

Eliakim and Shebna in Isaiah 22:15-25

- Who is the Subject of Verse 25—Shebna or Eliakim?

Introduction

In this article, I would like to look at Isaiah's prophecy regarding Shebna and Eliakim in Is. Ch. 22 both as regards its local/historical fulfillment and also from a typological/Christological perspective.

A particular focus of the article is an attempted structural analysis of the passage.

An important question regarding Is. 22:15-25 concerns the final verse, verse 25. Is this verse about Shebna or Eliakim? Here is verse 25:

“In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load/burden that was on it will be cut off, for the Lord hath spoken”

Many older commentators (J. Calvin etc.) understand the verse to be about Shebna, but some older commentators and all the newer commentaries that I consulted (J. A. Motyer, J. Oswald etc.) believe this verse to be about a postulated fall of Eliakim. Some quotations from older commentaries, two of which specifically support the “Shebna” interpretation, are given in the Appendix at the end of this article.

One purpose of this article is (hopefully!) to demonstrate that verse 25 is very likely about Shebna and that the structural analysis points in this direction. If this is so, then the wider passage, Is. 22:15-25 will have an essentially chiasmic A-B-A' type structure. (i.e. Shebna-Eliakim-Shebna') in contrast to a sequential reading which has a simpler A-B type structure (i.e. Shebna-Eliakim).

This question is interesting in its own right, but it acquires additional significance given that Eliakim is a type of Christ (e.g. Rev. 3:7 where the Key of David which was given typologically to Eliakim in Is. Ch. 22 is given anti-typically and definitively to Christ).

The putative fall of Eliakim in Is. 22:25 is not generally seen, by those commentators who support this interpretation of v. 25, as part of the Eliakim-Christ typology: it does not have a part to play in their understanding of the type-antitype relationship. However, I have recently encountered a well-intentioned defence of the “Eliakim” interpretation of v. 25 (in an excellent recent sermon at one of the local churches) in which this verse was included in the typology: specifically the verse was interpreted as a typological reference to the death of Christ on the cross.

The opening verses of Psalm Ch. 22, as well as the “cutting off” of Christ in Dan. 9:26-27, were given as corroborating evidence for the “Eliakim” interpretation of v. 25 mentioned above. If this interpretation of v. 25 were to be correct, and v. 25 were understood as essentially saying the “same thing”, albeit typologically—as the above passages, it might, I suggest, raise a number of difficulties for the biblical understanding of the Atonement. For example, the verse speaks of the “cutting off” or destruction of the “burden” (which, typologically, in this interpretation would represent Christians) who are supported by the nail (Christ). I think there may be difficulties with the anti-typical application of v. 25 to Christ since the cross was the means of our salvation not of our destruction!

A further possible difficulty with the (sequential) “Eliakim” interpretation of v. 25 is that it

requires that at some stage after his exaltation by God for his faithful service as God's servant Eliakim will experience an (unreported) failure in his ministry which results in the "cutting off" of those who have previously enjoyed a period of being supported by Eliakim. This is possible, but a typological/Christological interpretation of this prophecy and its historical fulfillment would require that the corresponding falling of Christ (and of those supported by Christ) would follow, rather than precede, His exaltation. This is not the order of events as described in Scripture where Christ's exaltation to glory follows His humiliation (e.g. Phil. 2:5-11). Now it is true that Scripture describes believers as dying with Christ, which could correspond to an "Eliakim" interpretation of v. 25, but this dying with Christ occurs as part of the process by which we initially become united with Christ through His death and resurrection. It does not follow a previous period of union with Christ. The prophecy and its historical actuality with an "Eliakim" interpretation therefore does not, it currently seems to me, really produce a consistent basis for a typological/Christological interpretation. Please correct me if I have misunderstood this!

I consider this "Eliakim" approach might also lead to some additional inconsistencies in relation to a biblical understanding of the Atonement— inconsistencies which do not, I think, occur with the "Shebna" interpretation of v. 25—but I will not be pursuing this topic further in the present article. Perhaps on a future occasion I will have an opportunity to address this vital, albeit somewhat technical, topic.

Plan

I would like to start off by giving the text together with a provisional chiasmic-type analysis for the passage, followed by a discussion of some of the interesting details of the passage and its chiasmic structure. (Unfortunately I have not, in the present article, attempted to set the passage in its wider context either in Chapter 22 or in Isaiah's prophecy as a whole.)

The above discussion will include some of the typological/Christological aspects of what we are told about Eliakim (and the Shebna/Eliakim narrative more generally).

Just before we start however, I would just like to point out the interesting and appropriate meanings of the names ("*nomen est omen*" as the saying goes!) Shebna's name appears to be related to "growth" - a fitting name for someone whose life was centred on self-aggrandisement when his task should have been to "grow" the kingdom! Eliakim's name by contrast means "the God of raising" or "God is setting up" - very appropriate given Eliakim's elevation by God (but not quite so appropriate if he subsequently falls as in the "Eliakim" interpretation of v. 25!) Finally, Eliakim's father is Hilkiyah, and his name means "Portion of Yah" or, more colloquially, "My portion is Yah". Again this is very appropriate for a Godly man— someone who is subsequently honoured and rewarded through his faithful son (Is. 22:23 and 24) who himself is elevated to a very prominent position. (The Christological aspects are clearly present here!) This exemplary family illustrates Prov. 15:20: He is a wise son who brings joy to his father!

The Interlinear Hebrew and English Text of Is. 22:15-25

The Hebrew text and translation given on the next page is taken from the excellent interlinear OT Hebrew text and ESV translation published by Crossway. (It can also be freely accessed on the Internet.)

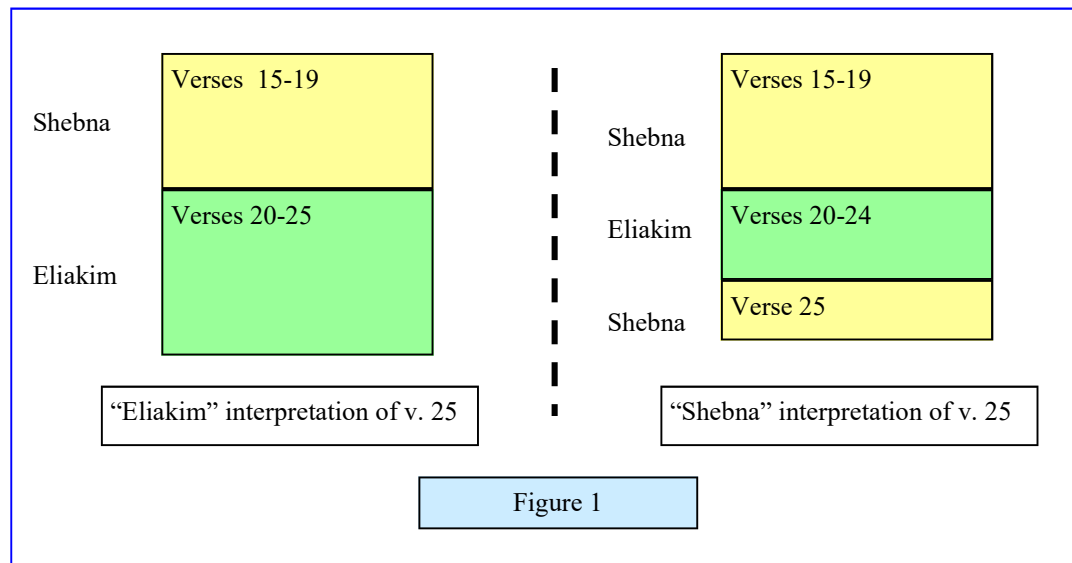
Structural Analysis of the Passage

As already noted, the structural analysis depends in part on whether v. 25 is understood to

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him: ¹⁶ What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a dwelling for yourself in the rock? ¹⁷ Behold, the LORD will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you ¹⁸ and whirl you around and around, and throw you like a ball into a wide land. There you shall die, and there shall be your glorious chariots, you shame of your master's house. ¹⁹ I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. ²⁰ In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, ²¹ and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. ²² And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. ²³ And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. ²⁴ And they will hang on him the whole honor of his father's house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons. ²⁵ In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken."

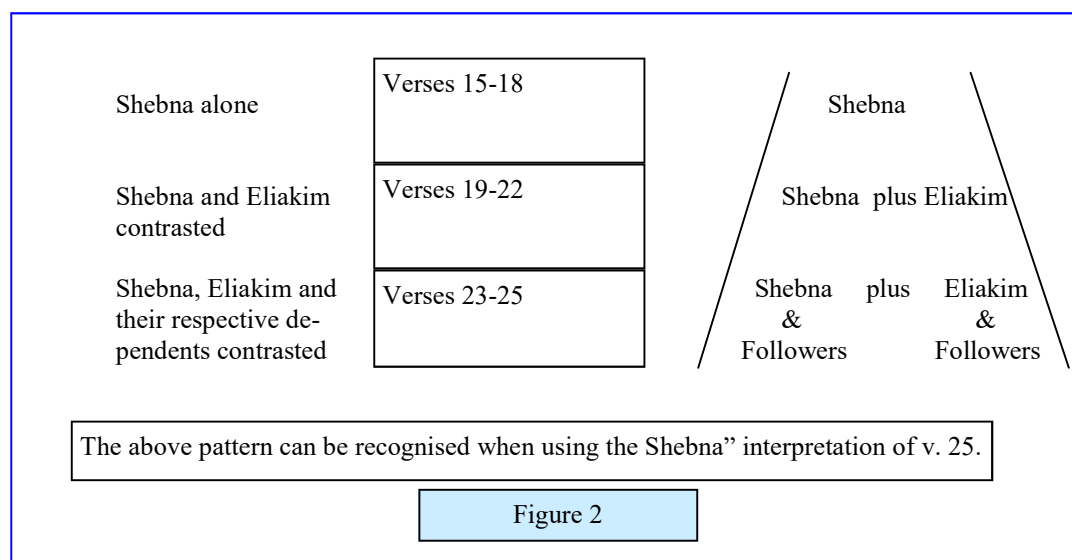
לְכֶם עַד-תָּמֹתוֹן אָמַר אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ¹⁵ כֹּה אָמַר
he-says thus hosts Yahweh-of Lord he-says you-die until for-you
אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לֵךְ-בֹּא אֶל-הַסֵּבִן הַזֶּה עַל-
to the-this the-one-being-of-use to go come hosts Yahweh-of Lord
שֶׁבְנָא אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַבַּיִת: ¹⁶ מַה-לָּךְ פֹּה וּמִי לָךְ פֹּה כִּי-
that here to-you and-who here to-you what the-house over who Shebna
חָצַבְתָּ לָךְ פֹּה קֶבֶר חֲצַבִּי מְרוֹם קִבְרוֹ חֲקִקִי
carving-of tomb-of-him height cutting-of tomb here for-you you-have-cut
בְּסֻלַּע מִשְׁכָּן לּוֹ: ¹⁷ הִנֵּה יְהוָה מְטִלְטֵלְךָ טִלְטֵלָה גִבֹּר
man hurling hurling-you Yahweh behold for-him dwelling in-the-rock
וְעִטָּךְ עֹטָה: ¹⁸ צָנֹף יִצְנֹפֶךָ צִנְפָּה כְּדֹר אֶל-
to like-the-ball whirl he-will-whirl-you to-whirl to-seize and-seizing-of-you
אֶרֶץ רַחֲבַת יָדַיִם שָׁמָּה תָּמוּת וּשָׁמָּה מִרְכָּבוֹת
chariots-of and-there-DIR you-shall-die there-DIR hands wide-of land
כְּבוֹדְךָ קִלּוֹן בֵּית אֲדֹנִי: ¹⁹ וְהִדַּפְתִּיךָ
and-I-will-thrust-you master-of-you house-of shame-of glory-of-you
מִמַּצְבֶּךָ וּמִמַּעַמְדְּךָ וְהָרַסְךָ: ²⁰ וְהָיָה
and-he-will-be he-will-pull-down-you and-from-station-of-you from-position-of-you
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְקִרְאתִי לְעַבְדִּי לְאֵלִיָּקִים בֶּן-חִלְקִיָּהוּ:
Hilkiah son-of to-Eliakim to-servant-of-me and-I-will-call the-that in-the-day
²¹ וְהִלְבַּשְׁתִּיו כִּתְנֹתָיִךְ וְאַבְגָּדְךָ אֶחָזְקֵנִי
I-will-make-grasped-him and-sash-of-you robe-of-you and-I-will-clothe-him
וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ אֶתֵּן בְּיָדוֹ וְהָיָה לְאָב
for-father and-he-shall-be in-hand-of-him I-will-give and-authority-of-you
לְיוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם וּלְבֵית יְהוּדָה: ²² וְנָתַתִּי מִפְתֵּחַ
key-of and-I-shall-place Judah and-to-house-of Jerusalem to-one-inhabiting-of
בֵּית-דָּוִד עַל-שִׁכְמוֹ וּפָתַח וְאֵין סֹגֵר
shutting and-there-is-not and-he-will-open shoulder-of-him on David house-of
וְסֹגֵר וְאֵין פֶּתַח: ²³ וְתִקְעֵתִיו יֵתֵד
peg and-I-will-fasten-him one-opening and-there-will-be and-he-shall-shut
בְּמָקוֹם נֶאֱמָן וְהָיָה לְכִסֵּא כְבוֹד לְבֵית
to-house-of honor to-throne-of and-he-will-be being-trustworthy in-place
אָבִיו: ²⁴ וְתָלוּ עָלָיו כָּל כְּבוֹד בֵּית-אָבִיו
father-of-him house-of honor-of whole-of on-him and-they-will-hang father-of-him
הַצֹּאֲצָאִים וְהַצִּפְעוֹת כָּל כְּלֵי הַקֶּטָן מִכָּלִי
from-vessels-of the-small vessels-of every-of and-the-offshoots the-emerging-thing
הָאֵגְזוֹת וְעַד כָּל-כְּלֵי הַנְּבָלִים: ²⁵ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֹאֵם
declaration-of the-that in-the-day the-harps vessels-of all-of and-to the-bowls
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תָּמוּשׁ הֵיִתֵד הַתְּקוּעָה בְּמָקוֹם
in-place the-being-fastened the-peg she-will-move-away hosts Yahweh-of
נֶאֱמָן וְנִגְדָּה וְנִפְלָה וְנִכְרַת
and-he-shall-be-cut-down and-she-will-fall and-she-will-be-cut-down being-faithful
הַמֶּשָׂא אֲשֶׁר-עָלֶיהָ כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר:
he-has-spoken Yahweh for on-her that the-load

refer to Shebna or to Eliakim.



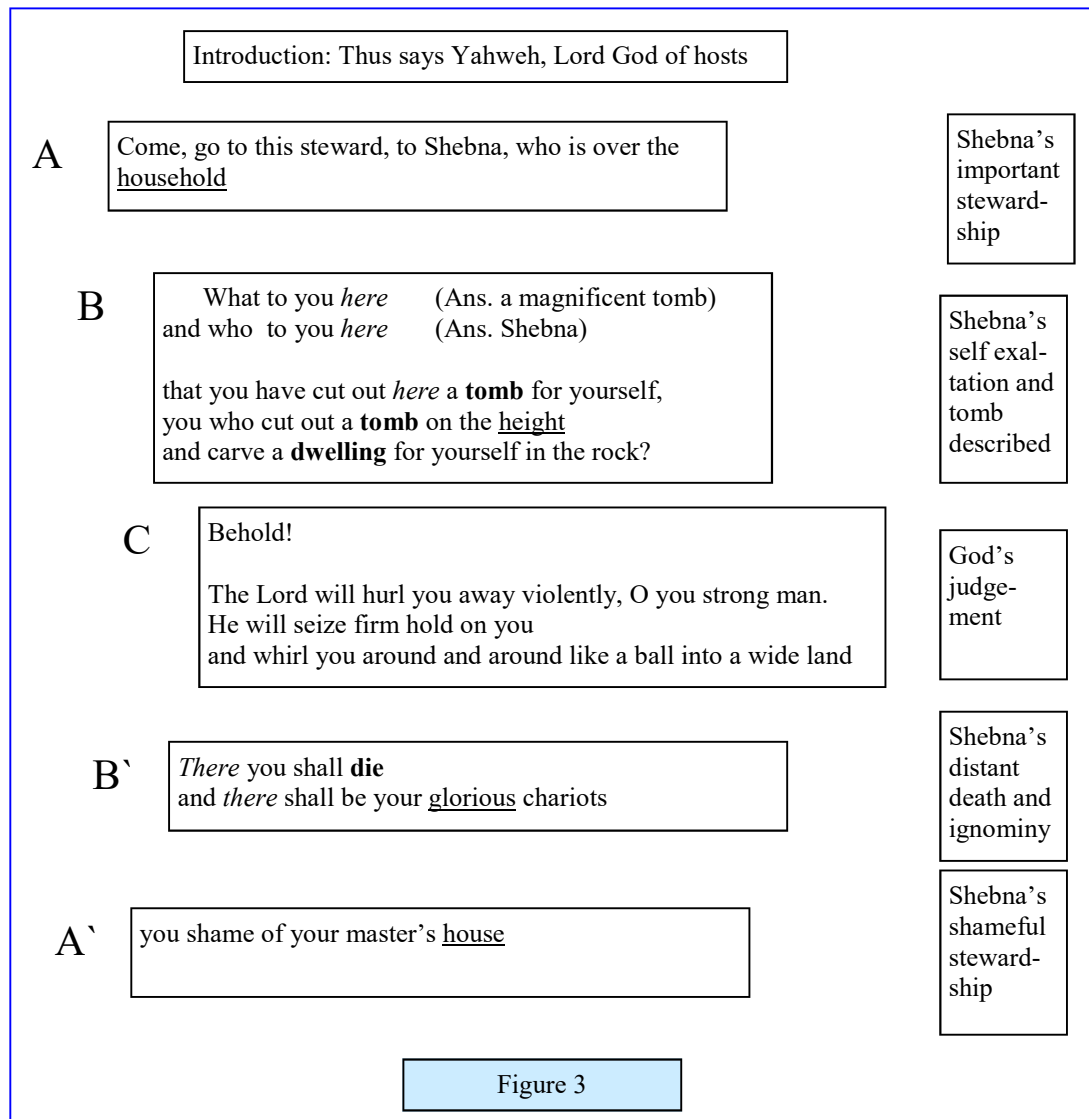
Here, in Figure 1 (above), the two approaches are set side-by-side in diagrammatic form. As we can see, the “Eliakim” interpretation is essentially sequential, and the “Shebna” interpretation which we will be following, chiastic.

Much of the passage clearly describes a contrast between Shebna’s demotion and Eliakim’s “reciprocal” promotion in relation to their status in the kingdom (a reversal which has been accomplished by the time of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah (c. 701 BC) as shown in Is. 36:3, 11, 22 and 37:2). However, a considerable portion of the prophecy, verses 15-18, is about a devastating judgement on Shebna which is not matched by any corresponding events in the life of Eliakim. In the analysis presented here, I have chosen to treat this initial bloc separately from the rest of the passage and analyse it separately. However, before getting into the detailed analysis, I would like to point out that the “Shebna” interpretation which we are following produces an interesting thematic aspect for the passage as a whole as shown in outline form in Figure 2 (below). This pattern doesn’t “work” with the “Eliakim” interpretation of v. 25.



Structural Analysis of the First Subsection (Verses 15-18)

This section is a judgement on Shebna because of his self-aggrandisement. The analysis is given in Figure 3 (below):



Notes on Figure 3:

1) I think the chiasm is fairly straightforward. God's judgement occupies the thematic centre, C. Shebna's important household position is described in A, and his pride and self-aggrandisement in B. The corresponding ignominy and shame following the judgement are described in B' and A' respectively.

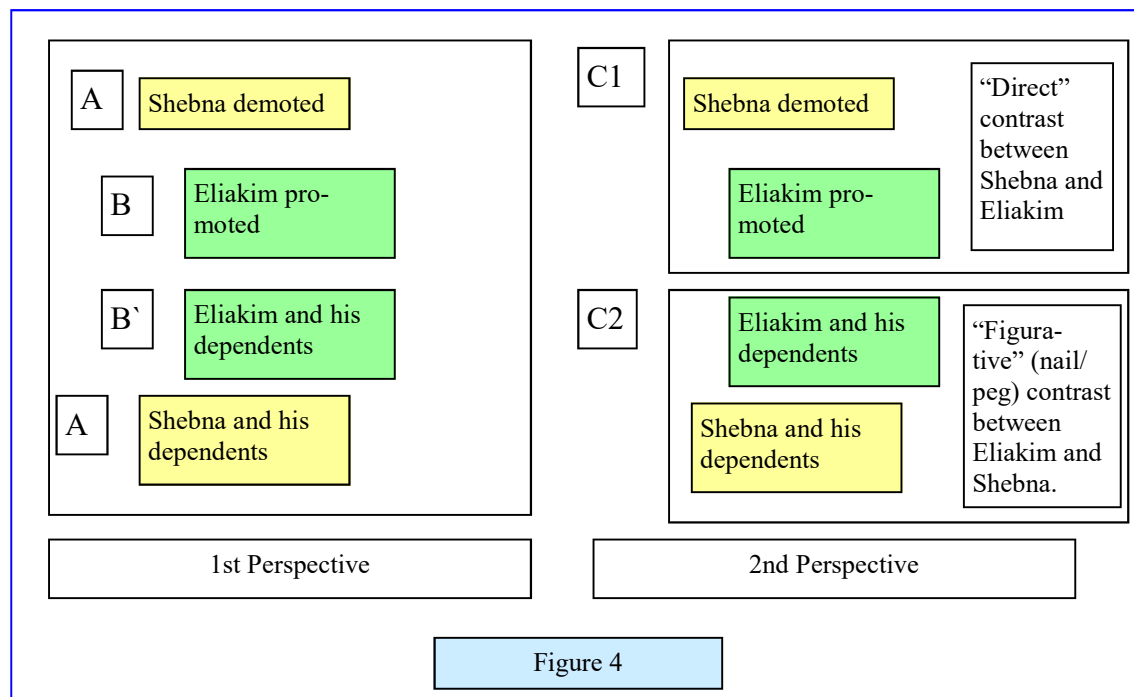
2) God's judgement is "appropriate" (the *Lex Talonis*): in B, Shebna gave himself a magnificent tomb on a high place on a rock in the Land where he would, figuratively speaking, dwell forever, even after death. (This may seem somewhat strange to us, but burial in the Land was seen as extremely important on OT times—for example, both Joseph and Jacob insisted that their bodies or bones should be buried in the Promised Land (please see Gen.

Ch. 50) and there are many other OT examples, both “positive” and “negative”.) Instead, in B’, Shebna was told he would die in a distant land (a land of “wide hands”!) and his glorious chariots would also be taken there (presumably captured by the ?Assyrian enemy). (We note too the contrast between “here” in B and “there” in B’). Similarly in A’, Shebna’s shame in relation to his master’s house is contrasted with his previous position as head over the household in A.

The Second Subsection (Is. 22:19-25)

The first subsection in our attempted analysis was about Shebna alone. However, the second subsection describes the “reciprocal relationship” between Shebna and Eliakim (who is described initially as a God’s servant), and also the corresponding reciprocal relationship between their respective “dependents”. This subsection is the main part of the passage for the purposes of the present article.

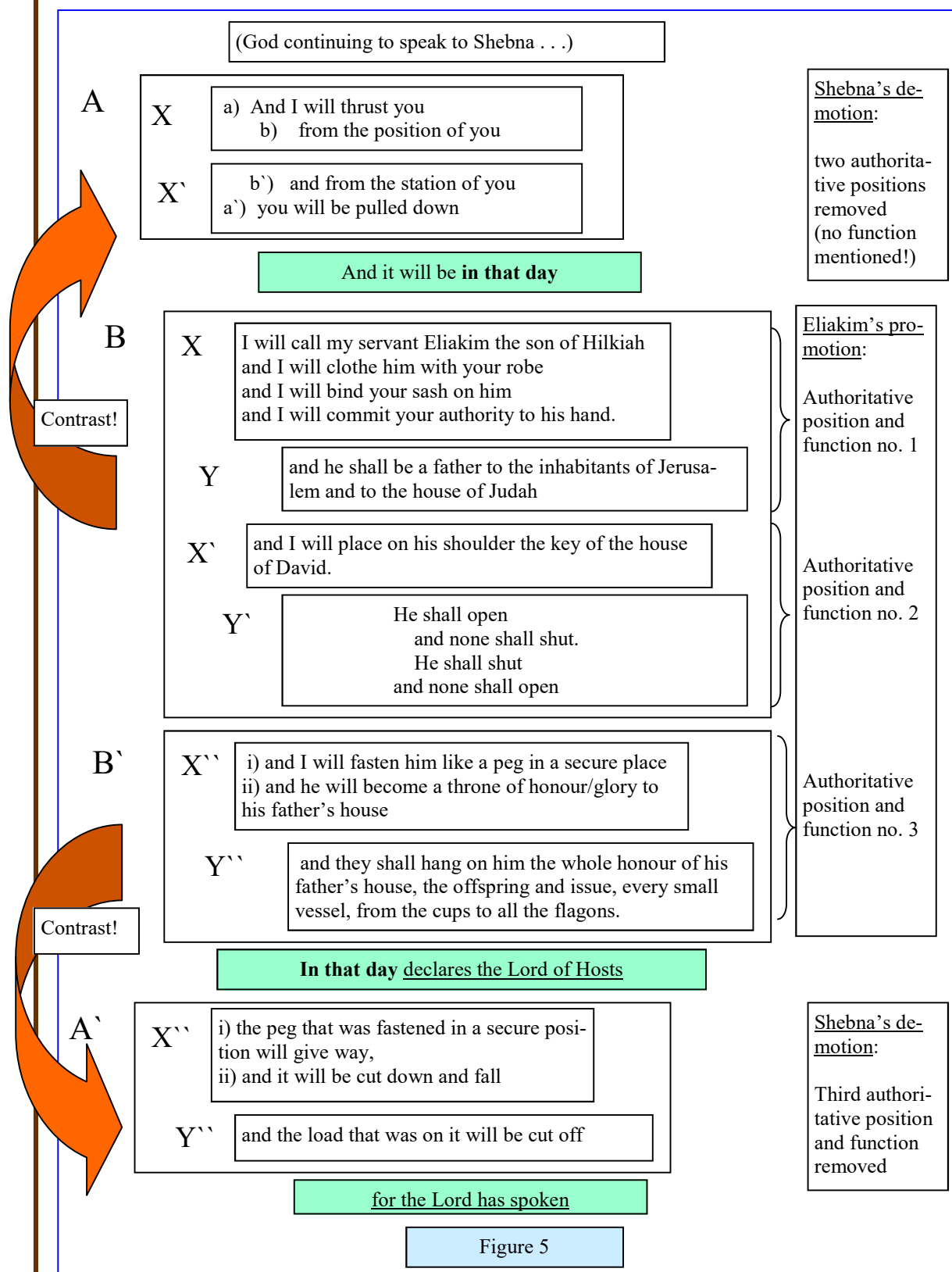
This second subsection is essentially chiasmic. However, before giving the actual analysis, I note that it is possible to consider the analysis from an alternative, but complementary perspective (called Perspective 2 in Figure 4 below) in which the passage is seen as consisting of two parallel panels, but which nevertheless “incorporate a chiasmic element”. (Sorry, not a very clear explanation at all!) These two perspectives are illustrated in Figure 4 below:



In the first perspective, the promotion of Eliakim, and the blessings for his dependents occupy the centre of the chiasm, and this is contrasted with the “demotion” of Shebna and the consequences for his dependents at the opening and closing of the A-B-A’-type chiasm: The “A’s” are about Shebna, the “B’s” are about Eliakim.

In the second perspective Shebna and Eliakim are contrasted “directly” in relation to each other in the first “panel” (here called C1) and in the second panel, C2, they are contrasted with respect to their “dependents” using the figure of the nail/peg and the items (actually people!) hanging from each nail or peg.

We will continue working with the “first perspective” however. The proposed analysis is given in Figure 5 below:



Notes:

1) The proposed structure is chiasmic, A-B-B'-A'

2) The A's refer to Shebna, the B's to Eliakim

3) A and B form a contrasting pair as do B' and A'.

4) The expression “in that day” occurs twice—in corresponding positions. The double occurrence of this time reference suggests that we should understand Shebna's fall as contemporaneous (or approximately so) with Eliakim's rise. Exegetes who see v. 25 (i.e. A') as referring to Eliakim and not Shebna either do not comment on the potential significance of this double occurrence (which links the whole chiasm into a single time frame) or claim that the expression is “general” and only has a broad temporal significance.

5) In A, there is a double mention of Shebna's position or status, and this contrasts with Eliakim's double status and function in B. If this is significant, this might be a subtle way of showing that Shebna had the position, but was not doing the work—in contrast to Eliakim in B who both had the position and did the appropriate work conscientiously and effectively. Again in B' and A', there is a contrast between Eliakim who uses his position as a strong peg to support effectively all the “honour” of his father's house, and Shebna whose “hangers on” are described as a “burden”!!

6) The honour of the house of Eliakim's father (Hilkiah) is prominent here: it is mentioned twice in B', and we have already noted how that honour is given outward expression in the elevation of his son Eliakim. When we read this passage Christologically, as we surely must, we have here a glorious pointer to Christ who was, “about his Father's business” and who did all things for the Father's glory! However, in B(Y) we read that Eliakim *himself* is described as a father—a father to the whole of the Southern Kingdom! Is there a sense in which Christ could analogously be seen as a *father* to His people? Although God the Father the First Member of the Trinity is definitively described in this way there are places where Christ's fatherhood is mentioned or suggested. This is a big topic! In Is. 9:6 we read that “He shall be called the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”, and in Heb. 2:13 Christ says, “Here am I and the children God has given me”. In the Gospels, Jesus calls people son or daughter (e.g. Mark 2:5, Luke 7:48). In Revelation Ch. 1, Jesus, following his ascension and glorification appears with hair white like wool and as white as snow—characteristics which are associated in Daniel 7:9 with the Ancient of Days. Jesus thus appears here in a way that characterises God the Father. He is now manifested as a true, mature image, in its fullest sense, of the Father, even to the extent of having “Father-like” characteristics.

7) It is also gloriously true that in and through Christ we individually, and as the Church generally, are children of God the Father, (John 1:12) and this corresponds to the “vessels” in B'(Y''). These vessels appear to be primarily the “offspring and issue” of Hilkiah, Eliakim's father, in B'(Y'') (i.e. v. 24), but this has come about through the reliability and strength of the nail or peg, i.e. Eliakim, representing Christ! We are “vessels in the Father's house”, 2 Tim. 2:20-21!

8) Subsections B(X) and B(X') too are full of Christological significance—the robe and sash are found in Rev. 1:13, and all authority has been given to the risen Christ (Matt, 28:18). The key of house of David is famously found in the letter to the church in Philadel-

phia (Rev. 3:7).

9) In this Christological interpretation of our passage, Shebna would then presumably correspond to the Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry (and also in Acts) who were rejected by God, and finally killed or expelled definitively with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple along with the final definitive ending of the whole Old Covenant system in A.D. 70. Thus the first chiasm that we looked at in Figure 3 could describe events which, understood typologically, could point to the events of A.D. 70.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that a very plausible case can be made for the view of many of the older commentators that v. 25 is describing one aspect of Shebna's fall rather than an (unrecorded) fall on the part of Eliakim.

I feel that I have not always expressed myself very clearly, and am conscious of the fact that I have missed many important points, both in relation to the passage itself and to its typological interpretation in terms of Christ and the Church. Nevertheless I hope that what has been written is helpful, and I look forward to all comments and corrections.



Appendix

Here (on the next pages) are some quotations from older commentators two of whom explicitly affirm the view that v. 25 is speaking of Shebna and not Eliakim.

This page: Excerpt from John Calvin's commentary on Isaiah

Next Page: Excerpt from Robert A Bertram and A. Tucker, Homiletical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah (1884)

Next page but one: Excerpt from Joseph Alexander Addison's Commentary on Isaiah (1880)

would be nothing so small, or minute, or insignificant, that he would not take charge of it.

25. *In that day.* It might be thought that this is inconsistent with what he had formerly said; but he no longer speaks of Eliakim, for he returns to Shebna, who was about to be cast down from his rank, as Isaiah had said. But for this, it might have been thought that there was no way by which Eliakim could arrive at that honour, but by the deposition of Shebna, who had arranged his matters so well, that no person thought it possible that he could be driven from his position. Yet though he has fortified himself by many defences, and thinks that he is at a great distance from all danger, still he shall be deprived of his office, and Eliakim shall be placed in his room.

In a sure place. When he calls it "a sure place," this must be understood with respect to men; for men judge that what is defended on all sides will be of long duration; but God casts it down with the smallest breath. It was only by way of concession that he called it "a sure place." Hence it ought to be inferred how foolishly men boast, and rely on their greatness, when they have been exalted to a high rank of honour; for in a very short time they may be cast down and deprived of all honour.

And the burden that was upon it shall be cut off. When wicked men are ruined, all who relied on their authority must also be ruined; and indeed it is in the highest degree reasonable that they who were united by the same bond of crimes, and who aided this wicked man as far as lay in their power, should share in the same punishment. It is difficult for those who place themselves under the protection of wicked men, and employ all their influence in behalf of them, not to be also partakers of their crimes; and if they were guiltless of crime, (which seldom, or rather, we may say, never happens,) still they are justly punished on this ground, that they have placed their trust on them as a very sure defence, and have depended wholly on their will and authority.

THE GLORY OF THE MESSIAH.

xxii. 24. *And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house—*

As on the nails or spikes fixed in the walls of the ancient temples and palaces it was customary to hang suits of armour, shields, helmets, swords,

&c., that had been taken in war as spoils of victory, or that had been used by illustrious ancestors. The declaration is made concerning Eli-

akim, and the meaning of it is, that all his relatives would connect with him all they deemed illustrious, and would rest upon him as their common support. Some of the expressions used concerning him are appropriated by our Redeemer to Himself (comp. ver. 22 and Rev. iii. 7); and, without adopting the view that Eliakim was a type of Christ, we may say that, true as this declaration was concerning Eliakim, it is still more eminently true of Him to whom "the key of David" belongs by right. Upon *Him* they shall hang all the glory of His Father's house."

I. THE GLORY THAT IS PLACED UPON CHRIST. Applying the text to Christ, the phrase "His father's house" acquires a new and more glorious significance, even that of the Church of the living God, the one family in heaven and on earth. All the glory of that spiritual and eternal house depends upon and is justly ascribed to Christ. 1. *All the glory of purchasing the Church.* All the persons of whom it is composed were in circumstances of bondage and misery, yea, under sentence of death, from which He ransomed them at inconceivable cost (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). 2. *All the glory of redeeming the Church.* This is not a mere repetition of what has just been said. We are the subjects of a twofold redemption—a redemption of price and a redemption of power. From the penalties of sin Christ redeemed us by His blood; from the power of sin, by His Spirit. A supremely difficult and an eternally glorious task is that which He thus undertook and has accomplished. 3. *All the glory of preserving the*

Church. What a marvellous history of dangers and deliverances it has had!

4. *All the glory of perfecting the Church.* It shall be complete in number, complete and resplendent with every spiritual grace. Remember what marvellous symbols are employed to set forth the beauty and the preciousness of its component parts, what treasures of spiritual wisdom and grace are already included in it. Hereafter, when it shall stand in all its radiance, the wonder and the admiration of all heavenly intelligences, all the glory of it shall hang upon Christ.

II. THE PERSONS WHO UNITE IN PLACING THIS GLORY ON CHRIST. "They shall hang," &c. The penitent sinner hangs upon Christ all the glory of his hope of acceptance with God. 2. The justified believer hangs upon Him all the glory of the favoured position in which he stands. 3. The spiritual veteran hangs upon Him all the glory of His triumphs. 4. The dying Christian hangs upon Him all the glory of the calmness and courage with which he advances to the final victory. 5. The glorified Church hangs upon Him all the glory of its perfected salvation. 6. Angels and archangels, though they were not the subjects of redemption, join in the song of salvation (Rev. v. 11-13), and ascribe to Him all the splendour in which they shine. 7. GOD exalted Him to the right hand of power, and gave Him a Name above every name (Phil. ii. 9-11).

"Oh that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

—George Smith, D.D.

25. *In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall the nail fastened in a sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall, and the burden which was on it shall be cut off, for Jehovah speaks.* The most natural and obvious application of these words is to Eliakim, who had just been represented as a nail in a sure place. But as this would predict his fall, without the slightest intimation of the reason, and in seeming contradiction to the previous context, most interpreters reject this exposition as untenable. Hitzig indeed maintains that this is the only meaning which the words will bear, but assumes that these two verses were added at a later date, shortly before or

after Eliakim's own disgrace. Hendewerk adopts the same hypothesis, but applies it to the last verse only. J. H. Michælis alone gives a favourable meaning to the figures of ver. 25, as signifying that Eliakim should die in peace, to the irreparable loss of Judah, and of his own dependents in particular. Another exegetical expedient is to apply even ver. 23 to Shebna, not as a promise of what God would do, but as a narrative of what he had done. The obvious objections are, that the verbs in that verse are as certainly future as those in the one before it; and that both verses must be referred to the same subject, unless the supposition of a change be absolutely necessary. Such a necessity does seem to exist in ver. 25, and is the more easily assumed because the grammatical objection is not applicable there. Most writers, therefore, seem to be agreed, that the twenty-fifth verse relates to Shebna, and that the Prophet, after likening Eliakim to a nail fastened in a sure place, tacitly applies the same comparison to Shebna, and declares that the nail which now seems to be securely fastened shall soon yield to make way for the other. Those who refer the verse to Eliakim suppose his fall to have been occasioned by his nepotism or excessive patronage of his relations, a conjectural inference from ver. 24. The partial fulfilment of this prophecy is commonly supposed to be recorded in chap. xxxvi. 3, where Eliakim actually fills the place here promised to him, and Shebna appears in the inferior character of a scribe or secretary. Some indeed suppose two persons of the name of Shebna, which is not only arbitrary in itself, but rendered more improbable by this consideration, that Shebna is probably a foreign name, and certainly occurs only in these and the parallel places, whereas Hilkiah is of frequent occurrence, and yet is admitted upon all hands to denote the same person. It seems improbable no doubt that Shebna, after such a threatening, should be transferred to another office. But the threatening may not have been public, and the transfer may have been merely the beginning of his degradation. But even supposing that the Shebna of chap. xxxvi. 2 is a different person, and that the execution of this judgment is nowhere explicitly recorded, there is no need of concluding that it was revoked, or that it was meant to be conditional, much less that it was falsified by the event. It is a common usage of the Scriptures, and of this book in particular, to record a divine command and not its execution, leaving the latter to be inferred from the former as a matter of course. Of this we have had repeated examples, such as chap. vii. 4, and viii. 1. Nay, in this very case, we are merely told what Isaiah was commanded to say to Shebna, without being told that he obeyed the order. If the execution of this order may be taken for granted, so may the fulfilment of the prophecy. If it had failed, it would not have been recorded or preserved among the prophecies.