

Deuteronomy 28:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

Analysis

The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far—the Hebrew *gôy* (גוי) here means a distant, foreign power. The phrase **as swift as the eagle flieth** (כַּנֶּשֶׁר יִדְאָה, *kanneshher yid'eh*) perfectly describes Rome's military eagles (standards) that swept through Judea. **A nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand** applied to Assyrian, Babylonian, and Latin—languages completely foreign to Hebrew speakers.

Deuteronomy 28:49 remarkably predicted events 1,400+ years in advance. The eagle imagery is prophetic: Roman legions carried eagle standards, and Jesus referenced this verse when predicting Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 17:37 —'where the body is, there the eagles will gather'). The incomprehensible foreign tongue meant no negotiation, no mercy, only conquest.

Historical Context

This prophecy saw multiple fulfillments: Assyria (Isaiah 28:11), Babylon (Jeremiah 5:15), and most dramatically Rome. Josephus records that during the AD 70 siege, Roman forces surrounded Jerusalem with terrifying speed, and Jewish captives couldn't communicate with their Latin-speaking conquerors.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty extend even to pagan nations that accomplish His purposes?
2. What does this passage teach about the consequences of spiritual complacency?
3. How should this prophetic accuracy strengthen our confidence in God's other unfulfilled prophecies?

Interlinear Text

יִשָּׂא	יְהוָה	עַל יָבֹ	גּוֹי	מִכֹּחֶק	מִקֶּצֶה
shall bring	The LORD		a nation	against thee from far	from the end
H5375	H3068	H5921	H1471	H7350	H7097
הָאֵרֶץ	כְּאֶשֶׁר	יָדָא הִ	הַנֶּשֶׁר	גּוֹי	אֶשֶׁר
of the earth		flieth	as swift as the eagle	a nation	
H776	H834	H1675	H5404	H1471	H834
					H3808
תִּשְׁמַע	לְשׁוֹנוֹ:				
thou shalt not understand	whose tongue				
H8085	H3956				

Additional Cross-References

Lamentations 4:19 (Parallel theme): Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

Jeremiah 48:40 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

Jeremiah 49:22 (Parallel theme): Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

Ezekiel 17:3 (References Lord): And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Hosea 8:1 (References Lord): Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

Ezekiel 17:12 (Parallel theme): Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;