

Jeremiah 28:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

Analysis

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also (כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת...עַל בְּרִזָּל נָתַתִּי עַל־צֹאֲר) ki-khoh amar YHWH tseva'ot...ol barzel natatti al-tsavvar kol-haggoyim ha'eleh la'avod et-n'vukhadnetsar melekh-bavel va'avaduhu)—God explicitly claims authorship of Babylon's dominance: **I have put** (נָתַתִּי, natatti) the iron yoke. The verb עָבַד (avad, 'serve') appears twice—**that they may serve...and they shall serve**—emphasizing inevitability. Even **beasts of the field** (חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה, chayyat hassadeh) are given to Nebuchadnezzar, echoing Daniel 2:38's vision of Babylonian empire.

This theology is crucial: Babylon isn't merely human empire succeeding through military might; it's divine instrument of judgment. God has actively placed nations under Babylonian rule for specific purposes. Resisting Babylon equals resisting God's appointed judgment. This doesn't make Babylon righteous (God later judges Babylon too, Jer 50-51), but it makes current submission wise. Sometimes God uses wicked instruments to discipline His people; opposing the instrument means opposing the Discipliner.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's empire (605-539 BC) dominated the ancient Near East comprehensively, from Egypt to Elam. Daniel 2:37-38 explicitly states God gave Nebuchadnezzar this universal dominion. Jeremiah's counsel to submit wasn't political defeatism but theological realism—recognizing God's sovereignty over international affairs. Other prophets (Habakkuk, Ezekiel) similarly acknowledged Babylon as divine instrument.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you recognize when opposition to human powers actually opposes God's purposes?
2. What does it mean that God uses wicked instruments to accomplish His righteous purposes?
3. When might submission to unjust authorities reflect wisdom rather than compromise?

Interlinear Text

עַל יֶשְׁכָּאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יָצָא וְהוֹה אָמַר כֹּה כִּי
H3588 H3541 For thus saith H559 the LORD H3068 of hosts H6635 the God H430 of Israel H3478 a yoke H5923

הָאֵל לָהּ הַגּוֹיִם כָּל צוֹ אֶרֶץ עָלַי נָתַתִּי בִרְזֶן לִי
of iron H1270 I have put H5414 H5921 upon the neck H6677 H3605 of all these nations H1471 H428

וְעָבְדוּ הוּא בַבֶּל מֶלֶךְ נְבֻכַדְנֶאצַּר אֶת וְעָבְדוּ הוּא
and they shall serve H5647 H853 Nebuchadnezzar H5019 king H4428 of Babylon H894 and they shall serve H5647

לִּי: נָתַתִּי הַשָּׂדֶה חֵית אֶת וְגַם
H1571 H853 him the beasts H2416 of the field H7704 I have put H5414 H0

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 28:48 (References Lord): Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.