

Shebna and the Sin of Pride

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This sermon is going to be a little different in how it's presented; we're going to begin with a mystery that will lead to the subject. It's going to have a long introduction as we set the stage for the ultimate subject. Anybody who reads the Bible for any length of time knows that the Bible gives us details on some apparently unimportant events. We—at least I do when I read these—scratch my head and say, why did God include that, or, what does He mean by putting this—inserting this information—here? What does He want us to learn from that? We're going to see one such example today. The example involves a man named Shebna. Maybe you've heard Shebna's name before, maybe you haven't; he is an obscure character in the Bible but he is there. So you have to ask, what was God doing by putting this man's name and example in the Bible?

We know this about the book of Isaiah—much of it is prophecy. As a starter let's go to Isaiah 13 and we'll see that. If you have a New King James Bible, the heading—the subtitle over the chapter—is *Proclamation Against Babylon*. In Isaiah 13, we'll just read verse 6 and then we'll jump to verse 9 to set the stage because this tells us obviously that this is prophetic.

Isaiah 13:6 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand!*
9) *Behold, the day of the LORD comes ...* (NKJV)

Then if you look at the next several chapters, going down through Isaiah, much of what is included is prophetic. Chapters 15 through 21 have various prophecies against Moab, Syria, Israel, Ethiopia, Egypt and Babylon. Now we come to chapter 22, and again, if you have a New King James, the subtitle is *Proclamation Against Jerusalem*, and for the first fourteen verses, indeed there is a proclamation against Jerusalem. Let's go to Isaiah 22:15, and if you have a marker, you're going to want to put it there because we're going to be coming back to this verse during the course of the sermon. Here in the middle of nine chapters of prophecy—most of it prophecy—all of a sudden we come to verse 15 of chapter 22.

Isaiah 22:15 *Thus saith the Lord GOD [God is in all caps, meaning Yehovah] of hosts, Go, get thee [God is talking to Isaiah] unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say ...* (KJV)

This is odd that a man's name is inserted right in the middle of a group of prophecies. It gives us pause to ask, okay, where is God going with this? The New Living Translation says, Shebna, the palace administrator. The New International says, Shebna, in charge of the palace. The Complete Jewish Bible says, Shebna, in charge of all the king's affairs. So this is no lightweight. This is a man who could well have been second in command because we get the idea that he controlled—since he was named treasurer—

the money in Judah and he was chief of staff. If he controlled the household, he controlled who had access to the king and who did not. So the question is, after nine chapters, proclaiming prophecies against various nations, why does the focus suddenly revert to a Jewish man named Shebna who lived in the time of Isaiah? God must have had a reason, there must be a point, so we're going to investigate that point today.

In order to answer that question, we have to look at the context of what was going on when this was written. The year was likely 710 B.C. The Assyrians were the superpower of that age. Ten years prior, as you recall, they conquered the northern ten tribes—the nation of Israel—and they deported everyone. Now Judah, at this moment in time, is under imminent attack from the Assyrians. We need to understand that the Assyrians were not just any enemy nation. They just weren't. They were some of the most violent people and the most violent nation that has ever existed on this earth. They were in a special class unto themselves. Ten years later, after this was written, the Assyrian king Sennacherib would attack Judah. Afterward, commemorating that attack and that battle against Judah, he made massive carved pictures, also known as reliefs, that were carved into walls. He had his artisans make these to tell the story of the battle in picture form. These are called the Lachish reliefs; they are currently on display in the British Museum in London and they are very graphic. (You might want to close your childrens' ears if you don't want them to hear this but I'll just cover some very general details.) They show Jews being impaled on stakes, heads being chopped off and people being skinned alive. The reliefs commemorate that battle and the violence of the Assyrians.

So King Sennacherib also said this about a battle he won against the Elamites. These are the actual words—I'm going to quote the actual words of an Assyrian king, King Sennacherib, who lived more than 2,700 years ago. He says this, about his victory over the Elamites: *I cut their throats like lambs. I cut off their precious lives as one cuts a string. Like the many waters of a storm, I made the contents of their gullets and entrails run down upon the wide earth. My prancing steeds, harnessed for my riding, plunged into the streams of their blood as into a river. The wheels of my war chariot, which brings low the wicked and the evil, were spattered with blood and filth. With the bodies of their warriors, I filled the plain like grass.* Then he goes on in a graphic description of what he did to their private parts that I won't go into. You talk about violence and evil; the Assyrians at that time were the epitome of all of that. They were a very, very violent group of people. Their legacy is that they had no regard for human life. They killed and they tortured in the most egregious and the most painful way possible.

This is the reason God sent Jonah to Nineveh. It was the Assyrian capital and God sent Jonah to Nineveh not to try to turn its people to God, if you read the account, but rather to turn them away from their violent life—the way they thought, the way they acted. As I said, keep your finger here in Isaiah, but let's go to Jonah 3:1 and just see very briefly that God understood the Assyrians. He sent Jonah on a specific mission.

Jonah 3:1 *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying ... (KJV)*

We know Jonah ran away the first time. He didn't want any part of that. He hated the Assyrians. The last thing he wanted to do was go to the Assyrians so he ran away the first time, but in Jonah 3:2, God says,

2) Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. (KJV)

What was the message that he was to give to the Assyrians? Look at verse 8.

8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, [notice this last phrase] and from the violence that is in their hands. (KJV)

That was the characteristic that defined the Assyrians, their armies and their leadership. Jonah's message from God was simply saying to the Assyrians, if you want to avoid My punishment and My obliteration then you'd better cease from your violence. It appears for a time that the Assyrians did so. Now, as we go back to Isaiah 22, the point is that Judah was in imminent danger of being attacked, overrun, taken captive, tortured, and then killed and murdered by the Assyrians. They were going to be conquered by some of the most violent, cruel men who have ever walked the face of the earth. You would think that if this type of army, this type of culture, was coming against Judah, what do you think the leaders should be doing, if they claim allegiance to God? You would think they would be repenting and relying on God, and, at the same time, they would be physically doing whatever they could to prepare themselves for this attack. To protect their people, the leaders should be preparing to protect the people. With all of this in mind, let's go back to Isaiah 22:15.

Isaiah 22:15 *Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say ... (KJV)*

Because they are imminently going to be attacked within a few days. Let's see what Shebna's focus was when Isaiah came to him at the behest of God. Remember Judah is facing imminent attack. Verse 16, I'll read this out of the New King James. Isaiah is speaking to Shebna under God's direction.

16) "What have you here [God says through Isaiah], and whom have you here, that you [referring to Shebna] have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? (NKJV)

God is saying, why are you doing this at this time? Why are you taking the time to create a sepulcher and carve it out of rock, and make a grandiose statement about yourself and your life so that you can be buried there some day? There's nothing wrong with preparing for our death, we know that. We should be doing that, but this is much more than that. God says this is a sepulcher on high; on high means haughtily, arrogantly. He was building a very grandiose, very grand sepulcher that honored him at

a time when his nation was in dire straits. The top piece of that sepulcher—the top piece of the doorway—is called a lintel. There was a lintel at the top of the entryway into Shebna’s sepulcher.

That lintel is currently in the British Museum in London. It’s called the Shebna lintel. If you want to google it, you can see a picture of it. Shebna—it just boggles the mind—was focused on building a monument to his greatness despite the imminent danger from the Assyrians, and it speaks to the fact that this was an incredible act of pride on his part. He was putting himself first, he was putting his legend first, his legacy first. He was focused on himself, to honor and aggrandize himself, an incredible act of pride. Look at verse 17—notice how God views Shebna’s pride.

Isaiah 22:17 *Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, [you’re not even going to see this sepulcher because God is going to carry you away with a mighty captivity] and will surely cover thee.*
18) *He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there [in this large country] shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. (KJV)*

There is no record in the Bible of how Shebna died or where he died, but I think it’s safe to say, given what we just read, he probably wasn’t buried in his sepulcher. He was taken captive somewhere.

19) [God says] *And I will drive thee from thy station ... (KJV)*

The New King James says, I will drive you out of office.

19 continued) *... and from thy state shall he pull thee down. (KJV)*

We see here a direct prophecy that Shebna is not going to remain the administrator of the palace. God says, no, that’s not going to happen. Why? Because of his pride. He’s looking to aggrandize himself instead of preparing the people, preparing the nation for what lies ahead.

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 [Eliakim] with thy robe [Shebna’s robe], and strengthen him with thy girdle [the girdle was a belt worn to symbolize one’s authority], and I will commit thy [Shebna’s] government into his hand [Eliakim’s hand]: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. (KJV)*

The robe was a sign of office. You remember Elisha picked up the robe of Elijah and put it on himself in 2 Kings 2 to establish the fact that he was taking over the role of the prophet. Then the belt is a sign of office and a sign of power, and you remember Jonathan gave David his robe and his belt because he knew David would succeed his

father in 1 Samuel 18 (we won't turn there) because the belt and the robe were signs of power. God is saying, I'm going to give Shebna's robe—your robe, Shebna—to Eliakim; I'm going to take you out of office. In the last part of verse 21, it says Eliakim will be a father to the inhabitants of Israel. The Hebrew word for "father" is Strong's #1, *ab*, pronounced "ahb", and it can mean a literal father but it can also mean, in a figurative way, a chief. Surely this prophecy about Eliakim replacing Shebna indicates that Eliakim would be a chief, as we read in verse 21, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, instead of Shebna. Let's see if this came to pass. Let's see if God was accurate. Again, keep your marker here but let's go to 2 Kings 18 and see what happened.

This is a subsequent involvement with Assyria. Hezekiah is the king—2 Kings 18, and we're fast-forwarding five years from the time Isaiah 22 occurred—this is five years down the road. In 2 Kings 18 the Assyrian king Sennacherib is attacking Judah again. He has destroyed, up to this point, forty-six Judean cities. Nobody has been able to oppose him and he's now ready to attack Jerusalem. So we're breaking into that context. I'll read this out of the New King James.

2 Kings 18:17 *Then the king of Assyria [Sennacherib] sent the Tartan [a Tartan is a title, such as a supreme commander, as shown in the margin of the New King James], the Rabsaris [a regional officer—an intermediate officer], and the Rabshakeh [the field commander—the man on the spot] from Lachish, [which is twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem] with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which was on the highway to the Fuller's Field.*

18) *And when they had called to the king ... (NKJV)*

Notice, they called to King Hezekiah, but notice who came out on the wall to deal with this field commander.

18 continued) *... Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, [notice this] who was over the household ... (NKJV)*

Shebna was over the household in Isaiah 22, now we see Eliakim is over the household, and notice this:

18 continued) *... Shebna the scribe, [Shebna has been demoted to a scribe] and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. (NKJV)*

We see clearly that in Isaiah 22, that prophecy was fulfilled five years later because Shebna was demoted and Eliakim took his place. Why did God do that? How many proverbs tell us that pride goes before destruction? A haughty spirit goes before a fall—Proverbs 16:18—there are many others. Shebna's pride just stunk in God's nose and He removed him. We see five years later that the prophecy in Isaiah 22:21 came true, and Shebna was demoted because of his pride.

Let's go back to Isaiah 22 and pick up the story in verse 22. Now comes the head-scratcher. Now comes a verse that makes you just scratch your head.

Isaiah 22:22 *And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.* (KJV)

Okay, the context is Shebna being replaced by Eliakim, but you have to ask the question, who has the ability to open and shut? There's no record of Eliakim opening and shutting anything, and there's no record of Eliakim having the key to anything. No record in the Bible at all and yet this is inserted right here. There's got to be a reason for it; God doesn't do anything by accident or on a whim. Notice what we find—keep your finger here, and let's go to the book of Revelation 3:7. This is the letter to the angel of the church of Philadelphia and notice almost exactly the same words.

Revelation 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy [referring to Christ], he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;* (KJV)

So God has taken Isaiah 22:22 and put it here in the letter—at the beginning of the letter—to the church of Philadelphia. Again, that's a head-scratcher. What is God trying to tell us here? Let's jump to verse 12 and this shows very clearly that it is indeed Christ here.

12) *Him that overcometh will I [referring to the Messiah] make a pillar in the temple of my God [we know God the Father was Christ's God], and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* (KJV)

We have to ask the question, why would something in Isaiah at the time of Shebna and Eliakim be taken and put into the letter to the church of Philadelphia? That is indeed mysterious. What we have to address and what seems the only logical way to explain this is that the account and the prophecy in Isaiah 22 now becomes dual, having both physical and spiritual aspects. In a physical sense it obviously applies to Shebna being replaced by Eliakim—that's the context up to that point. But spiritually could it apply to Eliakim being a type of Christ? Could that be? Let's go back to Isaiah 22:22 and we'll read it again.

Isaiah 22:22 *And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so 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 glorious throne to his father's house.* (KJV)

We need to look at the word *throne* because in the Hebrew it can mean a throne but it can also mean a seat. It doesn't have to be a throne. Verse 23, translated in the New

International Version, is this: I will drive him like a peg into a firm place and he shall be a seat of honor for the house of his father.

Surely Eliakim's promotion to a position over the whole household of the king was an honor to his father's house—no doubt about that. But if that translates in the New King James as throne, and if that applies, then it would be clearly referring to Jesus Christ sitting on the right hand of Yehovah, His Father, because Eliakim never had a throne. He was never in a position like that. Let's go on to verse 24—I'll read this from the NIV.

24) All the story of his family will hang on him. Its offspring and offshoots, all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars will hang on him. (NIV)

I'll read verse 25 out of the New Living Translation [an older, online version]; it makes more sense there.

25) The LORD Almighty says [Yehovah Almighty says], when that time comes I will pull out the stake that seemed so firm, and it will come out and fall to the ground. Everything it supports will fall with it. I, the LORD, have spoken. (NLT)

The stake that was holding Shebna up, in the wall, surely seemed to be secure until it wasn't, until he was removed. Eliakim's stake was firm as long as he lived, as far as we know. Judah would ultimately fall and the temple would ultimately be destroyed, and once that peg came out, Judah and the temple would be destroyed because of their idolatry—their continued failure to worship God Almighty. They would worship anybody but God, time after time after time. Referring to the Messiah, didn't Christ leave a sure place to become a human being? On the right hand of God, as God Himself, did He not become a human being, to this earth, and die for all the sins of mankind? He was leaving a sure place to become a human being. He did that obviously because He loved us all and gave Himself for us. But later when that stake was pulled out, when Christ died, the temple was destroyed a second time. For a second time, the idol—the main idol of the Jews—was demolished. They idolized the temple, worshipped it like a god, and it was a physical thing. Everything associated with that died—was destroyed in 70 A.D.—all of that was abolished.

Here in Isaiah we have to ask the question, could God be presenting us with an incredible contrast between Shebna, who built a sepulcher to honor himself, and Jesus Christ, who is exactly the opposite, who is the ultimate example of humility and self-sacrifice? Could God be giving us this contrast between Shebna and Jesus Christ so we can see it and then we can begin to act upon it? Shebna, as we know, built a sepulcher to aggrandize himself, and there was a huge difference between that—his ultimate act of arrogance and pride—and what Christ did as the greatest act of humility: A God-being, divesting Himself of that and willingly giving up His life, giving up His divinity, humbling Himself, to be made flesh, suffering incredibly yet living a perfect life. Then He died for all mankind, and where was Christ buried for three days and three nights? It was in an unmarked, common grave. You look at that sepulcher compared to what Shebna was preparing for himself. So we have to ask the question, is God trying

to get us to look at this contrast between Shebna and his self-aggrandizement, and Christ and His humility and self-sacrifice, so that we can make a contrast and then we can make a choice in our life?

We see why something that seems so small—this little insert about Shebna—can be so very important. One man is inserted into a mountain of prophecy, which is a little mysterious to begin with but I think as long as we study the Bible, and the longer we study the Bible, God has a reason for everything He does. He has a reason for everything that He inserts into His word. The fact is that pride, as exemplified by Shebna, is the one sin that has permeated the modern-day church. It is still here, it is still with us, it continues to this day, and it is something God hates. Let's go to a very familiar scripture—Proverbs 6:16. God is very clear on the things He hates. What is the very first one that He lists? Verse 16 contains a Hebrew turn of phrase that shows an example of extremity, let's say.

Proverbs 6:16 *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: (KJV)*

Even more are an abomination to Him.

17) *A proud look ... (KJV)*

... is the first thing that is mentioned. The NIV and the NLT say *haughty eyes*. We've all seen it—somebody, with their nose up in the air, looking down on everybody. I think we've seen examples of that recently in the government that we are under; one sees this arrogant, haughty look, and God says, that's the first thing I hate. The very first thing I hate. In part it's understandable because the very first sin that was committed was the sin of pride—the very first sin was the sin of pride.

So today, as I conclude this introduction, we're going to see that the sin of pride predates humanity. Pride is a very indelible part of our human nature. Human nature hasn't changed; it exists in all of us to this very day. It is something the churches of God are prophesied to struggle with right up until the return of God and Christ. When you look at it, pride is at the source of almost every sin—pride of the self, focus on the self. Sad to say, we see it too often in the greater church. God, by inserting Shebna into the middle of these prophetic chapters, is trying to get our attention by saying there is a lesson I want you to learn here if you'll just look. Let me teach you, God is saying. So the title of the sermon is Shebna and the Sin of Pride. We're going to talk about five points in the remaining time we have. We're going to look at pride—look at it in history and look at it today. The first point is:

1. Pride was the first sin that was ever committed.

The very first sin. Let's go to Ezekiel 28—you know where we're going. Let's begin in verse 12. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation. We know that this is the account of Satan and what God has to say about him.

Ezekiel 28:12 *“Son of man, weep for the king of Tyre. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD [Yehovah]: “You were the perfection of wisdom and beauty. (NLT)*

Going on to verse 14.

14) I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire. (NLT)

We know that in the book of Job, Satan walked back and forth in front of God on a regular basis, accusing Job in front of God.

15) “You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you. (NLT)

We have to ask the question, what was the evil that was found in Satan? Let’s go to the other traditional scripture, Isaiah 14, about Satan, and we’ll begin in verse 13. I’m going to read out of the New King James but as we read these very few verses, notice the focus on the self by this being.

Isaiah 14:13 *For you [referring to Satan] have said in your heart: ‘I [the big I] will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;
14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ (NKJV)*

The Tanakh says *I will match the Most High*. So the very first sin that was committed was by Satan, long before humanity ever was created, and it was the sin of pride. He thought he could do a better job of being God than God could. He thought he could do it better. So we see that the sin of pride was the very first sin that was ever committed and it predates humanity. We have to remember that we’re at the end of 6,000 years of Satan’s prideful influence on the world. It’s coming to a conclusion right in front of our eyes. It’s in our leaders, it’s in government, it’s in education, it’s in athletics, it’s in music and entertainment and all of that. It is drenched right in front of us. Pride was the very first sin that was committed.

2. Pride is at the core of our human nature.

Remember the account of Nebuchadnezzar where he was exalting himself and God finally had enough, and Nebuchadnezzar was glorying in all the stuff he built? Like Shebna with his lintel and his sepulcher, Nebuchadnezzar was saying, look at this, what I built—the hanging gardens, Babylon the city, all of it.

Let’s go to Daniel 5:20 and see that what happened to Shebna is exactly what we’re going to read happened to Nebuchadnezzar. This was long after Adam and Eve but human nature doesn’t change.

Daniel 5:20 *But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for hardened is Strong's #8631 and it means *to grow arrogant*. His mind grew arrogant because of his pride and we know God changed him—his whole nature—and he lived like an animal for seven years. God said, enough is enough. I'm not going to tolerate this any longer.

Now let's go to the New Testament, Mark 7, and we're going to interrupt as Christ is speaking to His disciples about the very sin of pride. Mark 7:21—nothing has changed. Pride still exists. It existed with Satan, it existed with Adam and Eve, it existed with Nebuchadnezzar and Shebna, and now is in the midst of the disciples, as we're going to see in a minute. Christ is talking to His disciples about the sin of pride.

Mark 7:21 *For from within, out of the heart of men [meaning man's human nature], proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22) Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23) All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (KJV)*

All of these are part of our human nature. In light of what we've seen with Shebna and what we've seen briefly with Nebuchadnezzar, let's go to Proverbs 14:12. This is repeated in Proverbs 16:25. Pride infects things that we do, things that we think, decisions we make.

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man ... (KJV)*

It seemed right to Shebna, to build this sepulcher to honor himself, while the nation was being threatened with attack.

12 continued) *... but the end thereof are the ways of death. (KJV)*

Shebna died not being ushered into his sepulcher; we don't know where he died but the fact is there is a way that seems right to a man, and if we allow our human nature to choose that way, as often as not, it's pride. One of the lessons God is trying to teach us, in this contrast between Christ and Shebna, is that pride is at the core of our human nature. Christ overcame His human nature. Christ never once sinned. That blows my mind, really, to think that He lived for over thirty years, and had thoughts and ambitions, dreams and words and deeds, and He never once sinned, not once. Given what goes through my mind, that's just so amazing. We all have to fight it—sin and pride.

3. Pride existed among the disciples.

It was there. For three and a half years, the disciples had daily interaction with Christ Himself. Morning, noon, night—they traveled together, they ate together, they slept together, but that didn't stop the disciples from struggling with the sin of pride. Shortly

before Christ's death, what was their focus? What was in the minds of the disciples? They didn't understand, when Christ said, I've got to leave you; they didn't understand that. He basically told them He was going to have to die, and they didn't understand that. They just blew on past Him.

Let's go to Matthew 20:20. This is toward the end of Christ's ministry—very close to Him being taken captive. A request is made of Him. Notice the genesis of the request.

Matthew 20:20 *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

21) *And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons [James and John] may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

22) *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able [looking at her sons, the disciples] to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto him [the two young men], We are able. (KJV)*

When we were baptized, or close to our baptism, we didn't have a clue of what we were going to face, we didn't have a clue what life would be like or the trials that Satan could bring our way, and they were saying, yeah—youthful zeal—of course we can handle anything, we'll go to the death, we'll be imprisoned; don't worry, we'll follow You wherever You go.

23) *And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. (KJV)*

Christ says, my Father is greater than I, I came to do His will; it's not my decision, it's God's decision—my Father's decision. I don't have the authority to do that.

24) *And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. (KJV)*

Why do you think they were indignant? Because the two brothers were so unconverted? No, I don't think so. Why were they indignant? You can just imagine—who do you think you are? I should be on the right hand, or, I should be on the left hand. That's the clear implication. They were indignant not because they were prideful, they were indignant because they wouldn't be considered for the right hand or the left hand. Absolute pride on display.

If pride can infect the disciples, it can infect us. We always have to be on guard about the specter of pride rearing its ugly head in our minds, in our emotions, in our hearts—we have to be very careful about that. It infected the disciples, it can infect us.

4. Pride is prophesied to infect the end-time church.

God is on record saying that in these last days pride is going to be a problem. Let's look at Christ's warnings to Laodicea. God gave this warning to Jesus Christ, who gave it to John. To understand the message of Laodicea though—we live in the Laodicean era—we need to understand the dynamics of the town of Laodicea in the late first century. That will help us to understand the message.

Residents of Laodicea were incredibly wealthy. Let me read from Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary: *Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 62 A.D. [this was thirty to thirty-five years before John wrote the book of Revelation] and rebuilt by its wealthy citizens without the help of Rome.* The town was so rich that they told Rome, we don't need anything—we don't need your help, we can do it ourselves, we are rich, we are increased with goods, we are wealthy. The wealth came from three things in Laodicea: (1) from banking—it was a banking center; (2) from the sale or distribution of a beautiful, black wool that was renowned all throughout the Middle East; and (3) from the sale or distribution of a well-known and well-regarded eye medication that was used to treat any kind of eye condition or disease.

Let me read from The Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The great Roman road, stretching to the inland of Asia from the coast of Ephesus, ran straight through its center, making Laodicea an important center of trade and communication. In addition, its wealth came from production of a fine quality of famous, glossy, black wool. Whether dyed or natural in color, it is not known. That the city's banking assets were noteworthy is evidenced by the fact that Cicero [the famous Roman orator and statesman] cashed huge bank drafts in Laodicea. [The banks of Laodicea had a lot of money and resources.] Laodicea had a famous school of medicine and special ointment known as Phrygian powder. [Phrygia was the region to which Laodicea belonged; it would be like a province or a state today.] Famous for its cure of eye defects, it was either manufactured or distributed there, as were ear ointments also.*

With this background let's go to Revelation 3:14, and we'll begin out of the New King James. This is a message to the end-time church. It's a message to all of us.

Revelation 3:14 *And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

15) *"I know your works [those of Laodicea and us today], that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*

16) *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (NKJV)*

Another characteristic of Laodicea was its natural hot springs. People would come from all over the area to bathe in these hot springs because they had, according to what the people believed, some medicinal benefits. Also, Laodicea wasn't that far from the mountains so there were streams coming into Laodicea that would bring cool water from

the mountains. The snow in the wintertime would bring cool water into Laodicea, so they had hot water available and cold water available. A cold drink on a hot day is very refreshing. You've been working all day or you're achey and you jump into a hot bath—a natural spring—and that is very refreshing too. Laodicea had both of these.

The fact is, what Christ is saying is that none of us likes to drink a lukewarm glass of water on a hot day—it's not refreshing. And nobody likes a lukewarm temperature, when looking forward to jumping into a hot bath; it's not hot at all—it doesn't do anybody any good. Christ is making the point here when He says, you're neither—you're not hot, you're not cold, you're not useful for anything.

17) Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" [they rebuilt the city in 62 A.D., after the earthquake]—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— (KJV)

Christ is saying, because of this,

18) I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich [not physically rich but spiritually rich]; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and [now He has a play on words] anoint your eyes with eye salve [what they were famous for, the message being, you need some spiritual eye salve to open up your eyes], that you may see [spiritually]. (KJV)

Clearly Laodicea, and by extension, the end-time church—indeed both—have a problem with pride.

There is spiritual arrogance and spiritual pride in the greater church. How many times have we heard—I've heard it said so many times one is almost sick of it—our group is the only group Christ is dealing with? I've heard that many times. You have a bunch of groups saying the same thing. Either they are all wrong, or all but one is wrong. I've heard people saying things like, we're the only ones going to the place of safety; individuals saying, I am a prophet, or I am an apostle, or I'm going to train the Two Witnesses. All of these things have been said. It's in writing—proof that it's been said in all seriousness. Others say, you don't have the knowledge that we have; we're here, you're down there. All of this I've heard with my own ears, seen it with my own eyes.

The problem is that pride clouds our vision. That's why Christ said you had better get some eye salve and anoint your eyes so that you can see clearly. Pride causes us to not see ourselves as God sees us. Pride causes us to see ourselves as we want to be seen, not as God sees us. So pride is a huge barrier to conversion. Pride is a huge barrier to repentance. Pride is a huge barrier to getting close to God, if we, as Shebna did, exalt the self and build edifices to the self. The end-time church is infected with pride just as Shebna and Satan were infected with pride.

The fifth and final point:

5. What is the real danger today?

The real danger today is pride will take us farther and farther away from God and the truth of God. I'll say it again: Pride will take us farther and farther away from God—a personal relationship with God—and take us farther and farther away from the truth of God. Look at Psalm 10—we're just going to read verse 4. David talks about pride and what it leads to. This one verse says so much.

Psalm 10:4 *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance [pride in who he is], will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. (KJV)*

Maybe God is in some of his thoughts but not all his thoughts. You see, if we focus on ourselves and the pride of our countenance, the moments we spend focusing on our pride and on our countenance are moments we are not focusing on God. That's a sad, sad situation, because somebody who is filled with pride spends more and more time thinking about themselves, and less and less time thinking about God. Then we begin to lose understanding of who God is relative to who we are. The key to humility is looking to God and seeing who He is and then contrasting that with ourselves. God is trying to get us to look at the example of Shebna and then look at Jesus Christ's example, see the contrast, and decide that we don't want to be like Shebna, we want to be like Jesus Christ—we want to follow in His footsteps. So Psalm 10:4 tells us that when we put our thoughts, through pride, before God—before seeking God—then what are we doing? We're committing idolatry. We're putting ourselves before God because we're thinking of ourselves before thinking of God. Satan did it. Shebna did it.

Now look at Proverbs 29:23; this is a truism that is the end result of pride.

Proverbs 29:23 *A man's pride shall bring him low: (KJV)*

That could apply to Shebna. His pride of building his own sepulcher, his pride of elevating himself in the eyes of the people, of honoring himself, brought him low—he lost his station and he lost his sepulcher eventually.

23 continued) *... but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. (KJV)*

Christ humbled Himself to become a human being, He lived a perfect life, was tortured and abused and slandered and then died. Honor shall uphold the humble in spirit; God honored Him by raising Him up to His right hand in all glory. God said, all glory belongs to My Son because of what He's done. He honored His Son. Proverbs 29:23 shows that contrast. Pride—Shebna—bringing low. Christ—humility—honor for eternity. The ultimate end of man's pride bringing him low is the lake of fire. If we cannot get rid of pride, the lake of fire is going to get rid of us—simple fact. We must divest ourselves of pride if we're going to be in God's Kingdom because God is not going to have somebody in His Kingdom who continually walks around exalting himself—not going to happen. Absolutely not going to happen. Yet the greater church of God has had a history of exalting human beings. Titles: preaching elder, then elder, then pastor, then

regional pastor, then evangelist, then vice president, then head of all the ministry, pastor general and the list just goes on and on and on—exalting human beings. That's just been part of the church and it shouldn't be—should never have been.

Let's go to Proverbs 13:10; there's been a lot of contention in the church, obviously accelerating after 1986, with changes in leadership and doctrine, but here's an important point, an important lesson, for all of us. The danger is that pride takes us farther and farther from God and from the truth.

Proverbs 13:10 *Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.* (KJV)

Look at the contention existing in the greater church today. There is contention between mates, there is contention between brethren, there is contention between church groups. People have called us out publicly. We haven't reciprocated but they've called us out publicly, and said, watch out for these people, we have to watch out for them, they are a bunch of this or that. Then we find people stubbornly insisting that their way is the only way. We see it in marriages, we see it within churches, we see it with church leaders. Look at Matthew 15:9; when we put anything before God, including ourselves and including tradition, we are committing idolatry. Whether we are putting ourselves before God, or what we believe before God, or what we feel comfortable with before God, if it's not the truth then we have a problem.

Matthew 15:9 *But in vain they do worship me [Christ is worthy of our worship but He's saying there is a group of people out there that worship Me in vain], teaching for doctrines the commandments [or traditions] of men.* (KJV)

Sometimes church tradition comes in conflict with what the plain scriptures say, so we as individuals have a choice to make. Do we believe what the scriptures say, or do we hold on to church tradition? That's a choice all of us have to make. Heresy can be either believing something new that is wrong, or holding onto something that is wrong. Heresy occurs either way. It's up to us, you see, to ratchet down our pride and to look to God and put God first, and not our cherished beliefs—human beliefs—or traditions or anything else; the commandments of men. The key is, when you find contention, you generally always find pride, and where you find pride, you find Satan. That's just a fact. When you see two people arguing and contending with each other—losing control, not having a rational discussion, but going at each other—you find contention, you will find pride, and when you find pride, Satan is stirring that pot. He is right in the middle of it. So that's why we find this admonition in Proverbs 22:10. When there's contention, pride is at the core of it, and that's something that needs to be gotten rid of.

Proverbs 22:10 *Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.* (KJV)

The Hebrew word for scorner—it's interesting—means one who talks arrogantly. We had a situation over the years in the church, in a certain church group, where there was

unrest. It takes only one person to cause unrest—just one. We put up with it for a year, a year and a half (the example I'm thinking of) and when this person walked into church, a cloud just descended over everybody, and there was unrest. So finally I just had to ask the person not to come, and the next Sabbath peace broke out. It was like we had declared an end to hostility—let's raise the flag and we have peace now. When people talk arrogantly or put themselves first or insist on their own way, it causes problems. We see in this last point that pride can drive us farther and farther away from God. It can drive us farther and farther away from His truth. As we've seen in Proverbs 22, it causes contention and trouble. As we get closer to the end—here's the point—we have to have a sense of urgency to get pride out of our very being. Pride will take us away from God and Christ at the time when we most need Them and we most need to be close to Them.

Let's conclude now. We began this sermon by studying the legacy of Shebna. He was the second most powerful man in all of Judah. Yet in Judah's time of greatest need, as they were being threatened by the Assyrians—an evil, violent people—Shebna's focus was on himself. Not on the people, not on the nation, but on himself and his legacy. He wasn't thinking about the average Jews and their children and their families. So he left us—Shebna left us—with a lesson in the legacy of pride. I personally think it's more than a coincidence that somehow that lintel to his tomb remains in existence to this day. It is on display for everyone to see. It's not a coincidence. It has lasted to this day as a witness to the end-time church—to all of us—that pride is a bad thing; look what happened to Shebna, and the record of it is right there in the British Museum. Interesting that it has been preserved to this day.

God inspired Isaiah to contrast Shebna with the Messiah. Look at the difference. The legacy of Shebna was one of pride. Let's turn to Philippians 2:3 and we'll see what the legacy of Christ was. I'll read this out of the New King James. Paul is admonishing the church in Philippi and us today.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition [that's pride] or conceit [both are synonyms for pride], but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

4) *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

5) *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ... (NKJV)*

The contrast between Shebna and Jesus Christ. I'll read verse 6 out of the NLT.

6) *Though he was God [Christ was God], He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*

7) *Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form,*

8) *He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (NLT).*

There is no greater example of humility, and God inspired Isaiah to insert the passage about Shebna, into that section of prophecy, so that we can see the contrast between Jesus Christ, with His humility, and Shebna, with his arrogance.

9) *Therefore [because of what was said previously] God also has highly exalted Him [Christ] and given Him the name which is above every name,*

10) *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,*

11) *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)*

If God is at the center of what we do—instead of ourselves—then we will be like David. We won't turn there for time, but remember when David wanted to build God a temple? God said, no, I'm not going to let you do that—I'm going to let your son do that, so it's in your family and it's your son who will do it, but you are not going to do it. David could have gotten offended about it but he didn't. We're told—we won't turn there, you can reference it later, in 2 Samuel 7:18—David went into the house of God and said, Yehovah, who am I? Who am I, oh LORD God, and what is my house, that You have brought us to this place?

What humility! He put God first even though he didn't get what he wanted. He put God first, and said, God, You know best, I'm just a little runt of a human being, and I'm going to humble myself and do what You want. Humility is the ultimate antidote for pride. It wipes away pride every time if we will just humble ourselves.

So the lesson of this scripture in Philippians 2 is this: If Christ is to be our example, and there are numerous scriptures showing that Christ should be our example and that we are to walk as He walked, then how humble must we become? He leads the race in humility. If we are going to have to walk in His footsteps, what degree of humility and love for others must we have to follow in His footsteps?

If the Son of God shed His divinity, lived a perfect life, then willingly died for all of us so we could be part of His Father's family, how humble should we be? So the next time you and I get our backs up, we need to remember Shebna and Christ. Look at the difference between them; it's there for a reason. Let's focus on Christ's example and get rid of anything of Shebna that is living inside of us. Let's learn from this incredible contrast between Shebna and Christ and let's continually seek to be humble as Christ was humble.