

Don't! – Is 39

Is 39; As we continue to work our way through Isaiah, this is the last we'll see of King Hezekiah; He occupies 4 chapters here in the middle of the book . . .
And for the most part is a shining example of how to live for the Lord

But *this* chapter is an exception; B/c this is the point at which he's so blind, and so clueless – that he triggers God's judgment on the entire nation of Israel
Illustrating some very important lessons for our lives
So let's get at it and see if we can ferret them out

➤ [1] *At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys [like ambassadors] with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.*

Now, before we continue, let me see if I can explain the **Background and Situation**

First of all, Babylon was one of their enemies; Yes, the Israelites were being attacked by Assyria, and so too were the Babylonians under their thumb . . .
But they were still enemies nonetheless

Second – *At that time* refers to the days of Hezekiah's sickness, from which he had just recovered; Which is covered in ch38
Where Hezekiah fell deathly ill, prayed to God, and was miraculously healed

And *that*, was just *before* the events of chapters 36-37 – where God delivered his people out of the hand of the Assyrians; That's what 38:5-6 implies
God is speaking through Isaiah, to Hezekiah, and says – *I have heard your prayer* [your prayer for healing]; *I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will* [note the future tense of that] *deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.*

Which we saw a few weeks ago, he did at the end of the chapter 37

The implication being, that chapters 38-39 happened *before* chapters 36-37

➤ Which begs the question, why? Especially in our Western mindset where we tend to think of everything chronologically
And the answer is that the events of ch39 *set up* the events of chapters 40—66
With ch40 jumping 150 years into the future, and talking about a completely different situation; A time of *captivity* for God's people
And the end of ch39 tells us why; It foreshadows it

So this is a slice of Hezekiah's life, out of chronological order, but strategically placed to help us make sense of what's to come; That's the background and situation (**Summ**)

➤ Back to v1 – *The king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. [2] And Hezekiah welcomed them gladly.*
And he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.
[3] *Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?" Hezekiah said, "They have come to*

me from a far country, from Babylon." [4] *He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."*

Hello; That's about as naïve as you can get; And illustrates a principle that's crucial for a life well-lived; A life characteristic of the mind of Christ; Namely . . .

Don't be naïve! (v1-4)

Don't be clueless; Don't blindly trust; Don't get sucked into less than desirable situations by those whose motives and methods are marginal at best, and wrong at worst
Be wise Jesus said – *wise as serpents* (Mt 10:16); Something Hezekiah wasn't

Here was the enemy, maybe not enemy #1, but certainly the enemy – on his doorstep
And he not only lets them in, but shows them *everything*
“*What have they seen in your house*, Hezekiah? What have they seen in your rule and reign, your kingdom?”
“Everything;” “Was anything off limits?” “No; I showed them everything”

You can almost see the thought bubbles; With Hezekiah thinking, “What's wrong? What's the problem?” B/c he's so naïve
And Isaiah thinking, “What's wrong?! You just undressed in front of a crowd! Are you kidding me? Even if the Babylonians *had* no ulterior motives, that's not very smart”

➤ But it happens, doesn't it? Sometimes, in our naiveté, we're deceived by the disingenuous care of those who would take advantage of us
Or we're unknowingly seduced by their affection; Or sucked in by their flattery
Or just plain desperate for attention

In fact I wonder if that wasn't going on with Hezekiah
I wonder if he felt *overlooked* among the big boys of the Ancient Near East, and longed to be noticed; Predisposing him to latch on to the first person who did
Kind of like a girl tends to do with the first *boy* who comes along; Or the first one to come along in a long time; In her naiveté, she tends to latch on
And far too many parents, in *their* naiveté, allow it

➤ Or maybe that wasn't it at all for Hezekiah; Maybe he was just over-confident
Thinking he was stronger than he really was, and wanting the Babylonians to know it

Or maybe he had an inferiority complex, with a desire to impress
Kind of like the guy who puts on the smallest T-shirt he has, to show off *his* guns
Dude, people may think you're really strong, but they also think you're pathetic for wearing clothes that are too small; Don't be naïve

➤ Or maybe Hezekiah was clouded in his thinking by the need for an ally; Somebody to help him ward off the Assyrians who were breathing down his neck
Maybe he naively thought that the enemy of his enemy was his friend; Which sounds all cool, but rarely works – just look at world history

Whatever the case, he was naïve; Trusting those he shouldn't have, with the blessings of God, and the things of God

➤ Don't go there; Don't be naïve; Don't be naïve with your *body*; Don't be naïve in your *relationships*; And don't be naïve with your *enemies* . . .
Those who hate you b/c of your love for Christ
Trust those who show themselves trust-worthy, yes – life is empty, lonely, and miserable apart from *that*; But don't be naïve with those who don't, or haven't

That's the first takeaway; Second, is . . .

Don't open the door to evil influences (v2a)

V2a says that when the Babylonian envoys showed up – *Hezekiah welcomed them gladly*
He threw open the doors; And the people who walked in weren't exactly patron saints
In fact, they were evil; So evil, that the Apostle John uses Babylon as a metaphor in the book of Revelation, to describe evil of the worst sort; Listen to some of what he says

Rev 18 – [2] *And he [an angel] called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.*

[3] For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

[4] Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; [5] for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

[24] And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.

So bad, so evil was the *real* Babylon, that God uses them to describe the evil of the last days in the Great Tribulation; Not good*****
And even worse, is to open the *door* to such wickedness

➤ But I fear we do it all the time; Like when we harbor anger in our heart
Eph 4:26 says – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*
Implying that when we harbor anger towards someone, we open the door to the evil influence of Satan; Don't do that*****

Or how about opening the door to evil influences through raunchy movies, or TV shows
Or music with sinful lyrics; Or Victoria Secret mailers
Or paperback romances that don't pass the Phil 4:8 test – to think on whatever is pure, lovely, honorable, and worthy of praise
All it takes is a crack, and you open the door to evil in your life

➤ And lest you tend to rationalize these things, which we're *all* inclined to do . . .
Eph 5:3 says – *Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*
Or as the NIV says it – there must not be even a *hint* of impurity or sin in our lives

And I love this **quote** from Joshua Harris in that respect, who wrote a book titled “Not

Even A Hint”; He said . . .

Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things . . . that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.
It doesn't matter what something is rated, or how popular it is, or how seemingly innocent it appears. If it hardens your heart towards God, if it obscures your awareness of the ugliness of sin and the holiness of God, if it takes the edge off your spiritual hunger, then it's sin.

And make no mistake – sin opens the door to evil influences

Whether it's the influence of demonic forces *directly*, or indirectly through sinful people or sinful things*****

That's not to say that believers can be indwelt by demons; We can't; What fellowship can light have with darkness, Paul asks? None; They can't occupy the same place
Which means that with the Spirit of Christ, the light of the world dwelling within us, demons can't; You cannot be demonically possessed as a follower of Christ
Greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world
But you *can* be *oppressed*; You *can* be adversely influenced due to sin in your life

➤ In which case we need to be ever vigilant; Especially so b/c the evil of sin is not always blatant; Yes, Satan is described as a roaring lion . . .
Prowling about, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8)
But he's also depicted as an *angel of light*, deceiving those who aren't aware
And his servants it says, *disguise themselves as servants of righteousness* (2 Cor 11:14)

Which means we *have* to be ever vigilant; And the furthest *thing* from naïve
B/c the costumes in life are pretty slick

➤ Along those lines, I love how one commentator framed it (Ortlund), once again using the imagery of Revelation
He said that evil often comes to us in one of two forms – either as a Beast, to intimidate and crush us; Or as a Prostitute, to seduce and divert us; So true
And Hezekiah experienced both, didn't he?

Later on, it was a *beastly* attack by the Assyrians, who bludgeoned them with brutality and coercion; But at this point, in ch39, it's the seduction of the great whore – Babylon
Scoping out his wares and looking for weaknesses, while masquerading as friends and feigning innocence

➤ And more often than not, that's *our* risk, isn't it?
Oh sure, there's overt persecution in *some* parts of our world – where Satan's order of the day is oppressive, and obvious, and crushing
But in *our* culture, it's seduction, isn't it? And flattery; And pleasure

You see, far from *withholding* that which is enjoyable and desirable, like a beast would do – Satan lavishes us with it, like a prostitute; He surrounds us with convenience
He inundates us with pleasure; He floods us with flattery
Hoping beyond hope that we'll open the door and actually *invite* him in; Just like Hezekiah; Beware of that

➤ And beware of the *subtlety* of sin; Stealing in through a crack, unnoticed and elusive at first, but overwhelming and frightening in the end
Like the bats we battled on vacation one year

We were at a home in northern Wisconsin, and woke up one night to a bat sitting on the chest of Becky's sister
And after dealing with that, as you can imagine, we thought it was done; Isolated incident; No blood, no foul

But then, they started showing up on the walls here and there
And for the life of us, we couldn't figure out where they were coming from
Until somebody we talked to said they were probably coming in through the front door
And we were like, "What?" And they were like, "Yep; That's usually how it happens"

So I started watching; In fact I went into "red-alert vigilance mode" and became the front door Gestapo
And sure enough, the very next day, when one of the kids flung open the door to go outside, I saw a bat fly in at about knee level
And it was so subtle, so silent, and so fast – I almost missed it
It was barely a blur, but absolutely real

And we went on the warpath with that thing; I went from vigilance mode to the lunatic fringe in like 3 seconds
And for the next 30 minutes, we were running around with brooms, tennis rackets, and and trash cans – while hiding under tables, and cowering under blankets
It was craziness; When all we had to do, was close the door in the first place

And that's exactly how evil is in our *lives*; All it takes is a crack
And before you know it the bat is a beast, and the prostitute is a live-in
Don't go there; Don't open the door to evil influences
Not even a crack; Not even a hint

And then last . . .

Don't downplay God's judgment (v5-8)

Don't make it seem less important, or significant, or serious than it really is – once again, like Hezekiah did; Look at v5, after his clueless admission that he bared all

[5] *Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: [6] Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. [7] And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."* [8] *Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."*

Not only was he naïve, but self-absorbed; All he cared about was himself; All he cared about was *his* generation, *his* life, *his* days
Which he eventually corrected, and goes to show that failure is not final in our lives – that God still uses us when we repent and return to him . . .
But at this point, it was shameful; His self-absorption was shameful

➤ And it led him to *downplay* God's judgment; Saying that – *The word of the LORD that Isaiah just spoke was, good*; Seriously?
God just told him that his rule and reign is going to be obliterated, his kids are going to be emasculated, and Thanksgiving will be a distant memory
That's essentially what he's just been told – no grandbabies, no offspring, and no nation

In which case he must have been thinking that it wasn't really going to pan out; Or if it did, surely it wasn't going to be as bad as what *Isaiah* said
I mean, come on – Pessimistic Pete's are a dime a dozen; They were then, and they are now; And the doomsday predictions they spout *rarely* come true

The problem is, Hezekiah wasn't dealing with a Pessimistic Pete – he was dealing with a prophet of the living God, *the LORD of hosts*
Hear the word of the LORD Isaiah said
The one who's *more* than capable of doing what he says; The one who doesn't lie and *cannot* lie; The one who's perfect in *all* his ways – including the things he foretells

And sure enough, 115 years later in 586BC – the Babylonians swooped in, laid siege, overran the city, completely destroyed it . . .
And then ran off with all the goods, and took most of the people with them; Just like God said

• **B/c what God says, he does (2 Kings 25:1-21)**

Don't downplay God's judgment – b/c what he says, he does
And in this case, we not only have the *extra*-biblical record to confirm it, but we have the Scriptures themselves
Like 2 Kings 25(1-21), and Jer 39(1-10), and Jer 52(5-19), and 2 Chron 36(15-21)
Every one of them confirming the fulfillment of God's prophetic word; That what he says he does; Which means we ought not to downplay his warnings

Especially his warnings about the consequences of sin – that *whatever one sows, that will he also reap* (Gal 6:7); You reap what you sow
Don't minimize that; Don't rationalize it; Don't downplay it
Just b/c things are good in your life, or just b/c the consequences are out of sight out of mind, doesn't mean you've dodged the bullet (**Summary**)

What God says, he does; Forewarned is forearmed
And serves as a deterrent to sin and the evil it brings
Don't be naïve; And don't open the door

Prayer – Lord, we don't want to be naïve – about our life, our future, or the evil influences that abound in our world; Help us to beware; Help us to be wise; And impress on us the truth of what you say
And for our offering now, we give eagerly and joyfully; Anticipating all that you'll do b/c of it