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Eliakim: the Faithful Steward

22: 20-25

Eliakim was the faithful steward DIG: Eliakim had replaced Shebna as steward at least by the time of the Assyrian invasion of 701 BC (see 36:3). How was he like a peg in a firm place? How do his qualities contrast with those of Shebna? In spite of his good leadership, what will ultimately happen? Why?

REFLECT: Do you see any of Eliakim's qualities in yourself right now? In what way(s) are you far from being the kind of person that Eliakim was? How can you be more like Eliakim? What qualities make a great leader (see the commentary on [Ezra-Nehemiah](#), to see [link click Bt - The Third Return](#))?

Our attention now shifts to **Eliakim**, who replaced **Shebna**. But where **Shebna** only thought about **himself**, **Eliakim** was truly a **father to** the people of **Judah**. **He** was trustworthy and dependable. **He** was involved in the negotiations with Sennacherib (**Second Kings 18:18, 26, 37; Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22 and 37:2**). **He** would also be a respected leader and faithful administrator who would make wise decisions (**22:22**). But even **he** would not be able to save the nation single-handedly. Ultimately, the accumulated weight of sin would pull the nation down. Several generations later the Babylonians would destroy **Jerusalem** in 586 BC (see [Em - A Day of Terror in the Valley of Vision](#)). The blindness of the nation was such that a one man would not be sufficient to turn her from her path of destruction.

In that day I will summon My servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah (22:20). The title of **My servant**, has great significance in the book of **Isaiah**. It is first applied to **Isaiah** in **20:3**, then to **Isra'el** in **Chapters 40 to 55**, as well as to the unnamed **Suffering Servant**, and finally, it is applied to **Isra'el** again in **Chapters 65 and 66**. Although the term obviously contains a sense of obligation, it goes further than that and expresses privilege. Privilege not implying superiority, but in the sense of it being a privilege to be a **servant**. **Yeshua** would say: **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:46).**

Eliakim would wear the badges of honor and **authority**. **I will clothe him with your robe**

and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah (22:21). The king's officers wore distinguishing liveries to mark their respective offices and ranks. The robe is said to have been a long garment made of linen cloth. In the Orient, this was the symbol of power being transferred from one to his successor.

And Isaiah says that Shebna's successor, Eliakim, will prove to be faithful and points out Eliakim's authority. He has the power of the keys. And I will place on his shoulders the key to the house of David (22:22a). Oriental keys being unusually large, a long and heavy object, it is often a matter of convenience to carry them on the shoulder. As the possession of a key may be taken as evidence of property or of trust, the key became an emblem of wealth or authority. This idea is expressed beautifully in 9:6, where it is said of the Messiah: For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders.⁷⁴

What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open (22:22b). To hold the keys is to have the authority, because he had total supervision of the royal chambers. The one who held the keys was the one who would decide who could, and who could not, be able to see the king. Through this near historical period, Eliakim would hold the keys to the House of David. Christ gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Ex - On This Rock I Will Build My Church](#)). But who holds those keys now? Revelation 3:7 tells us that Jesus does. These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open.



Lastly, we see Eliakim's glory and Shebna's demise. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father (22:23). Eliakim will be like a peg driven into a firm place, and upon this peg the house of Eliakim will hang its glory. The reference here is not to the tent pins, which are driven into the ground for the

purpose of fastening the tent cords, but to wooden pins, or **pegs** which are put into the wall for the purpose of holding clothing and various household utensils. When these pins are driven into the plastering of a house they are very insecure, and most of the time fall out. To fasten them **into a firm place** they must be built into the wall as the house is built. **They** are then firm, and being large, help to strengthen the walls and at the same time afford useful support for anything hung on **them**.⁷⁵ A beautiful reference to these **house-pegs** is made in **Ezra 9:8**, where it speaks of **God's** grace which had given the people **a firm place in His sanctuary**.

All the glory of his family will hang on him: it's offspring and offshoots - all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to the jars (22:24). Eliakim was so dependable that even the insignificant, not just the influential, could entrust themselves to **him**. In that light, we should measure ourselves against **him** and ask whether even the **lesser vessels** in our lives can depend on us, or whether we, like **Shebna**, are too busy building our own reputations.

Even though **Eliakim** and **Hezekiah** were **God-fearing** men, the cancer of those like **Shebna** would eat away at the moral fabric of the nation of **Judah**. There were not enough **Eliakims**. **When that day comes, the peg fastened firmly in place will give way; it will be cut down and fall, and the weight that was on it will be cut off. For ADONAI has spoken (22:25 CJB)**. And 115 years later, **in that day** when **God's** patience would run out, **He** would send King Nebuchadnezzar and his army to destroy **Jerusalem**. So here, **Isaiah** warns that eventually even this **peg** would give way and **fall** from the weight of spiritual corruption. The nation would be sent **off** into exile (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)). I am sure **Isaiah** was saddened and horrified by what **he** saw and prophesied. But **he** was a faithful **servant**.

What does it mean to be an **Eliakim** rather than a **Shebna**? Above everything else, it means we have gotten ourselves off our hands. That's the difference between a David and a Sha'ul, or a **Jesus** and a Judas. The second person in each of these pairs was always looking out for himself. He was worried about *his* image, about what other people thought of *him*, about how he was going to supply his *own* need, and about how people would remember *him*. These were the last things the first person in each pair worried about.

I am convinced that these are the kinds of things **Jesus** had in mind when he said we must become like **little children** to enter the kingdom of Heaven (**Matthew 18:3-4**). There are a number of things about children that are not heavenly. They are ignorant and naïve, they can be petty and selfish; and if you are a parent, you know they are not innocent. But, by and large, they lack self-consciousness. It does not occur to them to worry about how they are appearing to others. Status means nothing to them. But how quickly that changes when

they grow up. We become absorbed not with the reality but with the image. We are consumed with a need for approval and position, and all too often with the approval of the wrong people and the positions that are worthless. That was **Shebna**. In his sermon, "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis says that it matters little what we think of **God**, but it matters for all eternity what **God** thinks of us.

That is the kind of person we see in **Eliakim**. Like **Christ**, **he** will care more for the welfare of others than **he** does for his own. And like **Messiah**, **his** greatest joy will be to make it possible for people to enter the throne room of **the King**. **He** will be seeking **God's** grace so that **he** can be responsible, reliable, and true in the cesspool of court intrigue. **He** will be concerned for the needs of others above **his** own to the extent that **he** will shoulder loads that are really too heavy to carry. But **he** will carry them, not because **he** constantly needs to prove to **himself** that **he** is indispensable or that **he** is really somebody, but because **he** does not want others to have to bear those loads.

This is the opportunity **Yeshua** offers each of us. We may choose to be **Shebna** or **Eliakim**. We may focus on the temporal (earthly) or the heavenly (eternal). If we focus on the temporal, we and all our works will perish with it. If we choose the eternal, then none of our temporal works will ever be lost (**Romans 8:13**).⁷⁶ He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to keep what he cannot lose. This is truly Good News.