

Isaiah 20:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

Analysis

'And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia.' God explains the sign: Isaiah's three years of humiliation prefigures Egypt and Ethiopia's coming shame. 'Sign and wonder' (oth umopheth) indicates miraculous testimony—not just unusual but divinely authenticated message. The three-year duration intensified impact—not brief dramatic gesture but sustained witness demonstrating seriousness and certainty of prophecy. This embodied warning demonstrated God's patience—providing extended warning before judgment. The phrase 'my servant Isaiah' honors the prophet's faithful obedience. Despite personal cost, Isaiah maintained the sign for three full years. This models costly discipleship—God's servants must sometimes bear shame for faithful witness (Hebrews 11:36-38; 13:13).

Historical Context

The three years (712-709 BCE) preceded major Assyrian campaigns against Egypt (701 BCE and later). This warning period demonstrated God's mercy—providing time for repentance and reconsideration before judgment fell. Judah's politicians advocating Egyptian alliance had three years to observe Isaiah's warning and reconsider. Some did heed—Hezekiah ultimately trusted God rather than Egypt during 701 crisis, resulting in miraculous deliverance. The sustained sign-act also validated prophecy's seriousness—brief dramatic gestures might be dismissed, but

three years indicated unwavering divine commitment to the message. Church history shows God similarly provides warning before judgments—giving opportunity for repentance while demonstrating justice when warnings are ignored.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does three years' duration teach about God's patience in providing warning before judgment?
2. How did the sustained sign-act validate the prophecy's seriousness versus brief symbolic gestures?
3. In what ways does God demonstrate both mercy (warning) and justice (following through) in temporal judgments?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם
said And the LORD H559 H3068 H834
יְהֹוָה כֹּאֲשֶׁר
hath walked H1980 H5650
כֹּאֲשֶׁר כֹּאֲשֶׁר
Like as my servant H3470
Isaiah

עַל וּמְזֻפָּת אֲזֹת שְׁנִים שְׁלִשׁ יְמִין רַע וּמְלֵךְ
and wonder for a sign and upon three years naked and barefoot
H5921 H4159 H226 H8141 H7969 H3182 H6174

בְּקַשׁ וְעַל מִצְבָּה
and upon Ethiopia upon Egypt
H3568 H5921 H4714

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 8:18 (References Lord): Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org