

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Ezekiel 29: Was Egypt uninhabited for 40 years?

Ezekiel 29: Was Egypt uninhabited for 40 years? - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/7/25 11:17

Reading through Ezekiel now, and in chapter 29 is part of his extended prophecies against Egypt. In pertinent part, the word of the Lord through Ezekiel is this:

“Because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, 7 when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake. 8 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, 9 and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

“Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine, and I made it,’ 10 therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush. **11 No foot of man shall pass through it, and no foot of beast shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years.** 12 And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated countries, and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries.

13 “For thus says the Lord God: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered, 14 and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. 15 It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. 16 And it shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid. Then they will know that I am the Lord God.”

My question centers on v. 11 -- 40 years of uninhabited Egypt. All of the English translations I've read use essentially the same language here and render Ezekiel's prophecy as meaning an uninhabited Egypt for 40 years.

There is plenty of debate about it. Some say that Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Amasis fulfilled the prophecy and they ignore the fact that there is no historical record of an uninhabited Egypt. Others say that the "uninhabited" language is prophetic hyperbole and is not to be taken so literally, which could be true I guess. Some say still that Ezekiel 29:11 is unfulfilled and will be fulfilled in a millennial age or before. Others simply say Ezekiel was wrong.

One thing I haven't read, and wonder if it holds water, is whether the translations correctly render the Hebrew as "uninhabited" or "will not be inhabited" so as to require a reading of the passage to mean literally no man or animal will be inside Egypt for 40 years. It seems absurd on the face of it to think that not even birds would alight on trees there. The only thing I can imagine that would create that drastic of an environment is a nuclear or chemical disaster. There being no record of those, it would seem to require a future fulfillment. But, I'm uncomfortable with that. The passage clearly places the disposition of Egypt as a consequence of historical Nebuchadnezzar.

So, I went back and read the Interlinear Bible and Strong's. The Hebrew word or phrase "not be inhabited", and in particular "inhabited", is used about 2 dozen times in the OT. Teseb (Strong's h3427) is the word. It is also rendered "stay", "abide", "continue", "remain", "sits", "dwell", "endure".

"Inhabited" also appears in Isaiah 13:20 (Babylon will be destroyed and uninhabited forever -- this has occurred and remains so, does it not?), Isaiah 42:11 (Messianic prophecy encouraging Kedar's inhabitants to lift up their voice to Him), Jeremiah 17:6 (Judah will dwell in an uninhabited salt land and in a parched wilderness for its Baal and Asherah worship; Tigris and Euphrates river mouths were salt marshes, but were not uninhabited at the time -- they did, however become covered over salt lands about 300 years after the 140 BC Parthian conquest of Babylon and the destruction of irrigation systems to the city from the rivers so that by/before about 230 AD, Babylon was ruined) 50:13, 39 (Babylon left uninhabited -- see Is. 13:20, above); Joel 3:20 (Judah to be restored and forever inhabited), Zechariah 2:4 (similar to Joel 3:20) and 9:5 (when God judges Israel's enemies, "king shall perish from Gaza, Ashkelon shall be uninhabited", but it doesn't say it will remain so -- we know Ashkelon (now part of Israel) is very populated, but may not be quite the same location as the original settlement).

So, without a historical record of an uninhabited Egypt, and with other uses of the word "uninhabited" or "shall not be inhabited" that are historically verified outside of Scripture, could "taseb" in Ezekiel 29:11 mean something other than "not be inhabited"? Could it mean "not be remained in" as in the then-current generation? Could it mean "not be a dwelling place" as in a primary or thriving place to live?? A drop in trade flowing through it? Is that much historically verifiable??

I don't see it.

IF Ezekiel 29:11 remains unfulfilled, what does this mean in terms of end-times fulfillment? Or, is this chickening out of really dealing with Ezekiel 29:11?

Re: Ezekiel 29: Was Egypt uninhabited for 40 years? - posted by rookie (), on: 2014/7/25 15:45

From around 70 AD till May 1948 Israel was not and now is. Many preachers prior to 1948 taught replacement theology. On that day many preachers were shown their error. No other nation in history ceased to exist for almost 2000 years and then in one day in 1948 was again a nation.

Likewise if the Scripture say that Egypt will cease to exist for 40 years, it pales in comparison to Israel's history. If the Scriptures say it will happen then it will happen. And I do not believe it has happened yet. But based on current events in Egypt, the fruit on the tree resembles the curses of God and not the blessings.

Just my thoughts