



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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The Oracles Against the Nations (Isaiah 13-23)

Babylon (13:1–14:27)	“The Wilderness by the Sea” (Babylon) (21:1–10)
Philistia (14:28–32)	“Dumah” (Edom) (21:11–12)
Moab (15:1–16:14)	Arabia (21:13–17)
Damascus/ Israel (17:1–18:7)	“The Valley of Vision” (Judah) (22:1–25)
Egypt (19:1–20:6)	Tyre (23:1–18)

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)

- *Last time* we looked at 22:1-14 which addresses the conduct of the *nation as a whole*.
- *This week* we will be looking at 22:15-25 which contrasts two of the *royal officials* of Judah: “*Shebna*” and “*Eliakim*”
- In the *first* part of this oracle that we looked at *last* time, we saw where Isaiah condemned the unconcerned and sinful condition of the *nation* in the face of approaching disaster.

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)

- As we *begin* looking at the *second* part of this oracle against Judah, we will see in “*Shebna*” a self-centeredness and luxury-loving attitude exemplified in a *single individual* who occupies a position of authority. (22:15-19) ¹
- *Further on* in this section, Isaiah prophesies that Shebna will be *replaced* in office by “*Eliakim*”, who will assume his privileges and prerogatives. (22:20-23). ²
- But Eliakim’s story has two parts: ²
 - He was a *generally* a good man
 - But *unfortunately*, he was unable to bear all the *strain* that this new responsibility put on him (22:24-25).

¹ Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; pp. 105

² Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (p. 451)

A Picture of Two Men (Isaiah 22:15-25)

22:15 *This is what the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies says: "Go visit this administrator, Shebna, who supervises the palace, and tell him: ¹⁶ 'What right do you have to be here? What relatives do you have buried here? Why do you chisel out a tomb for yourself here? He chisels out his burial site in an elevated place, he carves out his tomb on a cliff. ¹⁷ Look, the LORD will throw you far away, you mere man! He will wrap you up tightly. ¹⁸ He will wind you up tightly into a ball and throw you into a wide, open land. There you will die, and there with you will be your impressive chariots, which bring disgrace to the house of your master. ¹⁹ I will remove you from your office; you will be thrown down from your position.*

A Picture of Two Men (Isaiah 22:15-25)

22:20 *“At that time I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah. ²¹ I will put your robe on him, tie your belt around him, and transfer your authority to him. He will become a protector of the residents of Jerusalem and of the people of Judah. ²² I will place the key to the house of David on his shoulder. When he opens the door, no one can close it; when he closes the door, no one can open it. ²³ I will fasten him like a peg into a solid place; he will bring honor and respect to his father’s family.*

A Picture of Two Men (Isaiah 22:15-25)

²⁴ *His father's family will gain increasing prominence because of him, including the offspring and the offshoots. All the small containers, including the bowls and all the jars, will hang from this peg.* ²⁵ *"At that time," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "the peg fastened into a solid place will come loose. It will be cut off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off." Indeed, the LORD has spoken.*

22:15 *This is what the **Sovereign LORD** of Heaven's Armies says: "Go visit this **administrator**, Shebna, **who supervises the palace**, and tell him...*

- The "**Sovereign LORD**" here directs Isaiah to take urgent action ("**Go!**") to confront Shebna, the second most powerful man in the land.¹
- His title, translated "**administrator**" refers to a senior figure in the royal administration as confirmed by the phrase "**who supervises the palace**" (cf. 1 Kings 4:6; 2 Kings 10:5; 2 Chron 26:21).¹
- What the precise duties of this position were we cannot say for sure. Probably the **safest** thing to say is that he was **second** to the king.²
- If the man in that position were to act in an unwise or wicked manner, it would be a **threat** to the theocracy.²

¹ Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (p. 452)

² Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; p. 106

22:16 *What right do you have to be here? What relatives do you have buried here? Why do you chisel out a tomb for yourself here? He chisels out his burial site in an elevated place, he carves out his tomb on a cliff.*

- Isaiah's first words are an abrupt *indictment* of Shebna: "*What right do you have to be here?*"
- "*here*" could be referring to Jerusalem, the palace, or, more probably the site where a tomb was being constructed for him.
- Shebna was having workmen cut out a tomb for his future use in the rock face near Jerusalem, probably adjacent to the tombs of the kings.
- The threefold repetition of "*here*" suggests that the location and splendor of the tomb were presumptuous.

22:16 *‘What right do you have to be here? What relatives do you have buried here? Why do you chisel out a tomb for yourself here? **He chisels out his burial site in an elevated place, he carves out his tomb on a cliff.***

- Shebna’s tomb was carved out “*in an **elevated** place... on a cliff*”.¹
- Apparently Shebna’s intention was that in the years following his death those who saw his tomb would regard him as someone of **great importance** who ranked among kings and nobles.¹
- The **problem** is that while Shebna was focusing all his energies on constructing an ostentatious tomb for himself, he was **neglecting** his duty to his king and his country.²
- It is the self-serving and self-congratulatory nature of what Shebna is doing that is the focus of Isaiah’s condemnation.²

¹ Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; p. 109

² Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (p. 453)

22:17 Look, **the LORD will throw you far away**, you mere man! He will wrap you up tightly. ¹⁸ He will wind you up tightly into a ball and throw you into **a wide, open land**. There you will die, and there with you will be your impressive chariots, which bring disgrace to the house of your master.

- The sentence which will be imposed on Shebna by the LORD is graphically presented here.
- Because of his **presumptuous behavior**, the LORD is about to “**throw [him] far away**”, as something utterly rejected.
- The LORD will, in effect, **undo** all Shebna’s own preparations for his future self-glorification.
- Grasping him firmly, the LORD will wind him round and round like a piece of fabric wrapped into a tight ball and then toss him into “**a wide, open land**” where there will be nothing to hinder from rolling a long way.

22:17 *Look, the LORD will throw you far away, you mere man! He will wrap you up tightly.* ¹⁸ *He will wind you up tightly into a ball and throw you into a wide, open land. There you will die, and there with you will be your **impressive chariots**, which bring **disgrace to the house of your master**.*

- Shebna will end his days in a **foreign land**, **not** in Jerusalem like he planned.
- It indicates here that he had “**impressive chariots**”, probably reflecting his delusions of grandeur (cf. Absalom in 2 Sam 15:1).
- But in the LORD’s sight Shebna was a “**disgrace to the house of [his] master**”.
- The king (Hezekiah), while having his share of failures, basically “**trusted in the Lord God of Israel**” (2 Kings 18:5)
- Thus, Shebna’s behavior went **against** royal policy and was **contrary** to the true interests of the nation.

22:19 *I will **remove** you from your office; you will be thrown down from your position.*

- Here we see the LORD telling Shebna that he is going to “**remove**” him his official position.
- The Lord’s decision will be brought about, **not** through illness or capture by the enemy, but through action taken by King Hezekiah himself.
- We **know** that King Hezekiah later removed Shebna from his post as “**administrator**”, because we see that in the group Hezekiah sent to negotiate with a field commander sent by the king of Assyria, Shebna is listed **after** Eliakim, and is designated simply as “**the scribe**” (Isaiah 36:3).
- We know nothing about what happened to Shebna after that.

22:20 *“At that time I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah.”*

- The LORD here continues speaking to Shebna.
- *“At that time”* refers to the time of Shebna’s future disgrace.
- We are now introduced to *“Eliakim, son of Hilkiah”* who will later reappear in Isaiah 36-37.
- Eliakim’s story is old in **two** parts.
- At first, he is presented as an honorable and worthy royal official.
- He is referred to here as *“my servant”* – a grand title in light of the book as a whole (cf. 20:3; 37:35; 42:1).
- The LORD says *he* will *“summon”* him – Eliakim’s appointment would be by **divine decree**.
- Eliakim is one who will carry out the duties of his office with **loyalty** to God and his king.

²¹ *I will put your **robe** on him, tie your **belt** around him, and transfer your **authority** to him. He will become a [**father**] of the residents of Jerusalem and of the people of Judah.*

- The LORD continues speaking here to Shebna.
- Eliakim will be given the insignia associated with the office that Shebna had previously held.
- The “**robe**” and the “**belt**” were probably ceremonial attire appropriate to official status of the office.
- But the LORD doesn’t **just** give Eliakim an official looking **outward** appearance, the LORD gives him the **substance** of the office as well – its “**authority**”.
- The right to exercise control over the affairs of the nation will now be divinely transferred to Eliakim and he will rule the land as second in command after the king.
- Eliakim will serve as “**father**” of the people – and in that he will mirror the character of God himself.

²² *I will place the **key to the house of David** on his **shoulder**. When he opens the door, no one can close it; when he closes the door, no one can open it.*

- The “*key to the house of David*” refers to the power, delegated by the king, to make binding decisions regarding the nation, including controlling access to the king and to the treasury of the nation.
- Eliakim will decide who may enter and who may leave, and there will be no one in the kingdom (apart from the king himself) who will be in a position to challenge him.
- The position is *not* one that Eliakim takes upon *himself* – it is *divinely assigned* to him: “*I [the LORD] will place the key...*”
- Furthermore, it is a *weighty* duty – “*on his shoulder*” refers, *not* just to the location of the *physical* key that hangs there, but to the solemn and substantial responsibility that Eliakim will be given.

²³ *I will fasten him like a **peg into a solid place**; he will bring honor and respect to his father's **family**.*

- Another image from everyday life is introduced – that of a “*peg*”.
- This is *not* a peg that is used to erect a tent but, as the following verse indicates, one driven “*into a solid place*” (i.e. a wall) to hang objects from.
- Eliakim is divinely placed so as to be able to uphold the Davidic throne, the security of which, humanly speaking, will depend on him.
- As he faithfully discharges the functions of his office, he will become a source of *honor* to his whole “*family*”.

²⁴ *His father's family will gain increasing prominence because of him, including the offspring and the offshoots. All the small containers, including the bowls and all the jars, will hang from this peg.*

- But there is a ***second*** part to Eliakim's story.
- Here Eliakim as a peg is made to bear weight of his extended family.
- Various household items would be stored on such a peg.
- Isaiah mentions in detail all that a family might hang on such a peg to make clear just how many relatives will seek to use him to obtain influence and undue preference.
- It does not say that Eliakim ***invited*** such requests, or that he even ***agreed*** to them.
- The charge of nepotism is not ***directly*** levied against him, though the passage implies a warning against it.

²⁵ *“At that time,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “the peg fastened into a solid place will come loose. It will be cut off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off.” Indeed, the LORD has spoken.*

- *“At that time”* looks back to verse 20 where Eliakim is introduced.
- But this time it’s to show the **outcome** of the pressure that was subsequently put on Eliakim.
- The strain will prove too much and *“the peg fastened into a solid place will come loose”*.
- *“come loose”* refers to the inability of Eliakim to hold up under the pressure put on him by his family.
- *“It will be cut off”* hints at royal action against Eliakim and against his family, which had sought to take advantage of his position.

²⁵ *“At that time,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “the peg fastened into a solid place will come loose. It will be cut off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off.” Indeed, the LORD has spoken.*

- The weight placed on Eliakim had become an unsupportable burden.
- The LORD *declares* this will happen, but why?
- Perhaps it was to show that providing adequate governance for the people of God would prove too much even for such a dedicated “*servant*” of the LORD as Eliakim.
- Such a weighty responsibility would require the arrival of *another* “*servant*” upon whose shoulders the governance of the people would rest secure (cf. Isaiah 9:6)

New Testament
Usage of
Isaiah 22:22

Isaiah 22:21 *And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* ²² *And I will place on his shoulder **the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open...*** ²³ *and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. (ESV)*

Rev 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has **the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.**' (ESV)*

- This citation of **Isaiah 22:22** by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation occurs in the opening section of the book where the glorified Jesus Christ appears to John in a vision and then begins giving him a series of messages to give to the “angels” of seven churches in John’s day.

Isaiah 22:21 *And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* ²² *And I will place on his shoulder **the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open...*** ²³ *and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. (ESV)*

Rev 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has **the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.**'* (ESV)

- The citation occurs in a message to the “*angel of the church in Philadelphia*” in **Rev 3:7**, where Christ begins by describing himself as “*the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*”

Isaiah 22:21 *And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* ²² *And I will place on his shoulder **the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open...*** ²³ *and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. (ESV)*

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- **Isaiah 22:20-25** describes Eliakim's absolute control over the kingdom of Israel – though, as we saw earlier, he is eventually removed from office.
- The reference to Eliakim as “*my servant*” in Isaiah 22:20 brings to mind Isaiah's Messianic “*servant*” prophecies in Isaiah 40-53, since this phrase occurs in that section **thirteen** times.

Isaiah 22:21 *And he shall be a **father** to the inhabitants of **Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.*** ²² *And I will place **on his shoulder the key of the house of David.** He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open...* ²³ *and he will **become a throne of honor** to his father's house. (ESV)*

- The description given of Eliakim in **Isaiah 22:21-23**:
 - Placing “*the key of the house of David* [= governing authority] **on his shoulder**”,
 - As a “**father**” to those in “*Jerusalem and to the house of Judah,*”
 - And becoming “*a **throne of honor** to his father's house.*”
- suggests that we should have a **prophetic understanding** of this passage, since this language is so **strikingly similar** to that of the prophecy of the future Messianic ruler given in Isaiah 9:6-7:
 - *...the government will be **on his shoulders** ... and his name will be called... **Eternal Father**, who sits on the **throne of David.***

Isaiah 22:21 *And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* ²² *And I will place on his shoulder **the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open...*** ²³ *and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. (ESV)*

Rev 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has **the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.**' (ESV)*

- And so from this we see that Eliakim's temporary control of the kingdom as "prime minister" to the king of Israel was, in one sense, a prophetic historical event pointing forward to Jesus Christ's greater and eternal sovereignty over a greater kingdom.

Next Time

I plan to cover Isaiah 25:1-12 where Isaiah talks about how God “*will swallow up death forever*”.

Class Discussion Time



Class Discussion Time

- We saw where the primary failing identified in Shebna was that he spent a lot of time and energy preparing an ostentatious tomb for himself.
- Does this seem, on the surface, to be a rather small infraction given the grave consequences that resulted? Does this tell us something about the accountability that comes with an important position of authority?
- Eliakim's rule is almost the textbook definition of a **tragedy**: he a great leader and yet was ultimately brought down because he could bear the weight of responsibility that came with his high position.
- Is there are warning in this account for us?
- One NT passage that our text brought to mind for **me** was:
 - *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*
(Jam 3:1 ESV)
- Is there an implied justification in this passage for the rules against nepotism that are often put in place in modern society?