

Isaiah Lesson 22

Isaiah Chapter 22

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Introduction: Last week, we covered 2 chapters with chapter 20 being a continuation of the burden of judgment prophesied against Egypt and against Ethiopia, with the greater message being for Judah. In Chapter 21, the judgments continued with burdens pronounced against Babylon, Dumah, and Arabia.

This week things change. The last nine chapters have dealt with burdens upon gentile nations neighboring Judah, the prophet now delivers a 'burden' against Jerusalem itself. The chapter also contains a prophecy about the removal of Shebna, an officer in Hezekiah's court, and the placing of Eliakim in his stead.

I. An Oracle Concerning Jerusalem

Isa 22:1 The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?

Isa 22:2 Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle.

Isa 22:3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, which have fled from far.

As noted above, the preceding chapters of Isaiah have dealt with impending judgment against neighboring gentile nations. The prophet now speaks of the coming judgement upon Jerusalem itself. Though Jerusalem is not identified in verse 1, it will become evident in verses 9-10. Jerusalem sits on several high hills and there are a few notable valleys in between. Evidently one of those valleys, perhaps Hinnom, had become a symbolic name for Jerusalem.

Implicit are pagan 'visions.' The valley of Hinnom was notorious for such idolatrous practices as Molech worship. It is likely that the prophecy here is directed against all of Judah with Jerusalem, its capital, being described. The phrase, 'What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?,' is noteworthy. Why would the people flee to the roof? The prophet speaks of the noise that normally comes from an eastern market place. Yet now, it is strangely silent. Implied is that an invading army is causing the citizens to hide on their roofs for fear.

The Assyrian invasion was underway and Jerusalem was in its sights. It was only by the providential intervention of God were the men of Jerusalem not slain. God stopped the Assyrians one night when 185,000 men were killed by the angel of the Lord. The prophet foretold how that all the rulers fled together.

Some have interpreted this to indicate that the rulers and leaders of Judah had fled before the Assyrian onslaught. Some have suggested that the prophecy may be leap-frogging ahead to the Babylonian conquest when Jerusalem was in fact overrun and captured. In any event, the prophet is foretelling impending judgment against Jerusalem and Judah. That was accomplished as the Assyrians threatened and when the Babylonians later actually conquered.

Isa 22:4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

Isa 22:5 For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.

Judgment was impending against Jerusalem and Judah. Even as Jeremiah wept over the destruction of Jerusalem, Isaiah wept in advance of its accomplishment. Again, the valley of vision is mentioned which likely is the valley of Hinnom at Jerusalem. The days were coming when Judah and Jerusalem would be trodden down by invading armies.

Some have presumed this to refer to the Assyrian invasion when Judah was invaded though Jerusalem was not conquered. Others have assigned this to Babylon which conquered not only Judah but Jerusalem as well. In either case, “the Lord GOD of hosts” sent the invaders to chasten His people.

Also implied is that rather than seek their God, many in Judah prayed to the mountains and their high places for their deliverance. Of interest is the phrase “Lord GOD” literally is ‘Lord Jehovah’ of hosts. The greater thought remains that Judah and Jerusalem faced impending judgment by God.

Isa 22:6 And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield.

Isa 22:7 And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

Both Elam and Kir were nations to the east. Elam generally refers to Persia and Kir to a region of Mesopotamia. Some have assumed that the Persians were confederate with the Assyrians in their invasion of Judah. Elam also is a more generic name for Babylon and included the region of Kir. However, because the invasion of the Assyrians was just over the horizon chronologically, this may be what Isaiah had in view.

When Assyria invaded Judah, forward contingents of their army made it to the gates of Jerusalem. See II Kings 18:17-37. Judah was fully invaded by the Assyrian army, but God did not allow Jerusalem to fall.

Isa 22:8 And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest.

Isa 22:9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

Isa 22:10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

When Sennacherib, King of Assyria, invaded Judah, he discovered (i.e., uncovered) Judah's garments. The thought is a metaphor of how the Assyrians saw the armories of Judah in their countryside. The implication is of the embarrassment of being stripped naked. The military nakedness of Judah was made evident before the powerful Assyrian army. Judah looked to their armories for help, but were as naked before their foe. Not only had the Assyrians seen the general military nakedness of Judah, they had even seen the disrepair of the walls of Jerusalem.

Implicit is how Judah would become painfully aware of their lack of military preparedness. Assyrian generals had stood outside the wall of Jerusalem at the upper pool of Kidron. See II Kings 18:17.

2Ki 18:7 And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

There also may be reference here to II Chronicles 32:3-4 when Hezekiah took steps to hide the spring of Gihon from the Assyrians, hoping to deprive them of needed water. Judgment at the hand of the Assyrians was soon coming and Judah was ill prepared. In desperation, martial law had been imposed. The stone houses of Jerusalem were counted, and many were demolished to provide masonry stone for the repair of the walls of Jerusalem.

II. Weeping and Mourning to Come

Isa 22:11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

Isa 22:12 And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

Isa 22:13 And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.

Isa 22:14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

The reference to a ditch being constructed may refer to the tunnel carved by Hezekiah through bedrock referred to in II Kings 20:20 and II Chronicles 32:30. That tunneled conduit brought water from the Gihon springs outside the city wall to what later would be called the pool of Siloam inside the fortified walls. That tunnel exists to this day. The greater point is that Jerusalem was making military preparations to defend themselves against the threat of the Assyrian invasion.

The reference to “the maker thereof” is understood in two ways. Some take the view that the prophet is referring to God Himself and His creation of the spring of Gihon from whence their water came. The other view is that the prophet is referring to David who made the pool into which the spring of Gihon was collected to be used by the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The greater thought is that Judah was trusting in their military preparations to defend themselves, they did not look to their God (or their king) for deliverance. Hezekiah was the exception to that, but Judah had forgotten their God. The point at hand is a classic example of relying upon the arm of the flesh and ignoring the power of God. The hope of Judah was in their military preparations.

Begging God for deliverance did not cross their mind. However, that is exactly what Hezekiah did and God heard his prayer. See II Kings 19:20-36.

In verse 12, the prophet delivered further indictments against His people. God had called Judah to repentance—weeping, mourning, and a humbling of themselves. However, what God saw instead was their partying. There was the arrogance of proclaiming, “let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.” See I Corinthians 15:32.

1Co 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

To such folly, God revealed to the prophet that their iniquity would not be purged from them till they die. Their insolence and contempt would not be forgiven by God. Many of Judah would perish before the Assyrian army when it invaded.

Isa 22:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say,

Isa 22:16 What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?

The focus of the prophecy now shifts from impending judgment against Judah to two men named Shebna and Eliakim. The text indicates that during the reign of Hezekiah, there was a high ranking official in his court named Shebna. He is here called “treasurer” and “over the house.” This man evidently was treasurer of the royal palace. Shebna is accused of usurping his prerogative in making himself a sepulchre or tomb in the house David—the royal cemetery reserved for the kings of Judah. It is evident that Shebna had abused his privilege and arrogated to himself rank not due him.

III. Captivity Prophesied

Isa 22:17 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee.

Isa 22:18 He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house.

Isa 22:19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.

God said “Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee.” Jewish tradition holds that Shebna went outside Jerusalem when the Assyrians invaded and was captured by them. When Sennacherib departed from Judah with his tail between his legs, chastened by God, he took Shebna with him as a captive.

Moreover, the prophet foretold how that “He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord’s house.” God would soon throw Shebna, like a ball, into a foreign country (Assyria). There he would die, and his self-proclaimed glory would be turned into shame.

Many Jewish historians believe that while Assyrian forces were at the gates of Jerusalem, that Shebna went out in order to deliver Hezekiah’s forces to them. However, the gates of the city were slammed behind him, leaving him alone before the Assyrian generals. Some say that the Assyrians thought that Shebna was mocking them. Therefore, they bored his heels and fastened him to the tails of horses and dragged him through thorns and briars.

Instead of chariots of glory he thought they would give him; they put him to shame, binding him to the tails of horses. The arrogance, ambition, and treason of this disloyal subordinate of Hezekiah would be removed from office and put down by God.

Isa 22:20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah:

Isa 22:21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

God through the prophet foretold that He would call His servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah to replace the arrogant, wicked Shebna. God would put it upon the heart of Hezekiah to appoint this godly man to be ‘prime minister’ of Judah under Hezekiah. It is thought by some that Eliakim might be one and the same with Azariah, the ruler of the Temple. See I Chronicles 6:13 and II Chronicles 31:13 which seem to so indicate.

2Ch 31:13 And Jehiel, and Azariah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eiel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

The garments and vestments of high government rank would be transferred to Eliakim. He soon would be the number two man under Hezekiah, taking the place of the arrogant and treasonous Shebna.

Isa 22:22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Isa 22:23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall

be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

Here the prophecy seems to clearly shift to that of Christ. It seems evident that Eliakim became a type of Christ. The initial thought alludes to how ancient governmental authorities would have a hook sewn onto their upper garment upon which a key would be hung. It not only was utilitarian and convenient, it also by its very presence was a symbol of authority. In the immediate context, the key mentioned may refer to the treasury of the kingdom or even to the Temple itself. However, its greater application is to the house of David—the royal lineage whose ultimate descendant is Jesus Christ. It is He who has now come into view.

The day is coming when God will place upon our Lord the keys to all governmental authority. In that day he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. This is clearly referred to in Revelation 3:7.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

When Jesus Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will hold the key to all authority in heaven and in earth. Eliakim here clearly is a prophetic type of Christ. Verse 23 reveals how that God will establish His throne and rule permanently. No one will ever pull that nail out. In that day, our Lord will be “a glorious throne to his father’s house.”

Isa 22:24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.

Isa 22:25 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

The thought is now returning from the great antitype of Eliakim to Eliakim himself. Even as Christ will be glorious, Eliakim would serve in like fashion under Hezekiah. He would administer the government well for the king. The final thought of the chapter seems to shift back to the impending judgment against Shebna.

Shebna had thought himself to be the unremovable nail. However, he soon would find out otherwise. Those in his circle of influence would also be cut off. Jehovah God had given His word it would happen, and it did happen just as God said it would. ‘

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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