

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #31

Isaiah 22:15-25

Just recently at a Detroit Tiger baseball game, a squirrel somehow got out on the field and was running back and forth from right field to left field. There were many people who would have been happy to help that squirrel and set it free, but the problem is the squirrel would not permit any person to help it. As a result, the squirrel ran itself into a tizzy and if it runs long enough, eventually it will run itself to death.

That is the problem with Israel. She has been running through this world on her own as if she doesn't need any help, including the help of God. There is a wonderful God who would be glad to help her but she simply will not turn to Him for help. She would rather rely on herself and her own abilities rather than turn to the God who actually brought her into her land. This matter of self-dependency will be a big reason why she will find herself in terrible trouble during the Tribulation and it will be the reason why God will permit the rise of the Antichrist.

There can be little doubt that there is a prophetic chronology to these prophecies in Isaiah. Isaiah's prophecies move from eschatological judgments against various nations to judgments pertaining to two individuals. It cannot be a mere coincidence that Babylon is destroyed before the finale which takes place in Jerusalem, for this perfectly squares with the book of Revelation. It also cannot be a mere coincidence that judgments move from national to individual. We know that another key eschatological episode pertaining to the Tribulation will be when Jesus Christ returns and destroys the satanic Antichrist and replaces him as the Righteous ruler of the world. We believe that this is the event which is pictured in part right here in Isaiah.

This prophecy centers on two specific individuals and it teaches us that there is coming a day when a false, evil, arrogant leader (Shebna) will be replaced by a true, righteous, humble leader (Eliakim). We know this has clear prophetic application for there is coming a day when the arrogant false Antichrist will be replaced by the glorious true Jesus Christ.

Now the actual Biblical basis we have for believing this is a legitimate application of this text, is because of **verse 22**. When we compare Isaiah 22:22 with Revelation 3:7, we have a legitimate right to draw the conclusion that Jesus Christ is in view because Jesus Christ said that He is the One who has the "key of David." As we approach this text, we agree with G. Campbell Morgan who said, "While there is undoubtedly a Messianic value in this passage concerning Eliakim, we must be careful not to forget its first application" (*The Prophecy of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 134). It seems to me that the primary point of this text is this:

EVENTUALLY THE HUMBLE AND RIGHTEOUS PERSON WILL RULE AND THE ARROGANT AND EVIL PERSON WILL BE REMOVED AND DESTROYED.

In the end, God will use His power to see to it that the proud and the arrogant are leveled and He will also see to it that those who are humble and faithful will be exalted. That is clearly the message here. Now the text before us centers on two persons:

PERSON #1 – God reveals prophetic truth about the false evil arrogant leader Shebna .
22:15-19

There is nothing wrong for a person to plan and give careful, prayerful foresight to a decision. There is certainly nothing wrong with making plans with a careful dependency on God. But there is something terribly wrong with an arrogant self-reliant attitude that does not depend on God. That is clearly the attitude that existed with Shebna.

Shebna was a high court scribal official during the days of King Hezekiah and a steward who was involved in negotiations with Sennacherib when he came to take over the city of Jerusalem (II Kings 18:18, 26, 37; 19:2; Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2). He was bilingual and could speak both Hebrew and Aramaic (Isaiah 36:11). He was in charge of the royal household. He was a foreigner and had maneuvered his way into power and became a man of great influence who was, as Dr. McGee said, nothing more than a “cheap politician” who was eventually displaced by Eliakim. There are five observations we want to make concerning Shebna.

Observation #1 - God is the One who is in sovereign charge of everything . **22:15a**

Notice the names used for God - “the Lord GOD of hosts” (Adonai, Jehovah, Sabaoth). These powerful names mean God is the Lord, Master and owner of everything (Adonai), Who does whatever He wants to do (Jehovah) and Who controls all hosts, including that which is on earth and in heaven, including that which is miserable and wretched (Sabaoth). He is the “LORD Almighty” over everything.

The first thing God wants us to realize is that even when you have a power-crazed, corrupt leader in charge, God is still sovereign and is directing all things for His purposes.

I don't care who the public leader is, God is the One who has permitted that leader to be in power and when God is through with him, He will take him out. Wise is the leader who governs his constituency in a way that honors the God of the Bible and the one who doesn't is a fool, because God can and will remove that leader in an instant. Even though Shebna thought he was in charge, actually God was in charge.

Observation #2 - Shebna was in charge of the royal household . **22:15b**

The point of any leader in Israel during the O.T. economy was to lead the nation into a proper relationship with God. This actually is the same responsibility any government has. Unfortunately in the case of Shebna, his goal was not this but self achievement.

Now according to Keil and Delitzsch, this title of being “over the house” was one given to some state official of great importance both in Israel and Judah (I Kings 4:6; 18:3). According to II Chronicles 26:21, one in this position actually judged people and was in charge of everyone and everything connected to the king's household. All things were under his sovereign superintendence (*Isaiah*, Voil. 7, p. 398).

What this proves is that sometimes God permits those who have no fear of Him to get into a high political position of power for awhile. This kind of person is proud and self-sufficient and self-indulgent and self-secure. He doesn't really care about the Word of God or the Will of God and, in fact, he may promote an agenda that is anti-God and His Word. But what this person needs to realize is that God is watching his administration and God will hold him accountable.

Observation #3 - God commands that it is time to go confront Shebna. **26:15c**

Isaiah was commanded by God to go to this high-ranking official and confront him. No matter how powerful he was, Isaiah was a man of God who was not afraid to confront political leaders with truth and he had access to do it. The thing to see about Isaiah is that he treats Shebna just as he deserves to be treated in light of the Word of God. Isaiah was no politician, he was a prophet and he communicated the truth of God clearly and precisely no matter who his audience.

When our recent President was inaugurated, he had some ministers speak at his inauguration. One of the ministers was cute with his words and made up some cutesy rhymes. When he got done speaking the place erupted in applause and the President with a big grin on his face stood up and shook his hand. Had that been the prophet Isaiah, I guarantee you the world would not have applauded him and the political leader would not smile and shake his hand because Isaiah's message to Shebna was not favorable.

Playtime and ego time for Shebna was over. God says it is time to go get that false steward who has set himself up to be a leader of Israel. Shebna had carefully maneuvered his way through the political system even though his heart was not right with God, and God said, it is time to hold him accountable right now. Isaiah's job was to communicate God's truth to this high-ranking arrogant puffed up official that God was soon to destroy.

Observation #4 - Shebna is a steward who has no legal right to be in charge. **22:16**

When Isaiah confronted Shebna, he didn't waste time getting at the heart of the issue - "What right do you think you have to be here?" It would be like going to our President and saying - What right do you think you have to tell Israel she has to share a land God has specifically given to her? What right do you have to fly into the Middle East and think you can usurp the living Word of the living God and tell Arabs they belong in a land God gave Israel?

I want you to notice the threefold repetition of "here-here-here" in **verse 16**, and the twofold repetition of "there-there" in **verse 18**. This is a Hebraic poetic way of stressing the point that, you do not belong here and you are going to go there. It is possible that this is a reference to the entire mandate of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit all conclude you do not belong here and you are going to be removed.

This foreigner had no legitimate right to be a leader in Jerusalem and be in charge of anything. He had no legal right to be a leader of Israel. Foreigners have no legal right to Jerusalem or any of the Promised Land. Political leaders of the world need to realize this. It is true that Arabs and Americans and Australians and Europeans and Africans and Egyptians may manipulate their way into Israel's cities and land, but God will eventually bring them all down, just like Shebna.

Shebna was an arrogant man who tried to make a permanent name for himself in Israel's land as a foreigner, so that his name would live on even by some tomb he had carved. You will notice from **verse 16** that he was carving his tomb "on the height." What this means is that he wanted a high-ranking preeminent place in Israel's history, even above kings and priests. He wanted a resting place in Jerusalem so people would look at his tomb and admire him as being a giant for God. What I find so intriguing about this is that his whole main ambition was to be remembered in Israel for being great and he would actually lie dead and be buried in a foreign land.

Many arrogant kings desired to lie in state of honor. In fact, that is why the pyramid tombs in Egypt were made. If you were an arrogant king, you wanted to be buried in such a spectacular tomb that no one would ever forget you. Who of us can forget the body of JFK lying in state in the Rotunda and then the procession that led to his burial. It was regal. The picture stays in your mind. However, it was not JFK who planned any of this. Shebna was planning all of this himself. The real reason was because of a proud vanity and a self-exaltation. I find it interesting that those God honors are often buried in tombs, some of which we don't even know where they are located. Truth is we aren't even totally sure which tomb Jesus was buried in. God doesn't need an impressive tomb or the self-effort of any man to honor someone. He lifts up and exalts without any human manipulation whatsoever.

The irony of all of this is that while Shebna was investing all of his time and life to try to make a name for himself "here" in Israel, God caused him to die "there" in a foreign land.

Observation #5 - God will remove and destroy Shebna. **22:17-19**

Any leader who misuses the trust of leadership God gives him, is heading to a Divine disaster. News for Shebna was not good. God was going to treat him like a ball in that he would roll him up, turn him over, toss him up and throw him away. According to **verse 18**, he would throw him into a foreign country and there he would die. He would die in shame because God would topple him. Shebna probably got in the splendid chariots and rode around Jerusalem so people could get a look at his greatness. Just like an arrogant politician who parades himself to masses of people saying, "Look at me, here I am."

God says I have sad news for you, for I'll hurl you right out of this land. Shebna longed to be remembered in the Promised Land and God says I'll see to it that you die in some large foreign land. I'll hurl you out of my limited Promised Land and you will die out there someplace in the vast world of foreigners. There is no record of what happened to him anywhere other than this prophecy given by Isaiah. So we don't even know where he ended up dying.

This is all very reminiscent of what we read in Revelation 19:20 concerning what God will do to the Antichrist. The Antichrist will be a foreigner who will move into Israel as her deliverer. He will hold great power for a short time. He will desire to be worshipped in Jerusalem as God and ultimately God says I am going to topple you. I will throw you into the eternal lake of fire.

It does not matter how big the politician, God is still bigger. There is no question in the world of politics that leaders learn how to smile and move and manipulate things for their own gain and ego. But be warned, **the leader who does not honor the true God will be the leader humbled by God.** When the Lord God of hosts says "go get that steward," it will mean the end.

PERSON #2 – God reveals prophetic truth about the true righteous leader Eliakim . **22:20-25**

Shebna was going to be removed but God said, “I have another who will take his place.” The opening of **verse 20**, “in that day,” is clearly prophetic. At the time when Shebna is destroyed, the Lord will raise up His servant Eliakim.

Observation #1 - God is the One who summons His true servant to take charge. **22:20**

Now there are five different individuals in the Bible given the name Eliakim. Two of them show up in Christ’s lineage (Matthew 1:13; Luke 3:30). Another was a contemporary of Nehemiah and a priest (Nehemiah 12:41); one was king of Judah (II Kings 23:34; II Chronicles 36:4) and the last one is the one mentioned here by Isaiah. This particular Eliakim was a very godly man, who also was involved in negotiations with Sennacherib (II Kings 18:18, 26, 37; Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2).

He is called by God as “My servant.” Whenever God attributes this name “My servant” to an individual, it is a title of high honor. One who is designated by God as a true servant of God is one with a tremendous name in heaven, not in a tomb.

Observation #2 - God will clothe Him and entrust Him with all Fatherly authority over Israel. **22:21**

This promotion comes from God. The clothing described here may indicate that Shebna was actually dressing himself as a priest. In fact, the Hebrew word “tunic” and “sash” are the same words used to describe a priestly garment (Exodus 28:4).

There is no question that the position was authoritative.

Observation #3 - God will give him the key of David which opens and shuts all Divine doors of God’s blessings. **22:22**

Not only would Eliakim receive Shebna’s position and power, but he would receive tremendous power and authority from God. God would give Eliakim the keys to all Davidic government. He would have total and complete control over all things connected to God; as one commentator said, to all of God’s “treasures of grace.” If he were to open the doors for someone, no one could shut them and if he were to shut the doors, no one could open them. This was an exalted position over all of the blessings of God.

Observation #4 - He will become an unmovable king on a throne to the Glory of God. **22:23**

The idea of a peg being driven into a firm place was a metaphorical picture of something driven into the wall so securely that you could safely hang things on it. This is the type of God-appointed leader on whom you may depend. This is the type of strength on which you can rely.

Observation #5 - All the Glory of God will rest on him. **22:24a**

People will realize that all glory of God rests on him and therefore they will want to be near him and hang on him to share in that glory. All of our salvation hangs on Jesus Christ. Everything we have in our relationship with God and everything Israel has in her relationship with God hangs on Jesus Christ.

Observation #6 - All of God's offspring will hang on him. **22:24b**

All of the offspring of the Father will hang on him, from the least to the most glamorous of vessels. They will all hang on him.

Observation #7 - The load and burden will be cut off from the earth. **22:25**

The prediction in this verse is that the peg on which people depend will be broken. Some have said they think this is a prediction of Christ's sufferings. The words "cut off" are the same words used by Daniel (9:26) in reference to the fact that Jesus Christ would be "cut off" from the world before He would reign. Others suggest that the broken peg is a reference back to Shebna, the false Christ on whom people depended.

Both are true possibilities. We may also suggest that if this is a contrast between the Antichrist and the true Christ, we know that on the day that Jesus Christ returns, many will have falsely placed their faith in the Antichrist, and he will be broken, gathered up like a ball and thrown into the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

PARTING THOUGHTS:

- 1. Those God honors are humble people who reverence Him and promote His Word.**
- 2. Those God crushes are proud arrogant people who promote themselves.**
- 3. Everything we have or will ever have in a relationship with God hangs on Jesus Christ.
He is the One who has the keys to all of God's blessings.**
- 4. Political leaders need to think very seriously about who gave them their power and purpose to honor the God of the Bible with it.**
- 5. Self promotion and elevation will eventually lead to Divine humiliation and demotion and condemnation.**