

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 15, 2016

Ezekiel 30:1–31:18. God’s judgment on Egypt—and the problem of pride.

Revelation 14:14–15:8. The reaping of the Earth in divine judgment—and worship of God.

Job 37:1–8. The power of God: feared or loved?

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 30:1–31:18. Ezekiel predicts that a sword will come against Egypt (30:1–19). Egypt will take six of her supporters with her to her doom: Cush, Put, Lydia, Arabia, Libya, and the people of the covenant land. The explicit reasons given for the destruction of Egypt include “idols, images” (30:13) or “arrogance” (30:6). Israel expects help from Egypt, but it will be help from a wounded, disabled ally. The prospects for real assistance from such a handicapped partner are bleak. Ezekiel is given a message by God about the Pharaoh (31:1–19). The king of Egypt is compared to a mighty cedar in Lebanon. It will be destroyed and cut down, and then be carried to the underworld. Ezekiel begins by addressing the cedar directly: Who can be compared with you? The tree is characterized by great height, lush verdure, and superb irrigation that makes it fertile. It is so verdant that it offers shelter and nesting places for the birds. It is such a refuge that even animals bring forth their young beneath its branches (6). The tree represents a sanctuary. Any within its confines are unthreatened. It is a tree with deep roots. In fact, the tree is incomparable. Not even the trees of paradise rival it. And all this beauty and majesty is due to God’s common grace. Unfortunately, the tree’s height goes to its head. Majestic stature breeds arrogance. As a result, God hands the tree over to a ruthless nation. The Babylonians are ferocious woodcutters who quickly level the tree. As a result, the tree ceases to provide shelter for birds, animals, and people. An erect tree becomes a fallen tree. All other trees are addressed with an implicit warning in **verse 14**. If this magnificent tree vaunted itself and perished all the same, what will happen to lesser trees (other empires) if they become enchanted with their own greatness? When a nation thinks that it is the source of its own greatness, it succumbs to pride, which will destroy it from within and from without. What a lesson for our nation!

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. In the above reading we see the pride of great nations (Assyria and Egypt), which is but a reflection of the pride of the people of these nations. Pride is the deadliest sin. It was not only Satan’s first sin, it continues to be his *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*. Pride is the single greatest reason a person will not walk with God *by second person proper knowledge and proper love*—he simply does not need Him. Such a person is simply too impressed with himself, his world, and what he can obtain for himself. There is simply little to no room for love in his heart. It is all about self. Who do we think about the most? Ourselves and our “goodness,” or God and His goodness?

Revelation 14:14–15:8. Two voices call for harvest. One calls upon the Son of man to reap the earth as a giant wheat harvest (14:14–16), while the last voice likens the reaping of the earth to a grape harvest, for the coming of the Lord will mean the treading of the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty (14:17–20). **Chapter 15:** Just as the seven seals and the seven trumpets depict different aspects of God’s judgments through Christ, so now another dimension of His judgment must be revealed. The seven cups of wrath are similar to the seven trumpets and the seven seals, but they also are different; for there comes a time when the wrath of God is no longer partial or temporary but complete and everlasting. The outpouring of the seven cups of wrath means that God’s judgment is also final and irrevocable. The partial judgment (“one-third”) of the trumpets suggests that God uses the sufferings and evils of this life as a warning to draw humankind toward repentance and faith. But such tribulations also foreshadow the final hour of judgment, when God’s wrath is finished and there is delay no longer. The seven cups of wrath represent the judgments of the Lamb on the earth, especially on those who have received the mark of the beast.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love. In *second person proper love and knowledge*, the believer appreciates both the love and the justice of God as per 15:3. Note that the Tribulation saints praise God’s works as well as His ways. The earth-dwellers certainly would not praise God for His works, and they would never understand His ways. God’s works are great and marvelous, and His ways are just and true. There is no complaint here about the way God permitted these people to suffer! It would save us a great deal of sorrow if we would acknowledge God’s sovereignty in this same way today! “The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Ps. 145:17). One day, after God removes all evil from this earth, the whole world will love and worship Him (15:4). *Maranatha!*

Job 37:1–8. With rising drama, Elihu depicts thunder as not just a natural phenomenon, but as the voice of God, mysterious, unpredictable and terrifying. He is speaking phenomenologically to point to the power and mysterious ways of God. In **verse 8** he points out that human beings are not the only ones to react to the storm and seek safety, animals also do the same.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. What is the point of being awed at the power and majesty of God if one does not have a loving relationship with Him? Without a loving relationship, the more one thinks about the power of God, the more one will want to suppress Him and shrink away from Him. Where would we be without faith, hope, and love? What would we be without faith, hope, and love? If it were not for God's grace, we would be nothing. What's worse is that we would be numbered among those who have rejected God's grace, who, in the end, will bow a knee to the majesty of God as they curse Him in their hearts while they suffer in Hell forever. It is one thing to understand God's power and live in fear. It is quite another to understand God's power and live in Him and it *by second person proper knowledge and proper love*, the only place for the cultivation of faith, hope, and love and blessedness both now and forever. As Isaac Watts has invited all saints to sing with him:

I sing the goodness of the Lord
That filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His word,
And then pronounced them good.

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow
By order from Thy throne.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don