

“Prayers of Hezekiah” Isaiah 37:1-39:8

Context: The invasion of Judah and the siege of Jerusalem set the scene for the recounting of Hezekiah’s prayers. The second prayer actually precedes the first, coming before Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem, as indicated by the mention of Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon. Chapters 37-39 answer the prophecies of chapters 28-36. Our current reflection moves beyond the condemnation of Judah and Jerusalem for their lack of trust in God and transitions again to the only condition in which a person or a nation can be saved, that of repentance. The prayer occurs in the context of Sennacherib’s assertion that he prevails over all foreign gods, including the God of Israel. The description of Hezekiah’s attitude and action serves as a timeless lesson for all who seek deliverance from distress and impending doom.

Life Principle: Keep your eyes on God and not on your treasures, so that you lose sight of neither (cf. Isaiah 39:4-6).

1. Hezekiah’s prayer for deliverance – Isaiah 37:1-38

Hezekiah’s prayer included acknowledgement of sin, recognition of God’s rightful discipline, and an attitude of earnest repentance. He also sought the prophet’s intercession for deliverance of the Remnant from the blasphemers. God responds through the prophet, assuring deliverance. Sennacherib challenged God’s assurance. Hezekiah’s response was for God to spare the Remnant for His name’s sake and for His glory. God promised the Remnant three signs in order that they might remember that He delivered them: (1) no breach of the wall, (2) retreat of Sennacherib with his army, and (3) three years of harvest.

2. Hezekiah’s prayer for healing – Isaiah 38:1-22

The foretelling of Hezekiah’s death in the prime of life and without an heir led Hezekiah to immediately turn to God for resolution. The God of the covenant granted Hezekiah’s plea for physical life for a period of time. Hezekiah responded with thanksgiving.

3. Hezekiah’s sin of presumption – Isaiah 39:1-8

Hezekiah’s sin of presumption and callous arrogance, showing the Babylonians ‘his’ wealth, resulted in the prophecy of the loss of wealth and the destruction of Jerusalem after his reign. Perhaps his repentance and prayer recorded in chapter 37 accounts for the fulfilling of this prophecy during his reign.

Study questions:

- A comparison of Isaiah 38:1 and 38:5 seems to bring into question God’s veracity or His omniscience, since Isaiah was told by God that Hezekiah would die and then God spared his life (see footnote 5 ‘**On God**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org)? Is there a satisfactory way to reconcile these verses?
- The Scripture sometimes emphasizes events and not chronology. As a **Bible study method**, locate chapter 39 chronologically, using Merodach-Baladan as a time reference. How might you account for the non-linear time sequencing of chapters 37-39? (Hint: Note the transition of subject matter in chapters 40 and following.)
- *Sheol* is frequently used in the Hebrew Scripture and seems to have various shades of meanings. Look up the meaning of *Sheol* in the TWOT (2303c). What are three possible meanings? Which use seems most likely in Isaiah? See also Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:20ff; 1 Peter 3:19ff; Eph 4:9-10.

Transformation exercise:

Reflect on Isaiah 38:17 and 20. How might the mediations of Hezekiah benefit you in your physical suffering? From Hezekiah’s prayer, incorporate contrition, recognition of God’s rightful discipline, and earnest repentance as you plead with God for help. Do you need to take your plea to someone with the gift of prophecy for possible spiritual discernment? Has God ever healed you for a period of time? Do you often give thanks for that healing?