

August 12

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 36-39

Key Verse: “For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.” (Isaiah 37:35)

Overview

Chapters 36 to 39 form an historical account which verifies the accuracy of Isaiah’s prophecies. It relays events that are also recorded in 2 Kings 18:13 to 20:21 and 2 Chronicles 32. For the third time, the Spirit of the Lord has moved an inspired writer to tell of this wonderful miracle of God’s deliverance of His people after they had humbled themselves and cried out to Him. It serves to illustrate well the results of trusting in the Lord, as well as the disastrous results of waging war against God, for when the Assyrians came against Jerusalem, they were in fact challenging God. They were proud, arrogant, and cruel to those whom they subjected, which at that time included all the surrounding nations, including the Northern Kingdom of Israel and most of Judah, except Jerusalem. Their argument was that because none of the gods of these other nations had delivered them, the God of Israel also would not be able to deliver Jerusalem. Therefore, they blasphemed and mocked God (36: 18-20).

Hezekiah’s servants (36:22 compare 22:15-24) reported to him the Assyrians’ insults and demands for Jerusalem to surrender. Hezekiah responded in the right way; he humbled himself, finally realizing they had no strength on their own (or through the help of Egypt) to overcome their powerful enemy (37:3). Therefore, Hezekiah sought the Lord by going to God’s spokesman, Isaiah. Hezekiah’s main concern was that God’s Name not be shamed and mocked.

Once again, the God of Israel was blasphemed through a letter from Sennacherib, king of Assyria. This time, however, Hezekiah went personally and directly to God in prayer, asking Him to save them so that all people everywhere would know that He alone is God and that He might receive all the glory (37:20). Hezekiah’s humble and sincere prayer touched the heart of God. Through Isaiah, God promised He would save for Himself a remnant, and therefore He would defend Jerusalem for His own Name’s sake and for the sake of David His servant, to whom He had promised an enduring dynasty (37:32, 35). God would not allow Hezekiah to perish, for His plan of redemption through Jesus had yet to be fulfilled (cf. Matt. 1:9-10).

After God had accomplished the miraculous deliverance by sending His death angel over the besiegers’ camp, only a few survivors, including Sennacherib, returned to their homes in shame (37:29). Sennacherib’s pride and wickedness had led to the downfall of his nation, and to his own death, for while he was praying to his idol, he was struck down by his sons; thus Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled (37:3, 37-38). In sharp contrast, Hezekiah’s humility and godliness led to the salvation of his city. While praying in the Temple of the true and living God, Hezekiah was promised salvation and was also granted healing from his sickness, giving him fifteen additional years of life in which to serve and praise God (ch. 38).

News of Hezekiah’s miraculous recovery spread as far as Babylon, a nation which at the time was still under Assyrian subjection (but soon to revolt and become the world power). Merodach-

Baladan, king of Babylon, sent a delegation to congratulate Hezekiah. In proudly showing them all the wealth of his kingdom, he fell into the temptation of taking the credit and glory for himself which belonged to God alone. Hezekiah also missed a great opportunity to be a witness for God to these pagan ambassadors. With Isaiah's rebuke, Hezekiah bowed to the will and justice of God. Isaiah's explicit prophecy was perfectly fulfilled in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, for indeed the Babylonians carried away all the royal treasures their ambassadors had seen many years earlier. (For additional comments, see "Day unto Day" on 2 Kings 18, 19, and 20, and 2 Chronicles 32.)

Prayer

Lord, You miraculously healed Hezekiah, and You are still the healer now. We ask for Your mighty hand to work miracles in our lives and the lives of others. We pray this for Your greater glory, O Lord. Amen.