

Ezek. 31:1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third *month*, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, This message from God to Ezekiel is two months after the last one in chapter 30. Adam Clarke makes note that this is a month before Jerusalem fell to the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezek. 31:2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?

This message is also directed to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and all his allies. It starts out with a question: Who would you compare yourself to in greatness?

Ezek. 31:3 Behold, the Assyrian *was* a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs.

Ezek. 31:4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

Evidently, the answer to the question in verse two was “the king of Assyria,” referenced here as “the Assyrian.” The Assyrian is compared to one of the great cedar trees of Lebanon. He is pictured as having many branches, so many that he casts a great shadow all around him. He is also pictured as the tallest among the trees. Part of his greatness was due to the water resources in his kingdom.

Ezek. 31:5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.

Ezek. 31:6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

Ezek. 31:7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters.

The Assyrian is easily recognized by how he towers above all the other trees in the field. His branches multiplied quickly and became very long from the sustenance provided by the waters. All the birds of heaven are pictured as making nests in his branches. All the beasts of the field are pictured as finding shelter and protection under those branches. This tree is beautiful in size and has abundant water resources.

Ezek. 31:8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty.

Not even the cedar trees from the Garden of Eden could hide this great cedar. Neither the fir trees or the chestnut trees or any other tree in the Garden of Eden could compare to the beauty of this great cedar.

This is obviously painting a word picture of a very great and powerful ruler of a very prosperous kingdom, a ruler who had absorbed many other peoples and nations into his kingdom as he stretched out his many great branches of power. Burton Coffman’s Commentary makes this comment:

“The Assyrian empire had existed since the days of Nimrod; and it was doubtless considered to be as established and permanent as the earth itself...”

Ezek. 31:9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, envied him.

By the time I got to this verse I began to make some other connections. In this verse God declares that He is the One that is responsible for making the Assyrian so beautiful to the envy of all the other trees in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of God is here specifically identified as the Garden of Eden. I believe that there is a double reference regarding “the Assyrian.” I believe this passage can be compared with the message of chapters 26-28 regarding the prince/King of Tyre.

I know that in context at the beginning of this message reference is being made to the earthly king of the great kingdom of Assyria. When I looked up the Hebrew for “the deep” in verse 4, reference was made to an abyss. That quickly took my mind to Revelation where the abyss is described as a place where the minions of Satan are imprisoned. (Revelation 9 - bottomless pit = abussos = abyss, deep) Though natural water resources would have contributed to the prosperity of Assyria, I believe the wicked spiritual forces at work in her were more responsible. Though I don’t feel I can even begin explain it all, I think the argument can be made that Satan was the most beautiful creature of all God’s creation. When he turned against God and was able to get man to disobey God, he earned the privilege of a certain amount of control in this world. Scripture describes him as the “god of this world” (2Corinthians 4:4). With this privilege he has used all the resources within his sphere of dominion to empower the wicked and thwart the purposes of God in every possible way. I believe he is the source of power behind the Assyrian king. This in no way takes away from the fact that God’s sovereign hand is in ultimate control; this is all according to His sovereign decision to allow men the privilege of choice regarding their response to Him and how to live their lives.

Ezek. 31:10 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

Ezek. 31:11 I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness.

Pride is again the reason that God decides to bring judgment upon this ruler. This is a true statement regarding both Satan and the Assyrian king. The earthly king was conquered by “the mighty one of the heathen,” Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. God has brought this judgment upon the king not only because of his pride, but because in his pride he acted wickedly.

“I have driven him out...” – This seems to apply more directly to Satan being driven out of the Garden of Eden, but can also reference the king of Assyria being driven out of power.

Ezek. 31:12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

The Babylonian army is described as strangers/foreigners who had become the most feared among the nations. God had chosen the armies of Babylon to bring judgment upon most of the recognized heathen powers of that time. They are pictured as having chopped down the tree that represented the Assyrian and chopping off all the branches that were part of that tree.

Ezek. 31:13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:

Ezek. 31:14 To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

This verse pictures the remains of the tree as still providing for the birds and beasts, but not from a position of power. None of the other trees (or heathen kingdoms, i.e., Egypt) are able to gain the power and influence that he enjoyed at the height of his kingdom.

“all that drink water” – The trees that were drinking of this water were pictured as “delivered unto death.” We know that water is normally good for supporting the growth of trees. This again seems to connect with the thought that the waters being referenced are demonically provided as discussed above. The death that comes from the partaking of these waters results in the other trees (heathen kings) being delivered to the “nether part of the earth...with them that go down to the pit.” Their fate rests with the “children of men” as opposed to with the “children of God.”

Ezek. 31:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

After all I've learned about the cruelty of the Assyrians, I have to wonder why the demise of this king and his empire would cause such mourning. I think one reason would have to be because of the fear the other nations felt concerning his conqueror. They didn't mourn for him as much as they feared for themselves. If the mighty Assyrian was taken down, what hope could they have? It would also represent a great defeat for Satan and his demonic forces. God is in complete control. He will only allow Satan and his forces temporary successes until their ultimate total defeat. Lebanon was representative of the forest home of the cedar to which the Assyrian was compared. All the other trees in the forest *fainted* at his fall; they recognized their own perilous position before his conqueror.

Ezek. 31:16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the

choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

Ezek. 31:17 They also went down into hell with him unto *them that be slain with the sword*; and *they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.*

These verses make me think of the old saying, “Misery loves company.” When the mighty Assyrian fell, all the other mighty men who were sustained by the same source as he (Satanic) would be consoled in that he didn’t get away with his pride and wickedness any more than did they. He too was subject to the ultimate authority and will of Almighty God.

Ezek. 31:18 To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that be slain by the sword.* This *is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.*

God again has the prophet pose the question to Pharaoh with which He began this message—To whom would you compare yourself in greatness? The “trees of Eden” represent earthly kings. I think this reference emphasizes the fact that all men are God’s creation; you may deny and/or reject your Creator, but the fact remains that you are His creation. God is saying that just as surely as the Assyrian met his demise by the sword, Pharaoh and his allies will meet their end in the same way.

“in the midst of the uncircumcised” – On the surface this seems to be just another reference to the heathen nations. The Jews are generally known as “the circumcision.”

Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We learned in chapters 26-28, however, that Israel wasn’t the only nation that practiced circumcision. Though maybe not understood by the people at that time, I think the “uncircumcised” here is referring to all those that have rejected God as LORD, the uncircumcised of heart.

Rom. 2:29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Phil. 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

It is those who have uncircumcised hearts who will end up with the wicked in the nether parts of the earth, specifically identified as “hell” in verse 17.

Because of my interest in prophecy, I can’t help but make connection with the Assyrian as a type of the Antichrist. Just as with the prince of Tyre and the Assyrian of this chapter, he is a man who will basically sell his soul to the devil. Although allowed a temporary time of power and authority on planet earth—to a degree never yet experienced by any other man to have lived on the planet—he will be completely defeated by the Almighty Son of God. I think we Christians

don't often think about the influence that Satan and his forces for evil exert on planet earth in the affairs of men. Scripture clearly declares this to be the case.

Eph. 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

Though he is limited by God as to his use of them, Satan has great powers and abilities. He will one day empower the Antichrist to show great signs and wonders to the extent that "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24)