

We see different kinds of flesh here: beasts, birds, fish. This should illustrate God's power to give us a heavenly body according to His own will. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." We shall preserve our identity. We shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. "These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they and whence came they? . . . These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13, 14). In this blessed hope let us live and die, for death is but the beginning of life, unending and blessed, for those who follow the Son of God.

Addendum: For an excellent expose' of Modern Higher Criticism dealing at length with the Pentateuch, see Dr. John L. Campbell's book, *The Bible Under Fire*. Read especially the first chapter which deals with the Polychrome ("Rainbow") Bible where the critics literally took shears and cut and pasted until they made a Bible which would "prove" their theories of "gradual development."

D. PRESUMPTION, CHAPTER 39

1. PRIDE

TEXT: 39:1-4

- 1 At that time Merodachbaladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.
- 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

- 3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.
- 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

QUERIES

- a. Why was the king of Babylon so interested in Hezekiah?
- b. Why did the prophet Isaiah question Hezekiah?

PARAPHRASE

About nine years before Hezekiah's confrontation with the Assyrian Rabshakeh, soon after his recovery from his illness, the king of Babylon, Merodachbaladan, son of Baladan, sent his envoys with a letter and a gift to Hezekiah. The King of Babylon was interested in the reports of Hezekiah's phenomenal recovery from terminal illness. Hezekiah was proud of the fact that the king of Babylon had sent envoys to inquire of his recovery so he took them on a tour of his palace, showing them the wealth of his treasury and the armaments in his armory. Hezekiah was so taken with the overtures of the Babylonians, he showed them everything in his city they wanted to see. Immediately, Isaiah the prophet confronted King Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say to you—where are they from? Hezekiah did not tell Isaiah what the men said but did reply, They are from far away in Babylon. Then Isaiah asked the king, what have you shown them of your kingdom? Hezekiah replied, I have shown them everything about my kingdom—everything in my treasury and in my armory.

COMMENTS

V. 1-2 VANITY OF THE KING: II Chronicles 32:31 relates that the envoys from Babylon were sent to "inquire about the sign that had been done in the land." Evidently word had filtered into the courts of foreign potentates of the phenomenal, miraculous recovery of King Hezekiah from a terminal illness. Some commentators are inclined to think the inquiry of the envoys about Hezekiah's recovery was simply a ploy, a ruse, to approach Judah for a military alliance against Assyria. Whatever the case, the text in II Chronicles indicates Hezekiah did not seek the Lord's guidance in dealing with the Babylonians so, "God left him to himself, in order to try him and to know all that was in his heart."

If our chronology is correct (see comments on 38:1-3) the Babylonian envoys came to Hezekiah before the invasion of Sennacherib (Isa. 36-37). They came soon after Hezekiah's recovery. This would place their visit sometime in 710 B.C. Merodachbaladan (which means, Marduk has given a son) was probably named for the pagan god Marduk. He was the valiant leader of a people known as Chaldeans who gained power and rule over the southern territory of Mesopotamia. In 722 B.C. he rebelled against the Assyrian rule of that territory and formed his own kingdom. Sargon, king of Assyria (Isa. 20), recognized his domain in 721 B.C. so he reigned over that small southern territory for 11 years. About 710 B.C. he sent envoys to Jerusalem, supposedly to give his best wishes to Hezekiah at his recovery from illness. What the envoys really came for was to invite Hezekiah to join in an alliance against Assyria. Merodachbaladan had already persuaded Susa, Phoenicia, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Egypt to join him in a military attack upon Assyria. Sargon learned of the planned attack and set about to defeat these nations, one by one. He took Babylon and Bit-Yakin (Merodachbaladan's home in the swamps of southern Mesopotamia) and Merodachbaladan himself was captured. He managed to be reinstated as ruler of a small principedom at Bit-Yakin. Around 702 or 701 he occupied

Babylon and ruled there again but only briefly. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor drove him back to the swamps and Bit-Yakin. Later he was forced to flee to Elam (Persia) and Chaldean influence was silenced in Mesopotamia. Although Merodachbaladan was unsuccessful in his attempt to overthrow Assyria and revive the power of ancient Babylon, the Chaldeans rose after his death to the dominant power in Mesopotamia.

Merodachbaladan's escapades and seditions are documented in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sennacherib found by archaeologists (See *Archaeology and Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pg. 210-211).

The Hebrew word *samahk* expresses more than *gladness*. It often means *to shine cheerfully*. Hezekiah was evidently very impressed with his visitors. He was flattered that the king of Babylon would send him a present. He was also momentarily charmed by their invitation to join in the efforts to break the Assyrian yoke. With such charming visitors Hezekiah felt it would be an opportune time to "show off" the grandeur of his country's wealth and armament. He probably wanted to prove to them he was no second-rate king. Hezekiah committed a two-fold *faux pas*; a political blunder and a personal transgression. For the king of God's covenant people to display all his treasures and weapons to pagan envoys who represented inevitable enemies was political stupidity. The envoys undoubtedly made mental note of fortifications, weapons and financial resources for future use. The personal blunder was in succumbing to vanity, pride, egotism and self-sufficiency. This detracted from his faith and trust in Jehovah. And this almost immediately after his great psalm of praise and trust in Jehovah! How like us mortal men he was!

V. 3-4 VOICE OF THE PROPHET: It appears Isaiah came almost immediately after the tour of the envoys and confronted Hezekiah with his blunder. Isaiah was sent by Jehovah as verse 5 confirms. His approach reminds one of the confrontation between the prophet Nathan and King David. Hezekiah is so charmed by the prestige apparently accorded him by this visit he misses the ominous inferences of the

prophet. Isaiah asks, what have these men said? and where are they from? Hezekiah places first importance on where they were from—Babylon. Never mind what they say—even though they may be talking about a Babylonian-Judean alliance. The important thing to notice is how important I am that they would come all the way from the great city of Babylon to see me.

Isaiah's next question is one of foreboding also, What have they seen in your house? In other words, How much have you shown them of your armament and treasures? Have you been discreet or indiscreet? Still elated over being flattered by such auspicious visitors, the King blurts out that he has shown them *everything*! Nothing has been kept secret. Isaiah's questions were intended to reveal to the king his blunder. They were specifically to remind him he had not kept his promise to trust in Jehovah but he had been seduced through his egotism to trust in men.

QUIZ

1. What does II Chronicles 32 tell us about this incident?
2. When did the envoys from Babylon come to Hezekiah?
3. What was Hezekiah's reaction to their visit?

2. PUNISHMENT

TEXT: 39:5-8

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts.

6 Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah.

7 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.

8 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

QUERIES

- a. Why carried away to Babylon instead of Assyria?
- b. Why did Hezekiah say the prediction was "good"?

PARAPHRASE

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts. Behold, the time is coming when all of the armament and treasures which you have so boastfully shown your Babylonian visitors—everything your ancestors have worked so hard to accumulate and store up—will be carried off by the Babylonians as the booty of war. None of your wealth or weapons will be left, says the Lord. Your own sons and grandsons will be taken away by these same Babylonians and made slaves in the palace of their king. Hezekiah was humbled by the prophet's words and said, Yes, the word of the Lord is good and just. Furthermore, the word of the Lord is merciful. The Lord will make peace and truth to prevail for us at least for the rest of my days.

COMMENTS

v. 5-7 **CARRYING AWAY:** Isaiah came, not in a human advisory capacity, but as a prophet of God. His prediction carried all the authority of Almighty God. It was, in fact, *the word* of Jehovah.

It is ironic that all the treasures Hezekiah had shown to the Babylonian envoys will someday, Isaiah predicts, be carried off

by the Babylonians as the booty of conquest. Isaiah's prediction is enigmatic and problematical, to say the least. Here are the Babylonian envoys bringing gifts, expressing concern about Hezekiah's health, making friendly and charming inquiries about the grandeur of Judah's beautiful Temple vessels, diplomatically inviting Hezekiah to join forces with a great crusade against the common enemy, Assyria, and Isaiah is predicting they will be Judah's real conquerors. What appears to be the real threat, which has terrified the people, Assyria, Isaiah has predicted will disappear and pose no threat at all to Judah. What it really amounts to is a confrontation between the finite knowledge (limited only to the past and present) and the infinite knowledge of God (unlimited). Hezekiah's part in the drama is to decide which he will trust.

A prediction even more piercing to the heart of Hezekiah was the one concerning his sons. He does not even have a son yet! Now the dark news comes that when he shall have a son, his destiny is that of conquest and slavery in a pagan palace. The fulfillment of this prediction may be seen in Dan. 1:3-6; II Chron. 33:11; II Kings 24:12-16. Manasseh, Hezekiah's immediate son, was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians; Jehoiachin, a great-great-great-great grandson of Hezekiah was taken captive by the Babylonians. The throne of Judah, the house of David, so precious to Hezekiah, will not only cease to exist, but the sovereign crowned heads which sit upon it will be forced into shameful servitude in an unclean, idolatrous, pagan court.

V. 8 CALM ACQUIESCENCE: Hezekiah reacts to the rebuke of Isaiah and the word of the Lord as one would expect a man of his calibre to react. He is a man of great faith, but not a perfect man. He has weaknesses. But he is a man of a good and malleable heart. He is capable of acknowledging his sin and repenting when confronted with the will of God. In this respect, he is like his progenitor, David. It is not only the sin of Hezekiah that brings on the Babylonian captivity (cf. Deut. 28:32), but the whole nation has defaulted on their covenant with God. Already other prophets have arraigned Judah before

the judgment bar of God (Amos 2:4-5; Hosea 6:11, etc.).

Hezekiah should not be accused of a selfish attitude when he says, "For there shall be peace and truth in my days." He has resigned his will to that of the Lord and pronounced the will of the Lord "good"! What all does he mean? We cannot be certain. Perhaps he is acknowledging the justness of God's chastisement. Perhaps he is acknowledging the good that will result from the chastening of a rebellious and unfaithful people through the coming captivity. He himself has just endured a chastening in his illness, and it has made him a man more responsive to the revealed will of God. Now he thanks the Lord, not only for himself but for his nation, that there will be a time of peace and truth for Judah before the darkness of the Babylonian captivity falls. E. J. Young paraphrases Hezekiah, "There will be peace and truth at least in my days, but I am not spared the misfortune of the knowledge that my descendants will go into captivity."

The great forces of evil that oppose the redemptive work of God through His covenant loom on the horizon in Babylon. The mercy of God is extended to the covenant people for a short time. But soon they must be cast into the crucible and purified. Soon they must suffer the discipline of God that produces the fruit of righteousness. Soon the remnant must be refined that through it may come the Messiah and redemption to all peoples. It is no comfort to know that "peace and truth" will last only for Hezekiah's day. What about the future fortunes of the people of God? What ultimate and everlasting comfort can be given to God's people? What about peace and truth forever?

The answers to these questions are reserved for the second great section of the book of Isaiah, chapters 40-66.

QUIZ

1. What is so enigmatic about predicting captivity by Babylon?
2. Which sons of Hezekiah were taken captive?

3. Was Hezekiah selfish in being glad of peace and truth in his own days?
4. Where is the answer to the enigma of the captivities?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-EIGHT AND THIRTY-NINE

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

(Identify and locate the following by telling all you know about them.)

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. Hezekiah | 7. the house of Jehovah |
| 2. the wall | 8. cake of figs |
| 3. dial of Ahaz | 9. Merodachbaladan |
| 4. Sheol | 10. the house of his armor |
| 5. the loom | 11. Babylon |
| 6. the pit | 12. thy sons that shall issue
from thee |

MEMORIZATION

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto _____. And Isaiah the prophet the son of _____ came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, _____; for thou shalt _____, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his _____ to the _____, and prayed unto Jehovah, and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in _____ and with a _____ heart, and have done that which is _____ in thy sight. And Hezekiah _____ sore. (Isa. 38:1-3)

Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, _____ is the word of Jehovah which thou has spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be _____ and _____ in my _____. (Isa. 39:8)

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EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain why Hezekiah was so distraught when he learned he would die (Isa. 38:1-22).
2. Explain why it was proper for Hezekiah to ask for a sign of his healing, when the N.T. denounces the Pharisees for continually seeking a sign from Jesus (Isa. 38:7-8).
3. Explain why Hezekiah could say the prediction of the Lord of the Babylonian captivity for Judah was "good" (Isa. 39:5-8).

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. What is the difference between the Old Testament concept of life after death and that of the New Testament and what difference should this make in our relationship to God?
2. What did Hezekiah do wrong in showing the Babylonians his treasury and what application could be made in the church's (the New Kingdom of God) relationship to the world?
3. What overall application could be made for the Church and the World in this whole section, chapters 24-39?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:1-11

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THIS MESSAGE?

- A. The general tenor of thought and action today