

Ezekiel 29:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.

Analysis

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it—The verb נָתַתִּ (nātattî, 'I have given') is prophetic perfect: future event spoken as accomplished fact because God's decree is certain. פְּעֻלַּתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָבָד בָּה (pē'ullātô āsher 'ābad bāh, 'his labor which he served in it') refers to the Tyre siege.

Because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD—The stunning declaration: עָשׂוּ לִי ('āsû lî, 'they worked for me'). Nebuchadnezzar didn't know he served YHWH (he worshiped Marduk/Bel), but God sovereignly directed his campaigns to accomplish divine purposes: judging proud Tyre and Egypt, disciplining Israel, and demonstrating that YHWH alone controls history. This echoes Cyrus being called God's 'shepherd' and 'anointed' without knowing YHWH (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-4). God works His will through all rulers, willing or unwitting (Proverbs 21:1).

Historical Context

This principle—pagan rulers serving God's purposes unknowingly—appears throughout Scripture: Pharaoh in Exodus, Assyria (Isaiah 10), Cyrus (Isaiah 45), Rome crucifying Jesus (Acts 2:23). God's sovereignty doesn't negate human responsibility but demonstrates His comprehensive control of history. Nebuchadnezzar's campaigns against Tyre and Egypt fulfilled divine purposes though motivated by imperial ambition.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can God righteously claim pagan rulers 'worked for me' without their knowledge?
 2. What does this teach about God's sovereignty over world history?
 3. How should Christians view secular governments in light of God's absolute control?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה פְּעַלְתָּו	אֲשֶׁר בְּדַעַת	בְּהַנִּתְמָתִים	לֹא בְּהַנִּתְמָתִים
for his labour	wherewith he served	I have given	
H6468	H5647	H5414	
him the land	of Egypt	against it because they wrought	
H776	H4714	H6213	
בְּנֵי אָדָם הָיָה;			לֹ
for me saith the Lord GOD			
H5002	H136	H3069	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 25:9 (References Lord): Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant,

and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

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