

## Ezekiel Chapters 29-32 - John Karmelich

Title: No turning back!

Most of us veteran Christians know that phrase, as we sing it in church as part of a famous hymn. That phrase ties well to these chapters as we've come to the last of Ezekiel's "preaching to the neighbors". In short Ezekiel's saying, "God's God, deal with it and live as we're called to live!" Yes, I'm covering four chapters here, but they're all about Egypt. It's the last set of chapters where Ezekiel's focuses on places other than Israel. Why Egypt and why four chapters? Egypt is where Israel was born as a nation! They have always been symbolic of the world as God called His people "out of the world" for them to live as a witness for His (yes, that applies to Christians too). Egypt was also a powerful military force and one of the most dominant powers in the Middle East for millenniums! I did a study of Egypt history when I taught Exodus the first time! It's always amazed me how God took the most powerful entity in that area and brought them to nothing, as Ezekiel predicted in these chapters! It amazes me that Egypt still exists as Ezekiel predicted in these chapters but as he said, they'd always be around as they haven't ruled over anyone for about 2,600 years and counting.

OK John, that's interesting ancient history, what does it have to do with us now? God created the world in a way where it's always tempting to revert to our bad non-Christian ways! God likes to test us to ask in effect, "Do you trust me now, more than this?" Much of these chapters is in effect a dirge to discuss the fall of Egypt. Obviously, Egypt's still around today (there are people in Egypt reading my lessons!) and God cares for Egyptians as He does all people! The dirge isn't so much about Egypt as an entity, as much as it's about the danger to worship things other than God Himself. Yes, the text will pick on their leader and a lot of Israelites went there to avoid the Babylonians who were conquering Israel when this was written. The underlying point is about trust in anything other than God to guide our lives. So even though the text focuses on the fall of a great historical empire, the application is about us not living the way God has called us to live, and what the negative outcome of turning from Him! OK then, time for the details!

If memory is correct Ezekiel announces in these four chapters three different dates. The point is not all of this text came in one big "download" from God! So why so much text? Why not just state Egypt got a lack of trust in God after all they've seen historically! If God said He's going to wipe out Israel given a lack of trust in Him, why "kill the whole neighborhood"? A reason is Egypt agreed to defend Israel if the Babylonians attacked and they didn't keep their word! Egypt's leader was like Tyre's leader (who did fall for his ego as I stated in my last lesson) as he gave himself credit and not God. It's a reminder God holds us accountable for what we do know about Him! That's the bad news of knowing our bible! It doesn't mean we have to fear judgment day, it means such knowledge means we have no excuse not to be a good witness for God throughout our lives! Bottom line, Egypt goes "down for the count" in these four chapters.

In effect God uses Babylon (again based out of Iraq today) as His instrument of judgment on groups in that area who treated Israel badly and given their knowledge of God, should have acted better! I admit, I pondered weren't the Babylonians as guilty as everyone else in that region? If you studied Daniel, you may recall the Babylon king declared God to be God after, "God humbled him!" I should point out the text here mentions just as the Israelites were taken in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10). The text says Egypt will be in captivity for 40 years! Why a shorter time frame? The conquering of Egypt came later when a Persian king (who conquered Babylon) released the Israelites also released the Egyptians.

Of all the things that Ezekiel says in these chapters the one that amazes me the most is he states Egypt's fall will be permanent in the sense they will always exist but be a lowly kingdom forever. Realize they were a mighty power in Ezekiel's time and ruled that area for well over a millennium! So even if one's thinking Ezekiel was late dated, and that's how he knew all of this, realize the entire Old Testament got translated into Greek a few centuries before Jesus. Ezekiel's prediction that Egypt's never conquering a country again has been true for 2,600 years and counting! God's word IS the Word of God!

A few more details: Chapter 29 focuses on Egypt's king, comparing him to a crocodile (they existed in the Nile River). In effect God is saying, "You may think you're something great, but you got no idea of who you're messing with!" We get mention of several cities in the northern and southern part of Egypt that shows that Ezekiel knew enough about their country to describe such details. This chapter has that prediction about them being the "Lowest of kingdoms" from now on! Remember Ezekiel's living in the Babylonian Empire (in Iraq) and giving this speech to fellow Israelites who thought Egypt will help the nation of Israel in their hour of need! Obviously, that didn't happen!

Chapter 30 begins the dirge. Again, specific cities there are mentioned. It may help to remember what I said about Babylon attacking Tyre (in Lebanon) in the previous lesson. While Babylon was attacking them, Tyre took most of their wealth offshore during the 13 years Babylon tried to conquer it. It meant when Babylon conquered the mainland the amount of goods collected was not enough to pay the army. To reward that army, God said go conquer Egypt, as God judged them around the same time era for the same arrogance Egypt had against God! Best to quote a famous sports reference from a generation ago, "Down Goes Frazier" (a boxing reference) as Egypt's no longer a significant player from then onward!

Anyway, it wasn't enough to say, "Down Goes Egypt!" Ezekiel started comparing their leader to other great leaders who were around then. The message in effect is, you thought you were something special that the world let alone those under you should admire? I'm aware I'm preaching to Christians who will never be like these people, nor was Ezekiel's Jewish captives like them! The point is about not trusting in say our wealth, success or military power! One never knows how long one can live. There's nothing wrong with acquiring stuff as long as we understand it's place versus our relationship with God. That's in effect the underlying message here!

The final chapter not only picks on Egypt, but other countries in that region that Egypt rules or they are partners with. Bottom line is they all went down for the count and God used Babylon as His instrument of judgment before judging Babylon itself (described later in the book as well as in Jeremiah).

I know all too well I covered four chapters way too fast and skipped a lot of details. The text is here to remind us that our trust should always be in God and nothing else! It's a lot of text as Egypt was known as a mighty military power at that time that rivaled Babylon but again went down for the count. That in effect leads me back to my lesson title, "No turning back". Once we make that commitment to God for our lives, there is no turning back. Much of Ezekiel is a reminder to us of the danger of trusting in what doesn't benefit us eternally. There's nothing wrong in living in a place with a strong army or to acquire a lot of "stuff" 'or even have fame. The issue is are we trusting in those things more than in God? We're called to use our lives for His glory and use the gifts He's given us to make a difference for Him. That's why I encourage people to pray for guidance. I believe His favorite prayer is total surrender of our will to His. Once we "let go" He uses our life for His glory. No turning back!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful

for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!