

Isaiah 22

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 July 2016

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] I'm 22. And we're breaking for the summer here. I'm sorry, 22. And we'll be back in Joy's Eye in September. There's a BBC programme that's won lots of awards.

! A happy valley.

It's a contradiction, isn't it? A valley, metaphorically speaking, is rarely a happy place. You know, there's progress. You have a valley of humiliation.

You have the valley of the shadow of death. And we talk, don't we, about mountaintop experiences, which are good things. But valleys are not normally places in our lives where they're happy places. They usually refer to experiences that humble us. That bring us low. That even discourage us. And yet it is often the case, it is often from that place of humility, from being in the valley, that we have a renewed vision of reality.

[1 : 19] We get a new vision of truth. We have a new vision of what really matters. We're a couple of months into this series in the book of Isaiah. And the last couple of weeks we've been in chapters 13 to 23.

And the prophets had ten oracles, ten sermons, about the other nations and the cities that surround Judah. And the basic message to Judah has been, don't even think of trusting those other nations for security.

Don't think about it. That you need to trust in God alone. That God alone is the only one you can trust. However, in chapter 22 there's a surprise because the oracle cuts a lot closer than both.

Can you see who it's for? It's for Jerusalem. It's not about the neighbouring nations. And Isaiah introduces this oracle concerning, can you see verse 1, there's value of vision.

And that might have left the first three years of Hannah's a bit confused. Except in verse 5 we're told, aren't we, that the value of vision refers to a specific place.

[2 : 24] And that place will have a day of trampling and two months and terror. And through the rest of the chapter it's plain that it's speaking about Jerusalem. So why does Isaiah refer to Jerusalem here as the value of vision?

And I want to say it's ironic. It's an ironic condemnation. But in fact as you read through the chapter, the people of Judah, they don't have any vision at all. They are strangely blind, they don't see.

Or at least their gaze is looking in totally the wrong direction. And Isaiah is going to help us here.

That in the valley of vision, we get true vision from looking in the right direction.

True vision comes from knowing which direction you're going to see. And so in Isaiah 22 he critiques the vision of the people. He shows us the vision of the people.

He shows us the vision of a person. And then finally he directs our vision. He shows us the vision of the future. So let's look at how Isaiah directs the vision of the people. Verse 1.

[3 : 29] The oracle concerning the valley of vision. What do you mean that you've gone out all of you to the housetops? You are so full of shoutings, tumultuous city, exultant town.

You're partying on the roof. You're slain. I'm not slain with the sword or dead in battle. All your leaders have fled together. Without the bow they were captured. All of you who were found were captured.

Although they had fled far away. Therefore I said, look away from me. Let me weep bitter tears. Do not labour to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people. First one literally is what do you mean by doing this?

What do you mean by going up on the roof? As we read it, the sense is these people are not troubled by anything. They go up to the roof to celebrate, to party. And Isaiah rebukes them.

Isaiah is saying, what right have you got in the context of what is going on in your country and your city, to justify this kind of partying?

[4 : 26] There's a bit of disagreement. Why? Why? Something is because God has come and stopped Sennacherib, who was the ruler of that kind of superpower, Assyria at the time.

But he stopped Sennacherib from attacking in 701 BC and God has sent him away. And so on that reading, the references to the slain and all the leaders fleeing in verse 22 and 3 are to events that led up to Sennacherib's defeat, in which the people of Judah some do die and some fled. I'm actually not persuaded by that. Because I think the references to the slain and the leaders running away come along here with heavy references to the judgment. So in verses 5 to 8, it points to a day that is still to come.

It points to a day that went far beyond the destruction of 701 BC. And I can't think Isaiah is daring now for their celebrations, but he does so in the context, in the prospect of judgment.

A judgment that still lies in the future. Where the Babylonians will come and will wipe them out. And will take them into exile. Now if you're still with me, you might say, well Isaiah uses the past tense.

[5 : 43] Doesn't he? He seems to be looking backwards to refer to these things. And I'm saying that it's in the future. Well that is an example, and another example, of what we know of the way Isaiah used the prophetic past.

The prophetic past is when the prophet uses the past tense. To refer to something that's going to happen in the future. It seems odd to us, doesn't it? But he uses the past tense to refer to something that's going to happen in the future.

Because it's as certain as if it's already happened. And so we've seen, haven't we, when you deal with God's promises, the future is concrete. The future is certain.

As events that have already happened. In the past. And so Isaiah is pointing forward to the judgment that's still to come. So if that is the case, and you still haven't answered the question, why are the people of Jerusalem parting?

Why? And I think the answer comes, he was saying to Lambs. Which I think is referring to something of the past. He's taken away the covering of Judah verse 8.

[6 : 50] In that day, you looked to the weapons of the house of the forest. And you saw that the breaches of the city of David were many. You collected the waters of the lower pool. And you counted the houses of Jerusalem.

And you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. And you made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it. Or see him who planned it long ago.

Celebrations are there over the securing of the water supply of Jerusalem. They secured the walls of the city. And we do know, don't we, that during the reign of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, there was an underground tunnel that the people of Judah built.

The tunnel was designed and constructed to bring water securely into the city. That we know. And the whole thing demonstrated incredible ingenuity.

And initiative. There's extraordinary engineering skill that was used by the people of Judah. And apparently the tunnels will survive for this very long. But with the securing of the tunnel and the securing of the walls of the people of Jerusalem.

[7 : 58] They perceive themselves to be, well, incredible. We're safe. We're secure. We're protected from attack. And so let's party. Well, Isaiah is in no mood to party.

Look at what it says in verse 4. He says, look away from me. He tells the people to stop. He tells the people to stop trying to convince themselves that everything is okay.

And in this section, he spells out what the problem is. He condemns them for their misdirected vision. And that is the problem. He's been telling them all the way from chapter 13 to 23, you've been looking in the wrong place for your security.

And it's very clear how he does that. Now look at verses 8 to 11. And you'll see that Paul uses the same, not Paul, Isaiah uses the same word again and again, the same verb. Verse 8, he says, you looked.

You looked to the weapons of the house of the forest. You've looked to weapons for your security. And in verse 11, you did not look to him.

[9 : 03] Do you see the contrast? You should have been looking to him. The fact is, God has not been in their sights at all. In their minds, why would you bother with faith in the Lord when you've got massive great walls and your own water supply?

And weapons. Why are you looking to God When you've got your own resources? And Isaiah gives a reason why, As he offers the most sobering verdict For his audience in verse 14.

Do you see what it says? The Lord of hosts Has revealed himself in my ears. Surely this iniquity, This sin, Will not be atoned for Until you die.

Now Isaiah is not saying there That for the rest of your lives, God will not forgive your sin, But on the final day, On your deathbed, He will forgive your sins. He's not saying that.

He's saying your sin Will go unatoned for. That sin is unforgivable. Why? Because it is a sin of Unrepentant, Unbelief, And ignoring God, And wanting nothing to do with Him.

[10:16] And you do that by your self-confidence, And your self-reliance, Which they thought would save them. And Isaiah says, It is not going to save you. Your self-confidence, Your self-reliance, Will not save you.

It will actually destroy you. It's probably worth pointing out, Isn't it? That God is not against, God was not, And is not against, Engineering products, Projects.

He's not against, Human ingenuity. He's not against, Inventiveness, And creativity. If you have those abilities, And gifts, They've been given to you, Because you are made, In the image of God. The God who is creative, And ingenious, And inventive. He's creative with a capital C, He's the ultimate engineer, Of all engineers.

And I imagine, That there was a context, Where digging this tunnel for water, Was appropriate. But it wasn't here. We're not specifically told, That God told the people of Jerusalem, Not to build the tunnel.

[11:17] But my guess, Is whether God told them or not, They were absolutely clear, In their minds. And the direction, They were going, In their relationship with God, By building this tunnel. But in the way, That they did it, It was a lack of, Trust in God, And unbelief.

And Isaiah says, The consequence, Of unrepentant unbelief, Is judgment. And if we try to bring this, Forward, To how it applies to us, In 2016, And we put ourselves, Within this framework, How do we know, That we've got, Misdirected vision.

How do you know, That you are living your life, Looking in the wrong place. How do we know, Whether we're living in a state, Of unbelief, Rather than trust. And I think there's a number of ways, We can answer that.

But if we look at the text, Isaiah gives us, Two very helpful clues. What does unbelief, Look like in our lives. And first of all, Unbelief looks like, Swinging back and forth, Between acts of, Activism, And escapism.

It's very clever, The way Isaiah does it. Isaiah portrays, This activism, This busy, Busy, Busy attitude. Look at verse 8. It's not easy, To notice on the first reading, But once you've already pointed out, I think it's pretty clear, That Isaiah reports, What's going on, In verses 8 to 11.

[12:38] That he has the people of Israel, Going to get their weapons, And then they've got to fix the walls, And then they've got to take care of the water supply, And then they've got to fix the walls some more, And then they go back to the water supply.

There is, In the text, All this to-ing and fro-ing, And to-ing and fro-ing. Now did he have to write it that way? No, I don't think he did. Why did he write that way? I think he wrote that way, To portray, All this busyness, Busy, Busy, Busy, Hyper activism, On the part, Of the people of Jerusalem, And the question is why.

The reason for their activism, Is the same as yours. Because we usually think, That everything depends on what we do. Hyperactivity can be a sign, That while we pay lip service, For salvation, By faith alone, In Christ alone, And that we trust God, And God is going to gift us, With salvation, By his grace, And through Christ alone, Actually, Our hyper activism, Shows that deep down, We actually believe, Salvation is by works.

That we are justified, By what we do. That it is what I do, That really matters. And that hyperactivity, Is something that can, Creep easily, Into church life.

And so we think, If we just do this, If we build this addition, There's nothing wrong, With those things, But if they become a substitute, For trusting God, To bring people to faith, If they become a substitute, For trusting God, To change lives, They are of sound, With unbelief.

[14:28] If they become a substitute, For trusting God, To change lives, They are of sound, In unbelief. We believe the lie, That we just have to, Get things right. That we have to run, The right programs.

That we get the right courses. That we get the right people, We get just a little bit more money, A little better building, And this thing is bound, To take off.

If only we have, Dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, This church would really thrive. And Isaiah says, That activism is a sign of unbelief. That you're actually not trusting, That God is the one, That does this stuff.

So there's all this activism, But Isaiah shows that, It's combined with escapism. Look at verse 12, In that day the Lord God of hosts, Called for weeping and mourning, For baldness and wearing sackcloth, And behold joy, And gladness, Killing oxen, Slaughtering sheep, Eating fish, And drinking wine, Let us eat and drink, For tomorrow we die.

True spiritual vision, Would have led the people of Jerusalem, To repentance and to faith, For the shaming of their heads, Not literal baldness. But instead of that, Well they just escaped, Don't they, Verse 13, Their hyper activism, Is interrupted by escapism.

[16:00] And both activism in our lives, And escapism in our lives, Are attempts to push out reality. To push out the voice of God. So we work hard, And we play hard, And in the process, We drown out the voice, Of God's messenger.

Isaiah says, Can you see that verse 13, They did it with alcohol, They did it with gluttony. We've added to that, Haven't we? Our list of methods, And escapism, Well dregs, Internet pornography, Retail therapy, Holidays, The list would go on.

And so if you're wondering, If you're heading on a path of unbelief, All of us at times, We get too busy, And we look to escape reality, But when there is a pattern, When there is a pattern in our lives, Of hyper activism, And escapism, Isaiah says, That is a red flag, That maybe there's a pattern of unbelief, In your life.

That you don't actually trust, That God is at work, That God is the one, Who is going to save you, That God is the one, Who is going to get you through.

So unbelief, Results in this chewing, And this throwing, But it also results, In ignoring, Or rejecting, Of God's word. And Isaiah specifically, Identifies the unbelief, Of the people in verse 11, With not looking to God, And so what would looking to God, Have looked like for the people, And it would have at least meant, Beginning to heed the word, Of God's messenger, Named Isaiah, And repenting, And what they do instead, Well can you see in verse 4, They say Isaiah is, Overreacting, He's overreacting, He's way too serious, About this stuff, Calm down Isaiah, Take a chill, That's what they're talking, They spurn the word of God, That's what they're doing, Let me illustrate this, In this church, We are, Let me try and illustrate this visually, In this church, What are we trying to do, We are trying to sit under, The word of God, Okay, That's what we're,

[18:20] We're trying to do, In every part of church life, In all of our lives, And we are trying to sit, Under the word, But the danger is, That we move from our position, Of sitting under God's word, To sitting over God's word, That's why I don't like the phrase, Bible based, Because when we sit, Over the word of God, When we, When we base ourselves, On the word of God, The danger is, We move from a position, Of sitting under the word, To sitting over the word, And so we get to decide, What is true and what is not, And we get to decide, What applies to today, And what doesn't, The question, Becomes, Isn't it, What do we do, When the Bible contradicts us, On the basis, That we accept, That occasionally, We might be wrong, On some things, How does, How does the Bible, Contradict us, If we are sitting, Above the word,

You see, Everything we come across, In the Bible, Some things in the Bible, We don't like, Do we? And we say, The goal I believe, In would never say that, The goal I believe in, Wouldn't do that, When we refuse, To sit humbly, Under God's word, And be corrected by it, And challenged by it, When we do that, We have created, A God who always agrees with us, Isn't that nice?

When we sit, Over God's word, We have a God, Who has the same opinion, As us, But we are, Up here, And the Bible is down there, Instead of the Bible, Being up here, And submitting to it, Because if we don't, Submit to God's word, Isaiah says, It is a manifestation, Of unbelief, And a demonstration, That our vision, Needs to be corrected, So here in the Valley of Vision, Isaiah critiques, The people who are looking, To their own strength, And salvation, Instead of God, Now secondly, He critiques, A vision of a person, New York in verses 15 to 19, Isaiah is told, Kind of reign in his focus, And he reigns it in, On one person, An official from Jerusalem, An individual, A government official, Called Shevna, And we get a clue, Very quickly, That Shevna, Is not going to be presented, As a poster boy for faith, As he, Just by the two terms, And is prescribed,

About him, He is a steward, Which is essentially, Would be a big put down, For somebody, Who is an advisor, Of the king, For somebody, Who is in the cabinet, To be called a steward, Would be a put down, Interestingly, There's a connection, Between the oracle, To Jerusalem, Back at the beginning, Of the chapter, And the oracle, To Shemna, So verse 16, Should literally be, What do you mean, By dot dot dot, What are you doing, Building, Building this tomb, Verse 16, He's supervising, Isn't he, The construction, Of some grandiose, Edifice, For his remains, That in the face, Of a national danger, In the face, Of emergency, Shevna is more, Interested in securing, His legacy, His place in history, So that people, Will remember him, From an elaborate tomb, It's like a little pharaoh, Building his pyramid, So he can be praised, And remembered forever, No matter what happens, Around him, And you see, Shevna's vision, Is completely on himself, Isn't it, On his reputation, On his legacy, On his present, Satisfaction, And it appears, That he's got his eyes, On the purpose of his position, Look at verse 18, There's the fancy chariots, And as a result, Of Shevna's pride, And frustration, And selfishness, God is outraged, He says, This is what I'm going to do, He says, Instead of you being, Buried in an ostentatious tomb, I'm going to roll you up, Into another ball, And I'm going to, Swing you around my head, And I will hurl you, Into another country, Which we know, From Jesus' history, It's Babylon, Now if Jerusalem's vision, Was misdirected, Because they were looking, For their own strength, And salvation, Instead of looking, To God, Shevna's vision, Was misdirected, Because it's all focused, On himself, Martin Luther, Defined sin, As a heart, Curved in and of itself, So you know that, When our identity, Gets wrapped up, [22 : 52] With what we've done, Or what we do, So as a result, We live for affirmation, Of what we do for, Maybe promotion in work, Our identity, Is wrapped up, By how people perceive us, How they think of us, So we're very, Very careful, What we post, On Facebook, And what we don't, Post on Facebook, And we're very careful, About how we word it, Because we want, An image, To be projected, Of who we are, And we think, Very hard, About our self, Image, And our identity, Becomes wrapped up, With power issues, Who's in charge, Who gets the final decision, Who is in control, And we go down, That route, Because we want, To desperately matter, In life, The problem is, We've decided, That it's a DIY job, Is it doing itself job, And so, Our misdirected vision, Looking to ourselves,

And what we've done, And what we do, Well, Encourages pride, And so suddenly, We see ourselves, At the centre of everything, And other people, Even our family members, Are there to make us feel good, They help us to, Achieve our goals, And so if you want to know, The end point, Of what happens, With that skewed vision, Take a long, Hard look at Shegna, The vision of the people, Is misdirected, The vision of Shegna, Is misdirected, And that brings us, Last week, To the other government, Official, Eliakim, And the focus, Of Eliakim, Is not so, Much on his vision, But where he points, Our vision, So thirdly, A vision of the future, Look at this 20, And that day, I will call my servant, Eliakim, The son of Hilkiah, 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, I'll 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, And I will fasten him, Like a peg, In a secure place, And he will become, A throne of honour, To his father's house, And he will hang on him, Eliakim, The honour of his father's house, The offspring of the issue, Every small vessel, From the cups, To all the flagons, In that day, Declares the Lord of hosts, The peg, That was fastened, In a secure place, Will give way, And will be cut down, Will snap off, And fall, On the load that was on it, Will be cut off, For the Lord has spoken, So that after God, Has dealt emphatically, With Shevna, Eliakim, Receives the same responsibility, The responsibility, That belonged to Shevna, And he kind of becomes, The chief advisor, To the king, The deputy prime minister, And it appears, That Eliakim, Is going to be, A stabilising force, He's driven like a, Peg, Used in the Old Testament, Like a big tent peg, And he's going to hold, The whole tent of Jerusalem, In place, But in the end, Can you see in verse 25, His leadership, Is going to be insufficient, Because the peg, That is in the ground, The picture changes, So that it's hammered, Into the wall, On which, The family of Eliakim, All their, His honour, Hands on it, It's like his family, Looks to Eliakim, As their saviour, He is the one, The peg in the wall, To which they put, All their hopes, And honour, And glory, And significance, But, All that weight, Of the hopes of the people, Is too much, And the peg straps off, And it's a reminder, To you and I, That there is not, A human being, Whether it's a child, Or a

spouse, Or a work colleague, Or a friend, Or a prime minister, Or a sports star, There is not, One single human being, That can bear the weight, Of being someone else's saviour, Of being the one, In whom you put, Your unreserved, Trust and confidence, There's not one human being, Well except one, Just look at the language, That's being used of Eliakim, Can you see it, In verse, On verse, Sorry, In verse 22, Can you see that, Just look at the language, That's being used, And it picks up, On themes, That we've seen before, Do you remember, A few weeks ago, It talked about, Shoulders, Do you remember that, Can you see, In verse 22, He is, A father, And on his shoulder, Will be placed, The symbol of authority, Of the house of David, And so you think back, To Isaiah 9, It's what we've read, Merry Christmases, Isn't it, Unto us a son is born, Unto us, A child is given, And the government, Will be upon his shoulders,

[27 : 57] And he will be called, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, The everlasting father, The prince of peace, And of the increase, Of his government, And of his peace, There will be no end, On the throne of David, And over his kingdom, To establish it, And to uphold it, With justice, And with righteousness, From this time forth, And forevermore, The zeal of the Lord, Of hosts, Will do this, And so you have, This little clue, And I will place, On his shoulder, The key, A symbol of authority, Of the house of David, It's a stepping stone, From Isaiah 9, To someone in the future, And Eliakim, Could never have been, The one prophesied, In Isaiah 9, Because the peg, Of Eliakim, At the end of 22, Is chopped down, But with Eliakim, Our upward vision, To God, Our upward vision, Of God, Also becomes a forward vision, To the greater Eliakim, That he is pointing forward, To someone else, So let me read to you, From Revelation chapter 3, In verse 7, To the angel of the church, In Philadelphia,

Wrote, The words of the Holy One, The true one, Who has the key of David, Same word as Isaiah 22, Who opens, And no one will shut, Who shuts, And no one opens, And suddenly everything, Comes together, That there is one, Who is the greater Eliakim, The true Eliakim, Is the Lord Jesus, That he is the one, Who holds the key, To God's kingdom, He is the one, Who opens and shuts, And the question is, How does he do that, Is it an arbitrary thing, Does he open the door, To Sam and shut it to others, No it's not arbitrary, It's by the gospel, He opens, And shuts by the gospel, That if you refuse, The offer, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Bible is quite clear, The door is shut, And that sin, Will remain unforgiven, And the question is, Why would you ever, Want to do that, Why would you refuse, God's offer, Of a rescue plan, Why would you, Not want your vision, To be corrected, Why would you, Even risk, Going down the route, Where the judgment, Will fall on the people, Of Jerusalem, And fall on Shepard, And it will fall on you too, Jesus opens the door, Of his kingdom, To all who will come, Into the valley of vision, And see that they're not able, To save themselves, I see that all my efforts, To save myself, That I do, You know, Is in your sight, But all my attempts, To build myself up, All my attempts, To win the approval of others, All my attempts, To tell the Bible, What it says, Instead of sitting under the Bible, All my attempts, To find my identity, In what I do, All my attempts, To find my identity, In what people say, Say about me, All those attempts, Are damnable, But Jesus, You did all, That was necessary, To save me, And so I rescued, From hyper activism, And we refused,

The path of escapism, And Lord Jesus, You submitted yourself, To death, On a cross for me, So I don't need, To escape reality, And the keys are yours, Because you defeated sin, Because you defeated death, And yours therefore, Is the kingdom, And the power, And the glory, And the majesty, Forever and ever, Amen, It is yours, And so the message, In Isaiah 22, Is that there's no one, There's no one else, To change in life, There is no one else, However could there be, No one else, Has the keys, Jesus is the only one, Who has the keys, And so Jesus, You are the only one, Who can open this door, For me, And so through you, I come, Let's pray,