

Jesus Christ, the Key of David

Isaiah 22:15-25

Introduction:

- In **Isaiah 22**, the Lord sent Isaiah to make an announcement to a government official named Shebna, who served Hezekiah, the king of Judah. The news he had for Shebna was not good. Shebna had, apparently, used his position to increase his own wealth and glory, and had usurped authority which did not belong to him. Shebna received the news that he would soon be abruptly removed from his office.
- Isaiah also announced that another man (named Eliakim) would take his place, who would administer the office faithfully. This new man would be a type of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 22:15-25

I. The fall of self-serving Shebna (vv. 15-19)

- In **verse 15**, the Lord sent Isaiah to deliver a message to Shebna, who was the treasurer in the government of Judah. He is also described as being “over the house.” This particular position was first mentioned in the time of Solomon. (Apparently, the office did not exist in the days of King Saul or King David, because it is not mentioned.) Afterward, it became an important office both in the northern and southern kingdoms.

1 Kings 4:1-6; 16:9; 18:3

2 Kings 10:5

- The office of the man who was “over the house” of the king of Judah seems to have increased in importance over time, until it was similar to the Egyptian office of vizier. Joseph had been given this incredibly powerful position in the government of Pharaoh. (In fact, this position seems to have been created, for the first time, in Joseph’s day.) Joseph possessed all the power of the Pharaoh. Only “in the throne” was Pharaoh greater than Joseph.

Genesis 41:38-44

- From the wording in this passage, it seems that Shebna himself had, without warrant, expanded the importance of this office. At any rate, he had expanded the *appearance* of its importance. He was very self-serving and luxuriant. His materialistic attitude was like that of the people of Judah as a whole.

Isaiah 22:12-14

- It is believed that Shebna was not even an Israelite, but a foreigner. His name is of Egyptian origin. The fact that he is not referred to as “Shebna, the son of so-and-so,” as Jewish men typically are designated in Scripture, might indicate this. Also, in **verse 16**, there is a strong emphasis on the word “here” (i.e., the city of Jerusalem), as opposed to “there”—the place to which he was soon to be exiled (a place outside Israel) (**verse 18**). If Shebna were not even Jewish, then his presumption in exalting his office was all the greater.
- In **verse 16**, Isaiah inspects the “stuff” that Shebna had acquired for himself. In a time of uncertainty, when the mighty empire of Assyria was threatening Judah’s very existence, Shebna was not concerned about the welfare of Judah: rather, he was concerned about increasing his own wealth and power. Isaiah specifically mentions the luxurious tomb (“sepulchre”) that Shebna had hewn out of rock, in a manner like that of the kings of Judah.

2 Chronicles 32:33

Historical sidenote: In the village of Siloa (near Jerusalem), there is an ancient rock tomb whose style and lettering seems to be from the time of King Hezekiah. The wording on the entrance to the tomb reads:

“This is the tomb of [...] -yahu, who is over the house. There is no gold or silver here, but [the person buried there] and the bones of his slave-wife with him. Cursed be the man who opens this.”

This may be the very tomb of which Isaiah was speaking!¹

- Using strong figurative language, the LORD informed Shebna that he would soon be removed from his office. Shebna, who loved wealth and personal glory (and who was probably also pushing for a treaty with Egypt, in defiance of God’s command), was a disgrace to the government of righteous Hezekiah, who desired to honour God. All the “stuff” that Shebna had gathered to himself (including even his chariots) would be tossed out like a “ball.”

II. The rise of faithful Eliakim (vv. 20-22)

- The LORD prophesied that after Shebna’s removal, King Hezekiah would fill Shebna’s vacated office with a man named Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. Eliakim was a true servant, not only in outward conduct, but in the attitude of his heart. Just as God predicted, Eliakim became the next “governor over the house.”

¹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vol. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann’s Publishing Co, 1969), 3:108.

2 Kings 18:17-18, 26 / 19:1-2 (Notice that Eliakim spoke for the king himself. This indicates the high position of trust that he held.)

- Interestingly, Hezekiah did not diminish the power of the office of “governor of the house” after removing Shebna. Eliakim was given much power and glory; but he used his power rightly (as opposed to Shebna, who used it for himself). Unlike selfish Shebna, Eliakim would be a “father” to the people of Jerusalem. In other words, he would look after the poor and vulnerable, and plead their cause. This is what God required of every man in the theocracy of Israel, from the highest position of power to the lowest position of power. This will be the character of *Christ’s* rule when He sits on His throne in the 1,000-year Kingdom.

Job 29:11-16 (Job used the expression “be a father to” in the classic Hebrew way. It means “to show love and tenderness,” as a father would.)

Exodus 22:22-25

Isaiah 11:3-5

III. The true holder of the “key of David”: Jesus Christ (v. 22)

- In **verse 22**, Eliakim becomes a prophetic type, or foreshadowing, of Christ. (His name is, in itself, a type of Christ. It means, “God will set up.”) The “key to the house of David” is said to have been placed upon Eliakim’s “shoulder.” One cannot help but see the picture of Christ in this. Christ Himself applied this expression “the key of David” to Himself when He spoke to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos.

Revelation 3:7

Christ’s bearing the key of David on His “shoulder” bespeaks the weight and responsibility of governance. Christ will govern the house of Israel, and the whole world.

Exodus 28:9-14

Isaiah 9:6

- The statement that Eliakim “*shall open, and none shall shut,*” and “*shut, and none shall open*” bespeaks a power that was, in actuality, equal to that of the king himself (though the king was greater in name, and in his throne). So it is with Christ. Christ is on the “right hand” of God the Father. In other words, He is subject to His Father, yet possesses equal power and authority with Him.

Romans 8:31-34

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

John 5:19-27**Hebrews 3:1-6**

- Through the person of Eliakim, Christ is foreshadowed as possessing the “key to the house of David.” This speaks of the dynasty of David, from which Christ was descended. It points prophetically to the future 1,000-year Kingdom, when Christ will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and rule over the world-wide kingdom that God promised to King David (**Psalm 89:20-29**). However, these “keys” represent far more than Christ’s authority in the future Kingdom of David. They speak of His authority over all creation. He is the great “Door Opener” and “Door Shutter.”

Revelation 1:17-18 (Christ opens and closes the “doors” of death and hell.)

In this New Testament age, Christ is the “Opener” of doors of evangelisation. Wherever Christ opens a door, His churches should be going through those doors and carrying the Gospel to people.

Revelation 3:7**1 Corinthians 16:9****2 Corinthians 2:12****Colossians 4:3****Acts 16:14****IV. The true “nail in a sure place”: Jesus Christ (vv. 23-25)**

- In **verses 23-25**, the LORD uses another metaphor to describe Eliakim—and, ultimately, Jesus Christ. That metaphor is “a nail in a sure place.”
- In ancient Middle Eastern houses, sturdy pegs, or nails (like the long stakes that would hold up a tent) were driven, or built, into the interior walls. Household utensils (especially costly or valuable items, which the householder wished to display for ornamentation) were hung upon the nails.
- The idea is of this metaphor is that those who would rest upon Eliakim for support would receive glory and honour. Apparently, this is exactly what happened—particularly, within Eliakim’s family. The “glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue” were hung upon Eliakim. His family members are compared to all manner of “vessels”—vessels of “small quantity”; “vessels of cups” (like the kind of cups, or bowls, that priests used to mix blood, or that butlers used to mix the fruit of the vine); and “vessels of flagons” (bottles made of animal skin).

- From **verse 24**, some have assumed that Eliakim gave in to the temptation of nepotism (using one's post to place family members in nice positions, regardless of their competency or worthiness). However, the verse doesn't imply this. It merely says that his family would receive glory because of their relation to him.
- Even if Eliakim did grant certain posts to some of his family members, it was not wrong, so long as they were worthy of the position. Some of the top men in David's army were family members; but they proved themselves worthy by their bravery and faithfulness. Joab, David's captain of the host, was his nephew (**1 Chronicles 2:13-17; 2 Samuel 8:15-16**). Abishai and Asahel, two of David's "mighty men," were his nephews (**1 Chronicles 2:13-17; 1 Chronicles 11:10,20,26**). Jonathan, one of David's distinguished soldiers, was a nephew of David; but he proved his worth as a soldier by slaying one of the remnant of the giants from Gath (**2 Samuel 21:20-21**).
- The application of **verses 23-24** to Christ is obvious. Christ will be "for a glorious throne" to the house of *His* earthly "father" (ancestor), David.

Luke 1:31-32

The flesh-and-blood members of Jesus' "father's house" (the Jewish people, who are the near kinsmen of King David) will have a special position of honour above all the nations of the earth because of their relation to Him.

Zechariah 8:20-23

Spiritually speaking, all who belong to the household of Jesus' *Heavenly* Father (the resurrected saints from all past ages) will be given positions of authority and honour in His Kingdom. They will share in His glory.

Ephesians 3:14-15 (The "whole family in heaven and earth" consists of all believers of all ages.)

Luke 13:28-29 (Resurrected Old Testament saints will reign with Christ.)

Matthew 19:28 (The Apostles will reign with Christ.)

Luke 19:11-19 (Saved Jews from the New Testament age and Tribulation period will reign with Christ.)

Revelation 2:26-27 / 3:21 (Saved Gentiles from the New Testament age will reign with Christ.)

Revelation 20:4-6 (Saved, martyred, and resurrected Jews and Gentiles from the Tribulation period will reign with Christ.)

- This "nail" metaphor is also used prophetically of Christ in **Zechariah**.

Zechariah 10:3-4

In **verse 4**, the pronoun “him” refers back to the tribe of Judah (in **verse 3**); and three things are said to come out from Judah. First of all, out of the tribe of Judah would come the “corner” (i.e., “cornerstone”). This is, of course, one of Jesus’ famous messianic titles (**Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16**). Out of Judah would also come the “battle bow.” Again, this refers to Christ, whose “arrows” will be “sharp” against His enemies when He returns to earth at the Battle of Armageddon (**Psalm 45:1-5**). And sandwiched in between these two messianic titles is this title, “the nail,” which also refers to Christ. Out of the tribe of Judah, then, came “the corner,” “the nail,” and the “battle bow,” Jesus Christ.

*The last phrase of this verse is slightly different from the previous phrases. It literally reads, “*out of him came out (Hebrew *yaytzay*) every oppressor together.*” Obviously, the phrase “every oppressor” does not refer to Christ, because it implies *more than one* “oppressor.” In order to understand who these “oppressors” are, it must be understood that the pronoun “him,” in this last phrase, refers back *not* to the tribe of Judah, but to the “battle bow” at the end of the previous phrase (which is Christ).

Who, then, are the “oppressors” who “came out” from Christ? They are His saints, who will return to earth with Him, and fight with Him in the Battle of Armageddon. They will “oppress” the wicked followers of Antichrist as they assist in slaughtering them in the Battle of Armageddon. (Compare to **Zechariah 10:5**.) Also, during the Kingdom age, they will seem like “oppressors” to those sinners who refuse to submit to Christ in their hearts. The resurrected saints will be enforcing Christ’s “harsh” laws upon sinners with a “rod of iron.”

Jude 14-15

Revelation 2:26-27

- In **Isaiah 22:25**, we are told that the “nail that is fastened in a sure place” would be “removed,” and “cut down.” All the vessels that had been hanging upon it would then be cut off. Eliakim, though a worthy man, finally met his death, like every other man. All the “burden” (responsibility) of his post would be cut off with him, since his post was not passed down to his children.
- Some contend that this part of the prophecy applies only to Eliakim, since Christ, as God, will not ever be “cut down.” However, it may be that this part of the prophecy *does* apply to Christ. As a Man, Christ *was* “cut down” in that He was crucified, and killed. This exact same verb, *karath*, is translated as “cut off” in a prophecy in **Daniel**, which clearly refers to the death of Messiah.

Daniel 9:26

- The word “burden” in **verse 25** refers to the “burden” of governance, which was placed upon Eliakim. How would this apply to Christ, though? We know that He will bear the burden of governing the whole world; but there will never be a time when that burden of governing the world will end. In what sense, then, would “the burden” upon Christ be “cut off”?
- In answer to that question, it must be remembered that there is another kind of “burden” that Christ had to bear: the burden of mankind’s sin, which was laid upon Him while He was on the cross. This burden was removed after Christ’s death and resurrection. He bore it only once. Those who place their faith in Christ have their sin judicially removed from them, because Christ has already borne their sin upon Himself, and has cast it away from His remembrance!

Isaiah 53:6

1 Peter 2:24

Colossians 2:9-13

Hebrews 10:1-18

Psalms 103:8-12

Leviticus 16:7-10, 15, 20-22

- The sending away of the scapegoat with the symbolic “burden” of the sins of the people upon its head is a picture of the removal of our sins from God’s sight. The removal of our sins was made possible because Christ (as symbolised by the other goat that was sacrificed on the altar) bore our burden on the cross.

Conclusion: Though Eliakim was the one of whom Isaiah was speaking in this passage, he is nonetheless a picture, or foreshadowing, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s application of the “Key of David” metaphor to Himself in **Revelation 3:7** removes any doubt of the fact that this is a prophecy of the Messiah.

The removal of a selfish steward from his position, and the instalment of another man who was worthy of the position, may not, on the surface, seem very significant; but to the LORD, this event was worthy of placing in His Word, because He intended Eliakim to be a type of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One who holds the “key of the house of David”; and He is “the nail in a sure place.”

