

Judgment on the City of Jerusalem

Isaiah 22

Isaiah 22:1-11 - *“The burden against the Valley of Vision. What ails you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops, ² you who are full of noise, a tumultuous city, a joyous city? Your slain men are not slain with the sword, or dead in battle. ³ All your rulers have fled together; they are captured by the archers. All who are found in you are bound together; they have fled from afar. ⁴ Therefore I said, “Look away from me. I will weep bitterly; do not labor to comfort me because of the plundering of the daughter of my people.”*

⁵ For it is a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the Valley of Vision— breaking down the walls and of crying to the mountain. ⁶ Elam bore the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield. ⁷ It shall come to pass that your choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

⁸ He removed the protection of Judah. You looked in that day to the armor of the House of the Forest. ⁹ You also saw the damage to the city of David, that it was great; and you gathered together the waters of the lower pool. ¹⁰ You numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses you broke down to fortify the wall. ¹¹ You also made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to its Maker, nor did you have respect for Him who fashioned it long ago.”

Background Notes

This section of judgments in Isaiah began in chapter 13, with God’s judgment on Babylon, and concluded in chapter 23 with the prophecy of the Lord’s judgment on Tyre.

Isaiah 22 is like a parenthesis in the section of judgments. It is a judgment chapter - but it was not judgment on the foreign nations surrounding Judah, as were the other judgments in Isaiah 13-23.

In chapter 22 God’s judgment was pronounced upon Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was called “the Valley of Vision” (v 1&5), because from this city God revealed Himself to Isaiah, His prophet. It was called “the Valley of Vision” because Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains – for example, the Mount of Olives on the east. It is also noted for its choice valleys (v7) - the Kidron Valley on the east, and the Hinnom Valley on the south.

The most difficult part of interpreting this chapter is pinning down the time when this prophecy of judgment was fulfilled. Was it fulfilled when the Assyrians attacked Jerusalem in Isaiah’s day, in 701 BC? Verses 9-11 seem to support this view. At that time, defensive measures were taken by King Hezekiah, including the major engineering feat of tunneling through solid rock to bring the waters of the Gihon Spring (that was outside the walls of the city) to the Pool of Siloam inside the

city. (Read more about these projects in 2 Kings 20 and 2 Chronicles 32.) By the way, that water tunnel still exists today - and some of you here have actually waded through Hezekiah's Tunnel!

In addition, "Shebna" and "Eliakim," who are mentioned in the second half of this chapter, were part of Hezekiah's administration during the time of the Assyrian invasion. So at first glance, it seems that this prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians attempted to invade Jerusalem in Isaiah's day. But Jerusalem never did fall to the Assyrians. In fact, Jerusalem's deliverance from the Assyrian siege was one of the great miracles of the Bible (as we'll see in Isaiah 37 and 38). That deliverance may be what made Jerusalem a "joyous city" in verse 2.

However, the fleeing and capture of the rulers (v3), the defeat that Isaiah was weeping over (v4), and the day of panic and subjugation and confusion and the breaking down of Jerusalem's walls (v5) may refer to the coming Babylonian siege and defeat of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This defeat would take place more than 100 years after Isaiah gave this prophecy. This was when Elam and Kir were allies of Babylon (v6) and when the defenses of Jerusalem were completely removed (v8).

So what's the answer? Which invasion was in view in Isaiah 22? The answer is - **both!** Remember the mountain peak diagram we previously described, where we showed how the Old Testament prophets saw the distant prophetic events of the future as a distant mountain range, with all the peaks fused together as a single line on the horizon. Well - even the close-up prophetic mountain peaks are not differentiated by Isaiah!

So in Isaiah 22, Isaiah's prophetic oracle moved back and forth between the Assyrian invasion that came in Isaiah's day, and the Babylonian invasion that would come in Jeremiah's day. In fact, here we may even have a glimpse of a prophetic mountain peak that is still in the future - the attack on Jerusalem in the last days.

Doctrinal Point

The Lord pronounced judgment against Jerusalem.

Isaiah 22:12-25 - *"And in that day the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, for baldness and for girding with sackcloth. ¹³ But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"*

¹⁴ Then it was revealed in my hearing by the Lord of hosts, "Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you, even to your death," says the Lord God of hosts.

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord God of hosts, "Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say: ¹⁶ 'What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? ¹⁷ Indeed, the Lord will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. ¹⁸ He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country. There you shall die, and

there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house. ¹⁹ So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down.

²⁰ 'Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.

²¹ I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. ²² The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder. So he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. ²³ I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. ²⁴ 'They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. ²⁵ In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the Lord has spoken.'"

The basic sin of the people of Jerusalem was that they were depending on the city's defensive measures for their security, rather than depending only on the Lord. There was nothing wrong with Hezekiah's building projects, but for the people to rely only on walls and water for security was sinful (v11).

Rather than turn to the Lord in repentance, the people adopted a hedonistic philosophy and lifestyle (v13): *"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"* This sin of unbelief would not be forgiven and the people in Jerusalem would die in their sin (v14): *"...there will be no atonement for you, even to your death..."*

Verses 15-19 provided an account of Shebna, a high official in Hezekiah's court. He was also mentioned in Isaiah 36-37. Shebna was probably a leader of the political party in Judah that was looking to Egypt for deliverance from the Assyrian threat. (Remember - we spoke about this "pro-Egypt party" back in chapter 19.) Instead of directing the people to turn to the Lord at this critical time, Shebna thought only of himself. He was busy preparing an elaborate tomb as a monument to himself, so that he would be remembered for his importance!

By the way, archaeologists may have uncovered that tomb on the east side of Jerusalem's Kidron Valley - but it is hardly the important monument that Shebna planned for himself! Why? Because God said that Shebna would not die a peaceful death (v17-18). Shebna was deposed from office (v19) and he may have died as a captive of the Assyrians (v18). Thus he was not buried in the elaborate tomb he had carved out of stone for himself.

In verses 20-24 we read about a good man named Eliakim, who was also mentioned in Isaiah 36-37. Eliakim was a godly official. Like a father, he was really concerned about the needs of his people (v21). It looks like King Hezekiah entrusted Eliakim with all the affairs of state. Just as you can hang everything off a peg that is firmly fixed on a wall or on a solid post, so Eliakim (unlike Shebna) was a very reliable and trustworthy official – a hardworking servant who carried the weight of the kingdom. In fact, it appears that Eliakim may actually be a *type*, or picture, of Jesus Christ in this passage.

The terms “*My servant*” (v20) and having “*the key of the house of David on his shoulder,*” that when “he opens no one will shut, and when he shuts no one will open” (v22), certainly add depth to the possible *type*. This same terminology is used of our Lord in Revelation 3:7 - “*These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.*”

So Eliakim appears to be a type or spiritual picture of Christ - except in one respect. In the end, Eliakim, a good and godly and capable man, was not able to save the day (v25). The load would be too great, and the firm peg of Eliakim would give way. The firm peg and the burden it upheld would fall. ***But - our Lord Jesus Christ is a “firm peg” that will never fail!*** We can confidently put our trust in Him!

Practical Application

Where are you putting your trust?

In this chapter we’ve seen that if you look to anything or anyone other than the Lord Himself for security, you will be disappointed - because everything else and everyone else will eventually fail. All the “strong walls” that you build for protection, and all the “water cisterns” that you build for provision will fail in the end. Looking to the self-reliant and self-confident “Shebnas” of this world will lead to failure.

Even looking to good, godly, capable, and blessed leaders like Eliakim will fail. Taking your eyes off the Lord and looking to any human leader for security and protection will ultimately lead to disappointment and failure. Perfect security is found in the Lord Jesus Christ alone!

When you’re depending on the Lord alone you can truly say, with the psalmist, that you will not fear bad news because your heart is steadfast – you are trusting in the Lord. “*He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established; He will not be afraid*” (Psalm 112:7-8).

Let me ask you - Where are you putting your trust?