

Eliakim

A Type of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Old Testament is full of pictures of Christ. As the shadow of the Lord they typify and symbolise his character, glory, atoning work and heavenly ministry. While many of the shadows are inanimate objects (e.g. temple, tabernacle), some are offices (e.g. prophet, king, high priest) and while some are animal (e.g. sacrifices), many are men (e.g. David, Adam). Eliakim is not a man that springs readily to mind amongst believers, but his mention in Isaiah typifies many of the glories of the Lord. It will benefit us to search these out.

In a passage telling of the judgment against Jerusalem, Isaiah gives this oracle:

Then it shall be in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into 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 I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him *as* a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. 'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that *was* on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken.' (Isa 22:20-25)

While a human being is in view as the first level of prophecy, as with many prophecies there is a deeper layer that speaks of what can only be applied to the Messiah. On the immediate human level we can mention that by the name 'Eliakim' was initially intended Azariah, the son of Hilkiyah, (many people are given two names). He was a master over Hezekiah's household in 713 BC (2 Kg 18:18, 37; 1 Chron 6:13; Isa 36:3), just as Joseph was lord, grand vizier or prime minister, over Pharaoh's.

By all accounts he was a good man and diligent in God's service, thus Hezekiah appointed him as governor in the place of Shebna (Isa 22:15). His ability to serve well was due to his nature of acting as a 'father', or benevolent ruler, to the people of Judah in counselling, caring and defending their interests.

There are five people in total who have this name in the Old Testament.

Eliakim as a type of Christ

His name

Eli'akim means 'my God will raise up', 'the resurrection of the Lord', 'my God, he shall arise', or 'raised up by God', and this clearly speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. Hilkiah means, 'the Lord my portion'.

His character

Eliakim was someone who did not strive for the office he was given but was appointed by a higher authority for his suitability. Christ also was given his office by the Father (Heb 5:4).

His office

God calls Eliakim, 'my servant' (v20) and this is the motif that Isaiah frequently uses for the Messiah. Christ indeed was the servant of God, as Luke's Gospel particularly portrays.

Exposition

Then it shall be in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. (Isa 22:20-21)

Eliakim was called

Eliakim is called of God, just as Jesus Christ was the supreme elect servant. Without calling there is neither any divine office or standing; calling is the basis of relationship with God. Only those who are called and drawn by God, know God. Jesus was called by God, in his human nature, to be the divine servant prophesied by Isaiah. The Messiah is not just one sent, but also one called.

Eliakim was clothed

This could possibly refer to priestly garments and Jewish tradition is that he was a priest, but it is much more likely referring to the garments typical of a civil officer since he was actually a civil servant – having the robe of Shebna. Either way he is a type of Christ being robed for service, whether considered as a priest or king (civil officer). Being clothed with distinctive garments signifies being fitted for distinctive office with authority. [Cf. Rev 1:13.] As Eliakim is being authorised for the task of prime minister for the king, so Christ is the anointed Lord of God's creation; the clothing signifies governmental authority.

The clothing included being strengthened with a belt or girdle. This is both a symbol of power and human strength, the ability to get work done. All Jewish officers had girdles, including priests and kings. Christ's belt, indicative of the way he serves in office, is faithfulness and righteousness (Isa 11:5).

Eliakim governs

The government in question is the control of the king's house. This is typical of Christ as sovereign over God's household, the church (Isa 9:6). Eliakim governs, however, with the care and patience of a father, with affection. He is a good shepherd of his sheep – in just the same way as the Lord Jesus. Traditionally, a ruler who was known as a father to his people was considered to be a faithful counsellor and a good leader; a person who is able to sympathise with and pity those he governs.

The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. (Isa 22:22)

Eliakim has the keys

The reference is either (according to some) to the keys of the temple or, more likely, the keys to the king's treasury; Jewish Targums imply both meanings. Officials holding keys often had them hanging down on sashes from the shoulder as a mark of their office in both Jewish and Greek cultures, as some magistrates do today. However, a literal key may not be implied, being figuratively spoken as the power of office. The one with the key makes the decisions; he opens the door for new officers and shuts out those who are rejected, he controls the treasury and allows admission to the palace. It suggests high political authority.

The shoulder is symbolic of human power or strength and the one carrying the key is hereby symbolically declared as being strong enough to carry out the tasks required. Access (the power of the keys) rested with him. For Eliakim this responsibility meant control over the king's chambers and resources, and also the decision as to who was responsible in the king's service.

Note what is said of the Lord,

He who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens. Rev 3:7

This indicates the government of the church; Christ controls who comes in and shuts those out he does not want. He also controls the treasury of God, opening up the storehouse for those in need under his care. Christ is strong enough to control God's house, 'And the government will be upon His shoulder', (Isa 9:6).

The Lord also delegates the power of the keys to his church officers,

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matt 16:19

Local church officers (elders) are authorised to admit believers into the church and baptise them to demonstrate their faith; they hold the symbolic keys of entrance. The Lord Jesus here promises that heaven agrees with this admission.

I will fasten him *as* a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. (Isa 22:23-24)

Eliakim has a secure position

A nail fastened in a wall, or in the timber framework, is able to carry the weight of very heavy objects. It denotes stability, security and symbolically speaks of governmental support and continuance. Ancient Near Eastern house pegs were not put in after the construction of the house but were built in along with the construction of the walls, and thus were part of the secure fixing of the whole structure. Often shields and armour were hung from walls in this way [1 Kg 10:16-17].

The word 'peg' shows that the strong nails used in houses as hooks were the same word as the spikes used in fastening a tent to the ground. This nail or peg (*yâthēd*) was used

figuratively as a title for the king (Zech 10:4), who in the kingdom stands like a tent-peg, holding it secure and keeping it upright.

Thus Eliakim is denoted as a principal support of the king who would carry the glory of his father's family and the honour of his house. He was the lynchpin of the king's civil policy.

Christ, as the antitype of this, is the foundation and support of his people. It speaks of the strength of the Lord and his capacity to bear the weight of his people; he is 'the mighty God'. As Zech 10:4 declares, 'From him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler together'. Jesus is unchangeable and is as strong for his people today as he was yesterday, and will be forever. He is forever able to help his saints. His priesthood is eternal, his truth unshakeable. He is the peg on which the church is fixed.

Eliakim is a glorious throne

That is, Eliakim will make the throne of his father's house glorious; he will be an honour and credit to his family. By the wise administration of his duties in the government of the king, Eliakim brings glory to his family. In the same way Christ is the glory of his Father. He is the brightness of God's glory, seated on a glorious throne (Lk 1:32). Furthermore he raises up his people so that they sit with him on this throne (1 Sam 2:8; Eph 2:6).

Eliakim holds the glory of his father's house

Like a nail on the wall, all things hang upon Eliakim; his family is dependent upon his support. But more than this, his family receives glory and honour from him. Similarly, Christ holds all the glory and supports his house, the church. He is the glory of the body and secures the building of it as a house, the household of God. The glory of the house belongs to him.

Furthermore, like Eliakim supports his father's house, Christ supports the whole Christian family. All the children of God depend upon Christ for grace; he is the provider of all that is required for life and salvation. In a house there are various vessels of different sizes and qualities; this is implied in the Hebrew which not only distinguishes size differences but construction – some vessels are earthenware, some of gold and silver. Vessels had common or sacred uses; symbolising here the support of the whole civil and ecclesiastical polity. Note Paul's words in 2 Tim 2:20 and the description of the elect as vessels in Lam 4:2.

Thus in a family there are people of different ages and maturity, of different capacities and abilities, rich and poor, some honourable some dishonourable. 'The offspring and the posterity' affirms this, the meaning is rather 'the offshoots of the family, high and low'; the Septuagint has, 'from the least to the greatest'. Eliakim brings honour even to the lesser members of the family. None are ignored, but all are supported.

Barnes has it,

The idea is, that all the prosperity, near and remote, would depend on him; and that his character would sustain and give dignity to them all. The word which is rendered 'issue' (הַצְפֹּתָהּ *hats^epi'ôth*), according to Vitranga and Rosenmuller, denotes those that were of humble condition; and the passage means that honour would be conferred even on these by the virtues of Eliakim. ... The glory of the whole family would depend on him. His virtues, wisdom, integrity, and valour in defending and saving the Hebrew commonwealth, would diffuse honour over the whole family connection, and render the name illustrious.

Eliakim, like Christ, cares for each individual member of the family, despite their personal significance. Some are large vessels (flagons or pitchers) able to receive large amounts of

grace, others are like cups that can only hold a small amount. Christ gives to each what he can hold to function in that capacity. All in the church are 'vessels of mercy' (Rm 9:23).

Matthew Henry states,

Our Lord Jesus, having the key of the house of David, is as a *nail in a sure place*, and all *the glory of his father's house hangs* upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him; even the meanest that belong to his church are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor that concern fall to the ground, though ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that *was* on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken.' (Isa 22:25)

The deposition of Shebna

The elevation of Eliakim is at the cost of the deposition of his predecessor, Shebna. As Eliakim is a nail fastened in a secure place, Shebna is a peg that will be removed and fall down. Having thought himself secure due to his previous placement by the king, Shebna is disgraced and removed from office as unworthy. Furthermore, the faithfulness and promotion of Eliakim is told to Shebna before his rejection.

Those who were dependent upon Shebna, his family, friends and flatterers, those whom he had promoted to various offices, would fall with him in a clean sweep of reforms. All the honour that Shebna had would be removed. This is comparable to the election of a new Prime Minister in Britain, which includes a removal of all previous ministers of state. Compare the situation with Haman in Esther 9:12.

Some see this as the cancellation of the Jewish priesthood and Old Covenant ordinances, replaced by the New Covenant in Christ. However, it seems to me that it is more applicable to the ousting of the 'god of this world' who had usurped the government of the world through sin in men. It is Satan who is declared to be removed and cast down in Scripture by the ascension of Christ (Rev 12:10; Lk 10:18; Col 2:15).

This is further affirmed in the way the Lord speaks to Shebna (who was most likely of foreign extraction, possibly Aramaean¹) in the previous verses, which is the only instance of a personal denunciation in Isaiah:

Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: "Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who *is* over the house, *and say*: 'What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulchre here, *as* he who hews himself a sepulchre on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die, and there your glorious chariots *shall be* the shame of your master's house. So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down. Isa 22:15-19

¹ That he was a foreigner is suggested by: 1) The strange form of his name. 2) The lack of any mention of his father. 3) The allusion by Isaiah of a foreign background in, 'What are you doing here and whom have you here' (v16). 4) The contrast with Eliakim who is said to be God's servant, implying that Shebna was not a follower of Yahweh. This would make his proud, boastful dereliction of duty all the more obnoxious to the prophet. Perhaps Shebna was allied with the pagan politics seeking alliance with Egypt, which Isaiah censured in Judah's officials.

The likelihood is that the judgment resulted in Shebna being removed to Assyria in one of Sennacherib's attacks. The key problem with Shebna was his self-glorification, hubris, and this is the prime sin committed by Satan. Shebna built a tomb aiming at permanence (hewn out of rock) and prominence ('on the height') in the place where nobles were buried. What is believed to have been Shebna's tomb lintel has the third longest monumental inscription in archaic Hebrew. His 'glorious chariots' reveals Shebna's ostentatious manner of driving about in the city and his pride in possessions. His pride led him to be a disgrace in his master's house, so he was driven out of office.

All this is typical of Satan. Shebna was proud, arrogant, seeking honour, glory and authority. He boasted in his power and gloried in possessions. He sought to make his name permanently revered and failed in his duty to the king. As a result of his failure and sin, he is thrown down and condemned, driven out of the kingdom. He is a most fitting type of Satan, whose end is the same.

The denunciation of Shebna is a stark contrast to the appraisal of Eliakim, which emphasises the latter's faithfulness and suitability for office. In the same way the proud rebellion of Satan who tried to raise himself up emphasises the faithfulness and righteousness of Christ who came down from heaven to do the Father's will.

Conclusion

This is a remarkable prophecy by any sense of the word. It is one of the most concise typical descriptions of the glory of the person and work of Christ in the Old Testament. It is, therefore, worthy of deep consideration.

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