

Isaiah 21:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.

Analysis

'For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.' God instructs Isaiah to establish a prophetic watchman reporting visions—the prophet serving as lookout for divine revelations. This metaphor appears throughout prophetic literature (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7; Habakkuk 2:1)—prophets as watchmen warning of approaching danger. The watchman's duty is declaration of 'what he seeth'—faithful reporting regardless of message popularity. This establishes prophetic responsibility: communicate divine revelation accurately, whether welcome or unwelcome. Reformed ecclesiology emphasizes the pastor's watchman role—warning of spiritual dangers, declaring God's Word faithfully, not modifying messages for comfort. Faithful watchmen risk unpopularity but maintain integrity; false prophets please audiences but betray duty.

Historical Context

Ancient cities stationed watchmen on walls and towers to warn of approaching armies, giving citizens time to prepare. The analogy applied to prophets—providing spiritual early warning systems. Isaiah's ministry exemplified this: warning Judah about Assyria, Egypt, Babylon decades before threats materialized. This allowed hearers to prepare spiritually and politically. Those heeding warnings (like Hezekiah during 701 crisis) were preserved; those ignoring them faced consequences. Church history shows faithful watchmen often persecuted for unwelcome warnings—yet their vindication came when predicted judgments arrived. Modern pastors face similar tensions: proclaim unpopular truths (sin,

judgment, exclusivity of Christ) or compromise for acceptance. Faithful watchmen choose truth despite cost.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does the watchman metaphor teach about prophetic/pastoral responsibility?
2. How does faithful declaration of 'what he seeth' require courage despite unpopularity?
3. What modern pressures tempt pastors to compromise the watchman role?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	כֹה	אָמַר	אֵלַי	אֲדַבֵּר	לַיהוָה	הַמַּצֵּפֶה	הַ
H3588	H3541	said	H413	For thus hath the Lord	H1980	set	a watchman
		H559		H136		H5975	H6822
אֲשֶׁר	יִרְאֶה	יְגִיד:					
H834	what he seeth	let him declare					
	H7200	H5046					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 3:17 (Parallel theme): Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

Isaiah 62:6 (References Lord): I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

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