

under Ahaz. It is God's will to protect the city for the time being. He will not allow the Assyrians to conquer it. That will come a century later under the Babylonians. At present He is rebuking the attitude of the people, telling them how they should repent and look to Him, assuring them that they can find help nowhere else against the Assyrians, and pointing out the troubles that are coming at the hands of the Assyrians, even though actual conquest of Jerusalem is not included among them. For the present God will treat Jerusalem as His own city and will protect it "as birds hovering" (Isa. 31:5), as a way of giving evidence of His sovereign power and control.

Thus the message of Isaiah 17-22 (like that of Isaiah 28-33), combines several ideas. It contains the joyful message of God's promise of deliverance and also the sad message of rebuke for man's failure to trust God.

The last portion of chapter 22 is almost unique in the Book of Isaiah. He does not often deal with specific individuals of his own time. In chapter 7 he gives scathing rebuke to Ahaz, but it occupies only a few verses (esp. vv. 13-17) of that great chapter. In chapter 39 Hezekiah will be given a milder rebuke for his alliance with the king of Babylon. Aside from these instances, our present section is just about the only case where Isaiah specifically rebukes a living individual by name.

As we have little evidence elsewhere about the individuals to whom he refers, the section is not easy to interpret. It is mostly a rebuke against one man, and we have no other information about this man except that he was included in Hezekiah's embassy to meet the representatives of Sennacherib, listed in Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22 and in the parallel in 2 Kings 18:18, 26, 37 and 19:2. Isaiah 22 must have been written a long time before the events described in Isaiah 36-37 and in 2 Kings 18-19. In chapter 22 Shebna is the treasurer over the house. He is rebuked and told that his position is going to be taken away from him and that it will be given to Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. In chapter 36-37 we find this Eliakim already over the house, while Shebna is in a lower position.

Perhaps someone may question whether these terrible predictions against Shebna were fulfilled. In answer it may