
EZEKIEL 31: 1 In the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, the LORD's word came to me, saying,

This very beautiful chapter relates also to Egypt. The prophet describes to Pharaoh the fall of the king of Nineveh, (see the books of Nahum, Jonah, and Zephaniah), under the image of a fair cedar of Lebanon, once exceedingly tall, flourishing, and majestic, but now cut down and withered, with its broken branches strewed around, vv. 1-17. He then concludes with bringing the matter home to the king of Egypt, by telling him that this was a picture of his approaching fate, Eze 31:18. The beautiful cedar of Lebanon, remarkable for its loftiness, and in the most flourishing condition, but afterwards cut down and deserted, gives a very lately painting of the great glory and dreadful catastrophe of both the Assyrian and Egyptian monarchies. The manner in which the prophet has embellished his subject is deeply interesting; the colouring is of that kind which the mind will always contemplate with pleasure.

Verse 1

In the eleventh year - On Sunday, June 19, A.M. 3416, according to Abp. Usher; a month before Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans.

EZEKIEL 31: 2 Son of man, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude: Whom are you like in your greatness?

EZEKIEL 31: 3 Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with beautiful branches, and with a forest-like shade, and of high stature; and its top was among the thick boughs.

Verse 3

Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar - Why is the Assyrian introduced here, when the whole chapter concerns Egypt? Bp. Lowth has shown that אֲשׁוּר אֶרֶז ashshur erez should be translated the tall cedar, the very stately cedar; hence there is reference to his lofty top; and all the following description belongs to Egypt, not to Assyria. But see on Eze 31:11 (note).

EZEKIEL 31: 4 The waters nourished it, the deep made it to grow: its rivers ran all around its plantation; and it sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.

Verse 4

The waters made him great - Alluding to the fertility of Egypt by the overflowing of the Nile. But waters often mean peoples. By means of the different nations under the Egyptians, that government became very opulent. These nations are represented as fowls and beasts, taking shelter under the protection of this great political Egyptian tree, Eze 31:6.

EZEKIEL 31: 5 Therefore its stature was exalted above all the trees of the field; and its boughs were multiplied, and its branches became long by reason of many waters, when it spread them out.

EZEKIEL 31: 6 All the birds of the sky made their nests in its boughs; and under its branches all the animals of the field gave birth to their young; and all great nations lived under its shadow.

EZEKIEL 31: 7 Thus was it beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its root was by many waters.

EZEKIEL 31: 8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; the fir trees were not like its boughs, and the plane trees were not as its branches; nor was any tree in the garden of God like it in its beauty.

Verse 8

The cedars in the garden of God - Egypt was one of the most eminent and affluent of all the neighboring nations.

EZEKIEL 31: 9 I made it beautiful by the multitude of its branches, so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied it.

EZEKIEL 31: 10 Therefore thus said the Lord GOD: Because you are exalted in stature, and he has set his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

EZEKIEL 31: 11 I will even deliver him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations; he shall surely deal with him; I have driven him out for his wickedness.

Verse 11

The mighty one of the heathen - Nebuchadnezzar. It is worthy of notice, that Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of his reign, rendered himself master of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. See Sedar Olam. This happened about twenty years before Ezekiel delivered this prophecy; on this account, Ashshur, Eze 31:3, may relate to the Assyrians, to whom it is possible the prophet here compares the Egyptians. But see the note on Eze 31:3.

EZEKIEL 31: 12 Strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: on the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

EZEKIEL 31: 13 On his ruin all the birds of the sky shall dwell, and all the animals of the field shall be on his branches;

Verse 13

Upon his ruin shall all the fowls - The fall of Egypt is likened to the fall of a great tree; and as the fowls and beasts sheltered under its branches before, Eze 31:6, so they now feed upon its ruins.

EZEKIEL 31: 14 to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves in their stature, neither set their top among the thick boughs, nor that their mighty ones stand up on their height, even all who drink water: for they are all delivered to death, to the lower parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with those who go down to the pit.

Verse 14

To the end that none of all the trees - Let this ruin, fallen upon Egypt, teach all the nations that shall hear of it to be humble, because, however elevated, God can soon bring them down; and pride and arrogance, either in states or individuals, have the peculiar abhorrence of God. Pride does not suit the sons of men; it made devils of angels, and makes fiends of men.

EZEKIEL 31: 15 Thus says the Lord GOD: In the day when he went down to Sheol I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained its rivers; and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

Verse 15

I caused Lebanon to mourn for him - All the confederates of Pharaoh are represented as deploring his fall, Eze 31:16, Eze 31:17.

EZEKIEL 31: 16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol with those who descend into the pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the lower parts of the earth.

EZEKIEL 31: 17 They also went down into Sheol with him to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were his arm, who lived under his shadow in the midst of the nations.

Verse 17

They also went down into hell with him - Into remediless destruction.

EZEKIEL 31: 18 To whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the lower parts of the earth: you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord GOD.

Verse 18

This is Pharaoh - All that I have spoken in this allegory of the lofty cedar refers to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, his princes, confederates, and people. Calmet understands the whole chapter of the king of Assyria, under which he allows that Egypt is adumbrated; and hence on this verse he quotes: -

Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.

What is said of Assyria belongs to thee, O Egypt.