

## Isaiah Lesson 38

Isaiah Chapter 38

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**Introduction:** Last week in the last part of chapter 37, we saw King Hezekiah seeking Isaiah's help. Isaiah gave him good advice, and then Hezekiah prayed for help from the Lord. With God fighting the battle, we found Sennacherib being defeated.

Chapter 38 of Isaiah is again history without prophecy as such. The account is of the sickness and miraculous healing of Hezekiah. The final portion of the chapter presents a prayer or perhaps a psalm by Hezekiah regarding this crisis in his life.

The chapter parallels the first half of II Kings 20.

### I. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery

*Isa 38:1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.*

The text at hand is historical and not prophetic. Neither the account in II Kings 20 nor here tells what the sickness of Hezekiah was, but it was evidently terminal. Verse 21 speaks of a boil so it may have been some type of infection. The prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah and rather than consoling this godly king, he announced that God had said he was going to die and to get his affairs in order.

*Isa 38:2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,*

*Isa 38:3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*

Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the LORD. The wall in question may have been the wall of his bedroom or as Jewish authorities suggest, it may have been the wall of the Temple nearby. At this wall, Hezekiah poured out his heart in prayer to God. "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have

done that which is good in thy sight. The record stated that Hezekiah wept sorely. Here we find the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.

Notice how that Hezekiah first proceeded to remind God of his righteous character. He was on the praying ground and he brings it to God's attention. With great faith, he reminded God that he walked before Him in truth. He also stated that he had walked before God with a perfect heart. The word translated as perfect (Mlvshaw-lame' or shalom) has the essence of 'whole' or 'complete.'

He had sought the Lord with his whole heart. His life was singular in purpose—to serve the Lord. Finally, he reminded God how he had routinely and regularly done that which was good in the sight of God. This refers to that which is morally good. Hezekiah's appeal is for healing and deliverance. The very nature of this prayer is clearly effectual and fervent.

*Jas 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

*Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Hezekiah was upright before God. His faith was evident as he cried out to God and reminded God of his testimony.

*2Ch 29:1 Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.*

*2Ch 29:2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.*

His weeping further revealed the fervency of his prayer. God hears those that come to Him in this manner. Hezekiah had the right perspective of God and lived it.

*Isa 38:4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,*

*Isa 38:5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.*

*Isa 38:6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.*

God answered the king's prayer through the prophet. . The account in II Kings 20 indicates that God spoke to Isaiah before he had left the king's court and that he immediately turned and brought Hezekiah God's answer to his prayer. Notice the details of how God replied. He announced Himself as Jehovah (the Lord) and the God of David, Hezekiah's father.

God remembered the covenant He made with David, Hezekiah's forefather, concerning his successors. . God further announced that He had heard Hezekiah's prayer. God hears the prayer of the upright. What a blessing! See Proverbs 15:8, 29, and I Peter 3:12.

*1Pe 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

God promised to add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. Now, rather than staring death in the face, the king now had God's promise for another fifteen years. . Furthermore, God promised, that He would deliver the king and the city out of the hand of the king of Assyria and defend the city. Because this chapter follows the preceding two, the assumption is usually made that this event followed the death of the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. However, verse 1 notes that Hezekiah's sickness and prayer were "in those days."

The text seems to indicate that this crisis came amid the Assyrian invasion and before God's destruction of the Assyrian army. Hezekiah received double good news. Not only would God heal him and give him another fifteen years of life, but He also would deliver Jerusalem from the threat of the Assyrian army. It must have been a day of great rejoicing for Hezekiah.

Why did God allow all of this in the first place? The answer is clear. We never trust God more than when in the depths of a crisis. All things work together for good toward them for those in His will. God used the threat of Assyria and Hezekiah's health crisis to reveal His glory and power for all to see.

## **II. God Gives Sign Unto Hezekiah**

*Isa 38:7 And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;*

*Isa 38:8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.*

The account in II Kings 20 reveals how Hezekiah asked for a sign from God in this regard. Here, the prophet only records the announcement of the sign God

promised and that it would verify God's promise. Evidently, Ahaz had constructed a sun-dial sort of device.

God moved the shadow of the sun in the opposite direction that day. Precisely how much ten degrees of the time device is unclear. What is clear is that God wrought a major miracle before Hezekiah to confirm His promises to him.

*Isa 38:9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness:*

The chapter changes abruptly at this point. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered from his sickness is in view. Whereas the preceding has been the prophecy or history by Isaiah, now to the end of this chapter is Hezekiah and is noted as a "writing of Hezekiah," What is recorded is a prayer or confession of the king. It in many ways reminds me of the Psalms of David. The occasion is clearly set forth as the time after God had healed him.

*Isa 38:10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.*

*Isa 38:11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.*

*Isa 38:12 Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.*

*Isa 38:13 I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.*

*Isa 38:14 Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.*

This 'psalm' of Hezekiah begins with a lamentation as he considered the terminal character of his health. "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years." The king anguished over what he thought was imminent death. He in effect stared down into his own grave.

"I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." The thought may be that

he no longer could go to the Temple to worship before God. No longer would he bow before the Shekinah glory hidden behind the veil. Furthermore, he was about to be separated from friends and loved ones. He knew he was about to depart the land of the living.

*“Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.”* The thought is how that his generation was over. His life, like the tent of a shepherd out in the field, was about to be folded up. Like a weaver cutting a length of fabric from his loom, his life was about to be cut off. As far as he knew, he would die a lingering death, slowly slipping unto death.

The hints in the context are of one dying a slow and agonizing death. . *“I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.”* As he lay upon his bed in the long, endless hours of the night; Hezekiah anticipated that come morning, death like a lion would devour him. He did not think he would last beyond the dawn.

*“Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. Like the chatter of the birds before the break of dawn, he prayed. As the mourning dove sings its plaintive cry, Hezekiah looked to heaven and cried out, “O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”*

The specter of disease and death stared him in the eye. His only recourse was to cry out to God to undertake for him. And indeed, underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27). What a blessed prayer for a beleaguered saint.

*Deu 33:27 The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.*

### **III. Hezekiah Shows Great Agony as He Prays**

*Isa 38:15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*

*Isa 38:16 O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.*

*Isa 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

*Isa 38:18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate*

*thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.*

*Isa 38:19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*

*Isa 38:20 The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.*

The tone of his plaintive prayer now shifts from lamentation to reflecting on his deliverance by God. *What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.*

Evidently, Isaiah had by now announced God's promise to heal him. His healing was not instantaneous for Isaiah had told him it would be three days before he would go up to the Temple (II Kings 20:5).

*2Ki 20:5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.*

He apparently was reflecting on his thoughts of those days. What could Hezekiah say? God had spoken and would do it. He, therefore, reflected how that not long before he thought he did not have another day to live and now he had another fifteen years promised. He would therefore go softly on with life, reflecting back on the bitterness he had experienced.

*“ O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. “* It was by the promise and word of God that he had a renewed lease on life. Furthermore, all men live only by the goodness of God. Therefore, he mused upon how God promised him recovery and restoration of life.

*“Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. “* Though now he had peace, he had been in great bitterness. It was by the love of God that his soul had been delivered from death. The term “pit of corruption” undoubtedly is a metaphor for death and the grave.

With poetic hints of the atoning grace of God, Hezekiah likens God's mercy to casting his sins behind His back. The thought is how that God no longer remembers our sins once they have been removed. *“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. “* From a singularly human perspective, the dead cannot praise God. They have no hope for God's Word.

Hezekiah speaks of the funeral parlor and the cemetery. Dead bodies cannot praise God. *“the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.”* Because God had spared his life, he determined to praise his Redeemer. All living souls have that opportunity and duty. All fathers should instruct their children in this great truth.

*“The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.”* Because God had prepared to deliver Hezekiah, he determined to sing praise to God for the rest of his life at the Temple of God. Of interest is that his songs of praise were to be accompanied by musical instruments.

*Isa 38:21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.*

*Isa 38:22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?*

The final two verses of the chapter record other details of Hezekiah’s crisis. Isaiah had directed that a poultice of figs be made and rubbed upon Hezekiah’s boil. That in itself did not affect healing but was a visible manifestation of God’s working. This was the answer to Hezekiah’s question in verse 22.

*2Ki 20:8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?*

*2Ki 20:9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?*

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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