



Isaiah 37-39

Tape #7259
Isaiah 37-39
By Chuck Smith

The thirty seventh chapter of Isaiah, is almost word for word, a repeat of II Kings, chapter nineteen. Chapters thirty eight and nine cover the same portion of Hezekiah's life, as does II Kings, chapter twenty. So in a sense, we have a repeat of history that we have already covered as we were going through II Kings. But that was long enough ago that you've probably forgotten it, and so we can go through it again. One further note, and that is, when they wrote this portion of Hezekiah's life, they were not seeking to record history in a chronological order.

Now with them it was just giving you series of events that took place, with no concern as to the chronological order of the events. This is one of the difficulties that we have in cross-cultural seeking to relate to people in a cross-cultural type of an environment. Because people of different cultures think of things in different ways. They don't follow the same kind of logic for instance, that we follow. The Hebrew poetry does not rhyme. It is more a poetry of thought, rather than our poetry, which is rhyme and rhythm. Theirs is just a, ideas to them are poetic. So the repetition of an idea in a slightly different way to them, has a poetic beauty. Where, to us, it's a redundancy, and we like a rhythm, and we like a rhyme.

So in setting down the events, they weren't interested in, "Last year, this happened, this year, and then...", you know, or, "five years ago, and then four years ago, and then three years ago..." But it could be, "This is what happened today...", and then in the next chapter they'll tell you what happened twelve years ago. So what it is, is giving you sort of a collection of stories about king Hezekiah, and his reign, with no thought or desire to set it in a consecutive order.

So the events that we will read about in chapter thirty seven, actually covered a pretty broad period of time. It deals with the two invasions by Assyria. There was a separation of five years in these two invasions, but it doesn't bother to bring that out in the text. The first part of the chapter begins about 706 BC The latter part of the chapter is 701 BC But then, the next chapter, you know in our minds, it should be 699, or 695 or something, but the next chapter is 712 BC So you actually go backwards, from a chronological order, and yet the way it is set out, you see, our minds are set to go one, two, three, four, five. Theirs isn't! It's just whatever hits them twelve, seven, four, you know, and fifteen. So that it's just a collection, not in sequential order, as far as a chronological history. So with that background, let's take a look at chapter thirty seven.

Now chapter thirty six deals with this commander in chief, that was sent by Sennacherib, unto Hezekiah to demand the complete capitulation, and unconditional surrender to Assyria. At this particular time the Assyrians were down in the plain of the Philistines, and the king Sennacherib, was in process of besieging Lachish. He had sent his commander in chief with these threats, and with the demands for unconditional surrender.

So the servants of Hezekiah had talked with this commander in chief, there at the wall. When they heard these demands, they tore their clothes, they came to Hezekiah, and they told him the words of this commander in chief of the Assyrian armies. So chapter thirty seven, verse one...

It came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, [The demand for unconditional surrender.] he tore his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and he went into the house of the Lord (37:1).

His first reaction and response to this very troubling news was to go into the house of the Lord. Ostensibly to seek the Lord's guidance and help in the hour of crisis. Going into the house of the Lord is a wise move, when you're in trouble. When you're facing circumstances that are troubling you, you cannot understand them, it's good to go into the house of the Lord, because there, we get the eternal perspective.

Living in this world and caught up with the day by day circumstances of the world, it is very easy to lose the consciousness of the eternal. I am prone to measure things by how they effect me today. What effect this is gonna have on my life next week. Whereas, when I view them from the eternal perspective, that which is so troubling to me now, that which disturbs me so much now, is really of no consequence from an eternal

standpoint.

We used to have sort of a saying when we were in Bible college. When things would go wrong, and somebody would be all upset over a grade that he got or whatever, we'd say, "Hey a hundred years from now it won't make any difference." You know, see things in, in their eternal light, rather than in the temporary discomfort that I might have. But we get so caught up in this present, "ooh!", you know. We get just all churning inside over this present dilemma. We lose sight of the eternal so many times!

Peter spoke of the problem of not being able to see that which is afar off. We only see that which is near. This is so true of our lives. We are short sighted, and we can only see the immediate, the immediate consequence, the immediate effect, the immediate result, and we fail to see the eternal consequences, or realize that it really is of no eternal consequence at all! It really doesn't make any difference from an eternal standpoint.

Now this makes it difficult with us trying to understand the work of God in our own lives. Because, as God is working in your life, He's in the eternal, and He's always working the eternal plan. He is interested in your eternal welfare.

Now in working out that eternal plan, it may be that you're going astray, and He has to put you in temporary discomfort. Because I live in this temporary consciousness, I am uncomfortable in this situation in which I find myself. "And God why? If you really love me, why would you allow this to happen to me?", and I complain over these present circumstances that I am experiencing at this moment, that are very uncomfortable for me. God is working out the eternal plan. So God sees the thing from an entirely different perspective! That's why I have difficulty so often of understanding the way of God in my life. That is why it is so important when I am faced with this kind of a dilemma, that I go into the house of the Lord.

Now Hezekiah was facing a, a present threat. Here is the commander and chief of the Assyrian army saying, "Hey you either surrender unconditionally, or we're gonna come, and we're gonna starve you out. We're gonna destroy you! No city, no nation has been able to stand against our army. Don't you think you can stand, and don't let your king Hezekiah deceive you into thinking God's gonna come through and save you! There are no gods that can save from the Assyrians!" Hezekiah is disturbed. Things look very dark. So he goes into the house of the Lord. "God why?", you know. "I've tried to be a good king, I've tried to live the right kind of a life. I've tried to do your will, and yet Lord, look what's happening!"

So he went into the house of the Lord, where we always should gain the eternal perspective. Purpose of gathering together here, is to broaden the perspective of life, that we might begin to see things from the eternal, rather than just the temporary, in which we live in the world outside. Not only did he go into the house of the Lord, but...

He took, and sent his servant Eliakim, and Shebna, and the elders and the priests who were covered with sackcloth, [He sent these notable men] unto Isaiah (37:2),

It shows the trust that he had in Isaiah, and the position that Isaiah the prophet had, there within the nation. The king is, is sending his chief cabinet actually, to Isaiah the prophet.

who was the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, trouble for the nation, this is a day of rebuke, ["We've been rebuked by this pagan king] it's a day of blasphemy: for he has blasphemed our God: for the children are come to birth, but there is not strength to bring forth (37:2-3).

So he's talking about the nation. "That, we're coming to a birth, but we don't seem to have the strength to, to get through."

So it may be that the Lord thy God will hear the words of the commander and chief, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to reproach the living God, [and will remove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard:] and will reprove [rather] the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left (37:4).

So the plea that Hezekiah, uh that Isaiah would pray. The remnant being those in Jerusalem. The other cities of Judah have already fallen to Assyria. So Jerusalem is in a very weakened state. All of their ally cities have been taken. They alone remain. They have received this reproach against God, and so, "Pray, pray to God, lift up thy prayer."

So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he will hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land (37:5-7).

Now this prophecy covers a period of time. This is about 706 BC Sennacherib was in the process of taking the Philistine city of Lachish, and it is true he heard rumors that caused him to return back to Assyria. There were a couple of rumors, one, "The Ethiopians are coming!", and the other was that, "Babylon is beginning to stir!" So the fear of Babylon, which was beginning to gain power. So Sennacherib returned from this siege back to Assyria, but with the promise and the threat, "You're not through with me yet! Don't think that you're off the hook! I'll be back!", was the idea.

So the commander in chief returned, and he found the king of Assyria was warring against Libnah: for he had heard that they had departed from Lachish. [They left off the battle against Lachish, and they'd gone to Libnah, and they,] And he heard saying concerning Tirhakah the king of Ethiopia that, He has come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, [He heard these rumors and so he sent messages back to Hezekiah.] and said, Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah the king of Judah, saying, Don't let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you, saying, Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria (37:8-10).

"Don't be fooled there man, I'm not through with you yet. Don't take the word of the prophet as you're out of the woods! Because I'm, I'm still gonna wipe you out!"

Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands by destroying them utterly; and do you think that you are gonna be delivered? ["Who do you think you are that you can stand against Assyria?"] Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or Hena, or Ivah (37:11-13)?

These were cities that were destroyed. So this is a letter again that is again threatening, and challenging the God of Hezekiah.

So Hezekiah when he received this letter, period of time. Sennacherib had gone back to Assyria, but now in 701 he comes back with his troops, and here's the letter. So you have a period of time here that lapses between the letter that he receives, and the first promise that he's going to go home. So he's back again, sending the letter.

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and he read it: and [again he follows the same tact as earlier.] he went to the house of the Lord, [But this time,] he [just] spread the letter out before the Lord (37:14).

"Lord, look what this guy is saying about you. Look at these blasphemous things he's writing!" So he went up into the house of the Lord, and he spread it out before the Lord.

And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts (37:15-16),

As we pointed out this morning, the address of the prayer is very important. Who are you addressing your prayers to? So important that we have the right address on our prayers. Jesus said, "When you pray, pray, 'Our Father which art in heaven'". That's a good address. It's an address that presupposes relationship. Relationship is essential for prayer. It is important in prayer that you have a relationship with God. That you know Him as your Heavenly Father. "Our Father which art in heaven." There's relationship. You see, as a son, you have the right to come to your Father, any time, for any reason. The door to the Father is always open. My kids don't even knock. They know the door is always open. Dad is always there. So the relationship, and so important in prayer is relationship.

You remember the woman, the Syro-Phoenician woman who came to Jesus concerning her daughter, and said, "Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on me! For my daughter is grievously vexed with the devil!" The disciples said, "Lord do something about this woman! She's bugging us!" For Jesus seemed to ignore her. Jesus said, "It isn't right to take the children's bread, and throw it to the little puppies." He said that in her hearing. She said, "That's true Lord. But the little puppies do eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." He said, "Oh woman, I've not encountered this kind of faith!", and her daughter was healed. But the

children's bread, there's a relationship. That relationship is so important in prayer! "Our Father", to have that relationship.

Here, he is addressing his prayer, addressing it to, "Yahweh of hosts, O Yahweh of hosts".
that dwells between the cherubims (37:16),

So this is the concept they, they have of God. You remember the, the temple, the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant that was there in the temple, had these carved cherubims above it. Came from the tabernacle. That temple, holy of holies, was the model of the throne of God, surrounded by the cherubims. So, "O Yahweh of hosts", the hosts of heaven, the angelic hosts of heaven. He is the God of our fathers, "God of Israel", the God that dwells there among the cherubims.

thou art the God, even thou alone, [Or, "You are the only true God".] of all the kingdoms of the earth: [They all had their gods, but they were not true gods, they all had their objects of worship, their forms and rituals of worship, but they are not true gods. "You are the only true God"] because you have made the heavens and the earth n(37:16).

That's what distinguishes Him. He's the Creator! He's created the universe. "O Lord, thou art God, thou hast created the heaven and the earth, and everything that is in them", the disciples prayed. So the Creator of the universe.

Now that helps put your problem and your need in perspective! When you realize that He is the God of the universe. You're, you're not talking to just some inept friend who has limitations when you pray. You're talking to the eternal God that is without limitation! The God who created the universe, the God who is all-sufficient, the God who is capable to do exceeding abundantly above anything you could ever ask or think! The God who is your Heavenly Father, and delights to give good gifts to His children. The God who dotes over His children. How wonderful the privilege, to be able to bring our needs to a God like this! His prayer is...

Lord hear, and Lord see, hear what they are saying, see what they are doing: hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach you the living God. Now of a truth, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all of the nations, and their countries, They have cast their gods into the fire: for they were not really gods, they were the works of men's hands, they were of wood they were of stone: and that's why they were able to destroy them. But now therefore, O Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all of the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are Yahweh, the only God (37:17-20).

"For your sake, for your glory, that the whole world may know that you are the only true God. Lord deliver us out of his hands. All of the other gods were inept, they were not able to save out of the hand of the Assyrians, but no wonder! They weren't gods anyhow! But Lord, save us that the whole world may know, there's no God like you! You alone are God!"

So then Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah the king, saying, Thus saith Yahweh the God of Israel, [The God that he had addressed] Inasmuch as you have prayed to me against Sennacherib the king of Assyria: This is the word that the Lord speaks concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at thee (37:21-22).

In other words, "You come and you're boasting of all you're gonna do, your power and so forth, and the young girls are gonna laugh at you. The little girls are gonna shake their head at you. They're gonna defy you."

Because who have you reproached and blasphemed? against who do you think you've exalted your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. By your servants [Eliakim and these others, or not Eliakim, beg your pardon, the commander and chief.] you have reproached the Lord, and you have said, By the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars, and the choice fir trees: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places (37:23-25).

So he was boasting of his power. "I've conquered the mountains of Lebanon. I'm able to take care of my troops, we dig wells, and drink of them when we're in need. We've got the men, and the resources to do what we want to do! We can stop up the rivers of the besieged places."

This was a, a tact, and a ploy of, of the kings in those days, or of the generals. When you were coming against a city, you would find their, their water reserves. Then what you would do is, is stop up the springs. Usually the springs that fed the city were outside of the city walls, and so the, the idea was always to find out the source of water, cut off the water, and, and the city cannot survive but just a short time without water. That was the ploy that was often engaged. That is why Hezekiah built that tunnel to bring the water of the Gihon spring on inside of the city walls. Then they covered over the tunnel on the outside, so the Assyrians wouldn't know where the water supply came from.

In the city of Megiddo, you have a similar thing, where they built this same kind of a tunnel in Megiddo, to bring the water from the spring outside of the city, on into the city itself. So you've got a similar kind of a situation there in Megiddo. In the city of Samaria their water supply was off on another hill, and so they had an ingenious way. You know, water seeks its own level, and so they built this tube and all, to bring the water from this other hill, and on up into the city of Samaria. They didn't realize that their water supply was actually from this distant hill, a couple of miles away. Because of this tube, the water sought its own level, and so they built a pool over there from the spring, and the water fed the city of Samaria. But they were always trying to disguise their source of water.

He is saying, "Look I stopped up the waters that these besieged cities were depending upon. Have you not heard long ago, how I have done it?" These are the boasts of Sennacherib, of ancient. Then God answers him, he says he's dried up all the rivers and so forth, but God said...

Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it; of the ancient times, that I have formed it? and now I have brought it to pass, that you should be laid waste, that you should [that, that] thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, and as the grass on the housetops, and the corn blasted before it is grown up (37:26-27).

"It is true that you have conquered. These nations that you've conquered were really of no account. They're like grass that grows up rapidly, but dries so quickly. Like the grass on the housetops." They had dirt roofs, and the grass would grow on the dirt roofs, but it would die very quickly. So...

But I know your abode, and your going out, and your coming in, and your rage against me (37:28).

God said, "I know all about you man. I know where you live, I know when you go out, and come in, and I know the rage that is in your heart against me." So He knows about you. He knows all about you. He knows where you are tonight. He knows if you have a rage in your heart against God.

And because of your rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into my ears, therefore will I put my hook in your nose (37:29),

Now this was the typical tact of the Assyrians. When they would capture a city, they would lead the people away captive. But what they would do is put these hooks through their noses, and thus with a hook in your nose, you weren't apt to try and run away. They would lead you then, they'd have all these slaves, or all these prisoners of war sort of tied to the rope with a hook through their noses, and they would, you know, it doesn't take much pulling to get you to go the right direction. So God says, "I'm gonna do this to you. You've done it to a lot of people, I'm gonna do it to you." "Therefore I will put my hook in your nose,"

and my bridle in your lips, [The hook through the lips.] and I will turn thee back by the way which you came (37:29).

So He was gonna take the very ploy. That, in other words, I'm gonna force you to retreat. "You'll go back by the very way you came."

And this shall be a sign unto you, [Now this is to Hezekiah, the message was to Hezekiah of God against the king of, of Assyria, and so the sign that shall be to Hezekiah, is that it's not gonna take place immediately.] you will eat this year such as it grows of itself; ["You won't be able to plow and plant your fields this year, but whatever seeds and grain is there, that comes up of itself, you will eat of that."] and the following year the same way: ["You still won't be able to plant, there'll still be enough problems and all that the second year you won't be able to plant."] but again you'll just eat that which comes up of itself in the ground: but in the third year you will sow, and you will reap, you'll plant your vineyards, and you'll eat the fruit thereof. ["So it's not gonna, this deliverance won't be complete for three years."] And the remnant that

is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: [God will work with the remnant of His people, and they shall yet bear fruit.] For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, they that have escaped out of mount Zion: and the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning this king of Assyria, He will not come into this city, nor will he shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. But by the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall not come into this city, saith the Lord (37:30-34).

So the straight out promise of God. “He’s not going to come into this city.”

For [The Lord said] I will defend this city to save it for my own sake, and for my servant David’s sake (37:35).

“Lord, for your glory”, he said, “that all the earth may know”, so God said, “I will for my sake.” Then a little note from history...

Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty five thousand: so that when the rest of them awoke early in the morning, behold, there were all of these dead corpses around them. So Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed, [He left] he went back to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and he dwelt there in Nineveh for a few years. But it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with a sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead (37:36-38).

So the word of God against Sennacherib was fulfilled. He would return to his land, and there, he fell by the sword in his own land.

Now it was at this point, when the angel of the Lord destroyed the Assyrians, a hundred and eighty five thousand that, you remember in, you see, he doesn’t follow the chronological order. It was at this point that “the sinners in Zion were afraid. Fearfulness surprised the hypocrites, because they said, Who amongst us can dwell with this devouring fire?” They saw the effects of God’s fire against the Assyrians, and fear gripped their hearts.

So, one further little note here, one angel, in one night, wiped out a hundred and eighty five thousand. I think of the garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, sent from the high priest. Peter drew out his sword and began to swing away, whacked off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. Jesus said, “Peter put away your sword. Don’t you realize that at this very point, if I wanted to, I could call a legion of angels to defend me?” I think of, if one angel could wipe out a hundred and eighty five thousand, what could a legion of angels do?

Jesus said, “No man takes my life. I give my life.” He was surrendering to the cross, to the will of the Father in going to the cross. He could’ve spared it, He could’ve, He could’ve said, “Okay Dad, it’s enough. They’re not worth it. Let the angels...”, and I can imagine that God had to restrain the angels. I imagine that they were incensed at the treatment that the Son of God was receiving. I imagine that they would’ve done a real rip up job. Ha, ha! Had God let them, at that point. Probably nothing would’ve remained of the world, if God had just let the angels go at that time.

So, don’t you, doesn’t that sort of show the folly of our trying to defend God? Yet how many times we sort of find ourselves in that posture of defending God. That’s nice, but you know, God really doesn’t need your defense. He’s able to take care of Himself, quite handily! We need God’s defense. Sort of like the idea of supporting God. You know, “Send in your offering this week, or God’s gonna be in the poor house. God’s going broke. It’s almost over. If you don’t come through this week, He’s filing for bankruptcy.” Ha, ha! “Poor God! He needs your support in order to survive!” No. “Help us.” We need His support in order to survive!

Chapter 38

Now chapter thirty eight takes place about eleven years before the end of chapter thirty seven. So we go back to about 712, was about the time of Hezekiah’s sickness. But this is just another story about Hezekiah, and his prayers. Hezekiah was brought to his knees on different occasions, through different experiences. Even as God brings us to our knees, as the result of the experiences of life. He resorted to prayer in his times of trouble, even as we should always resort to prayer, even before we get in trouble. So...

In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Set your house in order: because you're gonna die, and not live. ["Write your will, and get things taken care of, because you're gonna die."] So Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and he prayed to the Lord (38:1-2),

Bad news for Hezekiah. Prophet says, "God says you're gonna die, and you're not gonna live". So Hezekiah said...

Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth with a perfect heart, and I've done that which is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept sore (38:3).

Whether or not he was afraid to die, or just felt he was too young to die, or what, we don't know. But he really didn't like the prospect of facing death. Thus, he prayed, and he was weeping, grievously weeping before God.

And then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying (38:4),

Actually we read in II Kings, chapter twenty, that before he even got out of the court, he had come and given the king the message, and he was heading back out through the king's court, and when he was halfway through the court, Hezekiah got the message, turned his face to the wall, started crying and praying unto God, and before Hezekiah got to the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to Isaiah. Saying...

Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: and, I'll give you fifteen more years (38:5).

Interesting! Interesting, because it brings up this age old problem concerning the sovereignty of God, and the effect of prayer upon God. You see, you can carry that sovereignty of God so far, as to make man's actions totally unnecessary. God is going to do what He is going to do, and no man can stay the hand of God. Who is man to stay the hand of God? "The purposes of God shall stand, and that which He has purposed, He shall accomplish." You can make prayer just really of, of no value, or no effect, because God's gonna do what He's gonna do anyhow, so why pray?

But this does show to us, that prayer does change things. Hezekiah had received the message, "Get your house in order, get things straight, because you're gonna die, and not live." The fellow immediately began to pray, and cry before the Lord, and instantly, before Isaiah even got out of the court, the Lord came to Isaiah, and said, "Go back and tell him God's heard his prayers, He saw his tears, He's gonna give him fifteen more years. Add fifteen years to your life."

And I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city (38:6).

You see, this was before the Assyrians had even come around! But they were taking other cities, and they'd taken the northern kingdom, and so there was that threat.

Now it brings up another interesting problem. The time is appointed for us to die. God has appointed time. It's appointed unto man once to die. Hezekiah begged off his appointment. "Postpone it Lord! I don't want to meet you right now!" And, his prayer that God would extend his life, and God heard, and answered his prayer, and extended his life. But was that for the best for the nation? Brings up an interesting question.

Because it was after this time that his wife bore a son by the name of Manasseh, who took over the kingdom at the death of Hezekiah. Manasseh was the most wicked, ungodly king ever to reign in Judah. He led the nation spiritually down the tubes. Everything that his father had done for God, in a positive way, he undid. So you think that for the nation, they would've been better off had Hezekiah died at that point.

Which brings up another interesting kind of a thing, and that is, God's direct will for our lives, and God's permissive will for our lives. It would seem that God does have a direct, first desire, but there is latitude, and God will give you second, or third best, if you won't come to His first best for you. His first best, being His direct will for your life.

Now we do know that God is not willing that any should perish. But that all should come to repentance. Now if you don't come to God's first direct will for your life, then you will have God's permissive will, and He'll permit you to destroy yourself. He'll permit you to go to hell. With Jacob, God said, "Now don't go down to Egypt, sojourn in the land here." But Jacob now hears that his son Joseph is alive, that they've got some years of famine left, and Joseph is saying, "Dad come on down with the family. I'll take care of you

well here in Egypt! God has blessed me.” Jacob prayed, and God said, “Okay go to Egypt.” But it would seem that was of permissive will, the direct will was, “Stay out of Egypt.” Getting out of Egypt was no easy task, it took them four hundred years! The descendants of Jacob went through some pretty hard times before they got out of Egypt. Then they had to take by force, this land.

Baalim, when king Balak sent to him, and said, “Come and curse these people that are invading my land.” Baalim prayed, and the Lord said, “Thou art not to go to the king. You’re not to curse these people. They are my people.” So the king sent back other messengers, more notable, with greater rewards for divination. When he saw all of the loot that the king was offering him, he prayed again! “Oh God you’ve gotta let me go! Please let me go! Lord, I want to go!” The Lord said, “Alright, go. But don’t say more than what I tell you.” But there was the permissive will of God. The direct will of God was, “Don’t go.” He was permitted to go.

Is it possible for us to insist that God give us second best? Or third best? That we sort of rebel against the first plan of God, and so He allows a lesser, alternate plan for our lives? Interesting things to ponder in your meditations. I’m not gonna try and give you any answers, because I don’t have them! I only ask questions! Ha, ha!

Now the promise to Hezekiah is that the Lord will give him fifteen more years. “And I will deliver you from, I will deliver you, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria, for I will defend this city.” And, God did that, twelve years later, quite a way!

And this shall be the sign unto you from the Lord, the Lord will do this thing that he has spoken; [Interesting sign, very dramatic one indeed!] Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backwards. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it had gone down (38:7-8).

Now the physicists, and the astronomers and all, have great difficulty with this particular passage! For we know that the sun actually doesn’t revolve around the earth, but the earth revolves around the sun. Our day and night are caused by the revolution of the earth upon its axis. So for the shadow to go back on the sundial would mean that the earth would have to stop its rotation, and reverse itself, and then start it up again. From a standpoint of physics that would be a pretty tough thing because the earth is spinning at about a thousand miles an hour, here on the surface, as we’re spinning, you’re going about a thousand miles an hour. To put on the brakes, you know what happens in your car, when you put on the brakes suddenly! You know, you’re thrown forward. So the hypothesis would be that we’d all be thrown off the earth. If the thing suddenly put on the brakes, we’d all be flying out into space!

So how did God do this? It’s a real problem for those who have a small concept of God. But if your concept of God is correct, you have no problem at all. He could’ve done it in any of many different ways. He could’ve actually taken the sun back. Or, He could’ve stopped the earth, and reversed the orbit for just a little bit, and then spun it again. How is it that the earth does spin on its axis, and remains pretty constant through, through the centuries? By what momentum does the earth continue to spin, and has continued to spin? Who started it spinning to begin with? Who gave it the initial flip to get it going? Ha, ha! So if your concept of God is, is a biblical concept, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, He measures the heavens with the span of His right hand.” I mean that’s a pretty big God!

How big is the universe? We’re not sure, we’re still discovering galaxies that are out there further than we thought there was anything at all. Fifteen billion light years? Perhaps. Maybe we’ll discover further galaxies. We ask God, “How big is your universe?” He said, “Well it’s that big. Measured it out, and when I measured the universe, I just...”, that’s a pretty big God! So you see He could do things any number of ways that He might desire. So I have no problem with this verse, because my concept of God allows Him to do anything. Thus, I have no problem with this. It’s only those people who have that narrowed concept of God, that find great difficulties with verses like this. I feel sorry for them.

So the writing of Hezekiah the king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness (38:9).

This is, this is sort of the song that he wrote when he recovered from this sickness. He thought he was gonna die, and so when he recovered he wrote this song.

I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I'm deprived of the residue of my years. ["I'm being cut off too early, it's too short!"] 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. ["I'm gonna be wiped out, I'm not gonna be able to go into the temple of the Lord, I won't be there with the people of God anymore."] My age is departed, it's removed from me as a shepherd's tent: ["I've been cut off like the weaver my", uh] and I've been cut off like a weaver my life: and he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. ["It's all over, I'm so young, and yet it's all over", and so he said,] I reckoned till morning, that as a lion, and so will he break all my bones: from day even to night will he make an end of me. ["I'm gonna be destroyed", and so he said,] Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: [Perhaps he was having chills, you know just, teeth chattering like a crane or a swallow.] I did mourn as a dove: [Groaning and mourning on his bed.] my eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I'm oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself he has done it: so I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. ["God heard me, He responded, and so I will live carefully before Him."] O Lord, by these things men live, and in all of these things is the life of my spirit: and so will you recover me, and make me to live. [The promise that God was gonna heal him.] Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but you in your love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: and you have cast all of my sins behind my back (38:10-17).

Oh that's glorious! "Lord you've forgiven my sins, you've cast them behind my back!"

For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth (38:18).

The idea of the resurrection of the dead was not fully developed really in the old testament. There was thoughts of it, there was talk of it, yet there was not a full understanding, until Jesus rose from the dead. So...

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known your 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 (38:19-20).

"So I wrote this to be sung." A rejoicing in the healing that God gave to him, and in the extending of his life when he was dying, and really had given up for dead. God extended his life, and so the rejoicing of his heart for this. The song that he wrote that was to be sung among the congregation of the people, accompanied by stringed instruments.

For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, a poultice and lay it for a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover. So Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord (38:21-22).

The sign was the dial going back, the sun dial going back ten degrees.

Chapter 39

Now...

At the time of his recovery Merodachbaladan, who was the son of Baladan, the king of Babylon, he sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: to congratulate him in the healing, because he had heard that he was sick, and that he had recovered. And Hezekiah was glad for these emissaries that had come from Babylon, and he showed them the house of his treasury, all of the treasure of Israel, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious ointment, all of the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all of his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them (39:1-2).

Here were these emissaries from Babylon, coming to congratulate him on his healing, and Hezekiah says, "Oh you know, take a look at the glory of my kingdom! Here's all of my treasures, and here's all of our weapons, and you know the power and all!", and showed them all off to this son of the king of, of Babylon. So...

Then Isaiah came to Hezekiah, and he said unto him, What did these men say to you? and where did they come from? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Isaiah said, What have they seen in your house? And Hezekiah answered, They've seen everything that is in my house: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. And Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the

word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days will come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store, the treasures that they have stored up to this day, they will be carried to Babylon: and nothing shall be left, saith the Lord (39:3-6).

Foolish! You see, again, maybe he'd have been better off to have died. The next fifteen years were rather disastrous for him, and the nation.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which you will beget, [The posterity] they will take them away as captive; [Daniel was one of the descendants of Hezekiah, that was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon] to be a eunuch in the palace of the king of Babylon. [He was there as a counselor.] Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord (39:8).

There is a softness, and there is something in Hezekiah to be admired, God has pronounced a judgment, and, and he acknowledges what God does is right, "Good is the word of the Lord." That's, that's hard to do when the word has come in such judgment like that. I mean, when it's very severe. When, when God says, "Oh I'm gonna bless you, and gonna do all this!" You say, "Oh good is the word of the Lord!" But when God lays a heavy on you, to then acknowledge, "Well good is the word of the Lord!" Is, it's a real faith in God. What God says is right, what God says is good. He accepted the judgment that was pronounced upon his folly.

And he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days (39:8).

So he will live out his life in peace, but following him, bad times are coming. His descendants will be carried away captive, all of the treasure of Jerusalem will be carried away to Babylon.

So we come now to the end of the first part of the book of Isaiah. We enter now into the second part. Sort of the new testament, as we have said, it's a miniature Bible. Thirty nine chapters deal with this portion of Israel's history. The next twenty seven chapters go into the new promises of God, much about the Messiah, and the new age that God is promised to come. It is significant that the next chapter begins with the prophecy of John the Baptist. Verse three, "The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.", and so forth. So you're entering into the, the Messiah, and the new testament, in the second, twenty seven chapters of Isaiah. So we begin that new section next week, and we see now, the promises of God for this new day that God has promised.

May the Lord be with you, and bless you, and help you to keep an eternal perspective concerning your life. So that, the hope that is ours, in our high calling in Christ, will sustain us through whatever dark experiences that we might be facing. May we never lose consciousness of God's eternal plan, and eternal purposes for us. May we see the experiences of our life as they relate to the eternal, and thus be strengthened in our walk with Him.