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<sup>A</sup> I Corinthians 4:2

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<sup>B</sup> Matthew 26:29

A. Introduction

1. the man of many monuments —{2}.

- a. John Davis started as a hired hand, but by sheer hard work and tightfistedness, was able to amass quite a fortune; but not many friends. A graveyard near Lincoln, Kansas, bears mute testimony to his character.
- b. When his wife died, Davis erected an elaborate statue in her memory. He hired a sculptor to design a monument which showed both her and him at opposite ends of a love seat. He was so pleased with the result that he commissioned another statue – this time of himself, kneeling at her grave, placing a wreath on it. That impressed him so much that he ordered a third monument – this time of his wife kneeling at his future grave site placing a wreath. He had the sculptor add a pair of wings on her back giving her the appearance of an angel. One idea led to another until he had spent over a quarter million dollars on the monuments to himself and his wife!
- c. Davis had no interest in aiding his fellow man, benefiting the nearby town, nor in being a blessing to the church, for he used all of his resources on shrines to self. He died at the age of 92, a resident of the poorhouse, and his cherished stones are slowly but surely sinking into the Kansas soil, victimized by vandalism and neglect, weathered by time.
- d. One other thing. Very few people attended Mr. Davis' funeral. Only one person seemed genuinely moved by any sense of personal loss. He was Horace England – the tombstone salesman.

2. let us put our text for today in its context

- a. In Isaiah 21-22, there are 4 related oracles
  - (A) these are prophetic proclamations
  - (B) they bring a message or burden of judgement
  - (C) against Babylon, Edom, Arabia, then Jerusalem,
  - (D) telling of the darkness of judgement by the hands of other nations that is going to fall upon them
  - (E) then in the last 11 verses of the chapter, which we read a few minutes ago, the focus turns to individuals, examples of the spirit that existed in Jerusalem that was the cause of God's bringing

judgement against her

b. This is the story of three men:

- (A) the Fall of Shebna the Steward
- (B) the Rise of Eliakim his replacement, and,
- (C) prophetically, the coming Messiah, superseding both

B. 22:15-19 – The Lesson of Shebna the Steward

1. 15-16 – God sees Shebna's plans for himself

a. in verse 15 Isaiah is given a task by God's – **Thus says the Lord God of hosts, 'Come, go to this steward, To Shebna, who is in charge of the royal household'**

- (A) a steward was more than just someone who made sure that there was sufficient food and drink in the palace
- (B) in effect, he determined who had access to the king, he had considerable political power, a deputy to the king and one who might shape the policies of state
- (C) but in the theocracy of Israel, the prophet stood in a position of exercising authority over the king himself; this is very clearly seen as you read about Samuel
- (D) despite Shebna's power, Isaiah would have no qualms in confronting him face to face with God's message

b. what a message Isaiah had for Shebna! Verse 16 –**What right do you have here, And whom do you have here, That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here, You who hew a tomb on the height, You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?**

(A) first of all, Isaiah says, you are an interloper

(1) you do not belong here

(2) some surmise because of his name and because his father is not named, that Shebna was an alien

(3) also, the office of royal steward was not one found in David's officers, but it was in Solomon's; in any case, God's intention was that the king carry out his rule for God directly – you do not belong!

(B) next, he asks, who are you to erect such a memorial to yourself in this place – not just the fact of

a tomb, but its grandiose character and its placement on high

- (1) at Siloam, in Jerusalem, there has been discovered a tomb among others to those of high rank. On its lintel is one of the longest inscriptions in ancient Hebrew so far discovered, with the name of a royal steward, possibly Shebna<sup>{3}</sup>.
- (2) Shebna, this is a place for burying kings, not you! You have quite got above yourself!
- (C) you think and plan, Shebna, to die peacefully, and to be buried here in great honour; think again!  
...

2. 17-19 – Shebna, here is God’s plan for you:

a. your plans for ostentation will come to nothing

(A) verse 17 – Behold, the Lord is about to hurl you headlong, O man. And He is about to grasp you firmly

(1) you plan for honour in the heights; God plans to hurl you down

(2) you plan for everyone to be able to see a memorial to your honour and glory; God is going to put you out of sight by covering you with His hand

(B) and, that is not all, you haven’t played ball with God, but, God – is about to grasp you firmly, and And roll you tightly like a ball, To be cast into a vast country; There you will die And there your splendid chariots will be, You shame of your master’s house. (Verse 18)

(1) God’s hand will hurl you ‘over the fence’ along with all you pretenses of splendour

(2) you won’t die here; you won’t be buried here; you and all your splendid chariots in which you ride

(3) why? because the way you carry out your duties is a shame upon the house of David, upon the king

b. the short of it is this, you are deprived of role and status; God says, ‘I will depose you from your office, And I will pull you down from your station.’ (Verse 19)

c. which brings us to

C. 22:20-25 – The Appointment of Eliakim, son of Hilkiah

1. 20-21 – Eliakim is to take Shebna’s place

- a. Eliakim's qualification is that he is the Lord's servant, verse 20 – 'Then it will come about in that day, That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,'
- (A) my servant – simple words, but what an honour they convey, an honour far beyond Shebna's mausoleum
  - (B) the Bible says, 'In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.' (1 Cor 4:2)
  - (C) Eliakim was God's servant, a man God could trust
  - (D) Eliakim's father is named, again a possible indication that Shebna, whose father is not named, was an alien
- b. now Shebna, here is what Eliakim's role will be, verse 21– 'And I will clothe him with your tunic And tie your sash securely about him. I will entrust him with your authority, And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.'
- (A) all the pips and badges of office that you wear with such pride, are going to be stripped from you and placed upon Eliakim
    - (1) he will have all the authority, you once had
    - (2) he will have all the responsibility, you once had
  - (B) and one thing more, he will carry these out in a far better manner than you, because he will be considered as a 'father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem' – you served your own self; he will serve others
- c. in Isaiah 36:2-3, when the Rabshakeh of Assyria came and 'stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field. Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.' – we find that the first part of this pronouncement has already taken place with Shebna reduced to just being a secretary.

## 2. 22-23 – The Honour of Eliakim

- a. bearing the key to the house of David, verse 22 – 'Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open.'
- (A) you have possibly seen a picture of a mayor giving someone the keys to the city, a large, ornate key

- (B) the key spoken of here was similarly large, and was literally born on the shoulder both as a symbol and as an instrument to lock and to unlock
  - (C) Eliakim will have the authority of granting or barring access to the king and to all government functions
- b. moreover, God will fix him surely in his position, verse 23 – ‘I will drive him like a peg for, nail in a firm place, And he will become a throne of glory to his father’s house.’
- (A) Eliakim, unlike Shebna, is not appointed by man
  - (B) and by God’s act, what has been to this point a humble family, will be brought to honour
- c. like Haman, forced to honour Mordecai, Shebna hears of God’s plan to honour Eliakim with the honour and power that he had desired for himself
- d. but there is a word of warning for Eliakim, too:
3. 24-25 – The Glory of Eliakim, too, shall Pass
- a. One problem Eliakim will have is foretold in verse 24 – So they will hang on him all the glory of his father’s house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars.’
- (A) those who have been in our house have no doubt seen the row of hooks outside the kitchen by the back door
  - (B) they were intended to hold a few things that would be needed if we were going outside: a jacket, a hat
  - (C) but, inevitably, like the ‘flat surface syndrome’, if there is a bit of flat surface free, it gets filled; so if a bit of a hook is showing, something gets hung upon it
  - (D) the same happened in the ancient near east – pegs were put in the walls so that things could be hung there to leave more living space
  - (E) Eliakim, being a peg in a sure place, will have this happen to him – he is warned that friends and family will want to benefit by the honour bestowed on him
- b. so, Eliakim is to be reminded that he is but a man, his office temporary; he, the peg will break, verse 25– ‘In that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the Lord has spoken.’
- (A) the burden will bear the man down

- (B) this the case with every mortal, no matter how long and fruitful his service, as he passes out of this life
- c. but there is also an ultimate explanation
  - (A) the role was not needed in God's theocratic rule
  - (B) the mortal human king of Israel was himself to be replaced, in the fulness of time, by the immortal King, risen from the dead: ...

#### D. The Messiah

1. the steward bore the keys of the kingdom, which showed his authority as he stood as a viceroy, in the place of the king
  - a. but the rightful King of Israel is God
  - b. Messiah, Isaiah has already told us was born to be king
  - c. 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14) – Jesus Christ, the son of the virgin, Mary, is to be Immanuel – God with us – representing His Father in the flesh on this earth
  - d. and he was born to rule – 'For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.' (Isaiah 9:6-7)
  - e. the keys of government were placed on the shoulders on Jesus the Messiah, Christ, and that rule shall continue until when as we read in 1 Cor. 15:24, 'then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.
  - f. that Jesus Christ had full authority respecting the keys of His government is demonstrated that he was able to pass them for a period of time to Peter, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.' (Matthew 16:19)
  - g. but that Jesus Christ has regained and retained those keys – His authority as head of His church and His people – is shown in the words of Jesus, written after Peter had died, in Revelation 3:7 – 'And to the

angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says...'

- h. Israel's real King has taken His place of rule, 'For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.' (1 Corinthians 15:25)

## E. Conclusion

### 1. memorials

- a. there is that fragment of an inscription of the tomb of a steward – possibly all that is left of Shebna's plans
- b. this morning, we will observe, with millions of others around the world, a simpler memorial, one that has been constantly observed since it was erected, and which will be observed until that day, when, as Jesus said, 'But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' (Matthew 26:29)

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2. Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements, Sep. 2001 – Kerux illustration 23289
3. Eerdman’s Handbook of the Bible, page 385 with illustration