

Gone Down in the Sun Dial

Isaiah 38:1 – 39:8

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~ Our Spiritual Safari is in a four chapter historical interlude in Isaiah that runs from chapter thirty-six through thirty-nine; and in which we find the good king Hezekiah under siege by Assyria. Rabshakeh has Sennacherib's army camped outside of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah is terrified, naturally. To make matters worse, Hezekiah has also just been given a death sentence by Isaiah. These four chapters compare to a continental divide, separating east and west. From chapters one through thirty-five, we had the strict and dark government of God, and the judgment thereof. On the other side of this canyon, beginning at chapter forty, we'll have lovely, sunny days by the grace of God. Right here, however, Hezekiah is under siege — inside and out. If you are still reading this safari, then I advise you *not* to read any further; but, if you insist, then don't go back and read the last several reports from Isaiah to get totally caught up, either....

XXXVIII

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.

~ Our previous report concluded with the Lord miraculously smiting a bunch of Assyrians. This report opens with Isaiah giving good King Hezekiah a death sentence. Well, each one of us has a death sentence hanging over our heads, too. We just don't know the day or the hour. What we know for sure is that it is "... appointed unto man once to die, but after that, judgment." I'm sure that if each of us knew the time our divine date would begin in eternity, it would change *everything* about us; from our daily routines, to habits, to an awareness of our personality quirks, of our character flaws and weaknesses – everything – would come into focus in a totally different light. Our current lifestyle instantly becomes unrecognizable with that information. A proper, correct and complete evaluation of material things becomes unbearably unavoidable; the

cherished becomes absurd, and the absurd becomes plausible, indeed, necessary. Things that mattered very much yesterday suddenly don't matter *at all* today. Where we are going tomorrow should be all-important to us today...

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,

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.

4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,

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.

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

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

~ Frankly, there is a subtle but extreme danger of withdrawing from the Lord after He provides miraculous physical and material blessings. Most people think it would draw us closer to Him; but it usually doesn't. God healing Hezekiah actually gave Hezekiah terrible pride — and nothing good happened during Hezekiah's fifteen-year life-extension. Primarily, Hezekiah's throne will be succeeded by Manasseh, his son, who will be the worst king in either Israel or Judah — even worse than Ahab and Jezebel. Well, Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, so we know that happened during those fifteen years. In the next chapter, we see Hezekiah totally playing the fool....

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.

18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

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

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.

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.

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

XXXIX

1 At that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

~ This was another *huge* mistake Hezekiah made. He plays an utter fool here. “*Merodach*” means rebellious and “*Baladan*” means not of the Lord; so, the king of Assyria’s name meant, “*rebellious one, not of the Lord.*” I’m sure he was highly proud of the name. I think Hezekiah should have seen a red flag being raised. Merodachbaladan comes to Hezekiah with flattery and sympathy – and Hezekiah thinks it is all great and wonderful; but Hezekiah doesn’t pray about this — as he had concerning Rabshakeh and Sennacherib. Not praying about this was the other great mistake that was made during those fifteen years of life-extension. So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with mistakes made that never should have happened. Hezekiah is really acting strange now. God extending his life was the worst thing that ever happened to Hezekiah. Am I saying God made a mistake extending Hezekiah’s life? Well, that would be foolish....

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 thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

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

7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

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

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