

“God Demotes and Shuns Shebna Because of His Pride.”

Isaiah 22:15-19

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(All Scripture quoted from the NIV Bible unless otherwise stated)

I. Introduction:

This lesson is a warning to remain humble for those that aspire to hold and to those who hold positions of leadership and influence. Whether the aspiration is a desire to lead in the church or in secular society, the warning is the same; **“Do not think higher of one’s self than you ought, remembering that ‘PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL’”**.

Until this point in the Isaiah’s prophecies, we have seen the rebuke and punishment of nations that were either enemies of God’s chosen nation of Israel or those whose friendship was shaded with deceit. However, in this chapter ***the mother hen comes home to roost!*** It is now Jerusalem and the people of God whose prophecy is given as one of doom and gloom for their prophesied misconduct, inattentiveness or acknowledgement of God their provider, protector and sustainer (Vv. 1-14).

God not only shows His displeasure with the people/nation of Israel presiding in Jerusalem, but with their leadership also. In the passages we study today Isaiah’s prophecy is specific to one of the leaders who has displayed a contemptuous lack of humility.

II. The Lesson: ***“Shunned, Shamed and Demoted”***

1. ***v. 15. This is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: Go, say to this steward, to Shebna the palace administrator:***

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah is tasked by God most High with directly approaching Shebna with a stern warning of rebuke and consequence for his behavior as a leader of God’s chosen people. Shebna’s actions are a display of his contemptuous and self-centered pride.

As the palace administrator and in regards to this position in the king’s (Hezekiah) court, Shebna is second in command to only the king. Use of the title steward, informs us of his lack of ownership of that which he is charged with managing. Some translations render him the palace treasurer, entrusted with management of the revenue; thus, illustrating a responsibility for the welfare and wellbeing of the kingdom and its people. But Shebna is self-absorbed with the perceived accolades that accompany his position within the palace. His care and concern were not for the people of the kingdom or for the palace, but for gratifying his own desires.

2. ***v. 16. What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock?***

This message to Shebna is a rebuke of his exaggerated self-worth (PRIDE) and arrogance. He was a dishonest man that used the power of his position within the government for personal gain. His name is Aramaic in origin, so it is quite likely he was not an Israelite but a foreigner.

What are you doing here. First, Shebna should be about the business of the palace and people, not so self-absorbed

with **his** final resting place. Shebna had a vain desire to be remembered as a great man. Secondly, if utilizing the King James version that states; **whom hast thou here;** we can deduct that Shebna was preparing this tomb in an area or land where he had no deceased relatives. This can be likened to a family cemetery, which would grant him the right to be buried there. Or, was he preparing this tomb where the royals were entombed? Without deceased relatives buried there, or if this was in fact a place where the royals are buried, the NIV properly asks **“who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here?”** I think we can reason that due to the question asked, he had no relative buried there and it is certain that he was not one of the royals.

Shebna was hewing out a grave site in an area that he had no right to do so. His pride, his exaggerated self-worth and arrogance are on full display. The position of second in command to king Hezekiah appears to have caused him to act as if he has supremacy over even the place of his burial, whether he was worthy of it or not. Thirdly, in his arrogance, he is **“hewing his grave on the height and chiseling his resting place in the rock”**. This is a practice and place reserved for Royalty and Men of Honor, set on a high place, sculptured and nicely adorned so that all might see, marvel and be reminded of the greatness of the deceased. Oh, how proud he is of Himself. Another proof of his pridefulness and vanity.

3.vv. 17-19. Beware, the LORD is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, you mighty man. He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there the chariots you were so proud of will become a disgrace to your master’s house. I will depose you from your office, and you will be ousted from your position.

Isaiah prophesies the violent shunning of Shebna, that the Lord Himself will carry out because of his pride and vanity. Although Shebna may consider himself a mighty man due to his position in the palace administration, he will be brought low, humbled by the Lord who is all powerful. By his use of the word beware, Isaiah is letting him know that what the Lord says will surely happen.

The tomb that he is preparing for himself will never contain his body. He will be crushed and banished into a strange land where he will be of no significance. This shall be the land and circumstance of his demise. In this land those possessions (chariots) that he took such pride in flaunting about the city streets will lie in ruin; a disgrace to the kingdom to which they formerly represented.

In verse 19, God's message through the prophet assures this steward that he will certainly be **removed** from this position that he takes such **pride** in because of the abuse of authority; that he will be stripped of any perceived power and prestige; that his removal will be to his shame and disgrace. Isaiah informs him that the Lord Almighty will judge and exact punishment upon him.

III. Conclusion

Sin is to be confessed and repented of:

Pride - Instead of centering our pride on self, our accomplishments and positions, we are to take pride in the One who positions, appoints and provides us with the skills and opportunities necessary to perform our duties. ***“Do all as if unto Christ.”***

Behavior to be corrected: Arrogance and Vanity!