

Isaiah Chapter 39

Verses 39:1-8: The incident in this chapter is used by Isaiah to introduce the coming Babylonian captivity. “Merodach-baladan ... king of Babylon” is known in the Akkadian texts as Marduk-apal-iddina. He conquered Babylon (in 721 B.C.), with the help of the Elamites and ruled there 11 years before being driven out by Sargon II of Assyria (in 710 B.C.).

Isaiah 39:1 "At that time Merodach-baladan, 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."

“At that time”: Just after Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery.

The very same thing is recorded (in 2 Kings chapter 20, beginning with the 12th verse). When we see the phrase “at that time”, it is speaking of a specific time, and not a time in general. We see that the king of Babylon has sent an ambassador to check out the rumor that Hezekiah had been healed of a life-threatening disease.

It was not unusual then, and is not unusual now, to send gifts to the sick. The gift sent this time was like a bribe to get him into the confidence of Hezekiah. This fake interest he was showing Hezekiah was so he could find out about himself and his headquarters.

Isaiah 39:2 "And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed 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 armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not."

“Hezekiah was glad”: The text does not say whether it was because of flattery or of a desire for help against the increasing Assyrian threat (2 Kings 20:13).

“House ... treasures”: Doubtless to try and impress his visitors (2 Chron. 32:25), Hezekiah showed all he could contribute in an alliance against the Assyrians.

Hezekiah's good judgment was swayed by the gift brought to him. He should never have opened his house and revealed all of his secrets to the ambassador from Babylon. It appears from all the things listed above, that Hezekiah had been blessed in a material way.

Hezekiah wanted them for allies. It appears Babylon wanted Hezekiah for an ally, as well. People who believe in God should never yoke up with those of unbelief. It brings nothing but grief. The greed of the Babylonians would cause them to come against Hezekiah, so they could get all of his wealth.

Hezekiah held nothing back. He showed them his personal belongings and that of the kingdom, as well.

Isaiah 39:3 "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."

“Then came Isaiah the prophet”: God’s spokesman showed up without being invited to confront the king, as often happened.

Isaiah sees the error in this immediately. He is asking Hezekiah, why he showed all of this to perfect strangers? This might be wrong for a person to do in our day against a ruler of the country, but at the time this was written, a prophet had access to the king.

In fact, the prophet was sent of God and was not to be stopped by anyone. They, many times, brought warnings from God. They spoke as an oracle of God. Hezekiah was aware these men were from Babylon, but he was not aware of their evil intentions.

Perhaps, Hezekiah's ego got in the way of sound thinking. He thought himself important for these men to have come so far to bring him a gift.

Isaiah 39:4 "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 showed them."

It is pretty obvious Isaiah already knew what Hezekiah had shown them, but just wanted to make a point of the foolishness of that act here.

Verses 5-6: “The word of the Lord ... carried to Babylon”: Isaiah predicted the Babylonian captivity that would come over a century later (586 B.C.), another prophecy historically fulfilled in all of its expected detail.

Isaiah 39:5 "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:"

When a prophet made a statement such as this, it was not his message, but a Word from God. Isaiah called the Lord, the LORD of hosts, very often in his writings. It is one of the things that set this apart as definitely being from the pen of Isaiah.

Isaiah 39:6 "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."

“Nothing shall be left”: Hezekiah’s sin of parading his wealth before the visitors backfired, though this sin was only symptomatic of the ultimate reason for the captivity. The major cause was the corrupt leadership of Manasseh, Hezekiah’s son (2 Kings 21:11-15).

This is a prophecy that Babylon will conquer them and loot the place, as well. The time and the season is always known just of God. This prophecy presented by Isaiah will surely come to pass, because it is from God. This is not Isaiah's message, but God's message spoken through Isaiah to Hezekiah.

Isaiah 39:7 "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."

“Sons that shall issue from thee” (see 2 Kings 24:12-16; 2 Chron. 33:11; Daniel 1:3-4, 6); for the prophecy’s fulfillment.

In the case here, the sons are eunuchs made by man. Many times, young men who are captured and used as servants of their captors were made into eunuchs, so they would not be able to have children. This is the fate of Hezekiah's sons. They did not have to be the literal sons of Hezekiah, but could be his descendants, spoken of as his sons.

We do know there is a mention of the seed of the king having this very same thing happen. The first chapter of Daniel is somewhat descriptive of what happened. The reason they were wanted, was because they were educated and capable to teach.

Isaiah 39:8 "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."

“Word of the Lord ... spoken”: A surprising response to the negative prophecy (of verses 5-7)! It perhaps acknowledged Isaiah as God’s faithful messenger.

“Peace and truth in my days”: Hezekiah perhaps reacted selfishly, or perhaps he looked for a bright spot to lighten the gloomy fate of his descendants.

It appears from this that Hezekiah knows he cannot do anything about the coming judgment. He is just happy there will be peace and rest for the rest of his life. Hezekiah accepted the Word of the Lord, because it was absolute truth.

He was happy for what God had already given him, and would not question anything beyond that.

In the next lesson, we will begin an entirely different study of this very same Isaiah that we have been studying. I said at the beginning of the lessons on Isaiah, that there were 2 distinct parts to Isaiah. The first 39 chapters symbolize the Old Testament, and the next 27 chapters symbolize the New Testament.

Isaiah Chapter 39 Questions

1. Who was this, Merodach-baladan in verse 1?
2. What did he do for Hezekiah?
3. What had he heard about Hezekiah?
4. What other part of the Bible gives this account?
5. What does “at that time” mean?
6. What was this gift actually?
7. Why was he showing interest in Hezekiah?
8. What did Hezekiah show them?
9. Hezekiah should have never opened his home to the ambassador from _____.
10. Hezekiah had been blessed in a _____ way.
11. People who believe in God should never yoke up with those of _____.
12. What questions did Isaiah ask Hezekiah about these strangers?
13. Where did Hezekiah say they were from?
14. A _____ had access to the king.
15. Prophets spoke as an _____ of God.
16. If Isaiah knew what Hezekiah had shown them, why did he ask him what he had shown them?
17. What title does Isaiah give the Lord in verse 5?
18. What terrible prophecy did Isaiah make about this?
19. What will happen to the sons that issue from Hezekiah?
20. Are these really his sons? Explain.
21. Where do we find a fairly detailed happening of this?
22. What reply did Hezekiah give to this warning?
23. What is Hezekiah happy about in this?
24. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah symbolize the _____.
25. The last 27 chapters of Isaiah symbolize the _____.