

LESSON 8

ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSES AND HEZEKIAH'S CRISES

Isaiah 34:1-39:8

Introduction

Chapter 34 deals with the judgement of God upon the nations, and chapters 35-39 describe the salvation of Yahweh. The first section of Isaiah (First Isaiah) closes with a historical account of the latter part of Hezekiah's reign. The vocabulary, literary form, and content of chapters 34 and 35 are similar to that of Second Isaiah.

The Judgement of Yahweh

Isaiah 34:1-17

Yahweh's anger against the nations (34:1-4).—

Isaiah summoned the nations to hear the sentence which had been passed on them by Yahweh (v. 1). The judgement was to be total destruction which, in His rage, Yahweh would bring upon all nations (v. 2). The wickedness of the people, especially their idolatry and injustice, caused them to deserve the punishment which Yahweh would execute. The fearful slaughter was dramatized forcefully by Isaiah's describing the stench of decaying corpses. The odour would ascend to heaven, and the mountains would flow with blood (v. 3). The heavens would be rolled up like a scroll, and the stars would fall like leaves from the vine and fig tree at the end of the season (v. 4). The judgement of all nations is elaborated in the New Testament as the great and final judgement.

The special doom awaiting Edom (34:5-17).—

Edom was singled out for especially severe punishment. The Edomites, who were descendants of Esau, were hated intensely by the Jews, and the two peoples were frequently in conflict. This hatred, which had existed from the time of Jacob and Esau, increased when the Edomites assisted the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem in 587 B.C., and, subsequently, the Edomites occupied much of the land of Judah. The people are described as doomed; they would be consumed by the Lord's sword which would descend from the skies and would slaughter the victims until the sword is "sated" with blood and gorged with fat (vv. 5-6). The judgement is described as a sacrificial feast in which the foe would be offered as the sacrifice. Not even animals would be spared in the slaughter, and the land would be soaked with blood (v. 7). Bozrah, the capital of Edom, would be the scene of the great slaughter.

Yes or No?

Yahweh passed judgement upon all nations because of their wickedness. _____

(Yes)

Place an X by the endings that make the following statements complete and correct.
Intense hatred between the Jews and Edomites was caused by—

1. the Edomite occupation of Judah. _____
2. trouble between their kings. _____
3. the relation of the ancestors of Jacob and Esau. _____
4. the Edomite assistance to the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem in 587 B.C. _____

(1-X, 3-X, 4-X)

The Day of the Lord is described as "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion" (v. 8). The Lord's vengeance would turn the streams into pitch and the earth into brimstone (v. 9). The land would become burning pitch, and smoke would ascend for ever (v. 10). The destruction of the land would be so complete that it would be uninhabited except for wild animals, birds, and demons hiding in the destroyed remains (vv. 10b-11, 14-15). The land would be so completely abandoned that its name would be "No Kingdom" (v. 12, RSV). Thorns and thistles would grow in its fortresses, indicating their not being occupied (v. 13).

The identity of "the book of the Lord" (v. 16) is uncertain. Perhaps the expression refers to Isaiah's prophecies or to a treaty that had been entered into by Judah and Edom. Since Edom had violated the treaty, the prophet pronounced doom upon her, using language taken from the list of curses attached to the treaty. The mouth of the prophet had given the words of the book, and the Spirit of God had directed what he was to say; thus, the prophet's message and the words of God were in accord (v. 16). Edom would be given to the unclean beasts, birds, and reptiles which would possess her for ever (v. 17; see also vv. 10-15).

Objection has been raised to Yahweh's severe destruction in the judgement. It should be remembered that there are two sides to judgement: condemnation and redemption. God acts in mercy and love towards sinners who return to Him in repentance; His judgement can mean blessings. Sinners who turn away from God to walk in rebellion and idolatry experience the wrath rather than the blessings of Yahweh. Judgement would not be judgement without punishment as an expression of wrath against wrong.

The Redemption of Yahweh

Isaiah 35:1-10

The glory of the last times (35:1-7).—The description of Yahweh's salvation gives a sharp contrast to His judgement. His salvation is described as so glorious and comprehensive that even nature is transformed and is depicted as rejoicing (v. 1). Under judgement, the land would be scorched and vegetation burnt. In the hour of redemption, the land would be made fruitful and vegetation would blossom profusely (vv. 1-2). This Scripture provides the background for Paul's statement that creation awaits expectantly for the "glory which shall be revealed in us," the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-19).

The humble and weak who were fearful were exhorted to be strong and fear not (v. 4). The righteous who walked by faith in Yahweh experienced courage rather than fear because they knew that their God would come with recompense (v. 4). His coming would be to save His people. This verse prepared for Jesus' teachings concerning His second coming.

A treaty between Judah and Edom which Edom violated may have been referred to as

(the book of the Lord)

Match.

1. *Condemnation and punishment*
2. *Redemption*

- a. *His mercy and love towards those who repent*
- b. *An expression of God's wrath*

(1.b, 2.a)

Isaiah 35:1-7 is the background for what New Testament Scripture.

(Romans 8:18-19)

Physical afflictions, such as blindness and deafness, would be removed, the lame would leap like deer, and the scorched land would have streams flowing from it (vv. 5-6). Jesus had these verses in mind when John's disciples came to inquire whether or not He was the Messiah or should they and John look for another (see Matt. 11:2ff.). Jesus answered that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are healed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. Apparently Isaiah 35:1-7 was commonly interpreted at the time of Jesus as referring to the Messianic Age. Jesus claimed that His ministry was the arrival of the New Age. The miracles of healing performed by Himself and His disciples proved its arrival. Although the passage was fulfilled partially in the ministry of Christ, the full blessings of the Messianic Age are still future—the desert has not yet become fruitful as predicted for the Golden Age. The parched ground's becoming a pool apparently is based on the idea of the mirage which results from heat waves reflecting from a hot surface. Often thirsty travellers in the desert whose tongues are parched are deceived by a mirage and think water lies ahead. The returning exiles were promised that when they crossed the desert they would not be deceived by a mirage but would find actual pools of water (v. 7).

The highway of the redeemed (35:8-10).—Salvation in the previous section (see v. 4) referred to the deliverance and restoration of God's people who had been taken into captivity. Defeat by a foreign power had come because the Israelites sinned by turning away from Yahweh to idolatry. Only the faithful remnant would be returned from captivity ("the unclean shall not pass over it"), and a highway, known as "the way of holiness," would be provided for their return (v. 8). Protection from wild beasts (lions and other ravenous animals) would be given for the righteous remnant who travelled on the way of holiness (v. 9). The redeemed would be those whom God had purchased for His own, and they would not be troubled by cruel enemies. Those who had been delivered by Yahweh would return to Zion with singing and joy, and sorrow would be absent (v. 10).

Sennacherib's Invasion

Isaiah 36:1—37:38

Introduction.—This section is a parallel to 2 Kings 18:13—19:37. Isaiah omitted the information found in 2 Kings 18:14-16; otherwise, only minor differences in expression appear. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. Isaiah predicted the deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian emperor. The invasion of Sennacherib took place in 701 B.C.

Assyria's demand for Jerusalem's surrender (36:1-22).—Hezekiah became king about 715 B.C. In his fourteenth year (701 B.C.), Sennacherib attempted to gain victory over Jerusalem by threat and deceit (v. 1). He sent Rabshakeh, his commander-in-chief,

Continue reading the following paragraph before doing this exercise.

True or False?

1. *Jesus answered the question of His messiahship by pointing to His miracles of healing. _____*
2. *Isaiah 35:1-7 was interpreted messianically and predicted the miracles of healing. _____*
3. *The pointing of Jesus to His healing miracles as proof of His messiahship was a fulfilment of Isaiah 35:1-7. _____*
4. *A highway known as the way of salvation would be provided for the remnant's return. _____*
5. *Attack by wild animals would be a provision for the remnant's return from captivity. _____*
6. *The deliverance from cruel enemies would be another provision for the remnant's return from captivity. _____*

(1. True, 2. True, 3. True, 4. False, 5. False, 6. True)

Isaiah 36:1—37:38 is parallel to what other Scripture. _____

(2 Kings 18:13—19:37)

to demand the surrender of Jerusalem (vv. 2ff.). According to the omitted verses which are found in 2 Kings 18: 14-16, Hezekiah had sent previously an envoy to the Assyrians, who were camped at Lachish, to acknowledge his revolting was an error. Sennacherib accepted Hezekiah's submission and required the payment of a huge amount of silver and gold which was taken from the Temple and the king's palace. This event is verified by the Annals of Sennacherib, but scholars have been puzzled by the subsequent demand of Sennacherib's general for the surrender of Jerusalem as recorded in both 2 Kings and Isaiah.

Rabshakeh, which is an Assyrian word for chief officer, delivered his artistic speech at the very spot where Isaiah had earlier encountered Ahaz (see 7:3). His skilful rhetoric included four reasons why Jerusalem should surrender: (1) Jerusalem did not have the power to resist the Assyrian army (vv. 4-5); (2) Jerusalem's God could not save her (v. 5); (3) Egypt could not be relied upon for help (v. 6); and (4) Sennacherib's career of conquest was ordained by God (v. 7). Rabshakeh taunted the inhabitants by stating that mere words would not provide military power for the defence of the city. He described Egypt as a crushed reed which would pierce a man's hand if he leaned on it (v. 6). He further taunted Hezekiah by offering two thousand horses if the Jewish army had men to put on them (v. 8). He claimed that Yahweh had said to him, "Go up against this land, and destroy it" (v. 10).

Rabshakeh's speaking in the Hebrew tongue was masterful psychology (v. 11). Judaeans sat on the wall and listened to his challenges. The Jewish leaders (Eliakim, Joah, and Shebna, the prime minister) requested him to speak in Aramaic so that the people on the wall would not be able to understand his words. Rabshakeh refused to heed their request (v. 12). Instead, he attempted to demoralize the Jerusalem resistance by criticizing King Hezekiah and creating distrust in his leadership. He suggested that those who continued to support Hezekiah were doomed to desperate times and starvation (v. 12). He appealed directly to the citizens, challenging them to become traitors to Hezekiah and pledge allegiance to Sennacherib (vv. 13ff.). He questioned Hezekiah's promises to deliver them from the Assyrian army (v. 14). In addition, he raised doubts as to whether or not Yahweh would deliver them as Hezekiah had asserted (v. 15). In contrast to the starvation which would come if the Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, the general offered adequate provisions of fruit, grain, and pure water to those who would change their allegiance. Furthermore, he pointed to the success of the Assyrian army and concluded that the gods of the weaker nations had been unable to deliver them out of the hands of the king of Assyria. He argued that, likewise, Yahweh would be unable to deliver Jerusalem (v. 18). Rabshakeh enumerated the gods of the conquered territories and challenged the power of Yahweh to deliver Jerusalem out of the hands of the Assyrian army (vv. 19-20).

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

Sennacherib demanded Hezekiah to pay a huge amount of silver and gold into the temple treasury and then to surrender completely.

(Compare your answer to the text.)

List the four reasons Rabshakeh gave for Jerusalem's surrender.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Rabshakeh, in addressing the Judaeans on the wall, wanted to c _____ d _____ in H _____ leadership, to cause d _____ by predicting d _____ times and s _____, to question Hezekiah's ability to deliver the Jews from the A _____ army, and to raise doubts about whether or not Y _____ would d _____ them.

(create distrust, Hezekiah's, dissatisfaction, desperate, starvation, Assyrian, Yahweh, deliver)

Isaiah omitted the account of Hezekiah's surrender to Sennacherib and his payment of heavy tribute to save the city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:14-16). Sennacherib's own account of the incident agrees with 2 Kings 18. He also told about the Philistine king Padi who refused to rebel and was taken prisoner to Jerusalem. Another man was put on the throne in his place. Sennacherib gained the Philistine king's release from Hezekiah and restored him to the throne at Ekron. He then defeated an Egyptian army, which had come to help the coalition, in a battle on the plain of Eltekeh. Sennacherib claimed victory over forty-six walled Judaeen cities, driving out 200,150 people. Sennacherib boasted that he made Hezekiah "a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage."¹ The city escaped invasion and destruction only by Hezekiah's surrender and payment of heavy tribute.

Sennacherib failed to mention the near destruction of his army by the plague (see Isaiah 37:36). It was quite common, however, for a ruler to emphasize his victories and omit his defeats.

The question has been raised as to why Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17) so soon after Hezekiah had submitted to him and paid a large tribute (2 Kings 18:16). Some scholars have concluded that Isaiah described a different invasion of Judah than the 701 B.C. one which Sennacherib included. Isaiah 37:9 says that the Ethiopian Tirhakah was the king who led the Egyptians against the Assyrians. Recent information indicates that he only became king in 690 B.C. Some scholars assume that Sennacherib accepted the surrender of Hezekiah and the heavy tribute in 701 B.C., but that he later regretted his leniency and demanded unconditional surrender. Following the advice of Isaiah, Hezekiah refused to accede full surrender. Isaiah assured Hezekiah that Jerusalem would not be taken. During the second siege of Jerusalem, Sennacherib's army was reduced greatly by a plague.

Hezekiah's alarm and Isaiah's response (37:1-7).— The envoys from Hezekiah had been instructed not to answer Rabshakeh. When they returned to their king and reported Rabshakeh's words, Hezekiah "rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord" (v. 1). His envoys and advisors were then sent to Isaiah who is specifically identified as the son of Amoz (v. 2). The dignity of the ambassadors indicates the esteem held for Isaiah. The delegation conveyed the message of Hezekiah that "this day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth" (v. 3). The latter part of the statement is a proverbial phrase, expressing a time of extreme difficulty. Hezekiah had called

¹See James B. Pritchard, ed., The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 200.

Yes or No?

Did Isaiah spend much time discussing Hezekiah's surrender to Sennacherib and his payment of heavy tribute to save the city of Jerusalem? _____

(No)

Underline the correct word or words.

Jerusalem was (not delivered, delivered) from the (second, first) siege by Sennacherib because the army (was, was not) greatly reduced by a (plague, battle).

(delivered, second, was, plague)

List three ways Hezekiah responded to Rabshakeh's threat.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

it a day of blasphemy because of Rabshakeh's impious utterances. Perhaps the king desired a prophetic utterance from Isaiah; therefore, he requested Isaiah to pray for the remnant that was left (v. 4). Hezekiah hoped that Yahweh had heard the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh who had mocked the living God. However, Isaiah did reply with an oracle from Yahweh. He advised Hezekiah not to fear the words of Rabshakeh who had blasphemed Yahweh (v. 6). Sennacherib would hear the rumour that a revolt was under way at home and would withdraw his forces from Judah (v. 7). The insurrection itself would lead ultimately to Sennacherib's death. There is no other record of Sennacherib's having to return home immediately to put down a revolt, but his death came by assassination in 682 B.C.

A second message from Sennacherib (37:8-13).—

Upon Rabshakeh's return to Lachish, he learnt that the Assyrian king was forced to withdraw temporarily to Libnah to fight the approaching Egyptian army (v. 8). Libnah was a fortress city situated ten miles north of Lachish. The Assyrian king had heard that the king of Ethiopia, who ruled Egypt, was advancing to attack him (v. 9). Sennacherib sent a second group of messengers to Jerusalem to warn Hezekiah that his withdrawal was only temporary. He continued to demand capitulation and warned that Yahweh was deceiving Hezekiah and the people by leading them to believe that Jerusalem would escape (v. 10). Since the gods of other nations had been unable to ward off the Assyrian army, Judah and her God likewise would fall as victims to the Assyrian king (vv. 12-13). The gods of the kings of Gozan, Haran, and other nations had been unable to give victory over the Assyrians. Sennacherib implied that Yahweh was too weak also to fulfil His promise to protect Jerusalem.

Hezekiah's prayer (37:14-20).—Hezekiah took the letter from Sennacherib's envoys, went into the Temple, and laid it out before the Lord (v. 14). His recorded prayer reveals distress, deep sincerity, and confidence in the ability of Yahweh to give deliverance. He recognized Yahweh as the divine King who is enthroned in heaven and who is above all the kingdoms of the earth (v. 16). The verse expresses theology which underlies the New Testament doctrine of the Kingdom of God. Yahweh who has created heaven and earth is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth. This verse sets forth a strong view of monotheism in contrast to the prevailing polytheism (every nation having its own god). Hezekiah invited his omniscient Lord to consider Sennacherib's words of mockery (v. 17). Also, he reminded the Lord of the destruction which the Assyrian king had brought upon Judah and other nations (v. 18). Verse 19 contains a second expression of monotheistic faith. Sennacherib was able to lay waste to other lands because they were protected by man-made gods of wood—which were no gods. Judah's situation differed inasmuch as Hezekiah's God was alive and the Creator of the heavens and the earth; therefore, He had the power to deliver His people from the hands of their foes (v. 20).

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

Sennacherib sent another messenger to Jerusalem to tell Hezekiah his withdrawal was permanent.

(Sennacherib sent a second group of messengers to Jerusalem to tell Hezekiah his withdrawal was temporary.)

What did Hezekiah do with the letter from Sennacherib's envoys?

(Hezekiah took the letter from Sennacherib's envoys into the Temple and laid it before the Lord.)

Isaiah's message for Hezekiah (37:21-35).—Isaiah interpreted the Lord's answer to Hezekiah's prayer and used a song of taunt to set forth Sennacherib's fate (vv. 21-28). The song depicts Jerusalem as a tender maiden, weak and delicate, yet still bold enough, because of her faith, to stand up against Sennacherib and his army (v. 22). The song contained the message that the Assyrians would be defeated because:

1. Hezekiah had humbled himself before the Lord and expressed confidence in the power of Yahweh to deliver Jerusalem (v. 21);
2. The people of Jerusalem were God's chosen, and He would not forsake them if they repented of their sins (v. 22);
3. In their haughtiness, they had reproached Yahweh by implying that He would be unable to deliver Jerusalem (v. 23);
4. The Assyrians had boasted arrogantly of their past victories against other nations without recognizing that Yahweh who controlled history had determined their success (vv. 24-26);
5. Sennacherib boasted of powers equal to a god (vv. 26-29).

Because of Sennacherib's arrogance and his ragings, Yahweh would put a hook in his nose and a bridle bit in his mouth, signifying that Sennacherib would be controlled as a master controls an animal (v. 29). The one who boasted of being god would learn that he was actually the servant of Yahweh.

Hezekiah was given a sign of assurance that Yahweh's words would come to pass. During the first and second years, the people would survive on volunteer grain which had sprung up by itself. By the third year, the sowing and harvest would return to normal conditions, and the people would enjoy adequate food as in former days (v. 30). Since Jerusalem was the city of Yahweh, it was inconceivable that it would be destroyed. On the other hand, Yahweh deals justly; the wicked of that city would be destroyed by the sword of the Assyrians. A remnant of the house of Judah would survive, however, and would become firmly rooted as in former times (vv. 31-32). Isaiah gave further assurance that Sennacherib would not even lay siege to the city but would return the way that he had come (vv. 33-34). The message from Yahweh indicated that Jerusalem would be delivered for two reasons: to bring honour and glory to the name of Yahweh and for the sake of David (v. 35). The belief that Jerusalem was inviolable developed and was associated uniquely with the prophetic ministry of Isaiah. Since Jerusalem was the city of Yahweh, it was inconceivable that He would permit its destruction. The belief was perverted later;

True or False?

1. Sennacherib boasted of powers equal to a god. _____
2. Hezekiah could not humble himself before God or believe God had the power to deliver Jerusalem. _____
3. The people of Jerusalem were God's chosen, and He would not forsake them if they repented of their sins. _____
4. The Assyrians gave God the credit for their many victories. _____
5. Assyria believed God could deliver Jerusalem. _____

(1. True, 2. False, 3. True, 4. False, 5. False)

List the two reasons given in Yahweh's message for the deliverance of Jerusalem.

1. _____
2. _____

(1. To bring honour and glory to Yahweh, 2. For the sake of David)

it was presumed that God would protect Jerusalem regardless of the ethical conduct of the people.

The fulfilment of Isaiah's predictions (37:36-38).

God works through history and natural order to bring about His will. Apparently the angel of the Lord used a dreadful plague to bring about the death of thousands of Sennacherib's soldiers (v. 36). Sennacherib withdrew the threat to Jerusalem, returned home, and eventually was assassinated while worshipping an idol (vv. 37-38). The events described in verse 38 apparently did not follow immediately Sennacherib's retreat in 701 B.C.

The Sickness and Cure of Hezekiah

Isaiah 38:1-22

His illness (38:1-8).—The account in 2 Kings 20:1-11 contains some details which are not included in Isaiah; however, Isaiah's more abbreviated summary has the important facts of Hezekiah's illness and recovery. His sickness came at a time when Jerusalem was being threatened by the Assyrians (vv. 1, 6), perhaps in 705 B.C. since Merodach-baladen of Babylon sent envoys to congratulate him on his recovery (see 39:1).

The sick king was informed by Isaiah that God had revealed his death was at hand; therefore, he should set his business affairs in order (v. 1). Hezekiah responded to this news with prayer and tears (v. 2). He reminded the Lord of his faithfulness (v. 3). Apparently the initial prophecy was conditional because God's word changed after Hezekiah prayed and wept (v. 5). The account in 2 Kings adds that Hezekiah's healing would come on the third day when he would be able to go up to the house of the Lord. Fifteen years were added to his life, and Jerusalem was delivered from the hands of the king of Assyria (vv. 5-6).

The reason for God's change of plans for Hezekiah is given in 2 Kings 20:6: "I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." The miracle of healing demonstrated the power of Hezekiah's God. The Lord had promised David that the throne would be established with his descendants. The implication of the writer is that Hezekiah did not deserve additional years of life.

A sign was given to assure Hezekiah of the dependability of God's word (v. 7). Perhaps the ultimate purpose was to assure that Hezekiah recognized his healing was a miracle of Yahweh rather than a natural recovery. The sign of the promise was the receding of the sun's shadow on a dial or a stairway built by Ahaz, an occurrence in the material realm which had meaning beyond itself. The miraculous sign indicated God's presence was in the prophetic statement. Perhaps Hezekiah requested the sign to verify the second word from the Lord since the first had stated his death.

The psalm of Hezekiah (38:9-22).—This section is not recorded in 2 Kings 20. It was probably used in a temple service by a worshipper who had recovered

God (works, does not work) through h
and n _____ o _____ to bring about His
will.

(works, history, natural order, will)

Place an X by each correct ending.

Hezekiah responded to the announcement of His death—

1. with prayers and tears. _____
2. by turning from God. _____
3. with a statement of his faithfulness to Yahweh. _____

(1-X, 3-X)

What sign did God give Hezekiah that he would be healed?

(The receding of the sun's shadow on a dial)

from a serious illness. Perhaps the recovered Hezekiah took an offering to the Temple at the time of the use of the psalm. It begins by lamenting the deprivations of an untimely death (vv. 10-12). Hezekiah felt that he faced death at the "noontide" of his days—the best time of his life (v. 10). Until Jesus' resurrection, there was little hope beyond death. Sheol offered little comfort to those who faced death (v. 10). It meant being cut off from the land of the living (v. 11). Hezekiah used the analogy of taking down a shepherd's tent to express the ease with which life could suddenly be taken from a person. He could find no encouragement to call on his God for deliverance since Yahweh had "cut him off" (v. 12). Yet, he continued to trust in the Lord and to call upon Him for help.

Before God's promise to extend his life came, he described his experience as being crushed as a lion crushes his prey (v. 13). He compared his imploring God for restoration to the shrill voice of the crane and the chatter of the swallow (v. 14). Since he realized that Yahweh had determined the experience, he had scarcely the strength or courage to look up to God in prayer (vv. 14-15). He continued to trust in the Lord in the midst of his troubles, and his prayer for restoration to health was answered (vv. 16-17). He praised God for delivering him from the bed of destruction and regarded his healing as evidence that his sins were forgiven. He expressed the belief that man's only hope is in living (vv. 18-19). He could see little hope for those who enter death. Before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there was a belief in existence beyond the grave, but it offered little hope and comfort. God's healing and forgiveness prompted Hezekiah to resolve to spend the rest of his life praising God and telling others of His faithfulness (v. 20).

Verse 21 indicates that Hezekiah's sickness involved some type of severe boils.

Isaiah's Reproof of Hezekiah
Isaiah 39:1-8

The embassy from Merodach-baladan (39:1-2).—The historical events described in this section are found also in 2 Kings 20:12-19. The Babylonians were attempting to organize a revolt against Assyria, and they desired the support of Judah. Merodach-baladan, whose name in its Mesopotamian form was "Marduk has given a son," became king of Babylon in 721 B.C. and continued until 710 B.C. Sargon II of Assyria was able to regain Babylon from him. Merodach-baladan escaped and reasserted his claim to the throne when Sennacherib became king. It was probably during the years 705-703 B.C. that he sent envoys to Judah under the pretext of concern for Hezekiah in his sickness (v. 1). However, the primary purpose was to incite revolt against the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah was flattered to have dignitaries from such a great distance to visit him. To impress them further with his greatness, he showed the ambassadors all of his treasure house (v. 2).

List three laments of Hezekiah as he faced an untimely death.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Hezekiah p _____ God for d _____
him from the bed of destruction and re-
garded his h _____ as e _____ that
his s _____ were forgiven.

(praised, delivering, healing, evidence, sins)

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

The true purpose of the embassy from Merodach-baladan was to get Judah to be loyal to Assyria.

(Compare your answer to the text.)

Isaiah's rebuke of Hezekiah (39:3-8).—Isaiah strongly opposed the foreign alliances of Hezekiah. Isaiah had great political insight and recognized that less suppression would result from continuing to pay tribute to the Assyrians. Revolt would bring the invasion of the mighty army into Judah, resulting in great hardship and destruction. He believed that the God of Israel was able to deliver His people when they repented and turned in faith to Him.

When Isaiah confronted Hezekiah, the king admitted that he had shown the foreign representatives all that he possessed (v. 4). Isaiah responded to Hezekiah's foolish actions with the word of the Lord rather than his own (v. 5). He pointed out that in the days to come Judah would be punished by the very nation with which the king had entered into an alliance and which he had supported (v. 6). Isaiah recognized that the king of Babylon would covet the wealth of Hezekiah and that the day would come when he would confiscate that wealth and carry it to Babylon (v. 6). Not only would the riches be lost, but Isaiah predicted that descendants of the king would be carried into Babylon as captives and would be made servants of the Babylonian king. Isaiah's prediction came true during the years 597–582 B.C. Daniel 1:3 mentions that several Israelites of the royal household served as eunuchs in the house of Nebuchadnezzar.

It is interesting to note that Hezekiah rejoiced that he would experience peace during his own reign even though captivity would come during the time of his descendants. He gave the impression of not being concerned about the effects that his policies would have on future generations (v. 8). His actions were controlled by self-interest at the expense of the future. It appears that the second part of Isaiah, chapters 40–66, relates to the fulfilment of Isaiah's predictions that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians more than a century later.

Continue reading the following paragraph before doing the following exercise.

Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah because he opposed an a _____ against A _____, and he pointed out that J _____ would be punished by the v _____ n _____ with which the k _____ had entered into an a _____.

(alliance, Assyria, Judah, very nation, king, alliance)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Why did Yahweh pass judgement on all nations? _____
2. List three historical events which caused intense hatred between Jews and Edomites. _____
3. What is the "book of the Lord"? _____
4. What are the two sides to judgement? _____

5. What New Testament teachings do Isaiah 35:1-2, 4 prepare for? _____

6. Why did Jesus answer the question of His messiahship by pointing to His miracles of healing?

7. What provisions would be made for the remnant's return from captivity? _____

8. Name the original and subsequent demands of Sennacherib on Hezekiah which have puzzled scholars. _____

9. What four reasons did Rabshakeh give in argument for Jerusalem's surrender? _____

10. List four psychological approaches used by Rabshakeh in addressing the Judaeans on the wall.

11. How was Jerusalem delivered from the second siege by Sennacherib's army? _____

12. What was Hezekiah's response to Rabshakeh's threat? _____

13. Interpret Isaiah 37:19-20. _____

14. List five reasons for the Assyrians' defeat. _____

15. Give the two reasons listed in Isaiah 37:35 for Yahweh's deliverance of Jerusalem. _____

16. How did Hezekiah respond to the announcement of his death? _____

17. What sign was given to assure Hezekiah of his recovery? _____

18. Give three laments of Hezekiah as he faced an untimely death in 38:10-11. _____
- _____
19. What was the true purpose of the embassy from Merodach-baladan? _____
- _____
20. Why did Isaiah rebuke Hezekiah? _____
- _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

Read pages 74-85 in The Book of Isaiah, by Wright, and answer the following questions.

1. How does vengeance as Isaiah used it differ from the contemporary use of the word?
2. What evidence is there, other than the biblical account, of Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.?
3. Why did the Judaeen officials ask Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic? What did he do and how did the hearers respond?
4. Give the theological interpretation of "the angel of the Lord" (Isa. 37:36).

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Compare the historical accounts in Isaiah 36:1-37:38 and 2 Kings 18:13-19:37, pointing out the material in each not included in the other account.
2. What are the historical problems with regard to the invasion of Jerusalem by Sennacherib around 701 B.C.?
3. How does Wright interpret the phrase "the dial of Ahaz" (Isa. 38:8)?
4. Discuss "the nature of God" as revealed in Isaiah 37:14-20.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the following proposition as it relates to this lesson:
 God often uses natural events to accomplish His will; however, man may not be aware of God's activity and purpose in history without a prophet to interpret.
2. Were the additional years which were added to Hezekiah's life beneficial or detrimental to his country? Why?
3. As a group project, prepare a sermon outline based on Isaiah 35:1-10. (The teacher-tutor may choose an alternate passage from the Scripture covered in this lesson.)
4. What passages of Scripture in this lesson have special importance as a background to New Testament passages?
5. How did the doctrine of Jerusalem's inviolability arise? Was this doctrine still held in New Testament times? (See Matt. 24:1ff.)