

Isaiah 19:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

'And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.' After internal chaos comes external oppression—a 'cruel lord' and 'fierce king' will dominate Egypt. The double title 'Lord, the LORD of hosts' emphasizes divine authority behind this judgment. The 'cruel lord' likely refers collectively to successive foreign rulers: Assyrian conquerors (Esarhaddon, Ashurbanipal), Persian emperors (Cambyses, who particularly brutalized Egypt), Greek Ptolemies, and Roman Caesars. Each showed varying degrees of harshness. This demonstrates that God controls not only who rules but the character of their rule—sometimes permitting harsh rulers as judgment. Reformed theology's doctrine of providence includes God's sovereign appointment of all authorities (Romans 13:1), whether righteous or tyrannical, according to His purposes.

Historical Context

Egyptian history after Isaiah's prophecy confirmed this pattern: Assyrian conquest (671-656 BCE) saw brutal subjugation. Persian rule (525-404 BCE, 343-332 BCE) included Cambyses' notorious cruelties—killing the sacred Apis bull, desecrating temples. Alexander conquered Egypt (332 BCE), followed by Ptolemaic dynasty infighting and oppression. Roman rule (30 BCE onward) exploited Egypt as Rome's breadbasket. The proud empire that once enslaved others experienced centuries of foreign domination. This fulfilled the principle that nations oppressing others

eventually face oppression themselves (Genesis 15:13-14; Obadiah 15). God's justice operates across generations and centuries, ultimately balancing accounts.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does God giving Egypt to cruel rulers teach about divine sovereignty over governmental authorities?
2. How does this demonstrate that God sometimes uses harsh rulers as instruments of judgment?
3. What principle of divine justice appears when oppressor nations eventually face oppression themselves?

Interlinear Text

וְיָ לֵךְ	קָשָׁה	הָ	הָאֵדֹן	בְּיָד	מִצֵּרִים	אֶת	וְסִפְרִתִּי
king	of a cruel	lord	into the hand	the Egyptians	And	will I give over	
H4428	H7186	H113	H3027	H4714	H853	H5534	
צְבָאוֹת:	יְהוָה	הָ	הָאֵדֹן	נֹאֲמִים	בָּם	יִמְשֹׁל	עַז
of hosts	the LORD	lord	lord	over them saith		shall rule	and a fierce
H6635	H3068	H113	H113	H5002	H0	H4910	H5794

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 20:4 (Kingdom): So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:26 (Kingdom): And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

Ezekiel 29:19 (Kingdom): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org