

A Nail In A Sure Place

Our previous studies in Isaiah have helped us to understand how much awareness Old Testament believers had concerning the coming of the Messiah. We have seen how the place, circumstances and parentage of Christ's extraordinary birth were known. We have learned that Isaiah knew about the redemption and deliverance of God's chosen people. We have noted how detailed prophecies to comfort and encourage God's remnant church were given and later fulfilled.

An enduring message

In all of Isaiah's writings the person of the Lord Jesus can be discerned in typical ways in the historical and circumstantial events portrayed. As the prophet laid out God's purpose and message for the people of his own age, and generations following, we detect spiritual significance in the things written. If some say we spiritualise over much we reply we reserve the right to do so because the apostles and the Lord Himself give us precedent. Spiritual lessons drawn from Isaiah's words will continue to nourish the soul and enlighten the understanding of God's elect to eternity.

Shebna violently removed

For example, in today's passage we learn of a man called Shebna, probably the court treasurer in Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah. Isaiah is sent to censure Shebna for neglecting his duty of care to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. Shebna was full of pride and his own self-importance. He was presently building a high-status tomb for himself in the heights of Jerusalem. Isaiah was to tell Shebna his days were numbered and another would soon take his place.

Eliakim installed

Shebna's successor is identified and described and we sense there is more to this individual than meets the eye. Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, was undoubtedly a real person; we read about him in 2 Kings. When the Lord removed Shebna, Eliakim took his office and responsibilities and faithfully served the people. However, the descriptions applied to Eliakim suggest Another is also in view. One still to come. Eliakim is revealed to be a type of the Lord Jesus and the Lord actually applies to Himself the very phrases first applied to Eliakim.

A greater than Eliakim

God calls Eliakim 'my servant' a title so peculiarly applicable to the Messiah as at once to evoke Christ in His covenant roles. It is said of Eliakim that the government of the kingdom would be placed in his hands just as the government of God's kingdom is placed on Christ's shoulder. Eliakim we are told 'shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open', a reference to his importance and authority in the kingdom. Notably, this is Christ's claim to John in Revelation, 'behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it'.

'A nail fixed in a sure place'

But it is in the metaphor of a nail fixed in a sure place that perhaps the finest parallels and sweetest applications may be drawn of the Beloved Son of God. Eliakim's governance would be fixed and settled by God, but in Christ the full spiritual significance of this picture unfolds. Writing after Isaiah but with an eye to this prophecy Ezra says, 'grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage'.

Christ's covenant purpose

For God's people, the Lord Jesus Christ is the nail fixed in the sure place. Neither the 'nail', nor the 'place' can be moved, fail or give way and this secures the elect and comforts our souls. The three persons of the Godhead have fastened and fixed Christ in His covenant roles so that in His person, His work, His offices, and all His dealings with us everything necessary for the church's salvation and glory is fixed, certain, sure and unmoveable.

Comfort then and now

It is a wonderful example of God's goodness to His people that the church is both able and entitled to discern Jesus with New Testament eyes in these Old Testament passages. But let us not imagine this application was lost to God's faithful saints in days past. The justification of the elect and the security and wellbeing of our souls has always been discovered

by faith, and revealed from faith to faith, to comfort and encourage God's remnant people in their pilgrim journey.

Amen

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