

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 22

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 22

Theme: “Repentance, Promotion, and the Fall?”

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 22:14 (KJV) “And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.”

INTRODUCTION

The LORD shifts His attention back to the heart of the issue. The heart of the issue is God’s people. These heathen nations are mentioned in the Bible because of the impact and relationships they have with Israel. In this chapter of Isaiah, the foreign nation is Assyria and it will be the southern nation, Judah, which will be the focus. The Jews will be judged by God for their many sins. The oppressors were the superpowers of that time and in this instance, it was the Assyrians. They will be used by God to turn Judah around. However, Judah would not heed the clear voice of God. Stubbornly, they would hold on to their sins. Finally, the judgement of

God could not be averted for Judah had crossed the line.

Many of the cities in Judah would be destroyed until the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah cried to the LORD in repentance and the LORD showed mercy and delivered Judah. The men that God used to bring about this repentance were promoted. One became proud and arrogant. He wanted to be remembered by the arm of the flesh. The LORD brought him down and he died a forgotten man.

The other remained humble and was blessed by the LORD. The blessings extended to him and to all his descendants, both great and small. In life, we find ourselves in the same kind of situation. We did well when we were young and leaned on God to guide and help us in time of need. But when promotion sets in and we begin to do well, pride sets in and we forget God. Our own name becomes more important and arrogance and self-reliance replaced humility and dependence on God.

This chapter of Isaiah teaches us that we do not need to end this way. We cannot only begin well but also end well if not better! The decision is ours to make on a daily basis as we serve the LORD.

OUTLINE

1. Judgement against Judah is sure (vs.1-7);
2. Unrepentant Judah will surely be chastised (vs. 8-14);

3. Shebna will die (vs. 15-19);
4. Hope in the midst of death and destruction (vs. 20-25).

COMMENTARY

Judgement against Judah is sure – 22:1-7

The burden in Isaiah 22 is against “the valley of vision”. Which country is denoted by this phrase? The word “vision” is not to be interpreted according to modern definition, which means some future aspirations. The word “vision” is used in the Bible to mean the word of God. This means that the valley of vision has to refer to the people of God. The question is whether it refers to the North (i.e. Israel) or South (i.e. Judah) during this period of the divided kingdom? Based upon other verses like verse 10, we know that it has to refer to the South. Based upon verse 2 (word used is “city”), we see that it is not just Judah as a nation that is emphasized but rather the capital city of Judah i.e. Jerusalem. Truly Jerusalem was a place of vision where much of the Word of God was revealed.

The question was the condition of Jerusalem. What is wrong with Jerusalem that the people in Jerusalem have gone to the house top? The house top is always a place to hide for protection because of the dangers below. The city was full of disturbances (cf. “Full of stirs” in verse 2), a tumultuous city i.e. a city in great commotion and a joyous city i.e. a city given to riotous living and carnal pleasures. The slain men were not

slain by the sword, neither did they die in battle. These two ways of dying to the Jews were noble ways of dying. However, the men in Jerusalem did not die noble deaths. They died the coward’s way. They died inside the city of Jerusalem instead of in the battle field. They hid and were surrounded by their enemies.

All the rulers fled together and hid inside Jerusalem, leaving the rest of the nation to fend for themselves! What kind of leaders would do something so hateful? They were bound together i.e. they were caught by the archers and tied together. These were the ones who fled from far, nevertheless, they were still caught and were bound together.

Then the prophet Isaiah was filled with great sorrow and said, in **Isaiah 22:4-5**, *“Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. 5 For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.”* Isaiah said not to look at him because he was weeping bitterly. To see even with one’s prophetic eye the future of the impending judgement upon God’s people and Isaiah’s own people caused him to respond with sorrow and pain in his soul! What a righteous and compassionate response for a man of God. There is no delight in seeing evil men being punished even if the punishment is justified.

Isaiah said to anyone who might try to comfort him to not try. He will not stop his bitter weeping. No matter how hard they might labour to convince Isaiah not to weep for Judah, he said that he cannot stop weeping because of the spoiling of Jerusalem. [NOTE: the word “daughter” refers to the city of Jerusalem.] This is more so when Isaiah realizes how significant Judah’s role was as the only spiritual light to a world in spiritual darkness. To be chastised by the LORD for her sins and her failure to bear a godly witness hurt Isaiah tremendously. We must see with our spiritual eyes more than with our physical eyes. Life would have a more sombre and righteous perspective.

Isaiah said that he wept bitterly because it was a day of trouble i.e. discomfiture and of treading down i.e. trampling and of perplexity i.e. utter confusion by the Lord GOD i.e. the Master Jehovah Himself. The LORD Himself has done this to His own people. The discomfiture and trampling occurs in the valley of vision. Breaking down walls refers to the destruction of the surrounding cities inside Judah that occurred during the time of the Assyrian conquest in Hezekiah’s time. There was much crying to the mountains, which means that the cries of the Jews were so loud that it reverberates throughout the surrounding mountains. For Isaiah to witness the LORD destroying His own people in this manner caused Isaiah to weep bitterly.

Isaiah continues by saying that Elam i.e. Persia bare the quiver with

chariots of men and horsemen and Kir i.e. Medes uncovered the shield. The Persian and Medes were vassal states under the reign of the Assyrians at this time. They were used by the Assyrians to boost their armies when they conquered. In this case, they were used by the Assyrians to attack Judah. The Persians came with their bows and arrows (long distance weapons) and chariots (olden day tanks for speed and mass destruction of the foot soldiers) including horsemen. The Medes uncovered their shields, which mean that their shields were usually covered to maintain their integrity of strength. Now that they were uncovered, it means that they were ready for battle. The Medes probably provided the foot soldiers to supplement the Assyrians.

Judah will find themselves overran by the Assyrian armies with the help of the Persians and the Medes. They will even approach the very gate of the city of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. When the capital city of a country is surrounded, it is usually the last city to fall and once it falls, the nation falls as well!

Unrepentant Judah will surely be chastised – 22:8-14

The identity of the personal pronoun is debatable. Some commentators said that it refers to God but others said that it refers to Sennacherib. Although the direct cause was Sennacherib but the ultimate hand was God’s. Therefore, I am inclined to interpret the pronoun “he” as a reference to God. Furthermore, this emphasizes the fact

that the LORD knows the sins of Judah as this section of Isaiah 22 elaborates. It was the LORD who punishes rather than the Assyrians. God discovered the covering of Judah i.e. all their protections were revealed or removed by the Assyrians. Judah will look to the armour of the house of the forest i.e. probably their armoury where their weapons were stored for help but none will come.

The Jews will witness the breaches of the city of David that they are many. They will gather together the waters of the lower pool to prevent the Assyrians from gaining access to the water supply as well as to protect the waters for their own use. This describes the desperate situation of the Jews in that day. Houses in Jerusalem were numbered and then were broken down to see how many were needed so that material from these houses could be used to repair the walls of Jerusalem that had been breached. The Jews would also make a ditch between the two walls i.e. the inner and outer walls of the city of Jerusalem for the water to flow to the old pool. The Jews took every precaution to ensure that they defend the city of David and to save themselves from the onslaught of the advancing Assyrian armies.

What Isaiah said in verse 11 b is very apt. These Assyrians were not there to cause Judah to defend themselves but to drive them to look up and return to God. It is true that Hezekiah was a godly and good king. But the people of Judah and especially those in Jerusalem were not very

spiritual to say the least. This means that the taunting of the envoy of Sennacherib, Rab-sha-keh, as recorded in 2 Kings 18 was very deadly in its influence. The arm of the flesh is not what Judah was supposed to lean on for help. Isaiah said that Judah failed to look to the Maker i.e. God who made all things including the water and all that pertain to it from the ditch to the city of David.

What God wanted from Judah was repentance of their sins and turning back to the LORD to be God's people again bearing a godly witness! Isaiah said that the LORD wanted Judah to weep and mourn for their sins. They were to shave their heads to baldness, which was a sign of great sorrow and to put on sackcloth. Instead, Judah continues to revel in their carnal sins. They still feast and enjoy themselves by killing oxen and sheep and eating flesh, which are signs of feasting and great enjoyment. They failed to realize the state of their sins and they continue to indulge in carnal appetites. They eat flesh and drank wine saying that "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die." What a foolish thing to say especially from God's people, who have the truth given to them. Life is more than eating and drinking for man is made in the image of God. Also there is judgement after death unlike animals when they die, they become nothing. Man will be judged by God and sent to Hell if they die in their sins. For man to think this way is utter foolishness. For God's people, who have been given God's Word, to think this way is suicidal!

There is only one conclusion when God's people refuse to repent and indulge in his folly. The LORD will surely judge. He cannot allow Israel to be called by God's Name and live such a sinful and carefree life. Isaiah said that the LORD revealed to him that "surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you [Judah] till ye die." These are the words of the LORD to unrepentant Judah!

Shebna will die – 22:15-19

The next section of chapter 22 emphasizes two persons. The first is a man named Shebna. His name was first mentioned in 2 Kings 18:18 as a scribe. A scribe was one who copies the Scriptures. This means that he was well versed in the knowledge of God's Word. Apparently, he began as a scribe and later became a treasurer. In 2 Kings 18 as well as in Isaiah 36 and 37, he was a scribe for these two passages of Holy Scriptures that describe the same event. It was the event when the Jews confronted Rabsha-keh, the Assyrian envoy of Sennacherib. At this juncture, he was on the same side with Eliakim and stood against the Assyrians. The Assyrians were soundly defeated by the LORD when 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian armies died in one night. Then Shebna could have been promoted to treasurer and overseer of the house because of what happened in 2 Kings 18.

As a treasurer, Shebna has become proud and esteemed himself very highly. He has hewn for himself a sepulchre here, probably where kings were buried. He elevated himself to

the position of a king by his arrogance. He had hewn out of a rock wall his own burial place among royalty. To the Jews, the manner and place where one is buried reflect the kind of life one lived. If it were good and godly then he would be buried with honour and distinction. This was true of Jacob when he died. When kings die, they were usually buried together with other kings that have died before them unless he was an evil king. In the case of Jezebel, she was not even allowed to be buried for she was eaten by dogs. In the case of Shebna, it was the height of arrogance and presumption to hew for himself such a high and dignified sepulchre.

Isaiah declared that the LORD will carry him away with a mighty captivity and will surely cover him i.e. a powerful captivity that cannot be prevented and that his desire for recognition and fame would be covered. The phrase (surely cover thee) literally means "to cover thee with a covering." He will be forgotten when he wanted to be remembered.

The LORD will certainly and violently turn and toss Shebna like a ball into a large country. A ball is a very small object and when thrown into a large country, it becomes very insignificant. He will die in that country. The chariots that Shebna once rode upon to show up his pomp and glory will become a shame to his lord's house that trusted and promoted the wrong man.

Hope in the midst of death and destruction – 22:20-25

On the other hand, Eliakim who was also present when Rab-sha-keh taunted the Jews, did very well. This understanding is based upon the phrase "in that day". He also appeared for the first time in 2 Kings 18:18. He was the son of Hil-ki'-ah. He was one of the spokesmen who stood against Rab-sha-keh. The Bible said that he would be clothed with the robe of the Jews and would be strengthened with their girdle. These are items to be worn that are sometimes embellished with precious stones. A person of distinction will be such an emblem of authority. The LORD will commit the government to him and he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. The appellation of "father" implies that he will be a good governor. Wicked governors will not be fathers but despots to their charges. However, Eliakim will care and protect them like a father to his own children.

The key of the house of David will be laid upon his shoulder. The "key" is to be understood metaphorically to mean the charge of the house of David will be his to decide. The "key" is for opening and closing doors. In this case, he was given very much power over the running of the house of David in making all kinds of decision. In other words, he became a trusted governor of the King who was probably at that time Hezekiah. The LORD will fasten him i.e. established him in a sure place i.e. his position as governor to help the king will remain firm. He will not be unseated or moved. This contrasts with Shebna whom the LORD

removed forcibly. Eliakim shall be a blessing to all his descendants that were born in his lineage. What a glorious commentary and blessing upon Eliakim because of his faithfulness to the task given to him by God to look after God's people.

The Jews would hang upon him all the glory of his father's house and the offspring i.e. his sons and the issue i.e. his grandchildren, and all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons i.e. all other descendants of different capabilities and skills will be blessed as well. In other words, the reputation of Eliakim will be remembered for generations to come after his death.

Verse 25 is not a continuation of verse 24 but brings us back to the incident of Shebna. This understanding is based upon the same phrase that occurs in verse 20, which also occurs in verse 25. It is the phrase "in that day". The nail in verse 25 refers to Shebna who fastened himself so securely and safely by his own means and design. He seems to be untouchable as far as men are concerned. However, the LORD declares that he will surely be removed. He will be cut down i.e. brought low from his high post. He will surely fall. All those who lean on him will fall with him - this is the meaning of the phrase "the burden that was upon it shall be cut off." Evil and powerful men will have followers a plenty. These despots surround themselves with men who will leech on their power to share in their fortune. But the LORD

warns here that when the evil man like Shebna falls, they will all fall with him.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Godly with godly duties

It is an honour and a privilege to be called God's people. God's people are given and entrusted with the perfect Word of God. They are the only acceptable mediators between God and the rest of the world when they pray and intercede on their behalf because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. OT Israel possessed all the above as well as the only right place of worship. All God expect from Israel was to bear a Christ-like testimony to the world in sin and darkness. Israel failed the LORD miserably. Because of the sins of Israel, God had to divide the kingdom into two, the north and the south in order to save the testimony of Israel. However, Israel failed the LORD from the very onset of her reign over God's northern kingdom. Judah continues this witness. In the prophecy of this chapter of Isaiah, the northern kingdom had already been destroyed by the Assyrians because of her many sins. Only Judah was left.

Judah failed in her witness as well. The LORD used the Assyrians to chastise Judah so that she will return to the LORD by repenting of her sins. Judah did although the return is not taught in Isaiah 22. Judah realized her many sins; sins that she refused to turn away from despite the rebuke from the LORD until oppression and destruction came upon Judah via the Assyrians. Finally she learned.

Leaders in Hezekiah's reign were used by God to strengthen the faith of the Jews against the lies and enticement of the Assyrians. When the godly fail in their godly witness, the LORD has to chastise. This is done for the sake of their godly witness. Without their witness, the world remains in depths of darkness and sin without a light.

Uphill climb against pride

When we are young and feel inadequate, we lean upon God a lot to get things done. We pray constantly and feel very close to God because we feel so inept in doing most things. This includes our studies or even our ministry. As time passes by, our confidence grows and we become more and more capable and independent. We become more adept in what we do and sadly, we pray less and less. We lean more and more on our experiences to see us through rather than on God. Success becomes the norm as we become better and better in what we do. Pride inevitably sets in. We think that we have done it all on our own. God is soon forgotten and pushed to the inner most recesses of our mind. We want to be noticed and be remembered that WE have done this and that and want the world to know it too!

God will not tolerate such prideful attitude and actions. He will cut down and bring us low so that we will stop sinning against Him and be a terrible testimony to our friends and loved ones. More often than not, such sinners are blind to the chastisement of God. They rush head on toward death and destruction. There are more

Shebnas in our time than Eliakims. We must guard ourselves against becoming a Shebna. Pray without ceasing is one way we can ensure that our trust in God is always consciously foremost in our mind. Without him, we can do nothing.

Seek eternal things!

Eliakim was a man who was right with God and man. He did not seek self-glorification but only how to serve the LORD faithfully by being a father to the Jews. He carried out his duties diligently. He wanted the LORD to be remembered by the Jews. He did not want recognition. He did not seek promotion or any of the worldly accolades that a man of his position and distinction expects.

However, the LORD promoted him. He was well remembered for generations to come. They remember his goodness and faithfulness and servant attitude. God blessed him when he did not seek blessing. The one who sought glory received death and destruction. The one who sought to promote God was promoted by God instead. This way of the LORD is still very applicable. When he seeks God consistently, promotion will not ruin him or become his idolatry. The LORD remains his only focus. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 22:1-14

TUESDAY: Isaiah 22:15-25

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 22:1-25

THURSDAY: Isaiah 22:1-25

FRIDAY: Isaiah 22:1-25

Discussion Questions

- 1. What is the heart and soul of a godly Christian testimony? Please explain your answer.

- 2. Other than pride what are some possible reasons that sinners refuse to repent of their sins and turn back to God? Is there a difference between an unbeliever and a believer?

3. Do you think this phrase, “eat and drink for tomorrow we die,” is an accurate description of our age? Is this an apt description of you? Please give reasons for your answer.

4. If we say that an iniquity cannot be purged, does it mean that we impinge on or diminish the sufficiency of Christ’s death on Calvary?

5. Are you prone to pride and self-promotion? How does a servant of God keep himself humble all the time so that he will not fall into the sin of pride? Or is this an ideal situation that cannot become a reality?

6. Do you think the LORD has promoted you now? How do you feel about your promotion? Has it changed you for the better or for the worse? Please share if you can.

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God’s Word and about yourself?
