

Zechariah 13:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

Analysis

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive. This verse describes the exposure and shame awaiting false prophets. "The prophets shall be ashamed" (yevoshu ha-nevi'im, יבשו הנביאים) indicates they will be humiliated when their deceptions are revealed. The phrase "every one of his vision" (ish me-chezono, איש מחזונו) refers to the false visions they claimed were from God—they will be ashamed of these lies.

"Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive" (velo yilbeshu aderet se'ar lema'an kachez, ולא ילבשו אדרת שער למען כחץ). The "rough garment" or "hairy mantle" (aderet se'ar, אדרת שער) was characteristic prophetic attire worn by Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4). False prophets adopted this distinctive clothing "to deceive" (lema'an kachez, למען כחץ)—using external symbols of prophetic office to lend credibility to their lies. Like modern frauds wearing clerical collars or religious garb to appear authoritative, they manipulated appearance to gain trust.

In the coming day of purification, false prophets will abandon even the pretense of prophetic calling. They'll be so thoroughly exposed and ashamed that they'll deny ever claiming prophetic office. This demonstrates that God's truth will ultimately triumph over all deception—lies cannot withstand the light of divine revelation.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, false prophets mimicked true prophets' appearance and speech patterns to gain credibility. Jeremiah confronted false prophets who stole God's words from one another and claimed divine dreams (Jeremiah 23:30-32). Ezekiel condemned those who prophesied from their own imagination (Ezekiel 13:2-3). The 'rough garment' or hair cloak became so associated with prophets that wearing it signified prophetic office—making it a tool for deception when worn by frauds.

By Zechariah's time, Israel had experienced the consequences of heeding false prophets—exile and destruction came because they believed lies rather than truth (Jeremiah 27:9-10, 29:8-9). This prophecy envisions a future when such deception will be impossible—truth will be so clearly revealed that false prophets will voluntarily discard their deceptive garb rather than face exposure. Jesus warned that false prophets would come in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), and Paul described those who masquerade as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The principle remains: external religious appearance cannot substitute for genuine calling and truthful message.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can you discern between genuine spiritual leaders and those who merely adopt external markers of authority?
2. What does this passage teach about the danger of judging spiritual authenticity by appearances (clothing, titles, credentials) rather than message and fruit?

3. In what ways might modern Christian leaders be tempted to use 'rough garments' (external symbols of piety or authority) to lend credibility to self-generated rather than God-given messages?

Interlinear Text

וְיִהְיֶה	בַּיּוֹם	בַּהֲזַד	יִבְשֶׂה
H1961		H1931	
And it shall come to pass in that day		shall be ashamed	
	H3117		H954
מִתְחִזִּים וְאַיִלְבִּיאָם		בְּהַנְּבָאָת וְאַל	
that the prophets	every one	of his vision	when he hath prophesied
H5030	H376	H2384	H5012
וְלֹא שְׁעֵר אֵיךְ נִתְבַּשְׂרָא		פְּתַשׁ לֹמְעָן	
neither shall they wear	garment	a rough	to deceive
H3847	H155	H8181	H4616
			H3584

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 3:4 (Parallel theme): And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Isaiah 20:2 (Parallel theme): At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

2 Kings 1:8 (Parallel theme): And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

Revelation 11:3 (Prophecy): And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Jeremiah 6:15 (Parallel theme): Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Mark 1:6 (Parallel theme): And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

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