

two brothers of Israel until they "turn" to God's Messiah. The Edomites had the audacity to put forth Herod, the Idumean as "king of the Jews." The Herod family, in its insolence toward Jehovah, contributed to the crucifixion of Christ. The Arabians had the audacity to declare that Mohammed was a Prophet equal to Jesus. Whoever does not "kiss the son" will die (Psa. 2:11). The insolence and irreverence of these two peoples is the cause of their judgment. Haughtiness toward God's covenant people is haughtiness toward God Himself. God's faithful servants are "the apple of His eye." Love God, love His children. Those today who haughtily despise the church of Christ will reap God's judgment.

## QUIZ

1. What does "Dumah" mean?
2. What is the watchman's answer about the night?
3. What relationship did Edom and Arabia have to the Jews?
4. What is the main cause of their judgment?
5. How have these prophecies been fulfilled?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### 2. JUDAH

#### a. IRREVERENT ATTITUDES

TEXT: 22:1-14

- 1 The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?
- 2 O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain with the sword, neither are they dead in battle.
- 3 All thy rulers fled away together, they were bound by the

- archers; all that were found of thee were bound together; they fled afar off.
- 4 Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people.
- 5 For it is a day of discomfiture, and of treading down, and of perplexity, from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, in the valley of vision; a breaking down of the walls, and a crying to the mountains.
- 6 And Elam bare the quiver, with chariots of men and horsemen; and Kir uncovered the shield.
- 7 And it came to pass, that thy choicest valleys were full of chariots and the horsemen set themselves in array at the gate.
- 8 And he took away the covering of Judah; and thou didst look in that day to the armor in the house of the forest.
- 9 And ye saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.
- 10 And ye numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and ye brake down the houses to fortify the wall.
- 11 Ye made also a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye looked not unto him that had done this, neither had ye respect unto him that purposed it long ago.
- 12 And in that day did the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:
- 13 and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.
- 14 And Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

## QUERIES

- a. Where is the "valley of vision"?
- b. Who is going to "weep bitterly"?
- c. Why would they say, "let us eat and drink . . . etc."?

## PARAPHRASE

This is God's message concerning Jerusalem, the place where God's word goes forth. What is the matter with you? Why are you all running up to the housetops? You are all consumed with the madness of revelry and irresponsibility. There is nothing to celebrate in your dead for they have not died honorably on the field of battle. Your leaders tried to desert you, but they were captured and taken prisoner. Everyone who tried to escape was either slain or captured. Some of you tried to console me, but I said, Do not try to console me, this is not a time for consoling but a time for weeping. I cannot be consoled when I see my people bring upon themselves inevitable destruction. No, these are days of confusion and affliction from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts. In the place where God's word is supposed to reside, an enemy is breaking down Jerusalem's walls and the enemy's cries of success echo among the mountains. The expert warriors of Elam came in wagonloads and warriors from as far away as Kir took up arms against you. Your finest and most strategic lands were filled with wagon-loads of these warriors. The enemy had you completely besieged occupying even the city gates. The enemy exposed your decadence and your foolishness. And where do you look for help? To man-made weapons you run for deliverance. You thought you could deliver yourself. You saw the walls of your city in disrepair. You saw that you would need water for a time of siege. So you calculated what you thought it would take to fix all your defences and tore down houses and repaired your wall; and you made a reservoir between the two walls for an increased water supply; but not once did you ask for help from Him who lets this come upon you. He is the One who planned

it long ago and you do not know it. When this was happening to you it was the Lord calling you to repent. His call to you is to weep, to mourn, to shave your heads in contrition, and to put on the sackcloth of penitence. But instead, you sing and dance and play, and feast and drink. You fatalists! You say, Let us eat and drink—what's the difference, for tomorrow we shall die. The Lord of hosts has revealed to me that this sin will never be forgiven you, not even when you die.

### COMMENTS

v. 1-4 FRIVOLITY: The events of this chapter apparently are those events surrounding the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib about 701 B.C. According to II Kings 18:14-16 Sennacherib had advanced against Jerusalem and demanded a heavy tribute, which somehow Hezekiah was able to amass and so buy off the attacker. For a while Sennacherib respected the terms of the tribute and withdrew his forces from Jerusalem. This first part of chapter 22 reflects the frivolity permeating the whole city after Sennacherib's withdrawal.

The "valley of vision" refers to Jerusalem and Judah as the repository of God's revealed word which came so often in olden times by vision. The prophet rebukes the people's irreverence and frivolity when they should have been solemnly and faithfully seeking God's direction by asking, "What is the matter with you?" The people were running up to the tops of houses, gawking, shouting gleefully to one another, and all over the city there was a frivolous holiday spirit. In spite of all the warnings of the prophets they could not seem to grasp the impact of what had just happened. They did not understand the Assyrian siege as a warning from God that they should repent. They were shouting and reveling as if their armies had been victorious in battle. But their dead had not died honorably on the field of battle—they had died of starvation and pestilence which always follows a siege. In fact, their rulers had deserted their posts of leadership and tried to escape. They were captured and carried off by the

enemy. Evidently someone had tried to console Isaiah and gain-say his interpretation that the Assyrian siege meant repent. Someone suggested Isaiah join in the shouting and frivolity. Isaiah's reply was, "Do not look toward consoling me. This is the time for weeping bitterly. I cannot take comfort in the impenitent self-destruction of my people."

v. 5-7 **FOREBODING**: The prophet proceeds to retell the foreboding events of the siege. He interprets it as a day of discomfiture, of affliction, of confusion. Its source, he says, is the Lord, Jehovah of hosts. Joel interpreted the locust plague as "a Day of Jehovah." Joel even called the locusts God's army. God works through natural phenomena to call the world to repentance (Rom. 1:18-20; Acts 14:15-18); He warns the world to repent by allowing reprobate sinners to "receive in their own persons the due penalty of their errors" (Rom. 1:26-32); and He calls the world to repentance and salvation through the preaching of the Word (Acts 17:22-31). In Jerusalem's case God was using at least two of these methods of calling. The Assyrians had broken down parts of Jerusalem's walls. Their shouts of encouragement to one another in attacking Jerusalem were reverberating through the hills and valleys surrounding the city. The Assyrians brought with them expert soldiers by the wagon ("chariot") load from as far away as Elam (Persia) and Kir (Armenia). This massive army inundated the peaceful valleys around Jerusalem. Those choice valleys where all their fertile farm lands lay were bivouac areas for teeming masses of men, chariots and horses. The Assyrians had the city so well trapped in a siege they could safely occupy the city gate areas.

v. 8-11 **FOLLY**: Apparently the veil of frivolity was ripped from the faces of the people momentarily as they contemplated what the Assyrians had done. Somehow they began to take a serious look at things. They could see the situation called for help. But where did they go for help? They went to their own devices. They went to the armory of the forest. This armory had been built by Solomon with cedars from Lebanon (I Kings 7:2-6). Among other things it contained the golden shields which Solomon had made (I Kings 10:17), and was one of the objects

later shown by Hezekiah to the envoys of Merodach-baladan (Isa. 39:2). They were proud of their own abilities to prepare for war. They built water reservoirs to store up water for the siege. They calculated how many house-bricks it would take to repair the breaches in the walls and tore down the houses and repaired the wall. Leupold says, "But in their mad haste to get everything done in quick order, no time was left for looking to Him who controls situations like this and alone can extricate those that have become entangled in their complications. The prophet's way of stating the case indicates how strongly he believes in the total control of the Almighty in every human situation, and that faith demands that his help be earnestly sought." Jeremiah would say, ". . . my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

V. 12-14 FATALISM: A second look at their situation caused them some soberness. But the tragedy is it did not lead them to repent—they responded with a foolhardy fatalism. Their reaction was to engage in hedonism. God was calling to repentance. Their reaction was reasonable enough. If one does not believe in One God, The God of Truth and Justice, a sort of epicurean fatalism is all that is left. "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." When men deny the historical realities of God's redemptive work in Jesus Christ today the only alternative is epicurean fatalism. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians (I Cor. 15:30-34) that he would not be "playing Christian martyr" if there was no resurrection. To the contrary, the only sensible alternative to life hereafter is hedonism in the here and now! Liberal theologians who deny the authenticity and credibility of the New Testament and who refuse to accept the deity of Jesus Christ and the historicity of His resurrection, are schizophrenic ostriches with their heads in the sand. They are living in a world of make-believe when they "pretend" there is something to Christianity. Those who deny the existence of God, the authority of His Word, and still try to "play at the game of Churchianity" are obscurantists par excellence! The mixture of liberal theology and existential

philosophy has produced a generation of hedonistic fatalists. Their shibboleth is "Meaning is found only in meaninglessness." This brand of fatalism has been preached by Sarte, Camus, Hemingway, Scheslinger and a host of others. It has fathered a generation of "do-your-own-thing" hedonists, since, "tomorrow we die" and "life is never more absurd than at the grave." So, you see, modern existential-fatalism is not new! There is nothing new under the sun! Unbelief will produce the same moral anarchy in one generation after another.

### QUIZ

1. What historical events do these verses probably refer to?
2. What was the first attitude of the people of Jerusalem?
3. How did Isaiah interpret these events?
4. Where did the people turn for solutions to their circumstances?
5. Why were the people so fatalistic?

### b. INSOLENT AGENT

TEXT: 22:15-25

- 15 Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, who is over the house, and say,
- 16 What doest thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre? hewing him out a sepulchre on high, graving a habitation for himself in the rock!
- 17 Behold, Jehovah, like a strong man, will hurl thee away violently; yea, he will wrap thee up closely.
- 18 He will surely wind thee round and round, and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame of thy lord's house.
- 19 And I will thrust thee from thine office; and from thy station

shalt thou be pulled down.

- 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:
- 21 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.
- 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.
- 23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house.
- 24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from the cups even to all the flagons.
- 25 In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall the nail that was fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for Jehovah hath spoken it.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is Shebna?
- b. Whose "house" was he over?
- c. Who is Eliakim?

### PARAPHRASE

The Lord, Jehovah of Heaven's armies, said to me, Go, find this insolent Shebna, the king's chief administrator, and say to him, Who do you think you are and what do you think you are doing by building this magnificent monument to remembrance? Who told you to perpetuate your memory in such a high-handed fashion as to have a burying place hewn out for yourself up among the kings? Look! Jehovah, the Strong One, will hurl you



away with great force. Indeed, Jehovah will wind you up like threads are wound into a ball and throw you into a country of vast proportions. In this far off place you will die, you who have brought shame to your king, and all the power you gloried in shall become shame. Jehovah says, I will thrust you out of your office and pull you down from your high position. And then I will call My servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, to replace you. I will give him your robes and I will turn over to him your office. He will humble himself before Me and be a real benefactor to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. I will give him authority in the king's government. Whatever he says will be done. He shall be second to none save the king himself. He will become a strong and steady support upon which much of the responsibility of government shall hang. There will be this danger for him. Many, especially all his family and relatives, will seek patronage, position and power from him. If he uses his office for nepotism or other forms of partiality, his office will crash down upon his head to the ruin of all those that sought to attach themselves to him, as well as to his own ruin. Jehovah has spoken!

### COMMENTS

v. 15-19 REJECTION: This "treasurer" or "steward," which is a more literal rendering of the original language, one Shebna by name, was an outstanding example of the irreverence and insolence of many of the people. "Over the house" is an indication that Shebna was probably the king's "chief of staff." He was the chief administrator of the king's governmental policies. Edward J. Young points out that this office was never legislated by God when the kingdom was begun under Saul and David. Solomon seems to have had a "chief steward" (I Kings 4:6). Why Isaiah was commanded to denounce him, publicly, by name, is not clear at first. Some commentators suggest he may have been leading the "look-to-Egypt" party which was such an abomination to Jehovah. Others suggest that he may have been an Aramaean (as the name Shebna hints) usurper who had

worked his way into the government of the covenant people. However, God's main indictment appears to be that Shebna is exploiting his position and office for his own selfish aggrandizement and not to serve and "be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" as Eliakim will (v. 21). Shebna is oblivious to the needs of the people. He thinks his position is to be served rather than to serve. So he is having an expensive and prestigious burial vault hewn out for himself. He is even having it hewn out "on high" which probably means up where the kings are buried. This would be an especial irreverence toward God. The whole tenor of this chapter is to point out the almost complete disregard both the people and the leaders of Judah have for directing the kingdom in Jehovah's paths. Judah is almost totally immersed in its own plans and pleasures. Shebna is concerned only with perpetuating his own name and glorifying himself. These people are very little different from all those pagan nations which have come under the judgment of God in this section of Isaiah (chapters 13-23).

By way of later history we find Shebna appearing again (Isa. 36:3; 37:2). He is still holding office in the government but not nearly so high as "over the house." Leupold points out that it is possible Shebna took this rebuke of Isaiah's to heart, was demoted, but still was found worthy to occupy a lower post of honor at court. Whatever the case, God brought him down.

v. 20-25 REPLACEMENT: We also learn from Isaiah 36:3, 22, etc. that Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, had become "over the household." Eliakim was chosen by God to replace Shebna as "chief of staff" to the king. Eliakim was God's "servant" and a "father" to the people. He evidently fulfilled in a humble manner what the office was intended to fulfill. He was given an authority so graphically described as could be second only to that of the king himself. He was apparently a good administrator and a "peg" upon which much weight and responsibility of government was fastened. He was evidently trustworthy and stable.

Verses 24 and 25 appear to indicate that within a very short time Eliakim, the "peg" was hewn down. It is not necessary, however, to read these verses as having already happened. They

may be read as conditional clauses (a construction that the Hebrew syntax very definitely allows) and then they become warnings for Eliakim concerning a danger that he will soon face in his new office. His relatives and friends shall swarm in upon him seeking special favors and patronage. *If* he yields to nepotism and partiality, his office will crash down upon his head to the ruin of all those that sought to attach themselves to him, as well as to his own ruin.

So, in spite of the fact that most of the people of Jerusalem and Judah were irreverently and insolently plunging headstrong in their own directions and violently using the kingdom of God to serve their own selfish ends, there were a few, like Eliakim, Hezekiah, Isaiah, and others, who hearkened to the call of Jehovah. While the majority demanded to be served, a faithful remnant surrendered to serve. None of them were perfect and sinless (e.g. Hezekiah, Isaiah). They were faithful. There is more joy in heaven over one sinner like Hezekiah and Isaiah who repents, than over ninety-nine who need no repentance.

### QUIZ

1. How important a figure was Shebna?
2. Why was Isaiah told to pronounce God's judgment on Shebna?
3. Where do we learn of Shebna other than this passage?
4. Why was Eliakim called to replace Shebna?
5. How great would Eliakim's power and influence be?
6. What is the prophet's warning to Eliakim?