

A. The Historical Chapters 36-39

B. Why Babylon, not Assyria?

C. When did this Babylonian entrance take place?

1. Hezekiah's illness<sup>A</sup>

2. Merodach-baladan<sup>B</sup>

D. Why did this Babylonian entrance take place?

1. secular history information

2. spiritual information<sup>C</sup>

E. Where did Hezekiah fail in his spiritual walk?

1. the quality of his walk<sup>D</sup>

2. his possessions & accomplishments<sup>E</sup>

F. What for us is the purpose of this record of Hezekiah's failure?

1. the scriptures statements<sup>F</sup>

2. the scriptural examples

a. Moses<sup>G</sup>

b. David<sup>H</sup>

c. Peter<sup>I</sup>

G. How did Hezekiah respond to the discovery of his failure?

1. the conversation with Isaiah

2. God's judgement upon him

3. the grace in the judgement

H. What do I learn from this?

---

<sup>A</sup> 2 Kings 20:5-6, Isaiah 38:5-6

<sup>B</sup> 2 Kings 18:13-16

<sup>C</sup> 2 Chronicles 32:24-26, 31

<sup>D</sup> 2 Kings 18:3, 6-7

<sup>E</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:10-15, 2 Kings 20:20

---

<sup>F</sup> Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

<sup>G</sup> Numbers 12:3, 20:8-12

<sup>H</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6-10, 26:9-11; 2 Samuel 11

<sup>I</sup> Matthew 16:16, 14:26ff, 26:35ff, 26:69ff

- A. These historical chapters, 36 to 39, in the middle of Isaiah
  1. are an important linkage of the messages of the first and second halves of this book of prophecy
  2. the first half is a message of God's coming judgement upon His people, both the wayward 10 northern tribes known as Israel, and even more especially on the 2 southern tribes, the people of the land of Judah and Jerusalem
  3. yet, interspersed in this message, and never far away, is also the message of God's coming salvation, of the promise of Messiah of the line of King David, who as Immanuel, the Son who is given: Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace – it is He who will bring deliverance to the people of God
  4. forming an ominous dark cloud throughout these hangs the shadow of Assyria and its conquests of the nations of the fertile crescent stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea – an apparently unstoppable empire and army
  5. the second half of Isaiah, from which, Lord willing, we shall begin to preach in September, is a message of comfort to a nation in exile; a message so vivid in its prophecy of the exile of Judah into the lands of Babylon, that skeptics, unbelievers, have sought to prove it was written a century and a half later by another author, and thus not prophecy at all
  6. yet the skeptics disagree among themselves on the various writers, and their arguments are baseless, for the language of this prophecy reveals but one human writer and one Divine Author, the Holy Spirit
  
- B. but what happened to the great empire of Assyria,
  1. that it should rather be Babylon than Nineveh that should be the source of the exile of the southern kingdom?
    - a. that is what these chapters explain
    - b. the people of Judah have stood and watched
    - c. as Assyria, over a period of 20 to 30 years, has taken away the people of the northern kingdom into exile: the tribes to the east of the Jordan river; the tribes around the sea of Galilee; finally Samaria and the remaining tribes
    - d. no king has stood up to Assyrian, to Sennacherib or his father Sargon and survived; that is, not until

## Hezekiah

- e. Assyria is on the wane and there is only one further time that they affect the people of Judah, when some years later, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, is taken into exile on a temporary basis to bring him to repentance

## 2. yet the judgement of God is coming to the people of Judah

- a. Isaiah had prophesied it, and Hezekiah knew it
- b. Assyria was a warning to the people of Judah, but was not to be the instrument to bring that final judgement to Judah
- c. this 39th chapter introduces that instrument; it is Babylon, who was itself at that very time struggling vainly to be free of the Assyrian yoke
- d. this, then is the prophetic context of Isaiah 39

## C. When did this Babylonian entrance take place?

1. Isaiah 36 and 37 tell us that Sennacherib began his campaign against Judah (as well as Egypt) in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign, and tell of the attack, the threats, the defeat and the retreat of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army on Judah
2. last Lord's day we found that Hezekiah's illness took place
  - a. some time before Assyria had met that defeat, but yet at a point where it was already a threat to Judah and Jerusalem
  - b. God answered Hezekiah's prayer with three promises
    - (A) first, 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord.' (2 Kings 20:5)
    - (B) second, 'I will add fifteen years to your life.' (Isaiah 38:5)
    - (C) third, 'I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.' (Isaiah 38:6)
  - c. showing that Hezekiah's illness, though severe, may have been relatively short, and took place before the deliverance related in chapters 36 and 37

3. The first verse of this chapter reads: '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.' showing that the Babylonian entrance took place sometime after Hezekiah's miraculous recovery
  - a. can we pin-point it in time more closely? ... perhaps
  - b. 2 Kings 18:13-16 says, '13 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 14 Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.'
  - c. Now, seeing that Hezekiah was still able, and was willing, to show all these treasures unspoilt seems to indicate that the Babylonian entrance took place prior to that date.

D. Why did this Babylonian entrance take place?

1. secular history records concerning Merodach-baladan that
  - a. he had, at about this time, regained the throne of Babylon in a revolt against Assyria, and was seeking help from the Arabs and other surrounding nations
  - b. he was deposed as king of Babylon, somewhat more than a year prior to the campaign against Judah and Egypt
  - c. so it is safe to assume that as well as rejoicing in Hezekiah's recovery, there was the political purpose in this visit of seeking Judah as an ally against Assyria
2. but 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 and 31, tells us the spiritual reason for the Babylonian entrance: '24 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him and gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. 26 However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah. ... 31 Even in the matter of the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of

the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.'

- a. God was testing Hezekiah's faithfulness
- b. it was an opportunity to be a witness to Yahweh, God of Israel, to declare the wonders done by God
- c. but Hezekiah showed the wonders of his kingdom instead
- d. Hezekiah, in his pride, failed the test of God

E. Where did Hezekiah fail in his spiritual walk?

1. as we have looked at Hezekiah's spiritual life

- a. I think we have been impressed by its consistent quality
- b. as introduced in 2 Kings 18: 3, 'He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.' and later in verses 6-7a, '6 For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. 7a And the Lord was with him; wherever he went he prospered...'
- c. when illness came upon him, he prayed
- d. when Rabshakeh came before Jerusalem with his threats and insults, he went to the temple, he called upon Isaiah the prophet of God for prayer and a word from God
- e. when Sennacherib's threatening letter came, he prayed

2. but in verse 2, '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 armoury 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.'

- a. there was a great deal to show to them
- b. not just the silver, gold, spices and treasures
- c. the word rendered 'armoury' is much broader in scope than merely weapons of war: it means 'articles, utensils, vessels, implements, or apparatus' – Hezekiah had much to show
- d. there would have been all that he had inherited from his great-grandfather, Uzziah, as found in 2 Chronicles 26, '10 He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock, both in the lowland and in the plain. He also had plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields, for he loved the soil ... 14 Moreover, Uzziah prepared for all the army shields,

spears, helmets, body armour, bows and sling stones. 15a In Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skilful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones...'

e. and Hezekiah showed similar abilities; 2 Kings 20:20, 'Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?' In 1867 this conduit was discovered by Sir Charles Warren, which conveyed water from the spring to the Pool of Siloam. Also discovered, near that pool was the Siloam Inscription, a record then made of the work.

f. and all this, in great pride, Hezekiah showed

3. when the Babylonian entrance with the arrival of envoys took place, he failed to pray, he failed to seek guidance, his heart was lifted up with his own possessions and success; and he showed them all without thinking of God and the results:

4. Hezekiah failed in the very place of his spiritual strength

F. What for us is the purpose of this record of Hezekiah's failure?

1. Romans 15:4, 'For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.'

2. and, speaking of the grumblers in the wilderness, 1 Corinthians 10:11-12, '11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.'

3. they are warnings; the warning that often it is in the very place of our greatest spiritual strength that we turn our eyes off of God; that then we fall and fail our Saviour

4. of Moses, we read in Numbers 12:3, that '(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)' Yet a few chapters later in Numbers 20 we read these words, '8 "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes,

that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him; 10 and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. 12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

- a. Moses failed in his greatest strength, his humility before God and was denied entrance into the land of promise
5. David was a man of justice, who refused to kill king Saul, God's anointed, on two occasions when he could easily have done so, even though then Saul was seeking to kill David
    - a. yet this great spiritual leader, because of adultery with Bath-sheba, sought to hide his great sin
    - b. and effectively murdered her husband, the faithful Uriah
    - c. the man of justice committed the ultimate unjust act
  6. Peter, was bold and resolute, never fearing to speak up and to declare his faith in Jesus, the Messiah of God, who alone had the words of eternal life. It was he who would step out of the boat to go to Jesus on the water, but sank when he took his eyes off of Jesus. But that failure was minor. He had declared that he would even die for Christ; but when a mere girl asked if he had not been one of Christ's disciples, this bold man, took fear and denied his Lord with curses. On the mission field, he had been eating with Christian gentile brethren, but when the legalist teachers came from Jerusalem, he removed himself from them out of fear of the Jews. Brave spokesman for Christ, he failed out of fear
  7. Abraham, Joshua, Elijah, &c could also be listed; **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.**
- G. How did Hezekiah respond to the discovery of his failure?
1. the conversation between Isaiah and Hezekiah is much like that between many a parent and one of their

children

- a. the parent knows full well what the child has done wrong
  - b. but rather than accusing the child, they ask questions that draw the child to confess the wrong and at the same time to realize that why it was wrong
  - c. notice that Hezekiah never answers Isaiah's first question as to what the Babylonian envoys said – perhaps it was a truth too embarrassing and obvious to say aloud, that this good king who so trusted God, had fallen into the same error as his father Ahaz who preferred to trust a heathen nation for deliverance rather than God – in Babylon, a nation that God through Isaiah in chapter 21 had already proclaimed the judgement of its destruction
2. God's judgement of Hezekiah is given in verses 6-7: '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 will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left," says the Lord. 7 "And some of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon." ' – in his pride and vanity, Hezekiah has failed in his stewardship of that which God had entrusted to him
- a. the things that his fathers, the kings dating back to David and Solomon had laid up as temple and personal treasures
  - b. but also the sons that would follow him would suffer
3. yet note that there is a measure of grace in God's words, if we are correct in our understanding of the time and situation of these words, for if, indeed, Hezekiah had not yet any children, then there is the implicit promise that the promised Messiah will one day come from his descendants: that's grace
4. Hezekiah's response is one of humble acceptance in verse 8 he says 'The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good. ... For there will be peace and truth in my days.' The translation of 'For he thought' in the NAS has little to comment it; Hezekiah accepted God's judgement, with especial gratitude in the last words. He is not saying, 'I'm OK, Jack, that's all that matters'. Hezekiah long ago knew from Isaiah's ministry that judgement must come upon Judah and the house of David, but he gives thanks to God for the grace that spared him from seeing it.

- H. I need not labour in the application of the lessons of this chapter
1. as believers in Jesus Christ, how often we fail!
  2. 'let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall'
  3. God may have to bring our failure sharply to our attention
  4. 'For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.' (Hebrews 12:6)
  5. in such time let us follow Hezekiah's example with humble acceptance and a renewed trust in God's goodness and grace, trusting for strength in the unfailing promises of God.

1. © 2009 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard (NAS) version of the Bible, © 1960 ... 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.