

# A Nail in a Sure Place

by A.B. Simpson

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*The sermon highlights the contrast between Shebna, a picture of corruption and selfishness, and Eliakim, a picture of faithfulness and service, and emphasizes the significance of Jesus Christ as the head of the new race and heir of David's throne and glory.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 22:23

**Topics:** "Faithfulness", "Eternal Investment"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson's sermon 'A Nail in a Sure Place' explores the contrast between Eliakim, a faithful servant of God, and Shebna, a corrupt official. Eliakim symbolizes the Messiah, representing resurrection and divine authority, while Shebna embodies vanity and selfish ambition, ultimately facing God's judgment. Simpson emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the 'nail in a sure place,' a steadfast foundation for believers, where all glory and needs are hung upon Him. The sermon calls for self-examination regarding our priorities and the use of our resources, urging us to recognize Christ as the source of all our needs and the key to eternal life. The message encourages believers to invest in the eternal rather than the temporal, highlighting the importance of being part of the 'Christ race' that inherits His glory.

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## Transcript

"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne in his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons." (Is. 22: 23, 24.)

This is the fourth picture of the Messiah in the book of Isaiah. He is presented here under the name of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, to whom is to be given the key of the house of David, and he is "fastened as a nail in a sure place."

The old painters used to heighten the effect of their visions of beauty by putting in the foreground some hideous picture of a reptile or a toad so that by the effect of contrast the picture itself might be made more striking through the effect of antithesis.

In front of this picture of our Lord the prophet puts in contrast another figure. It is that of Shebna, the treasurer of the king's house, a prominent official in the service of Hezekiah, who seems to have been puffed up with such egregious vanity that he had actually prepared for himself a splendid sepulcher in some prominent place, perhaps among the tombs of kings, that he might be buried with great honor.

Isaiah is sent to him with a terrific message of rebuke and judgment. "What have you here, and whom have you there," he asks, "that you have hewed for yourself a sepulcher here, as he that hews out a sepulcher on high, and that sculpts an habitation for himself in a rock? Behold, the Lord will carry you away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover you. He will surely violently turn and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die, and there the chariots of your glory shall be the shame of your Lord's house. And I will drive you from your station, and from your state shall He pull you down." (Is. 22: 16-19.)

It is in the place of this corrupt and selfish official that Eliakim, the faithful one, is to be appointed, and to exhibit in his character and public administration qualities so different and so lofty that the picture of Eliakim soon passes into the higher vision of the Son of God Himself, of whom he becomes the honored type.

Shebna is a fearful example of official corruption, of personal vanity, and of that sordid earthliness that would even make the grave itself the means of exploiting its ambition and its pride. The judgment of God is revealed from heaven against the spirit of worldliness and selfishness in every form.

Some of our Lord's most solemn parables were intended to show the fearful doom of the man that lives only to amass money and win success in this world. One of these parables is the story of the rich man who added to his barns and storehouses and kept saying to his soul: "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said: "Fool, this night they require your soul of you; then whose shall these things be that you have provided?" "So," the Master adds as He points the heart-searching moral, "is he that lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Another of these solemn parables portrays the doom of the selfish worldling on the other side of death. It is the picture of Dives and Lazarus. There is nothing said against the character of this rich man. He was not a bad man, so far as we know, but he simply lived for himself, and this is what we are told of him: "The rich man died and was buried." He had a funeral, as Shebna planned to have, and doubtless it was a splendid one. But oh! the sequel: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment," and begged that Lazarus, the wretched beggar that had often lain at his door, might be sent with a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. The only fault uttered against him by Father Abraham was: "Son, remember that you in your life received your good things and likewise Lazarus his evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented."

Dear friend, are you meeting the great responsibility which increased wealth brings to every man? Are you recognizing your means as a sacred trust? Are you "laying up in store against the time to come" and investing your wealth "where no moth corrupts, where thieves break not through and steal?"

Over against this hideous character of vain glory and selfishness arises the lofty figure of Eliakim.

I. His name is very suggestive. It means "whom God raised up." Just as Shebna stood for death and the grave, Eliakim stands for the Resurrection, for a life that seeks its portion not in the natural world, but in the new creation which Christ has ushered in. In keeping with this is his father's name, Hilkiyah, which means "God is his portion." This also leads our minds to that higher world of which Shebna knew nothing, and to which Jesus Christ is ever opening our faith and hope.

II. His administration is described in beautiful terms: "He will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." Just as we are accustomed to call Washington "the father of his country," so

this good man was a paternal governor over the people, and finely represents our blessed coming King,  
"Who rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love."

III. The girdle with which he was to be clothed represents our blessed Lord in His life service. The girdle always stands for service, in contrast with the loose robes that express self-indulgence and ease. While Shebna was living for pleasure, Eliakim was girded for work. Our blessed Master is always represented, even in heaven, as a girded priest, busy in His high offices of intercession and dominion. No sinecure of luxury or selfish glory has He set yonder, but a place of unceasing and faithful ministry as He bears our iniquities, sympathizes with our sorrows and there represents us before the Father, while at the same time He directs all the wheels of Providence from His mediatorial throne in the interests of His people and His kingdom. Like Him, Christian life is strenuous toil and holy activity.

No time for trifling in this life of mine;  
Not thus the path the blessed Master trod,  
But strenuous toil each hour and power employ,  
Always and all for God.

IV. The key of David was given to him. Our Lord applies this to Himself in the third chapter of Revelation, in His message from the throne to the church in Philadelphia : "Thus says He that has the key of David that shuts and no man opens." There can be no doubt, therefore, about the application of the figure to the Lord Jesus Christ. He carries this key upon His shoulder, which is quite customary in Oriental countries for officials entrusted with the care of some great household. The reference to His shoulder reminds us of the former picture of Jesus Christ in this book: "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Jesus Christ holds the keys of heaven and earth and hell. How many things He opens for us! the gates of heaven, the gates of prayer, the closed pathway of difficulty, the doors of service, the hearts of men. And how many things He shuts for us; the blessed hand of God which holds us so that none can pluck us out of His hand; the blessed ark of safety, like Noah, of whom it is said, "The Lord shut him in;" the mouths of lions, and the tongues of wicked men and women, which He alone can shut and keep shut.

Blessed Prince of the house of David! Let us give Him all the keys of all the chambers of our being, of all the treasure houses of our life, and we shall find that He is able to keep that which we have committed to His trust against that day.

V. A nail in a sure place. This is a very striking figure, and may refer either to the pegs by which the Arab secures his tent or the iron spikes which they were accustomed to fasten in the masonry of their buildings, at once securing the walls of the building and at the same time becoming a bend on which they hung their valuables inside the house.

1. This is a nail in a sure place. The Lord Jesus Christ is not a guess, a possibility, a theory. He is a mighty certainty. All the assaults of scepticism have only succeeded in establishing Him more firmly in the sure

place which He holds in the Word of God, in the hearts of His people and in the plan of redemption. When we trust Him we know that we are resting on a solid rock, and that all else "is sinking sand." His kingdom is the only certainty of the future. Our best systems of government, our highest forms of civilization, will all pass away, but "His kingdom shall never be removed, and His dominion endures throughout all generations." The only stable investment for our lives is there.

2. On this nail the prophet said, should be hung "all the glory of his Father's house." This does not merely refer to His inheritance in the throne of David, but rather to His heir-ship to all the glory of His heavenly Father. Truly He could say, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father;" and again, "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son." The apostle says of Him: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him." All the glory, all the power, all the authority of the Father has been handed over to the Lord Jesus, so that in receiving Him as our portion we are joint heirs with Him of all the glory of His Father's house.

3. He is the Head of a new race. "The offspring and the issue" referred to here signify what our Lord Jesus Himself has expressed in one of His last messages in the Apocalypse: "I am the root and offspring of David." He is the real head of David's house, and at the same time the heir of David's throne. David sprang from Him quite as truly as He sprang from David. Still more the truth is implied which the apostle expresses so forcibly in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, where he speaks of the Adam race and the Christ race: "As all that are in Adam die, even so all that are in Christ shall be made alive." There are two races of men in this world: one is the race of humanity born from Adam and inheriting his curse and his doom; the other is the Christ race born from the loins of the Lord Jesus, the second Adam, and inheriting His righteousness and His glory. It is only this new race that can ever enter the kingdom of heaven. The old race is doomed and must pass away under the penalty of sin, but the Christ race shall dwell forevermore and inherit all the glories of Christ, its Head.

To which of these do you and I belong, dear friend? Has your life been reborn from the heart of Jesus Christ, and through Him are you the heir of God and the joint heir of Jesus Christ?

4. Still further we are told that they shall hang upon Him all vessels, both large and small, the cups and the flagons, the vessels of the kitchen and the vessels of the feast, the vessels of commonplace need and service and the vessels of high and holy joy and ministry.

A very deep and practical truth is here expressed. Jesus Christ is the source and the supply of all our needs. These vessels represent the needs of our lives, the temporal and spiritual supplies for which we must go continually to Him. The idea is that we do not have the blessing within ourselves. We are not self-contained depositories of grace, but we come to Him moment by moment and hang upon Him our every need; the little vessels of commonplace life and testing, the flagons of higher and holier joy that stand for the hours of rapture and the moments of blessing. The whole weight of our need hangs upon Him, and all our future hopes are dependent likewise upon our Lord and Head.

How blessed to know that there is nothing which we cannot bring to Him!

"There's no time too busy for His leisure,

There's no task too hard for Him to share,

There's no soul too lowly for His notice,

There's no need too trifling for His care,  
There's no place too humble for His presence,  
There's no pain His bosom cannot feel,  
There's no sorrow that He cannot comfort,  
There's no sickness that He cannot heal."

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