

THE KEY OF DAVID

Here in this great passage of Isaiah we have these two key characters, the prime minister who is going to be demoted and the new prime minister who is coming along, Eliakim. The first man has abused his privileges. He has set up a special sepulcher; he has a special chariot and now he is going to be dispatched. God says, "I've borne with you long enough!" Then, there is this other man, Eliakim. Eliakim is described as going to receive the robe of the prime minister, the girdle. The robe stands for honor, the girdle represents the strength of his position. Then it mentions a key. I want you to think about the key. The keys of ancient times, in ancient Judea were not like our keys. First of all, they were not made of metal. They were made of wood and it did not act like our key, putting it into a lock and turning it the way we turn ours. It acted like a lever. When you put it in, it moved certain ^{other} things in a particular direction and then you could open the door. I want you to remember that about the key. But the key stood for authority.

Observe what it especially says about Eliakim in verse 21 (chapt. 30) "I will clothe him with Shebna's robe, I'll bind Shebna's girdle on him; I will commit Shebna's authority to him. He will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He will open and none shall shut; he will shut and none shall open and I will fasten him like a peg in a sure place. And he will become a throne of honor to his father's house and I will hang on him the whole weight of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel from the cups to all the flagons."

What's that all about? Well, in the ancient buildings they had big projections from the wall and if it was the kitchen, that's where they would hang a lot of the sauce pans. The other pegs would take special cups, containers; in another room is where one would hang coats but it represented a sure place of deposit. And what it is saying is that this new prime minister, everyone would be able to depend on him, lean on him, he would be strong, reliable. He would be consistent.

You know, I travel a fair bit and I often have the privilege of staying with people who are just such wonderful people, an inspiration to me. There is a place I go to in Canada, the folks I stay with, they are advanced in years, their health is not great but they are so wonderfully consistent in thoughtfulness and kindness. I confessed to a congregation recently, I could not believe these people were for real until I lived with them, they were so good. so kind. Eliakim was going to be like that. He was going to be a reliable man; people could hang their hopes on him, take their fears to him and one would be secure.

This expression, "on his shoulder," in order to get insight into that keep you finger in chapter 22 but come back to chapter 9.

Notice in verse 6: "To us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be upon his shoulder. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it." What it is saying about Eliakim is that he will forshadow the work of the Messiah for this passage (chptr.9) is about the Messiah. It's about the Mighty God who would come down as a baby, "A child is born

a son is given," and who is it? It is Mighty God. What a prophecy! The Mighty God would come down as a child and as a son. And it says when he came the government would be upon his shoulder. Now the ancients knew that the priest that represented them had jewels, one set of jewels on their chest and one set of jewels on their shoulders. The ancients believed the jewels on their chest represented the fact that God wears our names on his heart. All those jewels had names on them. There were 12 jewels on the ephod and each one had the name of a tribe of Israel; then they put jewels with names also on the shoulders and the symbolism was this, God has our names on his heart and he carries our burdens on his shoulders. So the allusion about the kingdom, the government would be on his shoulders. It said God is going to be like a merciful high priest who wants to carry the burdens of everybody in the kingdom. They all matter to him.

G.K. Chesterton, that great Roman Catholic saint, says the important thing is that we all matter. And so a true king cares for the suffering and the afflicted, the poor, those in trouble. He carries their burdens on his shoulders and their names on his heart.

So we come back to chapter 22; it is saying that Eliakim is like the great king to come; he would be a father (verse 21). Even though Christ is the Son of God, he is also called the Everlasting Father in chapter 9 which we just looked at, the one who would come as a child, unto us a son is born, a child is given. It says, this will be his name, the Mighty Counselor, the Everlasting Father. Christ is the son of God but he is also our father in the sense that he cares. Our life matters to him.

So, this man would be a father, he would have the government on his shoulder, he has the key of the house of David, he would open and none will shut.

It is pretty clear that there are two key ideas in this passage of Scripture. One is judgment. It is a great lesson to learn that the universe is not a chancy dicey affair. It is a great lesson to learn that. One of my hobbies (probably growing out of childhood experiences) is the study of preventive medicine. This is dangerous for you read a medical book and you think you have every disease in the book. Your reaction should be, hey, look, I don't have 99% of these. That should be the reaction; it is not usually the reaction for we think it sounds like me. Preventive medicine is a little different. But the thing that has impressed me over the years as I have studied preventive medicine is that the universe is run by law and unless we bring our habits into harmony with the laws of the universe, we won't be found breaking those laws--those laws will break us. And none of us are sufficient for these things because we all have temperamental weaknesses. The thing that is significant about many of us is not our I.Q., it is our temperament. I experience this very deeply. I am a rather driven person by temperament. I find it very difficult to stop still. This is a weakness, it is a defect, it is a bad thing. So I would suggest to you that most of us have some defects of temperament. And when they lead us to violate the laws of the universe, it will rebound to us in great sorrow and trouble ultimately. When our passage of Scripture talks to us about judgment on one hand and then blessing on the other it is talking about the realities of life. Some great writer said, "Don't wait for judgment day; today is

judgment day." Now, there is a judgment day coming but today is a judgment day. I am what I am because of what I have been doing. There are some exceptions to that because some of our problems come from outside us but, by and large for most of us, we are what we are because we have been doing what we have been doing. And today is judgment day. There is no sowing without reaping except in the spiritual realm where the Son of God has intervened to take our guilt. That's the only case. And even there, when a smoker becomes a Christian he can still die of lung cancer, of course, he can. So when we read this passage of Scripture it tells us one great reality of life, there is a sense before grace comes into the life in which we don't get away with anything. Everything we do matters. You know, if you want a definition of sanctification: it is a constant review of every habit in practice with the desire to bring it in harmony with God. That means with the laws of God because this is a universe, not a multiverse. The atoms march in tune. Whatever we sow we reap. There will be a gap in time; people think they are getting away with it. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of men is set in them to do evil. Yes, the harvest is always delayed. No one reaps the day after but the harvest always comes; whatever a person sows that shall they also reap and you reap more than you sow. You don't sow a bag of wheat to get a bag of wheat, you reap more than you sow and ignorance of the seed makes no difference. If I think I am sowing pumpkins and I am sowing potatoes, I am going to get potatoes. Ignorance of the seed makes no difference. A lot of people think, hey, I didn't know so it is not a sin. My friends, we are responsible to know whatever we can know. On the cross Christ did not say, Father I don't need to pray for these, they

are ignorant. He said, "Father, forgive them," although they are ignorant. So please note, ignorance of the seed makes no difference. You and I are responsible to learn about the laws of life. One of the biggest ones is kindness. Life is a mirror. If you have trouble with everybody you meet, it is not their fault. Life is a mirror. I am generalizing, of course. There are exceptions to the rule but, by and large, life is a mirror. Life is an echo. If all you hear is bad words, what are you saying? Life is an echo, a mirror.

When the Bible talks in this passage about judgment--Shebna you thought you were getting away with it--but you weren't.

Remember the book THE CITADEL by A.J. Cronin? He was a great writer. Lot of the books he wrote grew out of his own experience. He has this story of a doctor who when he started out in the coal pits ministering to these coal miners, he was so idealistic. He was prepared to do anything to get good conditions for the men. He loved those coal miners but, by and by, as he left the pits he went into a big city and fashionable women came to be attended by him with their supposed problems; women who have nothing else to do can always think of diseases and men too. And so, soon he is surrounded by all these fashionable women and he sells his conscience and his wife dies, tragically. As he is going through her things and in her purse he finds all sort of newspaper clippings about the man he used to be. Here, his wife has treasured the account that the man she married was a man, not a greedy hunk but a man prepared to do things for people. That's the test of a man. And so as he goes through his wife's purse he comes across these clippings of the man he used to be. He weeps and says, "You thought you were

getting away with it but, by God, you weren't."

We don't get away with anything. It is very important how we think, how we speak, what we do, for everything has a ripple effect; everything is a sowing. Judgment is a reality of life. There is no dodging except by the grace of God when he brings us to ourselves and he says, look, I will lift that burden of guilt from you. That is the only exception and, even there, it is no exception because the judgment fell on Christ.

Now, in order to understand any passage of Scripture, we need to focus the whole of the Bible upon it. So would you turn from this story (keep your finger there because we will come back) to Revelation chapter 3. I want you to notice how this quotes from it. Chapter 3, verse 7: "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write, the words of the Holy One, the True One, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens." Here is a description of Christ and suddenly we say, hey, it's here being said about Christ what was said about Eliakim in Isaiah chapter 22. In other words, Eliakim must have been a picture of messiah to come. And that is true of other characters in the book of Isaiah. You know, this book talks about Cyrus, you remember Cyrus, that great leader of the army that came to overthrow Babylon, and Cyrus means the SUN and he is called, my shepherd, he is called, my anointed. So there in that book we have been looking at we have a man who is a king, good shepherd, God's anointed, who is a redeemer. He redeemed Israel from Babylon. So Cyrus in the book of Isaiah is the picture of Christ, the Son of Righteousness, the good shepherd who redeems us. And Eliakim is another. Hezekiah in

the book of Isaiah is also a picture of Christ, a good king, a very, very good king. But now we find that this passage is drawing from the story about Eliakim and applying it to Christ. And look how it does so. It talks about him as the true one, who has the key of David. That's the passage from Isaiah 22, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens. You know, if we this morning began to go through all the Scriptures that use that imagery about shutting and opening, you would be here a long time. We are not going to do it but let me try to summarize it. The allusion to shutting and opening occurred through both Testaments frequently. Christ can talk about giving Peter the keys of the kingdom, he is going to open the kingdom and he did...at pentecost he opened to the Jews and, later, at the house of Cornelius he opened the kingdom to the gentiles. After his resurrection he said, "Whoever sins you remit by the preaching of the Gospel, they be remitted; whoever sins you retain by the preaching of the Gospel when you give the conditions of salvation, they will be retained." Here is the opening and the shutting.

Paul talks about a great door is open to me but there are many adversaries. In another passage it says, "The door of utterance was open to me. It says in the Book of Acts, the woman, Lydia, you remember how it describes her: "The woman, Lydia, a seller of purple, whose heart God had opened." This imagery of opening and shutting...it is telling us there are lots of things we can't do but God can do. I am so glad about that. All of us here have loved ones that are not in Christ, some of them very near to us. We are hopeless to open their hearts. We can't do it. The best we can do is live life we want them to live and God may use that

but we can't open the hearts. Some people....John McArthur, who I think is a very great Christian man, he said on the radio once, "If my children went astray, I would give up the ministry." I thought to myself, Mr. McArthur, I don't understand you. God's children went away but he did not give up being God. If we understand Scripture right, he lost a third of his children in Heaven and his first children down on earth. I was talking to some people recently about the Prodigal Son and it had never occurred to me before, but the father of the Prodigal Son is a wonderful man but both his boys were bad! The one who stayed at home was worse than the one who went away.

The point is, God has given everyone the gift of freedom, dear friends, and that's why even Christian parents have heartaches about their children. God had it before they did when many of the angels rebelled. God had it in Eden. The Prodigal Son's father is a symbol of God and the point is that you and I are helpless to coerce spiritually. Even God does not coerce spiritually. When we pray for people he brings more influences to bear but God is a gentleman and never compels. Some people are waiting for God to make them change their habits--it will never happen. God is too much of a gentleman. He has made us like himself, free. What a wonderful privilege...what a terrible danger! There is no great privilege that is not attended by a danger. If you want to be safe in life, don't even get married. It's very risky. You know, the ancients had a proverb, "If you don't get married, you will regret it; and if you get married you will regret it." Now, my friends, a lot of people would say 'amen' to that.

Marriage is a tremendous privilege. It is God's great gift. There is probably no other earthly blessing so wonderful as a helpmate who works with you and not against you. What a tremendous blessing. But, my friends, it is like every other privilege of life. It can work out the other way. The knife that cuts an orange can cut a throat...which will it be, see? Speech...here we differ from the animals. I talk to the animals at home all the time but they never talk back...every day I talk to them and they never say a word. What a wonderful thing that you and I can talk but haven't we often misused it? You know, you can hurt a person more with a word than a sword. If you wound them with a sword it would heal; a word wrongly spoken may never heal. It is such a dangerous privilege to be able to speak. So all of our privileges, whether it is parenthood, whether it is marriage, there is such tremendous dangers in it and one of the dangers is that we can't open and we can't shut. We are so limited. But here is a God who says, "I can open and no man shuts; I can shut and no man opens." Here is a God who could do everything we want to be done. He only will do it if his great wisdom dictates that this is the best thing, really, in the long run. There are many things in the short run that are not the best. I am sure I told you the story of Walter Martin, I can't resist because I love it so much: Walter Martin had a great sense of humor. Jill and I dined with him but we laughed more with him than we ate with him. He told the story of when he was very young he met this beautiful woman, a ravishing creature, this angelic being. He said, "I knocked on Heaven's door until my knuckles were bloody, 'Give me that woman.'" God said, "no." He met her 30 years later and looked up and said

"Thank you, God."

A lot of things we want first term, a lot of things we want immediately are not for our best good. I would always pray, "Lord, pain, not for me--only for the bad people, not for me." And I am naturally bad but that's what I pray but sometimes pain is what we need. Never learn sympathy without pain. No man can be a minister and do even 10% of his job if he has not experienced a considerable amount of pain. He is called to be a shepherd. He has to know what it is like out there where it is cold and where there are enemies. So, I need a God who can do what I can't do, who can open where I can't open, who can shut where I can't shut and this is the picture of Christ. But please notice, it is based on that Old Testament story.

Come, if you would to chapter I of Revelation. Look at the vision of Christ there beginning at verse 13: "I saw in the midst of the lampstand one like the Son of Man clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle." Please observe that and notice what he talks about in verse 18. He says, "I am the living one. I died and, behold, I am alive forever more and I have the keys of death and hades." So here is a picture of the risen Christ in the long white robe with a girdle and he talks about the keys. You cannot but see that this has its seed, its origin in the Old Testament picture of Eliakim who is exalted, who has the white robe, who has the girdle and he has the key. Christ, who is so much more has the keys. He is even bigger than anything you can imagine by a type. The anti-type is always bigger, better, wider, more infinite. Do you notice the last book of the Bible draws some of its threads from the book

of Isaiah. You begin to sense that the Old Testament passages have much more there than is apparent on the surface. And this thing of the key of David, I wouldn't be terribly dogmatic about this thought but it seems to me that even here we have an allusion that goes infinitely deeper than what we might first suspect. There are various tools mentioned in the Old Testament that have a deeply symbolic meaning. One of the best ones is the rod of Aaron. You remember they put Aaron's rod in a dark place and after the hours of darkness they retrieved it and it budded...a picture of Christ, our high priest who was put in the tomb in the darkness but new life budded forth in the resurrection. Moses' rod that opened the sea, the rod that Elijah places upon the dead child seem to me wonderful emblems of the life giving cross of Christ. And the key of David...remember, I told you the keys were made of wood and that the ancient key was not like our modern key fitting into a precise lock pattern and turning and unlocking but it was a lever. You know, God's great stick is what Archimedes, one of the ancients, "Give me a lever big enough and I will move the world." God has a lever big enough: "For I, if I be lifted up..." The cross is the ultimate key of David. It is the ultimate authority of God, that wooden cross that acts like a lever to move us out of the groove of sin and to raise us to heaven itself.

One last thing I want to say to you about this Old Testament story, before Eliakim could go in, Shebna had to go out. You and I must have the true Eliakim come in but he can't until the old Des Ford is gone out. The Bible says that which is first is not spiritual but carnal, after that which is spiritual. The first born in the

recorded stories of Scripture are always carnal. The first born son of Adam and Eve, Cain a murderer. The first born son. of Abraham, Ishmael. He is a wild man, his hand laid against every man, every man's hand will be against him. The first born...as you go through the stories in Genesis, in every family is exceeding carnal. The first king of Israel, Saul, looks great, head and shoulders above everybody else but he is carnal. The first generation of Israel, they have to see before they will believe. They have no faith. Their bones bleach in the wilderness. The second born, Abel, is spiritual. Issac is spiritual. The second generation of Israel by faith goes into the flooding waters and they are parted. The second king of Israel is David after God's own heart. Makes mistakes but his intent is right. Our first born nature is carnal. That's why Jesus says, "Except a person be born again they cannot see the kingdom of God." Shebna must be pulled down, Shebna must be tossed out before Eliakim can come in. The old life must be given away before the new life can rule.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for this Old Testament story. Thank you for its revelation of our Lord, Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders is the government of heaven, the church of Christ who opens the door of utterance, who opens the door of the heart, who does all those things we can't do, who shuts out the past, forgives our sins, who will abolish all evil, who has that robe which he offers to us though we are his crucifiers. He offers to us, too, that great key of the cross that can unlock all the mysteries of Heaven and earth. and lever us from this world into heaven itself. Grant that we may understand the depth of this story, that any elements of Shebna that are in our souls may depart that Jesus may reign, we ask in His name. Amen.