

to have consisted of a pole at the top of a stepped-pyramid.

Hezekiah could pick his sign. Did he want the shadow to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps? He viewed it an easy matter for the afternoon shadow to continue descending the steps, it would anyway! So the king requested the shadow to change its direction and move back upward ten steps.

The prophet called on the Lord and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down.

Bible scholars who are scientists say one of two things probably happened, (both of them supernatural in this case): 1) There could have been a temporary reversal in the rotation of the earth, or 2) there could have been an abnormal refraction of the rays of the sun causing the retreat of the shadow on the sundial.

If the event happened just in Judah, it was well known that such an astonishing event had happened. 2 Chronicles 32:31 records ambassadors coming to Jerusalem to inquire of this miraculous event "done in the land."

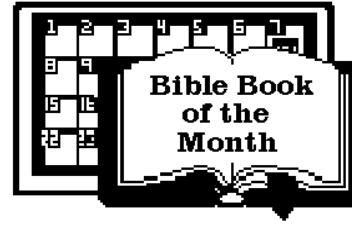
The Aftermath

Isaiah records a psalm of thanksgiving from Hezekiah following 38:8 which is not recorded any other place.

Hezekiah recovered and about three years later had a son who would keep the lineage of David and Hezekiah on the throne. The Assyrians made several bold but unsuccessful attempts to bring down Hezekiah and Jerusalem.

SUPPLEMENT QUESTIONS:

1. What had happened to the northern kingdom of Israel?
2. What is the lesson from here and from James 4:13-14 that we should always have before us?
3. What advantages would one have if he knew he was soon to die?
4. What would be the disadvantages?
5. What lesson is there about prayer in this study?
6. How quickly did the Lord's new communication come to Isaiah?
7. What promise is given in the Fifth Commandment? (Exodus 20:12)
8. What two promises did the Lord make to Hezekiah?
9. Why would Hezekiah ask for a sign?
10. What sign was given him?
11. How do you think this sign occurred?
12. Was the sign detectable outside of Hezekiah's courtyard.



ISAIAH

Lesson # 3

Text: Isaiah 38:1-7

Collateral Reading: 2 Kings 20:1-11

“Prophet of the King”

The Setting

Isaiah was closely associated with the court events of King Hezekiah. The King looked to him for counsel from the Lord and sought his prayers to the Lord for the nations's sake (2 Kings 19:4).

Isaiah chs. 36-39 correspond to 2 Kings 18-20. Isaiah may have been the record keeper for the reign of Hezekiah.

Isaiah 38:1. In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’”² Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD,³ and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what is* good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.⁴ And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying,⁵ “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years.⁶ “I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.”’”⁷ “And this *is* the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing which He has spoken: [NKJV]

2 Kings 20:1-3 is identical with Isaiah 38:1-3

2 Kings 20:1-11

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for

you shall die, and not live.’”² Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying,³ “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what was* good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.⁴ And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,⁵ “Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD.⁶ “And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.”’”⁷ Then Isaiah said, “Take a lump of figs.” So they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

⁸ And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What *is* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?”⁹ Then Isaiah said, “This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: *shall* the shadow go forward ten degrees or

go backward ten degrees?"¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees."¹¹ So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.^[NKJV]

The Text

Verse 1. The events of this chapter occurred about fifteen years before the death of Hezekiah. He is stricken with a malady that was fatal. Isaiah is sent by the Lord to warn him "Set your house in order."

Recently on one Sunday evening one hundred-forty people sat together filled with various emotions. Some were returning home from a pleasant vacation. They looked forward to a happy reunion with friends and family in Arizona and California. Others were just beginning a vacation that they assumed would be filled with fun and good times. They anticipated seeing the desert and the Pacific. A few were going to Phoenix and Los Angeles for business expecting to complete profitable deals and then return home.

But this was not the way it was to be. Some sixty seconds after zooming down the runway and rising no more than 48 feet into the air their plane crashed back to the ground and they were headed for eternity instead of Phoenix and Los Angeles.

"What is your life? It is a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." How proper it really is to have our house in order at all times! Knowing just when we are going to die is not a blessing we usually have.

Q-1 Personal Thought Question: What would you do to set your house in order?

Verse 2-3. After hearing this shocking announcement Hezekiah turns his face to the wall, probably to gain some privacy from his numerous attendants, and prays to God. Hezekiah was a great man of prayer and it's natural in a crisis like this for one to cast his burden upon the Lord.

This was not a presumptuous self-righteousness prayer, but rather Hezekiah knew he had made an honest endeavor to serve God and do his will.

Q-2 What do you think might be indicated by Hezekiah's great weeping?

Did not the Law promise length of day to the righteous (Proverbs 3:2; 9:11; 10:27)? Hezekiah was being cut off in the prime of life at thirty-nine.

Other wicked kings had lived much longer!

Verse 4-5. While leaving before Isaiah had reached the third courtyard surrounding the palace he received a new divine communication.

This story stands as an illustration of the truth that the prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:15b). We have no way of knowing what all is brought about by the prayers of the righteous!

Q-3 What is prayer?

Isaiah retraces his steps to the king's bedchamber with God's message. Hezekiah had reigned nearly fifteen years already, now the Lord was going to give him about that much more time.

God, for the sake of His servant David, would not desert Hezekiah or Jerusalem and let them fall into the hands of the Assyrians. At this time Hezekiah did not have a male heir to the throne. The King would have time to have a son and prepare him for the throne.

In facing the Assyrians at the walls of Jerusalem, it must have been assuring to Hezekiah to reflect back on the promise of God. God is a promise-keeping God. We know we can rely on His Word, and that not one thing will fail!

Q-4 What assurance does 2 Peter 3:9 give us?

2 Kings 20:7-8. Isaiah then directed the attendants to apply a lump of figs to Hezekiah's boil. It was clear to all that the healing was of the Lord and not to the figs alone however.

The Lord had told Hezekiah that within three days he would be up and about and able to worship the Lord in the appointed place (v. 5).

Isaiah had come in boldly and announced the King's impending death, then returned and announced he had 15 more years, how was Hezekiah to know this was of God? During the time of direct revelation God had frequently offered miraculous signs to confirm his Word. For example He had given Moses such signs for Israel and Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-9).

Isaiah had instructed Ahaz to ask for a sign to substantiate the promise that God would deliver Jerusalem from the Syrian and Ephramite armies.

God is not making new revelation to his saints today. His Word stands already confirmed, there's only the need for us to study its record.

Isaiah 38:7-8. Apparently visible from Hezekiah's window was a sundial built by his father Ahaz. Ahaz had brought other structures of foreign origin to his capital and this may have been one of them. It seems