

Topic/Subject: God Elevates Eliakim in the place of Shebna!

Scripture: Isaiah 22: 20-25

Biblical Focus/Introduction:

The Lesson:

Verse 20

The removal of Shebna, punished the other leaders of Judah, for his self-sufficiency and ill-timed rejoicing (for tomorrow we die. (v8-14), will leave room for my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.” “In that day” he will be clothed in Shebna’s official vestments and assume responsibility for the whole weight of his father’s house (v 23). This is hardly an actual prediction about a member of Hezekiah’s government, but rather a prophecy about the miraculous survival of Jerusalem and the House of David during the period of office of Eliakim. In him were invested the powers and hopes of the House of David, hence the messianic interpretation of the passage. The investments are those of the priests and signify the permanence of the appointment as well as its religious authority of this official, although it is nowhere else mentioned in the Old Testament. The key to the gates and the doors of the royal place, including no doubt those of the armory and the treasury, gave the holder enormous power. Thus, “the key of David” (Rev 3:7) or “the keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:19) became, in the hand of Jesus and his church on earth, a telling symbol of the power to give into the kingdom of heaven:

O come, thou key of David, come.
And open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
Verse 23

The image in verse 23, that of “a stake (tent peg) in a sure place, to which Jerusalem, a quite habitation, an immovable tent” is firmly secured, is thoroughly Isaianic. We have already considered “the faithful city” (1:21,26) and the proverb, “if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established” (7:9). Now Eliakim, keeper of the royal household, represents that stability amid the changes and changes of a troubled world. His name means “God will Established” (1 Kings 2:4, Jermiah 28:6) spells out his role in the House of David with a different image. The country will hang on his every word, everything will depend on him, all the affairs of state right down to the smallest item of household management. Perhaps his fall is already foreshowed in the description of the burden of his duties as “the whole weight of his father’s house”.

The final verse reads very much like the barbed comment of a later writer aimed at some actual person, and opponent perhaps or an unpopular official. As it is written in a different style from what precedes it and the “peg” is not now a tent peg, as it was in verse 23, but a hammered into a wall. “In that day” it come away form the wall, and with it all that had been hung on it. The verbs do not add up to a very convincing picture – give away, cut down, fall, or cut off. But it served it purpose if it succeeded in challenging the view that any state official – Shebna, Eliakim or anyone else an dominate the political scene indefinitely, and it certainly transforms the prophecy into the kind of warning against pride and the rest of the prophecies in these contain. But the astonishing “messianic promise concerning Eliakim the son of Hilkiah (v 20-24) still stands and with that in mind, one can trace the messianic route still further, to the point at which, weighted down by the sins of the world, the servant falls to the ground. Then at last the burden that was upon him will be cut off and the “servant of the Lord” exalted and lifted up (Isaiah 53:13): “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24 and Isaiah 53:4-5).

Conclusion

Although this prophecy is about the appointment of Eliakim and a warning to those in government that are bound by the sins of this word, you will not

dominate government forever. However, this text also points to a later prophecy of Isaiah 9:6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be call Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.