

Isaiah 13:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

Analysis

'Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.' God explicitly names the instrument of judgment: the Medes (later allied with Persians under Cyrus). Remarkably, these conquerors cannot be bribed—they don't regard silver or delight in gold. Their motivation isn't plunder but conquest and possibly divine destiny (Cyrus saw himself as Marduk's chosen servant, unknowingly fulfilling Yahweh's plan). When God's judgment comes, normal human motivations and deterrents (bribery, tribute) fail. Divine purposes override economic incentives.

Historical Context

Isaiah names the Medes over a century before they conquered Babylon (539 BC). The Medes came from the Iranian plateau; under Cyrus, they allied with Persians to form the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus's conquest of Babylon was remarkably merciful by ancient standards—no mass slaughter, no destruction of temples, immediate proclamation allowing peoples to return home (the decree that let Jews return, Ezra 1:1-4). His motivation wasn't gold (Babylon had plenty to offer) but empire-building according to his vision of divine mandate. God used a pagan king's ambition to fulfill His purposes.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's specific naming of the Medes over a century before events validate Scripture's prophetic authority?
2. What does God's ability to motivate pagan rulers to fulfill His purposes teach about His sovereignty?

Interlinear Text

הִנֵּנִי	יָמַע יר	עֲלֵיהֶם	אֶת	מֶדֶי	אֲשֶׁר	כֶּסֶף	לֹא
H2005	Behold I will stir up	H5921	H853	the Medes	H834	silver	H3808
	H5782			H4074		H3701	
	יִחַשׁ בּוֹ	וְזָבָה	לֹא		יִחַפְּצוּ		
	against them which shall not regard	and as for gold	H3808		they shall not delight		
	H2803	H2091			H2654		
בּוֹ:							
H0							

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:11 (Parallel theme): Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Isaiah 21:2 (Parallel theme): A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.

Isaiah 41:25 (Parallel theme): I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

Jeremiah 50:9 (Parallel theme): For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

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