

## ISAIAH – LESSON FOURTEEN

### ISAIAH 30-39

#### Chapter Thirty

#### Woe to the Pro-Egyptian Policy

##### Vv. 1-17 – Any Alliance with Egypt Is Bound to Fail

During the years 1200-750 BC, many small independent states sprang up in the near east because no major power existed. Assyria, Babylon and Egypt were all experiencing periods of decline. Nations such as Syria, Philistia, Ammon, Edom, Moab, Phoenicia, Israel, and Judah all vied for influence and power. With the rise of Assyria around 750 BC, these smaller states faced subjugation or extermination. One of their solutions was to seek alliances with other nations.<sup>1</sup> Chapters 30-31 focus on this sin on the part of Judah. Jehovah wanted them to depend on him. The people, however, committed two grave errors. First, they made their own plans. Second, they silenced God's plans.

Isaiah pronounces a woe on the rebellious children who took counsel and made agreements without considering God and contrary to his will. They were heaping sin upon sin. Judah had sent ambassadors to Egypt (v. 4), but Isaiah told them that their efforts were useless and the outcome would be ruin (5-6).

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1. For an example, go back and review 7:1-9.

Isaiah listed several animals that inhabited the Negev<sup>2</sup> (6-7). The animals watched as Judah's ambassadors passed by carrying their gifts with which they hoped to use to receive Egyptian support, but they carry them to a people that will not profit them. "Rahab that sitteth still" aptly describes the profit and protection that Egypt will provide Judah.

Isaiah was told to make a written record for a future witness. When it came true the people would know that Isaiah spoke from God (8). These rebellious children did not want to be confronted with their sins. A prophet who spoke right things was not welcome. They wanted a prophet who would "speak unto us smooth things and prophesy deceits. They demand that the true prophet get out of their way so they can continue as they wish. Indeed, they insist that the true prophet get the Holy One of Israel out of their way so that he will not interfere with that which they wish to do (8-11). They mock both Isaiah's preaching and one of his favorite descriptions of Jehovah – the Holy One of Israel.

The people think that they are beyond God's reach or that he will not raise his hand against them. Isaiah does in fact tell them that the Holy One of Israel was planning a restoration and deliverance that would involve the Lord's teaching his people, bringing them blessing, and displaying his warrior power to the nations (15-17).<sup>3</sup>

God longed to be gracious to his people (18-19). The hardship visited on them was to lead them to repentance. Both God and the teachers he sent would teach them and instruct them to walk in the way (20-21). This would lead them to realize the worthlessness of their idols (22), and God would bring great blessings upon them (23-26).

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2. The desert region of Palestine which extends from the hill country of Judah south to the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern Negev receives limited rainfall, and irrigation has helped to make it agriculturally productive and highly habitable. The southern Negev is extremely arid, and is inhabited primarily by nomadic groups.

3. Notice the different results of Judah's wars when God was with them and when God was against them (Deut. 28:7, 25; 32:30).

### **Vv. 27-33 – Vengeance on Assyria**

Accompanying this would be the display of God's strong arm against the nations (27-28). Assyria would not escape (31). Those who loved God would rejoice at his work on their behalf (29). God prepared a Topeth, a place of slaughter (cf. Jer. 19:6), for Assyria, a great fire that is kindled by God's breath.

## **Chapter Thirty-One**

### **Woe to Them That Go Down to Egypt!**

#### **Vv. 1-3 – God Also Is Wise**

Isaiah continues to pronounce woe upon those who persisted in seeing Egypt rather than God as the source of security. They had evaluated Egypt's horses and chariots and horsemen. They were very strong, but they did not look unto or seek Jehovah. Isaiah proclaims that God is also wise and that he will arise against both the evil-doers and any help from those that work iniquity. Jerusalem needed to learn that the Egyptians were men and not God and their horses were flesh and not spirit. Jehovah will stretch forth his hand and the one who helps will stumble and the one helped will fall. They all will be consumed together.

#### **Vv. 4-5 – God's Providence: Fierce Yet Compassionate**

It is not Egypt, but God who will one day descend upon Mount Zion and protect, deliver, pass over and preserve Jerusalem.

#### **Vv. 6-7 – Call to Repentance**

Isaiah calls upon Judah to turn to him against whom they had revolted, for the day would come when they would cast away their idols that they made and by which they sinned.

### **Vv. 8-9 – Destruction of Assyria**

No nation or group of nations would bring Assyria down. The sword of God would accomplish it. Following the Lord's victory during the days of Hezekiah (chs. 36-37), Assyria began a decline that ultimately would lead to its ruin.

## **Chapter Thirty-Two**

### **Vv. 1-8 – The New Order**

#### **[Vv. 1-4 – The righteous King and spiritual illumination]**

Two characteristics of the righteous kingdom stand out in Isaiah's description: 1) upright leadership, and 2) societal rejuvenation. How often had Judah's leaders let its people astray? In the new order there would be a righteous king who would have just rulers beside him (1). He uses four similes<sup>4</sup> to describe the blessings that this King would provide (2). Those who were blind and could not see and those who were deaf and could not hear would see and hear. Rash decision makers would make wise decisions and those who stammered would speak clearly (3-4)

#### **[Vv. 5-8 – Moral distinctions are now clear]**

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4. The similes become more vivid when set against the Judean landscape. Wilderness and desert areas get little rain; wind blows across the wasteland; shepherds must find shelter in caves or rock crevices; streams of water are a welcome sight.

The fool and the churl would now be seen for what they were – ungodly spreaders of falsehood and error. The rejuvenation would involve not only the rooting out of the evil, but the replacing of evil with good.

### **Vv. 9-20 – Warning, Judgment, and Blessedness**

#### **[Vv. 9-15 – Warning to careless women and judgment to come]**

The promise of Vv. 1-2 was great indeed, but first there must be days of judgment and mourning. God would deal with sin wherever he found it. Once he had done so blessing would follow.

Isaiah called the careless women of Judah to mourn. They felt secure, but within a year hard times would come.<sup>5</sup> The women would mourn the loss of crops and harvest, palaces and cities would disappear, and everything would seem lost (9-14).

#### **Vv. 15-20 – Rest and Quietness at Last**

The mourning will last until the Spirit is poured out from on high. The wilderness will become fruitful; justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field, bringing peace, quietness and confidence for ever. God's people will abide in peaceable habitation, in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting places (15-18).

This tranquility is abruptly interrupted by “hail in the forest” and a “city [that] shall be utterly laid. Great disagreement characterizes commentators on the identify of the “forest” and the “city.” Such a wide disagreement gives credence to Haley's position that the forest “perhaps” represents the great conquering military powers of the day and the “City” represents the desolated world cities, including political Jerusalem. Given the chapters that we have just studied, this seems to harmonize with the surrounding context (19). God's people in the peaceful and righteous kingdom will pursue productive occupations in the Lord. All, man and beast alike, will be devoted to the production of good. Swords will be beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning

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5. This may have occurred with Sennacherib's invasion.

hooks, and the nations will learn war no more. This is consistent with Isaiah's total message.

## Chapter Thirty-Three

### The Defeat of Assyria and Victory of Jerusalem

Isaiah's hearers were beaten down, oppressed, and felt the weight of their own sin. The entire land mourned and suffered from Assyrian domination and oppression. Did they have any reason for hope? Would the Holy One of Israel really arise on their behalf and rescue them? This message brings a strong assurance that God had not forgotten them and would act soon.

#### **Vv. 1-6 – Woe to the Destroyer!**

Assyria is not mentioned specifically but it is clear that it is in Isaiah's view. Isaiah begins by telling the destroyer that it has dealt treacherously with Israel and that when it has ceased to destroy it will be destroyed and receive as it has given (1). Then Assyria would recognize its role in the divine plan (10:7).

Israel utters a prayer for deliverance (2-4). They implore Jehovah for grace. They have waited for the One who alone could deliver them, has an arm that could protect them, and bring salvation in time of trouble. Only he can make the oppressors flee and scatter the nations. How long had God waited to hear words that he had been working to hear?

In vv. 5-6 the God who dwells on high is exalted for filling Zion with justice and righteousness, bringing stability, salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. He has created a people whose treasure is the fear of Jehovah.

#### **Vv. 7-16 – The Broken Covenant and the Devouring Fire**

Meanwhile the land languished as it waited for God's intervention (7-9). The Lord responds to the people's lament (10). He was ready to act and he announces to

Assyria what he will do unto them (11-12). He calls on those that are far off to take heed of that which he had done and on those who are near to acknowledge his might (13), and promised that fear would grip them all; who could dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? (14).

Isaiah proceeds to answer those questions (15-16). It is the one whose deeds and words are upright and who despises that which is evil. He shall dwell on high and be protected and cared for.

### **Vv. 17-24 – The Glory of Israel’s King and Jerusalem-Zion**

Lastly, Isaiah described the great day of God’s restoration (17-22). His people will see the great King in his beauty<sup>6</sup> and a land that reaches afar. They would not face oppressive terror, pay tribute, or be overlorded by those who speak a foreign tongue. They will live in Zion that shall never be removed or plucked up. They will be in the presence of the majesty of Jehovah surrounded by the beauty of flowing streams. Jehovah will be their judge, lawgiver, king, and savior.

From the Jerusalem of the future Isaiah looks to the Jerusalem of the present. It is a ship in distress, unfit for battle. It does not sink but it is helpless. In spite of its weakness there will be great spoil to divide, even for the lame. Though in distress the city will not be destroyed because Jehovah will give victory. Looking beyond the time of weakness he sees a time of power. Sickness is healed and sin is forgiven. Step by step Isaiah has come to the ultimate conclusion – the forgiveness of sin in the reign of the Messiah.

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6. If I walk in the pathway of duty, If I work till the close of the day, I shall see the great king in his beauty, When I’ve gone the last mile of the way.” Stanza 1 of “The Last Mile of the Way” words by Johnson Oatman, Jr., music by Wm. Edie Marks

## Chapter Thirty-Four

### Judgments of the Nations and Edom

Chapters 34 and 35 declare the judgment and destruction of the enemies of Jehovah and his people (34) and the redemption and glory of the ransomed (35). These chapters are not set in any particular period of history. They summarize what Isaiah has been saying.

#### **Vv. 1-4 – Judgment of the Nations**

Isaiah begins with a general call to all nations and peoples. While Judah may have been the primary audience the language used shows God's interest in those outside of Judah's borders. That interest includes God's wrath against the nations. Using the prophetic perfect Isaiah declares them destroyed and delivered to the slaughter. The Lord's victory is complete. The gruesome language emphasized total devastation. The fall of the nations will be so great that it can only be compared to a cosmic upheaval with their hosts falling like fading leaves.

#### **Vv. 5-7 – Judgment Against Edom – A Sacrifice**

Edom makes its appearance right in the middle of the prophecy. Why it appears as the first singled out by name is only speculation. Many suggest that it was because Edom was a "thorn in the flesh" for Israel and Judah over many years and it is used to represent all of the nations. All who opposed the Lord would suffer the same fate announced for Edom.

Edom had received only minor treatment in the oracles against the nations, but now it is declared that the sword of God had drunk its fill in the heavens, indicating thorough judgment, and it now descended on the land where Esau's progeny resided (5, Gen. 36:1).



God's judgment sword sliced through Edom's best as he prepared a sacrifice for himself from Edom's livestock. Bozrah, which will appear again in 63:1, was Edom's capital city. Some suggest that the reference to the oxen and great bulls may refer to Edom's leaders. Without them society would be confounded (cf. Obadiah 8-9). The entire land would be slaughtered.

### **Vv. 8-15 – The Judgment: Total Desolation**

V. 8 speaks of vengeance, but it is a vengeance that is concerned with administering justice or balancing the scales. It administers recompense for the cause of Zion. Isaiah describes in detail Edom's complete destruction (9-15). In short, it would become a fiery wasteland unsuitable for human habitation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Vv. 16-17 – The Certainty of This Devastation**

Isaiah concludes with a challenge to his audience: seek out the book of the Lord and read. The book is not identified, but it may be the prophecies that Isaiah had already delivered. He had already called his hearers back to God's written revelation (8:19-20). Check God's word and every prophecy will have a fulfillment. So shall these. God's people could count on Isaiah's words because they were from God and God had ordered it to be so. Jehovah himself cast the lot determining that this land shall belong to wild animals. He divided it unto them by his own measuring line. It shall be thus for ever. From generation to generation they shall dwell therein.

## **Chapter Thirty-Five**

### **The Way of Holiness**

Isaiah is a master of contrast. In chs. 2-4 he contrasted the ideal Zion with the real Zion of his day. In chs. 9-11 he contrasted treatment of Israel and Judah at Assyria's

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7. The language of these verses is very similar to the word's against Babylon (13:19-22). This is a suggestion that Edom represents the judgment on all the nations.

hand against the permanence of the redeemed remnant under the Root of Jesse. Now he contrasts the desolation of the nations and Edom (34) with Zion's glorious future.

### **Vv. 1-4 – The New Song**

Isaiah's words change abruptly. From the judgment of ch. 34, in ch. 35 Isaiah turns to the joy of the redeemed as God brought salvation to his people. Some understand his opening words to apply to literal nature. However, given the context, they are better understood as a description of the religious life of both Jews and Gentiles as they changed from a dry desert to one that now rejoices producing beauty and moral fragrance. Not only will it blossom abundantly, it will rejoice with singing. To illustrate the spiritual beauty of Zion's redemption Isaiah turns to the magnificent beauty of Lebanon with its snow-covered peaks, massive cedars and fir trees, and to wooded Carmel and verdant Sharon carpeted with flowers. They (the redeemed) shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God (1-2).

Weak hands and feeble knees, symbols of unbelief, shall be strengthened. They shall fear no more because Jehovah will come and save them (3-4).

### **Vv. 5-7 – Cause for the Rejoicing**

The cause for rejoicing is that the deaf shall hear, the lame shall leap, and the dumb shall not only speak, but sing.<sup>8</sup> There will be a great change in their lives as they are transferred from a desolate wilderness to a luxuriant garden. The glowing sand (mirage) shall now be a real pool and the wasteland that was fit only for animals shall be reeds and rushes. It was never intended that this prophecy be fulfilled in the natural world, but in the spiritual. The glory is given to Zion and is enjoyed by those who follow the Messiah.

### **Vv. 8-10 – The Highway**

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8. Some, particularly "faith healers," suggest that this indicates that miracles will always characterize Zion. While this is not the time or place to discuss this unbiblical doctrine, suffice to say that Isaiah here speaks of the spiritual healing that shall characterize the redeemed.

“And there shall be a highway.” This is not one of two ways, one narrow and one broad. It is the highway that leads to the Zion of God – a way of holiness for travelers. It shall be called *The* way of holiness – there is no other. It is *The* highway for the remnant of his people (11:16) over which the redeemed of the nations shall travel as a united whole (19:23-24).

*The* highway is limited to a select few. It is *The* way of holiness for the redeemed into which the unclean (legally or morally) shall not enter. A wayfaring man though a fool<sup>9</sup> shall not enter. Isaiah is saying that one who despises wisdom, being wise in his own eyes and in evil instead, will not make the “mistake” of walking in *The* way (8).

*The* way will be safe. Ravenous beasts shall not prey on *The* way. It is for the redeemed and over *The* way the ransomed shall return and come with singing unto Zion. Everlasting joy will be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (9-10).

To quote Isaiah, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (52:7)!

## Closing Thoughts on Chapters 28 – 35

### 1. God Desires His People to Follow His Plans

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9. It is sometimes argued that *The* way will be so simple that anybody can understand it. That is certainly true, but it is not supported by this passage. The Hebrew word translated “fool” is *evil* (*evil*). It is used 26 times in the Old Testament and, unless here, it never references and inexperienced or an uneducated or unlearned person. It is used of the despiser of wisdom (Prov. 1:7), of the person for whom wisdom is too high (Prov. 24:7), of one who is foolish of lips (Prov. 10:8, 10, margin), of one whose mouth is a rod of pride (Prov. 14:3), of one whose way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 12:15), of one who is quarrelsome (Prov. 20:3), of one whose foolishness cannot be pounded out of him (Prov. 27:22), of one with whom a controversy cannot be resolved (Prov. 29:9), etc.

Isaiah condemned the attempted alliances with Egypt because Judah was following its own plans and not God's. Judah's future was at stake, but it was busy making its own plans rather than seeking the Lord through his word, his prophet, and prayer.

## **2. God Hates Spiritual Complacency**

Judah's spiritual understanding remained at nursery-school level (28:10). They knew the words (honored the Lord with their lips), but their hearts were far away. All they knew was memorized traditions (29:13). Isaiah encouraged the people to grow in their relationship with the Lord.

God hates spiritual complacency no less today than in days of old. We must seek to grow in our relationship with him. As we yield our lives to him and trust his guidance through his word, we will increasingly be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

## **3. God Desires His People's Ultimate Allegiance**

Isaiah emphasized that God desired and demanded their ultimate allegiance. He knew who opposed him and their day was coming. Not a single promise he made concerning judgment would fail; all would happen just as he had said. Consequently, he desired their ultimate and absolute allegiance. Nothing less would do.

Many things in life clamor for people's attention today: money, power, status, even human relationships. None of these may necessarily be bad or evil in and of itself, but the Lord desires his people's ultimate allegiance. Everything that we are and have should be viewed through the lens of their relationship with him.

## **4. God Has Exciting Days Ahead**

God would sweep away all of those who opposed him and his people. They could count on him to judge thoroughly and with absolute fairness. But he also knew his own and would not let them down or let them go.

Isaiah foretold a day when the earth would again yield abundant crops, when holiness would reign in the hearts of God's people, and when God's glory would display itself

from one end of the universe to the other, a description of marvelous spiritual revival when many of the spiritually dead would arise. Jesus would establish his kingdom, the church, the gospel would go forth, and nations would flow unto it. God's people today are in that kingdom where they enjoy all spiritual blessings in Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **Chs. 36-39 – Historical Link**

Isaiah had fought idolatry and idolatrous leaders in Judah for almost 40 years, making every effort to turn a sufficient number to God to avoid destruction. With Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC the climax was reached and the king and others leaders besought Isaiah to implore God that they might be spared. Judah turned to God, at least temporarily. Chapters 36 and 37 deal with the conflict between Jehovah, the true and only God, and the gods of Assyria and the nations. God's victory was devastating.

There are problems with authorship and chronology in this section. 2 Kings 18-19 is almost identical with Isaiah 36-37. Delitsch and Young argue that the account in Kings is from Isaiah and not vice versa. The evidence is strong for that position. It is possible that Isaiah edited his book late in life, and that this may account for the differences between the two passages.

A more difficult problem concerns the date of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, who is mentioned in Scripture only twice, Isaiah 37:9 and 2 Kings 19:9. His age at the time of Sennacherib's siege has led some to conclude that there were two invasions and attacks on Jerusalem by the Assyrian, one in 701 BC and another sometime in the period 689-686 BC. However, because of lack of evidence most commentators accept only the invasions in 701 BC. Young concludes that the chronology is difficult and that the solution to the problems must await further light.

Another problem is that chs. 36-39 are not in chronological order. Commentators are agreed that 38-39 precede 36-37 in time. All that this means is that Isaiah had a different purpose than providing a chronological history lesson. What was that purpose? While Isaiah does not tell us, the arrangement certainly harmonizes with the two parts of his prophecy for which these chapters serve as a connection. Chs. 1-35 focus on the time when Assyria reigned as the dominant power in the Near East. Chs. 40-66 look ahead to the time when Babylon ruled the world, specifically the time when Babylon's rule was coming to an end. Thus, Isaiah 36-37, which emphasize the Lord's defeat of Assyria, concludes the "Assyrian section" of Isaiah, while 38-39, particularly the announcement about Hezekiah's descendants serving in Babylon, anticipate the Babylonian exile, as well as the news of release from Babylon that begins in ch. 40 and introduces the "Babylonian section" of the prophecy.

## **Chapter Thirty-Six**

### **The Threat to Jerusalem**

#### **Vv. 1-3 – The Emissaries Sent by Sennacherib**

Hezekiah revolted against Assyria, refusing to pay tribute (2 Kings 18:7). Sennacherib responded by invading Judah and laying siege to its leading cities, concentrating on Lachish. It was from Lachish that Sennacherib sent Rabshakeh<sup>10</sup> to made demands upon Hezekiah. Rabshakeh stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.<sup>11</sup> Hezekiah sent a delegation of Eliakim and Shebna.

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10. "Rabshakeh" is not necessarily intended as a proper name. It's meaning is "field commander," and some translations so render it.

11. This was the place to which Jehovah sent Isaiah with Shearjashub, his son, to meet Ahaz (7:3).

### **Vv. 4-10 – Rabshakeh’s Defiant Speech**

Rabshakeh made a speech characterized by pride and over-confidence. Hezekiah’s emissaries were told to take a message to their king from “the great king, the king of Assyria.” The basic message was that “there was no one in whom Hezekiah could or did trust who would enable him to successfully rebel against Sennacherib. Egypt was a bruised reed. Your God must be angry because Hezekiah has taken away his high places. Your best path is to surrender, make pledges to my king, and recognize that you could not win even if my king gave you 2,000 horses. After all, I have not come up against you to destroy this land without have Jehovah on my side. In fact, it was Jehovah who told me to come up against this land and destroy it.”

### **Vv. 11-12 – The Jew’s Request**

Eliakim and Shebna perhaps interrupted the speech, but in any event requested that Rabshakeh speak in the Syrian language and not in the Jew’s language in the ears of the people. The request was likely made because they did not wish the men on the wall to become fearful as a result of Rabshakeh’s threats. If that was the motive, Rabshakeh saw through it and continued with even greater threats, asserting that he was sent to speak to the men on the wall as well as Hezekiah and his emissaries. In fact, the men on the wall, he added, need to understand that, if they resist and war ensues, they will have to endure horribly disgusting conditions.

### **Vv. 13-20 – Rabshakeh’s Second Speech**

After that exchange Rabshakeh loudly issued an ultimatum for all to hear and understand. Do not follow Hezekiah. Do not trust in Jehovah. Do not listen to Hezekiah, but hear the king of Assyria, make peace with him, and accept the good things that he will do for you. After all, have any of the gods defeated my king thus far, and who is Jehovah that he should do any better?

### **Vv. 21-22 – The Report to Hezekiah**

Hezekiah's emissaries followed Hezekiah's orders and answered him not a word. They rent their clothes, returned to Hezekiah, and reported the words of Rabshakeh.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN**

### **VICTORY THROUGH FAITH**

#### **Vv. 1-7 – Desperation, and an Appeal to Isaiah**

Hezekiah's response to the news brought by his ambassadors was far different from the response of his father Ahaz to Isaiah. Isaiah assured Ahaz that God would deliver Judah, but Ahaz refused to believe. Hezekiah had no such assurance, but he mourned the news and he went to the temple of God. Additionally, he sought the help of Isaiah. He sent Eliakim and Shebna to Isaiah with a message of helplessness and futility, describing their situation as that of a woman whose time had come and who did not have strength to deliver. They entreated Isaiah to be certain that God knew the words of Rabshakeh defying the living God, asking Isaiah to pray for them. The message that Isaiah sent back to Hezekiah was one of encouragement. God's answer was there was no reason to fear the words with which the servants of the King of Assyria had blasphemed. Assyria's king would hear words, would return to his own land, where he would die by the sword.

#### **Vv. 8-13 – Sennacherib's Renewed Effort to Persuade Hezekiah**

Sennacherib did hear words. Specifically he heard that Tirhaka, Egypt's Ethiopian king, was marching against him (9). As he turned to deal with Egypt, Sennacherib sent a second message to Hezekiah advising him not to trust in Jehovah. After all, he argued, all of the other nations he had defeated had their gods and what good did those gods do them. Both he and his fathers had a long line of victories over many countries and their kings cannot be found.



### **Vv. 14-20 – Hezekiah’s Prayer Before Jehovah**

When Hezekiah received the letter he went to the temple and spread it before God, and prayed. He praised God and implored him to hear and see the defying words of Sennacherib. Hezekiah admitted that Assyria had laid waste nations and cast their gods into the fire, but they were gods of stone and wood that could be destroyed. He concluded with an entreaty to God to deliver them so that the world would know that Jehovah is God and that there is no other.

### **Vv. 21-29 – Jehovah’s Response – An Answer to Sennacherib**

Jehovah answered that prayer and it did not bode well for Sennacherib. Isaiah brought the message. God had a message of his own to the arrogant king. He had not challenged Judah; he had challenged Judah’s God (23). Sennacherib had made a tactical error. The glory of Jehovah was now at stake and Jehovah would intervene on behalf of his people.

God had made the Assyrian kingdom what it was (24-26). Each of the things that the Assyrian kings had done was only fulfilling God’s plan. He knew their every move and the time for their judgment had come. God would turn Sennacherib around and drive him back to Assyria (28-29).

### **Vv. 30-35 – A Message of Assurance to Hezekiah**

What assurance did Judah have that this would happen? God would provide a sign: Judah would eat and by the third year agriculture would return to normal. Not only would there be the return of the fields and vineyards, but a remnant (Hezekiah had been concerned about a remnant<sup>12</sup> (4).) shall survive and surpass. The seal of Jehovah of hosts will perform these great deeds (30-32).

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12. Note that there is no reference to a “righteous remnant.” It is those who survive the siege. It was the “righteous remnant” that kept Judah alive, but God’s use of “the remnant” indicates that more than the righteous remnant survive.

The Assyrian king will not come to Jerusalem. In fact, he will not even shoot an arrow there. He will take the same road home that he travelled to get here. God defended the city for his sake and for David's sake (33-35).

### **Vv. 36-38 – It Is Done**

The Angel of Jehovah smote 180,000 of Sennacherib's army and Sennacherib had no choice but to go home. He went to worship in the temple of his god and his god could not protect him. His own sons slew him and fled. Esar-haddon, another of his sons, ascended to the throne (36-38).

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT**

### **Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery**

#### **Vv. 1-8 – Hezekiah's Sickness and Prayer**

Hezekiah had become ill with an unnamed serious disease. Isaiah the prophet came calling but with a somber message – "Set thy house in order for thou shall die and not live." Hezekiah's reaction was not one of dejection or of submission. He wanted to live and he knew just one source that held hope – he turned his face to the wall and prayed unto Jehovah. Only after reminding God of how he had walked before him did Hezekiah weep. It could have been self-pity, but it could also have been that he desired to continue to lead God's people in the right way. Whatever it was it led Jehovah to respond with a positive answer. The death declaration was rescinded and fifteen years were added to Hezekiah's life. God would also deliver Hezekiah and the city (Jerusalem) out of the hand of Assyria. Hezekiah was given a sign – the shadow on the steps was turned back ten steps.

#### **Vv. 9-20 – Hezekiah's Psalm of Lamentation and Thanksgiving**

The opening verses (9-15) described Hezekiah's feelings arising from the Lord's decree that he would die. Vv. 10-11 record what he said. He had been deprived of the residue of his years. He will be deprived of life as he has known it, including relationship with God and man. He does not know what awaits him in the unseen world. In vv. 12-15 Hezekiah wrestles with the brevity of life, but in the end he resigned himself humbly to God's purpose.

Finally, Hezekiah reflected upon the lessons he had learned through his encounter with Jehovah through Isaiah. The Lord had restored him (16-17) and Hezekiah knew that this reprieve and forgiveness was to his benefit during the additional years. Indeed, these additional years would enable him to praise Jehovah, which he could not do from the grave (19). He pledged his additional years to the praise and worship of Jehovah in his temple (20).

### **Vv. 21-22 – Hezekiah's Healing**

Vv. 21-22 logically belong with vv. 6-7, but they appear here as the final details of the account. Hezekiah's illness apparently involved a large boil. Isaiah provided a prescription for the cure and then, in response to Hezekiah's request, provided a sign that the Lord would provide.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE**

### **Not Assyria, But Babylon**

#### **Vv. 1-4 – Prophet Versus King**

Sometime after Hezekiah's recovery, Merodach-baladan II<sup>13</sup> sent a delegation to Jerusalem bearing letters and a gift for Judah's king (1). The purpose of this visit was likely for the purpose of persuading Judah to form an alliance with Babylon against Assyria.<sup>14</sup> Hezekiah's response was a foolish attempt to impress his guests. He showed them everything that might impress them – silver, gold, spices, oil, weapons, and more. He showed them everything that he possessed of any kind (2).

Isaiah inquired concerning the delegation and its purpose. He asked a question that has been the title of many sermons, "What have they seen in thy house?" Hezekiah provided an honest response. He probably and correctly suspected that Isaiah already knew the answer.

### **Vv. 5-8 – The Word of Doom**

Isaiah then gave Hezekiah a message from Jehovah. The day was coming when Hezekiah and his entire family and all of value in Judah would be carried to Babylon. His sons would be eunuchs in the service of Babylon's king. Hezekiah meekly accepted God's judgment. His comment that "there shall be peace and truth in my days" has been construed by some as selfish. It is just as likely if not more likely that Hezekiah was grateful for God's grace in his last days. Hezekiah's proud act had cost him his kingdom, but God delayed the Babylonian conquest for over a century.

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13. Merodach-baladan ruled Babylon from 721 – 710 BC and again in 703 BC. During the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, Babylon attempted to assert its independence when it perceived Assyrian weakness. Sargon II (721–710 BC) was able to subdue Babylon, and Merodach-baladan fled into exile in Elam, where he subsequently died.

14. Another possible cause was that Babylon was gathering information about Judah's defenses for future use in war. Even if this were not the case, the information provided could still have been used for that purpose when Babylon did in fact attack Judah. "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts."