nile is mine" as if the Pharaoh is responsible for it!
 - i) In the last lesson, we dealt with the King of Tyre who wasn't satisfied with just being a king and declared himself to be a god. We have a similar situation here with the king of Egypt (called a Pharaoh) thinks he is a god.
 - ii) Let me explain the Nile River in Egypt. The river runs north to the Mediterranean as the southern part of Egypt is mountainous. The Egypt economy keys on the Nile. It floods the desert and makes it suitable for growing grain. The Pharaoh was giving himself the credit for the river doing its "thing".
6. Verse 4: But I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales. I will pull you out from among your streams, with all the fish sticking to your scales. ⁵ I will leave you in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and not be gathered or picked up. I will give you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air.
- a) God is making a prediction through "word pictures". God is saying in effect (through Ezekiel) that He will bring down Egypt, in the sense it will be conquered.
 - b) God is comparing the Pharaoh to a great fish in the Nile River. The text says the other fish of the river will be pulled out as they are stuck to your (Pharaoh's) scales.
 - i) The idea is that since the Pharaoh will be struck down, so will Egypt's "system". The fish that are attached to the scales of the great "crocodile" refer to the people of Egypt being part of Pharaoh's system. All of this is a colorful way of God saying He will bring Pharaoh down to "nothing" and the Egyptians will fall with him.
 - c) What Ezekiel is getting at is the Babylonians will conquer Egypt. While that sounds simple to our ears, one has to remember that "nobody" conquers Egypt. It has stood as an Empire for thousands of years. Ezekiel is making a very bold prediction at this time.

7. Verse 6: Then all who live in Egypt will know that I am the LORD. "You have been a staff of reed for the house of Israel. ⁷ When they grasped you with their hands, you splintered and you tore open their shoulders; when they leaned on you, you broke and their backs were wrenched.
- a) Remember this prediction was made a year after the siege of Jerusalem had begun. If you recall, the king of Israel reached out to Egypt for protection from the Babylonians. That protection meant that Israel's king was going back on his word to be loyal to Babylon.
 - b) The point as it applies here is God calls Egypt a "staff of reed". In and near the Nile River, a lot of reeds grow. It is not a "stiff" type of wood, but one that easily bends and breaks.
 - i) God's point here is that Egypt will not be of any help to Israel as Babylon is God's chosen instrument of punishment for disobedience to Him. Just as a reed breaks really easily, so Egypt will not be of any help to Israel.
 - c) The next line has references to torn shoulders and wretched backs. What happened historically was that Egypt's attempt to help Israel turned out "useless". It is a reference to the physical pain received by both the Israelites and the Egyptians by their efforts to help.
 - d) OK John, all of this ancient history is neat. How do I apply this information?
 - i) For starters, remember that God's word is just that: God's word. If one studies the actual history of this time and region, one discovered that history happened exactly as Ezekiel predicted. These chapters give excellent support that the bible is the word of God in that it is history written in advance.
 - ii) Next, it is a reminder that God does interfere in the affairs of mankind. If God was willing to interfere in the affairs of the Middle East then, then He is also willing to interfere with our lives today.
 - iii) It is also a reminder that there is a price to be paid for not honoring the God of the Bible as the source of "all that is good". As I like to say, the price for knowing one's bible is to comprehend we are now accountable for what we have learned!
8. Verse 8: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will bring a sword against you and kill your men and their animals. ⁹ Egypt will become a desolate wasteland. Then they will know that I am the LORD. "Because you said, "The Nile is mine; I made it," ¹⁰ therefore I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush. ¹¹ No foot of man or animal will pass through it; no one will live there for forty years. ¹² I will make the land of Egypt desolate among devastated lands, and her cities will lie desolate forty years among ruined cities. And I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries.
- a) The key point of these verses is that Egypt will be "empty" for 40 years. Just as the Israelites will be kicked out for 70 years, the Egyptians will be gone for 40 years.
 - b) OK, why do the Israelites get 70 years of punishment and only 40 years for Egypt?
 - i) Let's start with Israel. There is a specific reason for the 70-year period. It is because one of the laws given to Israel is that every 7th year the Israelites were to give that land a rest from farming and planting. God said in effect if they give the land a rest every 7th year, stuff will grow on its own and it will be enough to get the Israelites through the next few years. (See 2nd Chronicles 36:21 on this point.)
 - ii) As to the Egyptians, there is a tendency in the bible to have the number 40 associate with a period of testing. For example, the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years. Jesus was tested by Satan for 40 days. Therefore, this 40-year banishment is a period of testing for the Egyptians.
 - c) Let me discuss the actual 40-year history for a moment: There was a 40-year span from when the Babylonians defeated Egypt and the time Babylon was defeated by the Persians. There are no records in Egyptian history of Egypt being emptied out for 40 years. Remember that major powers rarely record their defeats, but only their victories. Many Egyptology experts deny this happen due to a lack of Egyptian evidence of this defeat. My view is that it happened exactly as described and Egypt never recorded its defeat.

- d) God through Ezekiel states the reason for their punishment: It is because the Pharaoh said the "Nile is mine". In other words, God is going to show the Egyptians who is really the "true God" who controls everything when the leader of the Egyptians who thought of himself as a god and the Egyptians thought of Pharaoh as a god, will go down in defeat.
 - i) While the Egyptians will realize the Babylonian army defeated them, they will also realize that Pharaoh was no "god" in comparison to a true, single God that controls the fate of mankind. That is why the text says the Egyptians will know God.
 - ii) It is not that the God will pull another "Mt. Sinai" appearance for the Egyptians to know He is God. ☺ The idea is the Egyptians will realize there is a single god greater in power than all of the so called "gods" of Egypt.
 - a) One has to remember that Egypt believed in a multitude of gods. When Egypt is conquered, they will realize the futility of this multi-god system.
 - b) The text is also hinting at the fact that in the "judgment day" all people and nations will realize that the "God of the Hebrews is the true God!
 - iii) The text mentions "Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush". This is a colorful way of explaining the borders of Egypt. It would be like someone in the United States saying from "Maine to California (or Hawaii)".
 - e) One has to remember that for thousands of years, no one has ever captured Egypt to a point where Egypt was made "desolate".
 - i) Imagine a prediction where someone says the United States would be conquered and all the people would be relocated out of the land. That is the type of "scope" that Ezekiel is predicting. He is predicting the end of a very long era of time!
9. Verse 13: " `Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. ¹⁴ I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly kingdom. ¹⁵ It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations.
- a) Ezekiel is now predicting that after 40 years, Egypt will be re-established, but as a lowly kingdom that will never again rule over other nations.
 - b) So let me ask the question: Why did God allow Egypt to continue to exist while the other six nations mentioned in the last few chapters were all eventually doomed to die out? Let's face it, we don't know any Moabites or even Tyre citizens today, but we all know that Egypt is still on the map and still exists several thousand years later!
 - i) One of the reasons God did it is to validate the bible as God's truth. Here we are now over 2,500 years after this prediction and that prediction has lasted for the last 2,500 years. Egypt has never ruled over any nation in this time span and has never set up colonies in any other country.
 - ii) That prediction would be shocking in Ezekiel's time, as Egypt ruled over that area and always was a great power that ruled over a good part of the Middle East.
 - iii) I think part of the reason God kept Egypt around all of these centuries is to help validate the bible as the word of God. We can look back over the millennia and realize just how literal this prediction came true!
 - a) Suppose you had doubts about when Ezekiel was written. Let's say you think the book of Ezekiel compiled long after the time frame so the book can appear accurate in its prediction of ancient history.
 - b) However, if Ezekiel predicted one of the seven nations would survive as a lowly kingdom essentially for the rest of history. That helps to validate Ezekiel. We know for sure that Ezekiel was written centuries prior to Jesus and well, for 2,000 years since Jesus and counting, God's prediction about Egypt has stood true!

10. Verse 16: Egypt will no longer be a source of confidence for the people of Israel but will be a reminder of their sin in turning to her for help. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.¹⁸
 - a) Remember that God condemned Israel for turning to Egypt for help as opposed to just trusting in God Himself for their protection. God is saying the Israelites will know that He is "the true God" because Egypt will be destroyed the same way Jerusalem was destroyed, (by the Babylonian army).
 - b) One has to remember that Israel is unique in the sense that God wanted "His people" united in one country and wanted Israel to fully depend upon God for protection.
 - i) That does not mean individual Israelites could not live in say, Egypt for a short time span like Joseph and Mary. (See Matthew 2:13-19.) It does mean that as long as Israel is united as a country, it should look to God as its protector and not depend upon the army of Egypt or any other country for that matter.
 - ii) Christianity is different in that God calls us to spread the word about Jesus and not be united on any particular piece of real estate.
11. Verse 17: In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸ "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon drove his army in a hard campaign against Tyre; every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw. Yet he and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre. ¹⁹ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth. He will loot and plunder the land as pay for his army. ²⁰ I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts because he and his army did it for me, declares the Sovereign LORD.
 - a) Notice in Verse 17, we have a new vision with a new date stamp. Notice the date in Verse 17 is about 17 years after the date stamp of Verse 1. Since the next couple of visions pre-date this one, people wonder why Ezekiel "put this vision here out of date order". The answer might simply be to validate His prediction about the fall of Egypt and Ezekiel put this "latter" vision after the first one.
 - b) Think about this second vision this way: Ezekiel claimed to be a prophet of God. Ezekiel predicted in the first half of this chapter that God would bring down Egypt. Well, it has now been 17 years between the two visions, and "nothing has happened yet". This second vision, 17 years later gives us more details of how Babylon will take Egypt!
 - c) One has to explain this text by going back to the war between Babylon and Tyre.
 - i) When the Babylonians attacked the city of Tyre, they organized a siege that lasted for 13 years. During that 13 year time period, the citizens of Tyre managed to get most of their valuables out of the city and into other places they controlled. Therefore, when Babylon finally won that siege after 13 years, there was not much of a material reward for their victory.
 - ii) One has to remember that the way an army was paid is that the soldiers got to keep a good percentage of the "loot" they captured. Since Tyre was emptied out prior to the victory, the Babylonian army couldn't be paid. ☺
 - iii) Which leads us back to the text: God says he will give Egypt to the Babylonians as a payment for their army. In other words, God will inspire the Babylonian leaders to take the army and lead it in an attack against Egypt.
 - d) The text also says: "every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw".
 - i) Soldiers wore "heavy" (armor-based) uniforms including helmets. The point here is that the Babylonians worked hard at destroying Tyre to a point where the helmets rubbed against their heads so long it caused hair to fall out and the "shoulder pads" caused skin to be worn off. The point is the Babylonian army paid a physical price over the long war with Tyre, and got no "booty" for it.

- e) Does this mean God approves of one army attacking a city for the sake of collecting "loot"? No. It just means that God used the Babylonians as His "choice of methods" of judgment against several groups near Israel of people who thought that humans could become "god's" and for those city-countries who treated Israel as an enemy.
 - i) You may think, "Well, nobody trusts in man-made gods today". Think of people who dangle objects from their rear view mirror as a symbol of protection. Think of the people who's "end all of end all's" is their favorite movie star or sports team". Think of people who trust in their own wealth for their protection and strength.
 - ii) My point is the world is full of "man made gods". Remember that God does not condemn enjoying other activities. The key is what is our god that we trust in?
12. Verse 21: "On that day I will make a horn grow for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD."
- a) Every now and then Ezekiel gives a "Messianic" reference, if for no other reason, just to show that Jesus will be ruler over the world and not just Israel. Let me explain further:
 - b) Whenever you see the term "horn grow", know that it refers to an animal horn. Animals that have horns use that horn as a source of power. The point is God will have someone rule over the whole world one day from Israel. In that day and time, the world will know that the God of Israel is the "one true God" as a horn (ruler) will come out of Israel. Yes, it is a reference to life during the time of the Second Coming of Jesus.
13. Chapter 30, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Wail and say, "Alas for that day!" ³ For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near-- a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. ⁴ A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down.
- a) In Chapter 30, we begin a new vision. This is the only one without a date stamp. Some suspect that since it lacks a date, it came right after the vision in the end of Chapter 29.
 - b) God compares the fall of Egypt to a "day of clouds". Remember that Egypt was very dry climate and rarely got clouds, let alone rain. For Egypt to have a cloudy ("rain like") day would be a very rare event and a "sign" of something to happen.
 - c) We have the continuation of Ezekiel predicting the fall of Egypt. Cush (Verse 4) is an ancient name for Ethiopia which borders Egypt to the south..
 - d) Remember the date stamp in the middle of Chapter 29 is 17 years after the first prediction about the fall of Egypt as stated in Verse 1. Ezekiel's point here is that the fall of Egypt is about to happen "soon" and Ezekiel is not talking about some great future vision.
 - e) Ezekiel is again predicting that when Babylon attacks Egypt, Babylon will carry away Egypt's "loot". Remember that Egypt was a rich nation by attacking other lands and collecting "stuff" through the centuries.
 - f) Ezekiel is predicting the immediate fall of a great empire that lasted for milleniums!
14. Verse 5: Cush and Put, Lydia and all Arabia, Libya and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt. ⁶ " `This is what the LORD says: "The allies of Egypt will fall and her proud strength will fail. From Migdol to Aswan they will fall by the sword within her, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁷ " `They will be desolate among desolate lands, and their cities will lie among ruined cities. ⁸ Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed. ⁹ " `On that day messengers will go out from me in ships to frighten Cush out of her complacency. Anguish will take hold of them on the day of Egypt's doom, for it is sure to come. ¹⁰ " `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ¹¹ He and his army--the most ruthless of nations-- will be brought in to destroy the land. They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. ¹² I will dry up the streams of the Nile and sell the land to evil men; by the hand of foreigners I will lay waste the land and everything in it. I the LORD have spoken.

- a) So how do I get through 4 chapters in one lesson? Easy, large chunks of text. ☺
 - b) These verses focus on the allies of Egypt. When a great empire falls, so do the nations that support it. "Cush" is an ancient name for Ethiopia. Put and Lydia were smaller, neighboring tribes that benefited from Egypt's wealth and trade.
 - i) Other allies will fall too, including whoever "Migdol to Aswan" were.
 - c) A lot of this text is colorful ways of describing the downfall of Egypt as an independent power. After the Babylonians, Egypt became part of the Medo-Persian empire, then the Greek and Roman Empires. By the time Egypt once again became a separate state in relatively modern times they were the "lowest of kingdoms".
 - d) I've made statements over the past few lessons how Babylon was known in the Middle East as a ruthless conqueror. Verse 11 uses the phrase, "the most ruthless of nations".
 - i) If you recall, the Babylonians would cut up the faces of women they suspected were whores as so those women would be unattractive. (See Ezekiel 23:25).
 - ii) The people who were not killed were physically taken several hundred miles away to Babylon. We have historical evidence that the Babylonians would put hooks in the mouths of their captives to encourage them to "move along".
 - iii) Radio talk show host Dennis Prager describe a flight where he sat next to an Iraqi citizen (Babylon is part of modern Iraq.) This flight was prior to second Gulf War. Dennis asked the Iraqi to describe his country. The Iraqi man answered, "We are the most ruthless people on planet earth". I'm sure the reference had to do with the way Saddam treated his enemies. My point is there is a lot of similarity with the way the Iraqi's acted "then" and "now".
 - e) Which gets us back to the text: The main point is how God is about to end the world as Ezekiel knew it and bring down a kingdom that has existed for thousands of years. Egypt will be destroyed and empty of people for 40 years.
 - i) This gets back to the point that God does interfere in the affairs of men. Empires that we think will last forever can and do be brought down by God, often for the arrogance of thinking that "we" are god and not Him!
15. Verse 13: " `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis. No longer will there be a prince in Egypt, and I will spread fear throughout the land. ¹⁴ I will lay waste Upper Egypt, set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes. ¹⁵ I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the hordes of Thebes. ¹⁶ I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. Thebes will be taken by storm; Memphis will be in constant distress. ¹⁷ The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis will fall by the sword, and the cities themselves will go into captivity. ¹⁸ Dark will be the day at Tahpanhes when I break the yoke of Egypt; there her proud strength will come to an end. She will be covered with clouds, and her villages will go into captivity. ¹⁹ So I will inflict punishment on Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD.' "
- a) Reading these seven verses together, one can see it is all about the destruction of Egypt. The "unpronounceable" places mentioned are all cities in Egypt.
 - b) One has to imagine predicting that an entire country who is a major power not only losing a major battle, but being taken into captivity. This is a major prediction on Ezekiel's part.
 - c) The text gives details how certain cities will fall by the sword and go into captivity. If one looks at a map of ancient Egypt, these locations were all over upper and lower Egypt.
 - d) The entire paragraph can be summarized by the last line: "So I will inflict punishment on Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD.' "
 - e) This leads to one of my standard questions: How will Egypt know God was behind it?
 - i) The answer may be the unusualness of Egypt being defeated like this.
 - ii) The more likely answer will be "judgment day" where Egyptians of that time era will realize the God of the world and the God of Israel was behind this.
 - f) Ok, one more big paragraph and then I'll stop for some applications.

16. Verse 20: In the eleventh year, in the first month on the seventh day, the word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. It has not been bound up for healing or put in a splint so as to become strong enough to hold a sword. ²² Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt. I will break both his arms, the good arm as well as the broken one, and make the sword fall from his hand. ²³ I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. ²⁴ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a mortally wounded man. ²⁵ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall limp. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he brandishes it against Egypt. ²⁶ I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. Then they will know that I am the LORD."
- a) Verse 20 starts a new vision. This one is dated years prior to the last one. This vision is very similar to the last one, which is again, dated years later. I think the point is that God reassured Ezekiel that the destruction of Egypt would happen.
 - b) The main point of this vision is that the Pharaoh would lose power and would suffer a major defeat to the Babylonians. The Egyptians would be defeated in their own land.
 - c) The text mentions the Pharaoh having his arms broken. It may or may not be literal (I suspect it was literal to validate Ezekiel). The context is Pharaoh's arm will be broken and not be able to fix it or set it straight. The idea behind the prediction is that the "arm" of the Pharaoh will grow weak while the "arm" of the Babylonian leader grows stronger. It is a word picture of the Babylonians defeating Egypt.
 - d) One has to remember that the text is not saying the Babylonians are a better people than the Egyptians. It is just that at this moment in history, God uses the Babylonians to judge the nations surrounding Israel. Isaiah (Chapters 13-14) and Jeremiah (Chapters 50-51) speak of Babylonian getting their "just punishments" for their own cruelties in a later time.
 - e) Time for the big question: Why does God pick on Egypt so "heavily"? Remember there is as much text given to the defeat of Egypt as there is to the other six nations combined.
 - i) Looking at the timing, this prophecy took the longest to fulfill and I suspect that Ezekiel's audience had their doubts about Egypt being defeated so bad.
 - ii) Ezekiel's audience could believe that a mighty army like Babylon could defeat Israel and the other, relatively small surrounding countries. It is another for Babylon to defeat an "equal" in size and stature. It serves as proof of the existence and power of God.
17. Chapter 31, Verse 1: In the eleventh year, in the third month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: " `Who can be compared with you in majesty? ³ Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. ⁴ The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. ⁵ So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. ⁶ All the birds of the air nested in its boughs, all the beasts of the field gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. ⁷ It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. ⁸ The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the pine trees equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches-- no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. ⁹ I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God.
- a) Now we get another vision about two months after the last one.
 - b) God is saying how "magnificent" Egypt was as a kingdom. Egypt is compared to a tree in the Garden of Eden that is more magnificent than every other tree.

- c) Does this mean each tree in the Garden of Eden represents a nation? I don't think so, although some people have suggested as much. My personal view is that God is describing Egypt's great power and using imagery the Israelites could understand.
 - d) If you recall in the last lesson, the text not only spoke of the King of Tyre, but the spiritual force behind that king. I think the text is giving the same types of "spiritual hints" when comparing Egypt to a tree in the Garden of Eden.
 - e) A few years back, I listened to a series of lectures by an Egyptian archeologist. Over several millennia there were changes in dynasties, but the point is that Egypt remained a great power for several thousand years! For Ezekiel to predict a complete defeat and exile of Egypt may be the biggest "shocker" of all of Ezekiel's predictions.
 - i) One thing the archeologist stated is that the early dynasties had Egypt worshipping a single god and that later changed into the "multi-god" system. There may have been a time in very early Egyptian history (long before Abraham) where Egypt acknowledged the existence of a single god.
 - f) The point of all of this text is to compare the "greatness of Egypt" to a great tree. Remember the "fault" of the Egyptians was not that they were wealthy, but the fact that they trusted in their multitude of gods and not "the" God Himself.
 - g) A simple application to get out of this is to remember if God could bring down a power of this size and nature that quickly, it is all the more reason to take God "seriously" about what He wants and expects for our lives.
18. Verse 10: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because it towered on high, lifting its top above the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height,¹¹ I handed it over to the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside,¹² and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it.¹³ All the birds of the air settled on the fallen tree, and all the beasts of the field were among its branches.¹⁴ Therefore no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their tops above the thick foliage. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortal men, with those who go down to the pit.
- a) Here we have the fall of Egypt comparing it to a great tree to be cut down. Because Egypt was "proud" over what they had accomplished, God gave them over to be cut down.
 - b) Verses like these are designed to be read as a poetic way of describing Egypt's downfall and one can get the flavor of the verses just by reading the text straight-through.
 - c) OK, we're way overdue for some personal applications: Egypt was taken down due to the pride in their heart. They gave themselves the credit for their success and not God.
 - i) Want to know the number one reason why people won't turn their lives over to God? It is because such people want to completely rule their own lives and not honor a single God that created all things. A lot of people give God lip service, but when it comes to actual obedience, they won't commit their lives to God.
 - ii) Even for the committed Christians, there are usually areas of our lives we still want to run by ourselves and not give to God.
 - d) We have some repeated themes here including the fact they were brought down by the most "ruthless" of foreign nations. The main idea of the text is to describe how Egypt has fallen as a great power to the Babylonians.
 - e) So let me ask the tough question: Why judge Egypt "now" at this date in history?
 - i) After all, if Egypt was this dominant for this long (millenniums) why wait until this point in history to bring it down? Why does God judge Egypt now after it has been dominate for so many years? In other words, I'm sure many Pharaoh's had pride issues before, why wait until this moment in history to end its dominance?

- ii) I suspect part of the answer is to have Egypt fall around the same time era as the end of Israel as a nation so people would associate the two downfalls.
 - iii) It is God's way of saying, "Yes, I'm bringing to a temporary end of the sovereignty of my people, but at the same time I'm going to judge other nations including powerful ones like Egypt to show the world who is really in charge!"
 - iv) As I've stated before, one has to see this section about the judgment of nations as a symbol of how judges non-believers and what is their ultimate fate.
- 19. Verse 15: " `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day it was brought down to the grave I covered the deep springs with mourning for it; I held back its streams, and its abundant waters were restrained. Because of it I clothed Lebanon with gloom, and all the trees of the field withered away. ¹⁶ I made the nations tremble at the sound of its fall when I brought it down to the grave with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, all the trees that were well-watered, were consoled in the earth below. ¹⁷ Those who lived in its shade, its allies among the nations, had also gone down to the grave with it, joining those killed by the sword. ¹⁸ " `Which of the trees of Eden can be compared with you in splendor and majesty? Yet you, too, will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below; you will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword. " `This is Pharaoh and all his hordes, declares the Sovereign LORD.' "
- a) In Verse 15 we read of God mourning over the fall of Egypt. As I've stated a bunch of times now, God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Egypt was a powerful country and they should have honored a single creator of the world for their blessings.
 - b) Notice in Verse 16 it said that the "Nations tremble at the sound of its fall". People get used to the way things are, "good or bad". Here is this powerful nation brought to nothing around the same time era that Tyre and other nations were brought down. The other nations are saying in effect, "OK, what do we do now and who will buy our stuff?"
 - i) What is also hinted at in these verses are those nations and peoples that sided with Egypt will also go down to hell. The idea here is that Egypt had a lot of pride due to its wealth and its system. God is sending most Egyptians to hell for focusing their lives on their multitudes of gods and their stuff. At the same time, those people and nations who benefited from Egypt will suffer in hell for eternity.
 - c) Time for a tough question: Is it fair to send one to hell forever for a lifetime of turning from the true God for their lives? It is best to think of it this way: If one spends 20-60 years of their lives in pursuit of other things, what makes you think such a person is going to change in eternity? I always viewed hell as "giving people what they want" which is an eternal life without God. In a sense, hell is a continuation of how people want to live on earth. Don't get me wrong, there is eternal suffering, but I believe people will understand it is due to their desire to turn from God that gets them sent there in the first place.
 - d) In Verse 16 we get another comparison of Egypt to being a great tree and called it a "tree in the Garden of Eden". I see this as another hint of the demonic force behind Egypt. It is not literally saying that Egypt was represented by a great tree in the Garden of Eden. It is saying that the spiritual, demonic power that influenced Egypt goes back to Eden.
- 20. Chapter 32: In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, take up a lament concerning Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him:
 - a) In this chapter we start the fifth of the six visions. This one is about a year and one half after the last one. Remember this is long time before the actual fall of Egypt.
 - b) As we have had several times now in Egypt, this chapter is a poetic dirge. It is about the actual fall of the king (Pharaoh) of Egypt and his descent into hell.

21. Verse 2 (cont.): "You are like a lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas thrashing about in your streams, churning the water with your feet and muddying the streams.
 - a) This is describing how God saw the Pharaoh prior to his destruction. He is compared to a powerful lion and a "monster" in the seas. The idea is that the Pharaoh saw himself as something great and causing "problems" for those nations near Egypt.
 - b) Time for another tough question: Was this Pharaoh any worse than other Egyptian leaders? The reason God picked on this Pharaoh is that it is time for "His" judgment to occur. I'm convinced that since God was judging Israel, God also wanted to see the fall of Israel's traditional enemies at the same time as well as the fall of other great powers at that time to show the world that the God of Israel is the God in charge of the world.
 - c) My point is the reason this Pharaoh is sent to hell would apply to anyone and everyone who thought and thinks of themselves so highly that they have no need or desire to learn of and worship the one God that truly runs the universe.
22. Verse 3: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "with a great throng of people I will cast my net over you, and they will haul you up in my net. ⁴ I will throw you on the land and hurl you on the open field. I will let all the birds of the air settle on you and all the beasts of the earth gorge themselves on you. ⁵ I will spread your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains. ⁶ I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.
 - a) In these verses we have a colorful description of how Egypt will fall and how Pharaoh and all of his followers will be sent to hell.
 - b) It is also describing how Babylon will conquer Egypt, even though Babylon is not mentioned by name. What is literally being described here is how the Egyptian bodies will fall after losing battles and that animals will eat up the dead human bodies.
23. Verse 7: When I snuff you out, 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. ⁸ All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁹ I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction among the nations, among lands you have not known. ¹⁰ I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.
 - a) Remember that Egypt rarely got rain or cloud cover. God is saying at the time of the attack, the sun will be covered by clouds and the moon will not shine. So is this literal, or is it describing the dust being kicked up by the attacking soldiers? It could be either. The point is the Egyptians will know when this is happening because they can't see the sun or the stars. Also know that Egypt thought the sun was one of their main gods.
 - b) Keep in mind that we are reading poetry. One can debate about its literalness. The main idea is God is describing the fall of a nation that has ruled this area for millennia.
24. Verse 11: "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you. ¹² I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty men-- the most ruthless of all nations. They will shatter the pride of Egypt, and all her hordes will be overthrown. ¹³ I will destroy all her cattle from beside abundant waters no longer to be stirred by the foot of man or muddied by the hoofs of cattle. ¹⁴ Then I will let her waters settle and make her streams flow like oil, declares the Sovereign LORD.
 - a) In these verses we get Babylon mentioned by name as being the attackers. In Verse 12 we get another reference to the fact the Babylonians are the most "ruthless" of nations.
 - b) The idea here is the Babylonian victory will be so complete, that the Babylonians will capture their livestock and kill and capture people. The Nile River will have no people or livestock to benefit from its flow.
 - c) Remember that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Yes God is announcing the punishment on Egypt for their pride. God is announcing this out of regret.

25. Verse 15: When I make Egypt desolate and strip the land of everything in it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the LORD.' ¹⁶ "This is the lament they will chant for her. The daughters of the nations will chant it; for Egypt and all her hordes they will chant it, declares the Sovereign LORD."
- a) Here we have another of those statements that say in effect the Egyptians will know that "God is God" when this judgment happens. How will they know that "the God" is behind it? I suspect that before they are sent to hell, there is an actual trial where the Egyptians will before the presence of God Himself. Before they are punished for eternity, they will be literally aware of the sins they have committed.
 - b) Does this mean God holds other nations accountable to know all of His laws? I would argue no. God does expect all people to realize there is a single God that does control the universe as that is "logical" if one thinks about it. Even if one believed in multiple gods, there has to be a single God in charge of all of them. (See Romans 1:18-32.)
 - i) At the same time, God instinctively makes us know that murder and theft is wrong. He instinctively makes us know that to honor ourselves over a true God is wrong. I'm a big believer that when people are sent to hell, they are well aware of what they have done and deserve such punishment.
26. Verse 17: In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸ "Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and consign to the earth below both her and the daughters of mighty nations, with those who go down to the pit. ¹⁹ Say to them, 'Are you more favored than others? Go down and be laid among the uncircumcised.' ²⁰ They will fall among those killed by the sword. The sword is drawn; let her be dragged off with all her hordes. ²¹ From within the grave the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, 'They have come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.'
- a) We now come to the final vision of Ezekiel on Egypt. This one is only a few weeks later than the one in the first half of this chapter.
 - b) To describe this final vision, imagine if the top rim of hell is a physical place one can visit. Let's put some safety rails around the edge so no one can fall in. ☺ Now imagine Ezekiel standing by the safety rails describing what and who he sees in hell itself.
 - i) In this final vision, Ezekiel is not content to describe Egypt being sent to hell for their sins. In this vision, Ezekiel is actually describing Egypt being in hell and describing who is there to say "hello" to Egypt in that place!
 - c) Notice in Verse 19 it asks the question, "Are you (Egypt) more favored than others?" The point is they get the same fate (hell) as other nations who were smaller and weaker, but also turned their backs on God.
 - d) Notice in Verse 21 that God says the leaders of Egypt and their armies have "Come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword."
 - i) The idea is that those who the Egyptians have ruled over and those the Egyptian armies have killed will be in hell with the Egyptians. The point is the fate of the Egyptians is no better than the other people who lead similar "lifestyles".
 - ii) The other idea is that everyone in hell is judged individually for their sins and one's status on earth in the end does not matter. It is how one acts that counts.
 - e) Think about the whole lesson this way: We are now at the end of this seven chapter section of judgment on Gentile Nations. Ezekiel has nothing left to do but describe what hell itself is like and who is there. The lessons of this section are not so much about the Egyptians alone but who is in hell and to understand why they are there. OK, off my soapbox. Time to get back to describing life in literal hell. ☺

27. Verse 22: "Assyria is there with her whole army; she is surrounded by the graves of all her slain, all who have fallen by the sword.²³ Their graves are in the depths of the pit and her army lies around her grave. All who had spread terror in the land of the living are slain, fallen by the sword.²⁴ "Elam is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. All who had spread terror in the land of the living went down uncircumcised to the earth below. They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.²⁵ A bed is made for her among the slain, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword. Because their terror had spread in the land of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among the slain.²⁶ "Meshech and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword because they spread their terror in the land of the living.²⁷ Do they not lie with the other uncircumcised warriors who have fallen, who went down to the grave with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads? The punishment for their sins rested on their bones, though the terror of these warriors had stalked through the land of the living.
- a) The nations listed in these verses include Assyria (a long dead empire), Elam, Meshech and Tubal. The point is God lists long dead people and nations that the Egyptians will "meet" in hell. What Ezekiel is trying to get across to his audience is that all of Egypt's effort to run the world lasts only for "this lifetime" and then comes hell.
 - b) One also has to remember the Egyptians were obsessed with death and the next life. They built great monuments for the Pharaohs and buried their treasures with their bodies. God is telling the Pharaoh that they will not get the "great life" they want in the afterlife, but will be stuck in hell with other nations and people who have turned against God.
 - c) Notice the crimes of all these nations have to do with their armies. What Ezekiel is trying to teach is that all of these armies' efforts to attack and kill only got them eternity in hell.
 - d) What is to be understood in this paragraph is not that God is condemning warfare in general. There are righteous causes for war and the bible teaches there are seasons in life where war is needed. (See Ecclesiastes 3:8). The condemnation here is against people that made war just for the sake of gaining loot and killing innocent people.
 - i) A good summary line is in Verse 26. It says they are in hell "because they spread their terror in the land of the living". In other words, when people are innocently killed in order for others to steal their stuff, the guilty suffer for eternity in hell.
28. Verse 28: "You too, O Pharaoh, will be broken and will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.²⁹ "Edom is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword. They lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the pit.³⁰ "All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power. They lie uncircumcised with those killed by the sword and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.³¹ "Pharaoh--he and all his army--will see them and he will be consoled for all his hordes that were killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign LORD.³² Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living, Pharaoh and all his hordes will be laid among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign LORD."
- a) Here we have more nations listed as being in hell along with Pharaoh.
 - b) The point is not that all Gentiles will be in hell. The point is that all who murder and steal (with no repentance to God) suffer the same eternal fate, no matter what their rank or background.
 - c) The view among the Egyptians was that their Pharaoh was more than just their leader, he was a god on earth. Here the true God is stating that their leader will suffer the same eternal fate as other raiding bands of other nations that got wealthy by using the sword.
 - d) Does this mean Babylon is innocent because God used them for judgment? No. As I've stated, Ezekiel doesn't judge Babylon as Ezekiel sees the Babylonians as God's chosen instrument of the moment for judgment.

29. OK, I just gave everyone a brief history of the Middle East around the 6th Century BC. Is that important that we know that time of history?
- a) In the eternal sense, such knowledge is not necessary.
 - b) It is only helpful in understanding what Ezekiel is preaching about. It's hard to explain these chapters without having to explain what was happening historically at this time.
 - c) What is important to comprehend is what gets a person sent to hell, then or now: It is about the rejection of God in our life. God does hold us accountable for what we do know about Him. To know one's bible well has great benefits as it helps us draw closer to Him. The downside of knowing one's bible is that we are now more accountable for our actions.
 - d) Now let's think in terms of a person who does not know what are God's requirements for their life. Romans Chapter 1 talks about such people and says in effect that God gives us the instinctive knowledge to know that there is a single God and that He wants us to respect human life.
 - e) If you've noticed over the last couple of lessons, no Gentile was condemned for not knowing Jewish laws. They were essentially condemned for thinking of themselves as a god or worshipping a person as a god. The other sin was ignoring God when they had interaction with Israel and were aware of the "one true God".
 - i) It was also about one's "pride" lifting up one's self or one's human leader and denying that there is a god that created everything.
 - f) This seven chapter section of Ezekiel is all about the fate of seven specific Gentile nations. What we as the reader should get out of this lesson is not so much the fate of those individuals, but to learn what caused their downfall and avoid the same mistakes.
30. OK, suppose you think, "OK, I'm not worshipping any other god or following any group that does worship other gods. As best I can tell I've never killed anyone or haven't stolen much."
- a) First, remember that God's standards are "perfection", which is why we have Jesus pay the price for our sins. Second, it is good every now and then to examine one's own life and think about areas that are not pleasing to God. God is not asking us to be perfect, but when we realize an area of our life that is not pleasing to Him, we are to confess that aspect as wrong and trust in God to change us for the better.
 - b) There, I'm actually going to end this on a happy note. ☺
31. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, help us to remember that hell is real, it is eternal and it is the fate of those who refuse to turn to You. Help us to see nonbelievers as people who need Jesus and need to turn toward You. Help us to be good witnesses for You in every aspect of our lives. Help us to eliminate the prideful areas of our own lives. Help us not to be "holier in thou" in our dealings but to show through our words and actions how to live a life pleasing to You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.