



Preaching Through The Bible, Michael Eaton

Isaiah

Part 31 Faithless Ones & the Faithful One (22:1-25)

• Fourth visions – include the judgement of God's people

• Valley – Jerusalem

Jerusalem's joy is misguided

As in Isaiah 13–20 (where Ephraim is mentioned), so again in Isaiah 21–23 the fourth visions include God's people among the nations under God's judgement. Isaiah speaks of *¹The burden concerning the valley of vision*. It refers to Jerusalem. Perhaps the 'valley' refers to the sadness of what he had to say. Sometimes we might say, 'I am walking in a valley' when we are referring to the sadness of our situation. Certainly the vision refers to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is rejoicing but its joy is misguided.

*So what is the point
when all of you go up to the housetops?
²O town full of hubbub!
O city full of revelry!
Your slain were not killed by the sword,
nor did they die in battle.*

• Jerusalem's future will be full of suffering – invaders

It seems that the people had just had some narrow escape (probably it was the event recorded in Isaiah 36:1–37:37). But Isaiah knows that the future of Jerusalem will be full of sufferings as various invaders come upon it.

*³All of your leaders will be scattered in one moment, they will be captured without using the bow
All of you who will be caught will be taken prisoner together,
though they are fleeing far away.
⁴Therefore I said, 'Look away from me,
let me weep bitterly.
Do not rush to console me
over the destruction of my daughter, my people.'*

• A day of judgement – war and total break up of society

A day of judgement will come upon Israel, and God's worst judgements include war and the total break-up of society. Isaiah has foreseen even something of the future invasion by Babylonians and Persians.

*⁵The Sovereign Lord, Yahweh Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision,
a day of battering down walls
and of crying out to the mountains.
⁶Elam will take up the quiver,
with chariotry, men and horses;
Kir will uncover the shield.
⁷And it shall turn out that your choicest valleys
will be full of riders,
and they will position horsemen at the city gates.*

• Babylonian and later Persian invasion

• The reason – Israel's self-sufficiency and pride

Israel is reliant on human resources

Isaiah is having a preview of the invasion by Babylonians who will break into the city of Jerusalem. Then (at a later stage) even Elam (the Persian authority) will have power as the ruler of Jerusalem. It all came to pass. The Assyrians lost power when Nineveh fell in 612 BC. The Babylonians grew in power. They invaded Jerusalem several times and eventually destroyed it in 586 BC. The Persians took over in 538 BC. Isaiah's vision was fulfilled. The reason why God was allowing these terrible judgements was because of Israel's self-sufficiency and pride.

Next Isaiah points to the nation's reliance on human resources (we recall 7:3).

⁸When he removed Judah's protective covering,
you looked in that day
to the weapons in the House of the Forest.

⁹You saw that the City of David
had many breaches in its defences;
you stored up water
in the Lower Pool.

¹⁰You counted the buildings in Jerusalem
and tore down houses to strengthen the wall.

¹¹You built a reservoir . . .

(i) Gospel brings
release from
militarism

Isaiah points to the sins that have specially angered God. The first is (i) **practical atheism**. Of course the people of Israel were not atheists. In fact, they were highly religious (we remember 1:11–17). Yet we can be highly religious and in our practical outlook be no different from atheists!

(i) Practical
atheism: practical
outlook takes no
account of God

¹¹You built a reservoir between the two walls
for the water of the Old Pool,
but you did not look to the One who made it,
or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.

• Terrible events
are a trumpet
blast from God
calling us to
amend our ways

God is the Creator of the universe, and he is the one who plans and steers world history. If something terrible is happening in our history it is not a tragic 'accident', it is a trumpet blast of God calling on us to amend our ways.

(ii) Impenitence

(ii) God was angered by Judah's **impenitence**. Tragedy upon a nation is a call to repentance over national sins.

¹²The Lord, Yahweh Almighty,
called you on that day
to weep and to wail,
to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. ¹³But look, instead there is joy
and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and
drinking of wine!
'Let us eat and drink,' you say,
'for tomorrow we die!'

• When our nation
sins we must
either repent
or totally
dissociate
ourselves

When our nation sins we must either repent (if we have been involved) or totally disassociate ourselves from the sin that is commonplace around us. Judgement passes us by only if we are among those who 'sigh and lament' over the sins of our people.

(iii) Foolish
optimism –
Judah's sin is
unforgivable

(iii) God was angered by Judah's **foolish optimism**. The southern kingdom thought (I suppose after the event of 36:1–37:37) that God's judgement had gone away. But Isaiah has heard from God that the sin of Judah has become unforgivable.

¹⁴But Yahweh Almighty has revealed himself in my ears. 'I swear that till
your dying day this sin will not be atoned for,' says the Sovereign Lord,
Yahweh Almighty.

• Spiritual
blindness –
blocking the
pathway to
forgiveness

Judah's sin – including the adoption of Assyrian gods and human sacrifice¹⁵ – had gone so far that the people have reached a point where nothing can stop God's judgement. Their optimistic feeling that all would be well was in fact spiritual blindness that blocks the pathway to forgiveness.

1 Kings
16:3-4

(iv) Personal self-
glorification

(iv) God was angered by **personal self-glorification**. Isaiah focuses on one individual, Shebna. He was a wealthy royal-steward at the time of Hezekiah. In a day of extreme national danger Shebna's only concern was to try to make sure he was everlastingly famous! He prepared a self-glorifying sepulchre for himself.

¹⁵This is what the Lord, Yahweh Almighty, says:
'Go say to this steward,

• Shebna prepared a self-glorifying sepulchre for himself

to Shebna, who is in charge of the house:
¹⁶What are you doing here and who are you to cut out a grave for yourself here – hewing his grave on the height and chiselling a dwelling for himself in the rock?’

• God planned a different end for Shebna

But it made God angry and God planned a different end for Shebna altogether.

¹⁷Look, Yahweh is about to throw you far away, O mighty man. He will take firm hold of you.
¹⁸He will roll you up tightly, like a ball he will throw you into a large country. There you will die and there your glorious chariots will remain – you disgrace to your master’s house!
¹⁹I will drive you out from your office, and you will be torn down from your position.’

God commends instead Eliakim, the servant of God, the forerunner of the Messiah

Over against Shebna’s self-glorification **God commends instead Eliakim, the servant of God, the forerunner of the Messiah.** Eliakim evidently became the royal steward to replace Shebna, who was demoted to being secretary¹ and, we may presume, later disgraced. Eliakim is described in a way that foreshadows Isaiah’s later title for the coming Saviour – ‘my servant’. Evidently Eliakim shares some of the characteristics of the coming Messiah.

¹ 2 Kings 18:18

• Replaces Shebna

²⁰In that day I will summon my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiyah. ²¹I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will care for those who live in Jerusalem and for the house of Judah. ²²I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ²³I will drive him like a peg into a firm place.’

• A forerunner of the Messiah

(i) Called by God

Eliakim (i) is called by God and becomes an eminent servant of God¹, and (ii) wears the clothing that was worn by the stewards of Israel². It resembles the clothing of the priests and may suggest that Eliakim truly fulfils not only the royal-administrative task in God’s kingdom but does so with the sympathy and care of an ideal high priest. He is, like the Saviour of Isaiah 9:6, an ‘everlasting father’. (iii) The government is upon his shoulder. He has total authority over the kingdom, under the king³. (iv) He will be like a peg or nail in the wall of a house upon which something heavy may be hung. (The word frequently means a tent-peg, but the hanging load suggests a wall-peg here.) (v) For many years Eliakim will be characterized by great stability and faithfulness, like a peg on a wall upon which a great weight may be hung.

¹ 22:20
² 22:21

(ii) Wears the stewards’ clothing

(iii) Governs

(iv) Like a peg in the wall

³ 22:22

(v) Is stable and faithful for many years

• Brings honour to his family and becomes like a little king

‘He will be a glorious throne for the house of his father.’

But this seems to have led him into disaster.

• But this leads to a tragic disaster

²⁴All the glory of his family will hang on him, its offspring and offshoots – all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars. ²⁵In that day’ – declares Yahweh Almighty, ‘the peg driven into the firm place will give way; it will be sheared off and will fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut down.’ For Yahweh has spoken.

It may seem tragic that Eliakim did not end well but his family brought some kind of disaster upon him. But there is an important point here. Eliakim was **only** a shadow of the Saviour – and not the Saviour himself. The prophets, the priests and the kings all failed to perfectly live up to the One they foreshadow.

•Eliakim was only a shadow of the Saviour

The same has to be said of Eliakim. He was faithful for much of the time, but only Jesus is the perfect Eliakim. The King is also the Steward of God's house. 'He . . . has the key of David. He opens and no one shall shut . . . shuts and no one opens'¹.

¹ Revelation 3:7

Dr Michael Eaton (1942-2017) was highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. Born in the UK, he lived for many years in Kenya where he became a citizen. He was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship in Nairobi. His Preaching through the Bible books are highly popular worldwide, written in a clear and down-to-earth style but underpinned by rigorous scholarship. Some of these books have been reformatted as individual sheets for personal and group study and preaching. The New Testament volumes have been re-edited and combined in the Branch Commentary. The Old Testament, including previously unpublished material will follow. More details: www.slices.org.uk.