

Isaiah 21:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

Analysis

'Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.' Isaiah's physical response to the vision: loins filled with pain, labor-like pangs, bowed down, dismayed. True prophets weren't emotionally detached but deeply affected by visions of judgment. The birthing imagery suggests something new emerging through pain—Babylon's fall would birth a new order (Persian Empire, Jewish return). Yet the process is agonizing. This demonstrates that announcing judgment isn't triumphalism but grief-laden burden. God's servants must feel the weight of divine judgments, never cavalier about wrath. This models pastoral sensitivity—truth must be proclaimed, but with broken-hearted awareness of its terrible weight.

Historical Context

Isaiah's distress at visions of Babylon's judgment (despite Babylon being future enemy of Judah) demonstrates prophetic compassion transcending national interests. True prophets grieve over all human suffering, even enemies'. This contrasts with nationalistic false prophets who gleefully announce judgment on opponents. Isaiah's response models Christ's weeping over Jerusalem despite pronouncing its judgment (Luke 19:41). Church history shows authentic preachers

similarly distressed when proclaiming divine wrath—Edwards wept while preaching 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.' This emotional engagement validates ministry authenticity. Those unmoved by judgment's reality likely haven't genuinely encountered it. Proper proclamation combines theological conviction with emotional gravity.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does Isaiah's physical distress at the vision teach about proper prophetic attitude toward judgment?
2. How does this contrast with nationalistic prophets who gleefully announce enemies' destruction?
3. Why must proclaimers of divine wrath feel its weight emotionally, not just articulate it intellectually?

Interlinear Text

עַל	כִּי	מָלֵא וְ	מִתְנִי	הַלְחָלָה	כְּצִיר י	אָחֲזוּ וְנִי
H5921	H3651	filled	Therefore are my loins	with pain	pangs	have taken hold
		H4390	H4975	H2479	H6735	H270
כְּצִיר י	יֹלֶדֶת הַ	נָעַם יִתִּי	מִשְׁמַע עַ			
pangs	of a woman that travailleth	I was bowed down	at the hearing			
H6735	H3205	H5753	H8085			
נִבְהָ לִּי	מִרְאֹת:					
of it I was dismayed	at the seeing					
H926	H7200					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:8 (Parallel theme): And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.

Isaiah 26:17 (Parallel theme): Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.

Psalms 48:6 (Parallel theme): Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

Isaiah 16:11 (Parallel theme): Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.

Jeremiah 48:41 (Parallel theme): Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.