

Isaiah – Chapter 22

The Valley of Vision and the Wicked Servant

Isaiah 21:9-10 - "Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs." And one said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground." O my threshed people, and my afflicted of the threshing floor! What I have heard from the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, I make known to you.

CONTEXT

This chapter is two parts with the same oracle and audience. Part 1 is the Oracle Concerning the Valley of Vision (Isaiah 22:1-14). Part 2 is a contrast between a wicked leader and a royal good leader.

Isaiah 22 belongs to the larger collection of “oracles against the nations” (Isaiah 13–23). These pronouncements demonstrate God’s sovereign rule, authority, and judgment over all peoples and empires. Nearly all of the enemy nations are addressed so far. We have past, present, and future enemies of God and Israel. But one nation is conspicuously absent from God’s judgment in this section. That nation is Judah, Jerusalem in specific.

Why is it that when someone is repeatedly warned about the trouble that will come, they still continue down that path? Why will they not learn from someone who knows? Why do they continue on that leads only to disaster? This is the history of Israel.

Israel & Their Future — "In That Day"

"In that day" occurs 90+ times in the Old Testament, 40 times in Isaiah (39 times in chapters 1-31; once noted in 32-66 at Isaiah 52:6). This has profound prophetic significance, pointing to future events including the Day of the Lord, the Seven Years of Trouble (Tribulation), and the Messianic Kingdom.

In Isaiah 22, it is used in verses 8, 12, 20, and 25.

Geography: Jerusalem's Valleys

Three main valleys of Jerusalem, all serving as natural defense to the city:

1. Gehenna (or Hinnom / Akeldama) — South of Jerusalem. Marked the boundary between Benjamin and Judah.
2. Kidron Valley — North and east side of Jerusalem. Separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, forming a wadi (ravine or channel) that eventually empties into the Dead Sea.
3. Tyropoeon Valley — The Kidron Valley joins this valley which passes down on the west side of the mount (Temple Mount area).

Why is this oracle called the Valley of Vision?

- Jerusalem sits on a ridge of hills (including Mount Zion), but it is surrounded by and intersected with deep valleys. Higher elevations surround it, notably the Mount of Olives rising noticeably to the east. From many vantage points, especially from the east, the city

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appears nestled in a basin or “valley” relative to the higher terrain around it. The title points to Jerusalem’s unique role as the place where God gave prophetic vision and revelation.

- This was the city of the temple, the dwelling place of God’s glory.
- It was where the law and the word of the Lord went forth (cf. Isaiah 2:2-3).
- Prophets like Isaiah received and delivered their visions here.

Jerusalem was meant to be the high place of spiritual sight and light to the nations. The “valley of vision” therefore highlights the city’s privileged access to divine revelation.

There may also be a bit of irony. Normally, throughout Isaiah, (and the rest of Scripture), Jerusalem/Zion is normally called a mountain (exalted, secure, the place of God’s presence and future glory). But here it is called a valley. Perhaps this is a play on words to point to a spiritual lowness and judgment to follow.

Historical Context in Isaiah's Time

Events during the Assyrian period in Hezekiah's reign (Isaiah 36-37; 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32). King Sennacherib of Assyria captured 46 cities of Judah, putting Jerusalem on high alert of being seized. Similar events occurred in 586 BC under the Babylonians.

Yet very clearly, once again we encounter things that will happen to Jerusalem during the Seven Year Tribulation Period (cf. Matthew 24:17 and Isaiah 22:1b — people on the housetops). Antichrist will be in charge, near the abomination of desolation. Bottom line: even in the Tribulation, Israel will refuse to worship the true God (except for the Remnant).

Key Point on Divine Names: The repeated use of "The Lord of Hosts" (Sabaoth — God of war/armies), "The Lord God of Hosts," and simply "The Lord" throughout the chapter emphasizes that YHWH, the God who is, is in complete control. He is Master and Ruler of everything. He will one day with His army destroy and carry out proper justice. Israel, in refusal to return to the Lord, is under terrific judgment. Yet God and the Lord of Hosts will finalize His purposes in the time of Jacob's trouble.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING THE VALLEY OF VISION

Six Scenes of Isaiah 22:1-14

Scene 1: A City Under Judgment (vv. 1-2a)

"What's the matter with you, now?" Literal translation: "What to you then?"

The people of Jerusalem had no concern for any alarm or apprehension. Nothing bothered them. They led a joy-filled celebration because the Assyrians had unexpectedly left the city. However, those who went up to the housetops set the stage for one day when that too will be used as a place of safety or celebration (Matthew 24:17, 10:27).

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The prophet expresses that Israel's problem was comfort in walls and alliances. They have no care to entreat God; they are too comfortable.

Scene 2: A People Under Judgment (vv. 2b-3)

People die, but not in war in the normal sense here. In the future Tribulation context, the Antichrist kills; rulers are captured. All are tied together, on the run. Some stay to fight or oversee the slaughter, yet all rulers flee at that time. Still, not a single ruler escapes being captured. A time is seen when all types of people are running from Jerusalem, yet tracked down for annihilation, all non-Remnant Jews will be destroyed.

Scene 3: Isaiah's Response to Judgment (vv. 4-5)

Isaiah had been weeping bitterly. Nothing is worse than seeing people judged who had multiple chances and refused to go to the Lord. Nothing is worse than the work of God seen when they had choices not to be judged.

This reminds me of when Jesus also wept over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35).

A time of terrible work (the Great Tribulation) looking out from Jerusalem in every direction as the assault begins. A Day of Destruction, devastation, violence, and oppression of lands and people (Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15). A vision of a military force coming into Jerusalem and leaving everything ruined. Those fleeing the city will cry out as they go from mountain to mountain and will be killed (5).

Scene 4: Military Used in God's Judgment (6-9)

Elam — Southern Iran, continues to develop military capabilities.

Kir — Mentioned 5x in Assyrian context; Khuzistan region between Iraq and eastern allies/provinces of Assyria, mounted army with one purpose. All this is during the Tribulation. Why are they allowed to get this far? Because Israel will not return to the Lord.

Scene 5: Israel's Response to God's Judgment (vv. 8-11)

This describes a time that has not yet fully occurred. a time when Israel is dependent upon her own military for her own safety. In that time, Israel will be dependent upon weapons hidden in the forest.

God removed the defense (the sacred covering) of Judah. No longer protected. Their city had been breached; they tore down houses to build a wall for fortification. They made a reservoir between two walls, yet they did not depend on Him who made it. Dependent on basic weapons, water, and fuels, but will not turn to God for their salvation.

When the Antichrist comes upon this city, they will count houses and tear down houses for fortification. Yet they did not take into consideration Him who planned it long ago. Trusting in externals, not the One who created, established, and protected the city until now. God

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decrees that punishment is "involved in actions without God." All man's scheming, planning, and resources for protection without God is useless.

Scene 6: Purpose for God's Judgment (vv. 12-14)

v. 12 - A day of humbling. A day of mourning. Judgment is a time to weep and a time to wail.

Weeping is controlled mourning — dominated by grief in the expression of emotion. **Wailing / lamentation** is usually over the dead (as in the case of Joseph) — more prolonged and involving other rituals rather than mere emotive release (sifting dust on one's head, fasting, cutting one's beard, tearing one's garments, etc.). Here it is accompanied by shaving the head and wearing sackcloth.

v. 13 - "Woe with feasting and gladness — What!" (*cf. Matthew 24:37-39 // Luke 17:26-30*) Judgment is a time to mourn! People are celebrating instead of repenting.

v. 14 - Very serious: "Sin not forgiven until they die." Your refusal to turn to God has sentenced you to death. God alone is our hope, our joy, and our peace. Israel will not be restored until the wicked are destroyed and only the Remnant remain.

The chapter now shifts from corporate judgment on a complacent city to individual accountability in leadership, showing that self-dependence at every level leads to ruin, while humble dependence on the Sovereign Lord leads to honor.

THE ARROGANCE OF A ROYAL STEWARD AND THE FAITHFUL STEWARD

Shebna the Steward — The False Leader (15-19)

Once again, when we look into these chapters in this prophetic section of Isaiah, we can make at least one important conclusion: An attitude of self-dependence — one not depending on God — leads to arrogance and pride, which comes before the fall. This makes God into a judge who has warned over and over again against such a state of being. This will clearly be shown as a Shebna attitude.

Historical Background: Shebna was an official in the court of King Hezekiah. When Sennacherib, King of Assyria, attacked Jerusalem, Shebna was one of those who was sure the city would fall, and he sought to ingratiate himself with the converging Assyrians. Shebna was in charge of the Royal Treasuries and household — a position of great importance (steward, possibly the highest official in the land).

Was Shebna an Israelite? There is disagreement among scholars: (1) His father's name is omitted in 2 Kings 18:18, 37 and Isaiah 36:22. (2) The name itself appears Egyptian in origin. (3) Isaiah makes a strong contrast between "here" in Jerusalem (where Shebna hews out a tomb for himself) and "there" where Shebna will be driven out and die (v. 18).

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Perhaps Shebna was even advocating making an alliance with Egypt instead of trusting God during the time of outside attacks.

Isaiah was previously weeping and wailing for Jerusalem. Here, Shebna in Jerusalem is busy digging his own grave (literally hewing a tomb on the height, possibly aiming for the Mount of Olives area so his name would live on in Israel).

Summary on Shebna: A high-ranking official trying to make alliances with either Assyria or Egypt or both. A foreigner who maneuvered himself into a place of power through self-promotion and self-reliance.

Eliakim — The Righteous Replacement (20-25)

God declares that He will call His servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah and will clothe him with Shebna's robe and bind his sash on him and commit his authority to his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

The key of the house of David will be laid on his shoulder. When he opens, no one shall shut; and when he shuts, no one shall open (v. 22). This language is directly picked up in Revelation 3:7 regarding the risen Christ: "He who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens."

Eliakim is pictured as a peg in a firm place, a throne of honor to his father's house. From him will hang all the glory of his father's house, every small vessel and every large vessel. But even this faithful servant's "peg" will eventually give way and be cut off (v. 25), showing that even the best human leaders ultimately fail. This then points beyond frail human governs to the ultimate, eternal Davidic King who never fails, Jesus Christ.

Typological Fulfillment & Application

Shebna typifies the self-reliant, arrogant false leader who trusts in alliances, human power, and personal legacy — ultimately judged and removed. This finds its ultimate expression in the Antichrist during the Tribulation, who will deceive many but be destroyed by the returning Christ.

Eliakim typifies the faithful, humble servant leader whom God sets up ("God sets up" = Eliakim). He receives authority, the key of David, and becomes a source of stability and honor. Yet even he is temporary, pointing to the perfect, eternal fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who holds the true Key of David and will reign forever as the Righteous King. Jesus Himself makes Eliakim a type of Christ in Revelation 3:7.

Simple Personal Question:

If God is sovereign Lord, Master, Owner of all (if God can do whatever He pleases and one day will stand in final judgment of all things), how can we not apply this to us as a body and individually?

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1 Peter 1:17-19: If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

God is our hope, our joy, and our peace.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 13–23 delivers God's judgment on the proud nations one by one. The Lord of Hosts rules history and brings low every empire that trusts in its own strength. Into this series God inserts Isaiah 22 — an oracle against His own people in Jerusalem. Judah had received unmatched revelation (“the valley of vision”), yet they lived like the nations: trusting walls, weapons, and alliances instead of the Lord who “planned it long ago” (22:11). The mountain had become a valley; vision had turned to blindness.

This reveals the impartiality of divine judgment. God judges the nations, and He judges His covenant people when they act like the nations. The same pattern of self-reliance will mark the Tribulation, when Israel faces the Antichrist and only the remnant turns to the Lord.

Shebna and Eliakim illustrate the contrast. Shebna, the self-promoting steward, is driven out in judgment. Eliakim, the faithful servant God “sets up,” points to Jesus Christ — the true and final Davidic King who never fails.

Israel takes many millennia to learn not to rely upon the things of this world (fortification, wealth, or allies), It is God and God alone who sustains them, protects them, who will make them prominent. But before they learn that lesson, they will go through such judgment, it will appear that God has forsaken them, but the Remnant will remain and prosper.