

Isaiah 20:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it;

Analysis

In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it. Precise historical reference grounds the prophecy: Tartan (Assyrian military commander title, not personal name) conquered Ashdod (Philistine city) under Sargon II's orders. Archaeological validation: Sargon's annals record this 712-711 BCE campaign. This demonstrates biblical prophecy's historical reliability—not mythology but rooted in verifiable events. Ashdod's conquest was part of Assyrian suppression of anti-Assyrian rebellion encouraged by Egypt. The context explains why Isaiah performed the following sign-act—warning against trusting Egyptian help. Reformed theology emphasizes Scripture's historical accuracy as foundational to trustworthiness in spiritual matters—if errant historically, unreliable theologically.

Historical Context

Sargon II (721-705 BCE) was powerful Assyrian emperor who completed Samaria's conquest and campaigned throughout the Levant. Archaeological discoveries include Sargon's palace at Khorsabad with detailed annals. His records mention conquering Ashdod in his 11th year (711 BCE), deporting its population, and installing an Assyrian governor—precisely matching this verse. This prophecy's historical precision demonstrates eyewitness reliability. Isaiah witnessed these events, providing contemporary testimony. The Ashdod rebellion was encouraged by Egypt's 25th Dynasty promising support—support that failed to materialize,

validating Isaiah's warnings against trusting Egypt. Modern archaeology's confirmation of biblical historical details strengthens confidence in Scripture's overall trustworthiness.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does precise historical detail teach about Scripture's reliability?
2. How does archaeological confirmation of events like Ashdod's conquest validate biblical testimony?
3. Why is historical accuracy important for theological trustworthiness?

Interlinear Text

בְּשָׁנָה	בָּא	תַּרְתָּן	בְּאַשְׁדּוֹד	וַיִּשְׁלַח	אֶת־וְ	סָרְגִּין
In the year	came	that Tartan	against Ashdod	sent	H853	when Sargon
H8141	H935	H8661	H795	H7971		H5623
מֶלֶךְ	אֲשׁוּר	וַיִּלָּחֶם	בְּאַשְׁדּוֹד	וַיִּקְחֶה:		
the king	of Assyria	him and fought	against Ashdod	and took		
H4428	H804	H3898	H795	H3920		

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 18:17 (Kingdom): And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field.

