

SHEBNA THE TREASURER

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The Book of Isaiah contains many prophecies against Israel, Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. There are also prophecies against many Gentile nations in Isaiah, including Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, etc. But Isaiah chapter 22 contains a rare prophecy against a single individual. That individual was a man named Shebna, who served in the position as treasurer over the house of the Lord.

Shebna humbled by God for exalting himself

Isaiah 22:15-16 says, “Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, 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?” As treasurer, Shebna had exalted himself by hewing out a sepulcher for himself “as he that hews him out a sepulcher on high, and that graves an habitation for himself in a rock” (Isa 22:16). He also apparently had glorious chariots for himself (Isa 22:18). Isaiah 22:17-19 says, “Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. 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. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.” Later, Shebna served as a scribe under king Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:18,26,37; 19:2; Isa 36:3,11,22; 37:2). That may have been a demotion in fulfillment of the prophecy that he would be driven from his station and pulled down from his place. This is a reminder of God’s great work in abasing the proud and exalting the humble (Job 40:9-14; Prov 16:18-19; Luke 14:11; 18:14; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). Matthew 23:11-12 says, “*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*” Shebna exalted himself and was humbled.

Eliakim’s promotion

Isaiah’s prophecy against Shebna also included a promise of promotion for another man, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah. Isaiah 22:20-25 says,

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(continued)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.” God promised to replace the worldly, proud Shebna with his faithful “servant” Eliakim the son of Hilkiah (Isa 22:20). Eliakim would be clothed with Shebna’s robe, strengthened with his girdle, and have Shebna’s “government” in his hand (Isa 22:21). Eliakim would be a “father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah” (Isa 22:21). God said, “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 22:22). This was indicative of the royal authority he would hold as treasurer. This same language is used to describe the authority of Christ over the church today (Rev 3:7). God said further, “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” (Isa 22:23). Eliakim would be a glory to his family, but his relatives would pressure him to the point that his secure position would break under the strain. God said, “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. 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 has spoken it” (Isa 22:24-25). By 701 B.C., Hilkiah had evidently already received his prophesied promotion (2 Kgs 18:18,26,37; 19:2; Isa 36:3,11,22; 37:2).