

Lesson 21
Isaiah 36 - 39
GOD SAVE THE KING!

Memory verse: ‘He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Ps. 46:10 NIV).

Except for David and Solomon, no king of Judah is given more attention or commendation in Scripture than Hezekiah. Eleven chapters are devoted to him in 2 Kings 18 - 20; 2 Chronicles 29 - 32; and Isaiah 36 - 39. “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him” (2 Kings 18:5).

He began his reign about 715 BC, though he may have been coregent with his father as early as 729 BC. He restored the temple facilities and services of worship, destroyed the idols and the high places (hill shrines where the people falsely worshipped Jehovah), and sought to bring the people back to vital faith in the Lord. He led the people in a nationwide two-week celebration of Passover and invited Jews from the northern kingdom to participate. “And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to see his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered” (2 Chron. 31:21).

After the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, Judah had constant problems with Assyria. Hezekiah finally rebelled against Assyria (2 Kings 18:7), and when Sennacherib threatened to attack, Hezekiah tried to bribe him with tribute (vv. 13–16). It was a lapse of faith on Hezekiah’s part that God could not bless. Sennacherib accepted the treasures but broke the treaty (Isa. 33:1) and invaded Judah in 701 BC. The account of God’s miraculous deliverance of His people is given in Isaiah 36 - 37.

Bible students generally agree that Hezekiah’s sickness (Isa. 38) and foolish reception of the envoys (Isa.39) took place before the Assyrian invasion, possibly between the time Hezekiah sent the tribute and Sennacherib broke the treaty. Then why are these chapters not arranged chronologically?

The prophet arranged the account as a “bridge” between the two parts of his book. Chapters 36 and 37 end the first part of the book with its emphasis on Assyria, and chapters 38 and 39 introduce the second part of the book, with its emphasis on Babylon. Isaiah mentioned Babylon earlier in his book (13:1ff.; 31:1ff.), but this is the first time he clearly predicts Judah’s captivity in Babylon.

Chapters 36 to 39 teach us some valuable lessons about faith, prayer, and the dangers of pride. Though the setting today may be different, the problems and temptations are still the same; for Hezekiah’s history is our history, and Hezekiah’s God is our God.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger once told the New York Times, “There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full.” Crises come, whether schedules permit them or not, and sometimes crises seem to pile up. How do we handle them? What life does to us depends on what life finds in us. A crisis does not make a person; it shows what a person is made of.

Hezekiah faced three crises in a short time: an international crisis (the invasion of the Assyrian army), a personal crisis (sickness and near death), and a national crisis (the visit of the Babylonian envoys). He came through the first two victoriously, but the third one tripped him up. Hezekiah was a great and godly man, but he was still a man, and that meant he had all the frailties of human flesh. However, before we find fault with him, we had better examine our own lives to see how successfully we have handled our own tests.

Scripture reading: Isaiah Chapter 36:13-20; 37:15-20; 38:1-6; 39:1-9

Things to learn: 1) Consequence of blasphemy 2) Coping with illness 3) Complacency with Success

Discussion Questions:

Q1. Read through 36:1 to 37:38 (with reference to corresponding chapters 2 Kings 18 to 19 and 2 Chron. 32). King Hezekiah and Judah were confronted with an invasion crisis. What did he have to deal with and how and why did God intervene in this crisis?

Q2. How did King Hezekiah approach his illness crisis and learn from his experience (refer Is38:1–22; 2 Kings 20:1–11)?

Q3. King Hezekiah recovered from his near death illness, became famous and attracted attention from the Babylonians. Why was he rebuked by the Lord in chapter 39?