

### Isaiah 38

*Is. 38:1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"*

It is clear from Isaiah 38:6 that the events of this chapter occurred before the events of chapters 36 and 37; for, according to verse 6, God's deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyrian domination had not yet been accomplished. The events recorded in Isaiah 38 are also addressed in 2Kings 20:1-11 as well as 2Chronicles 32:24-25. Based on 2Chronicles 32:24-25, *Hezekiah* was not yet the man of God that we witnessed in Isaiah 36-37. Therefore, God had to break him, and the events of this chapter describe just part of the process responsible for bringing it about. Hezekiah's mistakes in chapters 38-39 pave the way for Isaiah's prophecy of Isaiah 39:6-7, a prophecy relating to the Babylonian captivity approximately 100 years later.

*At this time, Hezekiah became mortally ill. As a result of his illness, Isaiah told Hezekiah to Set*

his *house in order* (to make a will and select a successor to the throne), for he would *die*. Because he had no son to succeed him, he would need to choose a man from the tribe of Judah to rule on the throne of David.

*Is. 38:2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord,*

Isaiah *turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord*, when he heard Isaiah's words, probably praying for an extension of his life.

*Is. 38:3 and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.*

The words that Hezekiah states here are true; for 2 Kings 18:1-5 confirms that there was no *king* in *Judah*, either *before* or *after him*, that was more faithful. This includes King *David* (read 2Chronicles 29:1-2 as well as 2Chronicles 31:20-21). Therefore, as God observed Hezekiah's life, He concluded that no *king* in *Judah* trusted Him as did *Hezekiah*. Did this mean that Hezekiah was flawless in his behavior? Not at all, for Isaiah 38-39, along with Hezekiah's ill-advised covenant with *Egypt* (addressed in the notes associated with Isaiah 30:1, 2; 36:9), confirm that he experienced seasons of disobedience. It did mean, however, that he possessed a heart that was more sensitive to Jehovah than any other king who reigned in Judah. As we continue, take note of Hezekiah's eagerness to repent once convinced of his wrong. To have a sensitive heart toward God does not mean that one never sins; but that once sin is committed, repentance results, and obedience is again the norm.

*Is. 38:4 Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying,*

God's answer through *Isaiah* is recorded in verses 4-8, an answer that was given *before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court* (2Kings 20:4-7), meaning that he was in Jerusalem while stating this prophecy.

*Is. 38:5 "Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life."*

Notice that *David* is mentioned. God healed *Hezekiah* because of His unconditional covenant with *David* (2 Samuel 7:11-16; 1Chronicles 17:10-14), a covenant which promised *David* an eternal dynasty, an eternal *throne*, an eternal *kingdom*, and an eternal *son*. 1 Kings 8:25-26 adds much insight into God's commitment to *David*:

***"Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David my father that which Thou hast promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way to walk before Me as you have walked.'***

Note that *David* would never *lack a man to sit on his throne*. This is not saying that someone has to continually sit on David's throne in Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled; obviously, no one sits there today. It does mean, however, that *David* will always have descendants (through his lineage) capable of sitting on this *throne*. Consider this as well. The eternal God-man, Jesus Christ, *the Son of David* (Matthew 21:9), is the being who will sit on this throne at His Second Coming. Therefore, because Jesus is the eternal God-man, and very much alive today, *David* does *not lack a man* today; nor will he ever *lack a man* to fulfill this promise.

*Hezekiah* would very soon walk in a place of faithfulness, and during the *fifteen* year extension of his *life*, continue to sit on the throne of *David*. The Lord realized this and chose to extend *Hezekiah's* life *for His own sake* as well as *David's sake* (2Kings 20:6). Oh the faithfulness of God!

Based on 2Kings 18:1-2, *Hezekiah* was *twenty-five years old* when he began to reign in *Jerusalem*, and he reigned for *twenty-nine years* (from 715-686 BC). Therefore, he was fifty-four years old when he died, meaning he was thirty-nine when he became ill. We see the fruit of *Hezekiah's* repentance and trust in *Jehovah*; for when *Rabshakeh* visited *Jerusalem* with *Sennacherib's* message of doom (in 701 BC—Isaiah 36), *Hezekiah* was walking in a place of faithfulness.

Based on 2Kings 20:5, a part of God's promise included the fact that *Hezekiah* would be healed within three days.

*Is. 38:6 "And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city."*

*Jehovah* also promised through *Isaiah* that He would *deliver* *Jerusalem* from *Sennacherib*. This deliverance occurred and is recorded in *Isaiah 36-37*. Obviously, the events of *Isaiah 38* transpired before the events of *Isaiah 36-37*.

*Is. 38:7 "And this shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that He has spoken:*

God would give *Hezekiah* a *sign* to confirm what He had promised concerning two issues: *Hezekiah's* healing as well as *Jerusalem's* deliverance from *Assyria*. According to 2Kings 20:8, *Hezekiah* asked *Isaiah* what the *sign* would be. Notice that *Hezekiah*, unlike his father *Ahaz*, accepted the *sign* (the notes associated with *Isaiah 7:11-12* address *Ahaz's* response).

*Is. 38:8 "Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps." So the sun's shadow went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down.*

*Hezekiah* could choose between *the shadow* going *forward ten steps* or...*back ten steps* on the *stairway of Ahaz* as a confirmation of God's commitment to what He had promised (read 2Kings 20:8-11). It is uncertain as to what the phrase, "*stairway of Ahaz*" (*Isaiah 38:8*) means. Some view it as a sun-dial, while others view it as a step-dial—where the *shadow* cast upon the *steps* of *Ahaz's* *stairway* indicated the time of day. We should also realize that the word "*steps*" is better interpreted "degrees." In 2Kings 20:9-11, *Hezekiah* asked that *the shadow* move opposite of its normal movement. Based on *Isaiah 38:8*, *the shadow* responded as *Hezekiah* had requested and *went back ten steps* (or degrees), confirming that *Jehovah* would fulfill what He had promised. Therefore, *Hezekiah* would be healed within three days (2Kings 20:5), and *Jerusalem* would be delivered from *Sennacherib*. This means that while *Hezekiah* was being ridiculed by *the Assyrians* (in *Isaiah 36-37*), these promises of *Jehovah* were the anchor of his soul. No wonder he stood with such courage and valor!

*Is. 38:9 ¶ A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after his illness and recovery:*

Verses 10-20 are words recorded by King *Hezekiah*. Note that these words were recorded after *Hezekiah* was healed.

*Is. 38:10 I said, "In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years."*

Verses 10-14 reveal the sadness within Hezekiah as he considered dying at such an early age (he was thirty-nine, as confirmed by the notes associated with Isaiah 38:5). The word "*Sheol*" (v.10) pointed to physical death in Old Testament times. Job 38:17, Psalm 9:13, and Psalm 107:18 make reference to the place of the dead as possessing *gates*. Jesus came to overcome *death* (2Timothy 1:10), thus His statement to Peter in Matthew 16:18—"*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*" Therefore, all believers who have died since Acts 2 (when the Church age began) have automatically been taken to heaven (2Corinthians 5:8). Not so during Old Testament times, as the following will confirm.

*Sheol* was divided into two compartments during Old Testament times (based on Luke 16), one side for the believer and the other for the unbeliever. The believer went to *Abraham's bosom*, and the unbeliever went to hell. The notes associated with Isaiah 14:9 can be read if you need more input concerning the subject. As we read Hezekiah's words, we must keep in mind that Old Testament believers knew little about the state of the believer after death. Consider this as well: only three verses in the Old Testament give input concerning the concept of a bodily resurrection (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; Hosea 13:14). Because so few Old Testament Scriptures address the subject, the *Sadducees* chose not to believe in a bodily *resurrection* (Matthew 22:23). The Pharisees believed in a resurrection, but knew little about it due to their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus.

Obviously, the Old Testament has little to say concerning the hereafter. It is apparent that Hezekiah's limited knowledge of the believer's environment after death affected his attitude concerning his present situation. Therefore, Hezekiah, being only thirty-nine years of age, viewed his life as being taken prematurely.

*Is. 38:11 I said, "I shall not see the Lord, The Lord in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.*

Hezekiah was saddened because physical death would prevent him from appearing before *the Lord* in the temple. Neither would he again see *man* upon the earth.

*Is. 38:12 "Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; As a weaver I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night Thou dost make an end of me.*

Hezekiah, during his illness, compared his life to *a shepherd's tent* which is suddenly *pulled up and* moved to a different location. He also compared his life to that of a weaver's cloth, which when finished, is cut *off from the loom* and *rolled up*. *From day until night*, he viewed Jehovah as putting *an end* to his life.

*Is. 38:13 "I composed my soul until morning. Like a lion-- so He breaks all my bones, From day until night Thou dost make an end of me.*

Hezekiah pictured Jehovah as *a lion* breaking *all his bones*. Again, he mentions that "*From day until night*" he viewed Jehovah as putting *an end* to his life.

*Is. 38:14 "Like a swallow, like a crane, so I twitter; I moan like a dove; My eyes look wistfully to*

*the heights; O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security.*

Hezekiah's grief is addressed here, for he moaned with much sorrow. However, in the midst of it all, he asked Jehovah to *be his security*.

*Is. 38:15 ¶ "What shall I say? For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it; I shall wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.*

Hezekiah, in verses 15-20, describes how God took his suffering and turned it into joy. He would spend the remainder of his life humbly remembering what God had *done* to spare his life.

*Is. 38:16 "O Lord, by these things men live; And in all these is the life of my spirit; O restore me to health, and let me live!*

This verse records Hezekiah's trust in God's promise for healing, which was fulfilled just as God had stated.

*Is. 38:17 "Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*

Hezekiah mentions the *bitterness* he experienced during his illness. Some attribute this *bitterness* to the fact that Hezekiah had no a son to succeed him; for the son that would succeed him, Manasseh, was born during the fifteen year extension of his life. He viewed his healing as having his *soul spared from the pit of nothingness*, again emphasizing his limited knowledge of the believer's environment after death.

*Is. 38:18 "For Sheol cannot thank Thee, Death cannot praise Thee; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy faithfulness.*

Again, we see the word "*Sheol*," as in verse 10, a term pointing to physical *Death* during Old Testament times. To die at a young age in Hezekiah's day pointed to God's displeasure (Deuteronomy 6:1-2). As stated earlier, Hezekiah's words expressed during his illness confirm his limited knowledge of what life after *Death* held for the believer.

*Is. 38:19 "It is the living who give thanks to Thee, as I do today; A father tells his sons about Thy faithfulness.*

Truly, *the living* on the earth can *give thanks to God*, but what Hezekiah failed to realize was the degree to which the redeemed could do the same (even more so) in *Abraham's bosom* (the place of the redeemed dead during Old Testament times—Luke 16). Hezekiah's statements during his illness relating to fatherhood are interesting, maybe even cynical, for at this time he had no son. As has already been addressed in verse 17, Manasseh was born to Hezekiah during the fifteen year extension of his life. One of the mysteries of the Old Testament, as far as I am concerned, is how such a godly man like Hezekiah could have a son as evil as Manasseh. Both 2Kings 21:1-18 and 2Chronicles 33:1-9 confirm that *Manasseh* was the most wicked king to rule in the southern kingdom. He repented later in life (2Chronicles 33:10-20), but the southern kingdom never fully recovered from the severity of his misdeeds.

*Is. 38:20 "The Lord will surely save me; So we will play my songs on stringed instruments All the days of our life at the house of the Lord."*

Hezekiah could believe that he would be healed based on God's promise of Isaiah 38:5; so he pledged to praise the Lord in the temple all the remaining *days of his life*. The "we" of verse 20 may point to Hezekiah's entire family praising the Lord in the temple.

*Is. 38:21 ¶ Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a cake of figs, and apply it to the boil, that he may recover."*

*A cake of figs* was to be applied *to the boil* on Hezekiah's body, and his health would be restored. This is confirmed in 2Kings 20:7 as well.

*Is. 38:22 Then Hezekiah had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?"*

*The sign* that would confirm his healing and immediate return to the temple was *the sign of the shadow of the sun dial*, or step dial, discussed in the notes associated with Isaiah 38:5-8. As requested, he was allowed to return to the temple (read Isaiah 37:1 and Isaiah 37:14).

### Isaiah 39

*Is. 39:1 At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.*

This same subject matter is dealt with in 2Kings 20:12-19 and 2Chronicles 32:31. Again, all of this took place before the events of Isaiah 36-37, as is confirmed in the notes associated with Isaiah 38:1.

We must first understand who *Merodach-baladan* was. He had reigned on two different occasions in *Babylon*, with an interval in between, and had fought successfully at times against the Assyrians. His first reign was from 721 to 710 BC, only to end at the hands of Sargon II of Assyria. This is confirmed by Fausset's Bible Dictionary:

**Sargon in the inscriptions says that in the 12th year of his reign he drove Merodach Baladan from Babylon after ruling 12 years.**

*Merodach-baladan* retook *Babylon* and reigned for nine months (704-703 BC) before being driven out by Sennacherib of Assyria. Obviously, he was a thorn in Assyria's side. He desired that King *Hezekiah* join him in a coalition against Assyria while he was ruling in *Babylon* the second time; thus, he sent a delegation to *Hezekiah* to gain his support. Therefore, the delegation sent to *Hezekiah* came for more reasons than to congratulate him concerning his recovery. God's purpose in these events was, according to 2Chronicles 32:31, to challenge *Hezekiah* for the purpose of revealing *his heart*.

*Is. 39:2 And Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them.*

Even though healed, *Hezekiah* had not yet been humbled. He displayed his pride by giving favor to Merodach-baladan's delegation; for he *showed them* everything he possessed, both *in his house* as well as throughout *all his dominion*.

*Is. 39:3 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon."*

*Isaiah asked Hezekiah about the men who had visited—what they had said and where they were from. Hezekiah replied by saying that they were from Babylon.*

*Is. 39:4 And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them."*

Isaiah then asked what the visitors had *seen*. *Hezekiah* responded by saying that they had *seen* everything in his *house* and *treasuries*. Obviously, *Hezekiah* was honest with Isaiah, even though he must have sensed that he had done something drastically wrong.

*Is. 39:5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts,*

*Isaiah* followed by saying, "*Hear the word of the Lord of hosts,*" confirming that bad news was to follow.

*Is. 39:6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord.*

The bad news was that there would be a day when Hezekiah's possessions would *be carried to Babylon*. This was fulfilled later, in 606-586 BC, when *Nebuchadnezzar* of *Babylon* overthrew *Jerusalem* and took the southern kingdom's wealth to *Babylon* (2Kings 24:13; 25:13-17; 2Chronicles 36:7; Daniel 1:2).

*Is. 39:7 'And some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall beget, shall be taken away; and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"*

The American Standard Version renders this verse as follows:

***'And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'***"

*Some* of Hezekiah's descendants, young men like Daniel, fulfilled this prophecy. They were exiled and made *eunuchs* for the purpose of serving in *Nebuchadnezzar's* court (2Kings 24:14-16; Daniel 1:3-7).

*Is. 39:8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days."*

Selfishness can manifest itself in the most bizarre ways. *Hezekiah* viewed Isaiah's prophecies of verses 6-7 as favorable because they would not be fulfilled in his day. He would need to grow past such immaturity to properly lead the nation. Exactly what brings about the change is not indicated in the Scriptures, but for sure he is a different man in Isaiah 36-37 while facing *Sennacherib's* forces subsequent to the events of Isaiah 38-39.

With the prophecies of Isaiah 39 addressing the Babylonian captivity brought about through King *Nebuchadnezzar*, it is easy to see why Isaiah 40 would begin a section (chapters 40-48) where

Isaiah looks into the prophetic future and predicts conditions that will exist within Israel while in Babylon. He covers other important subjects as well; so have fun as we continue!