

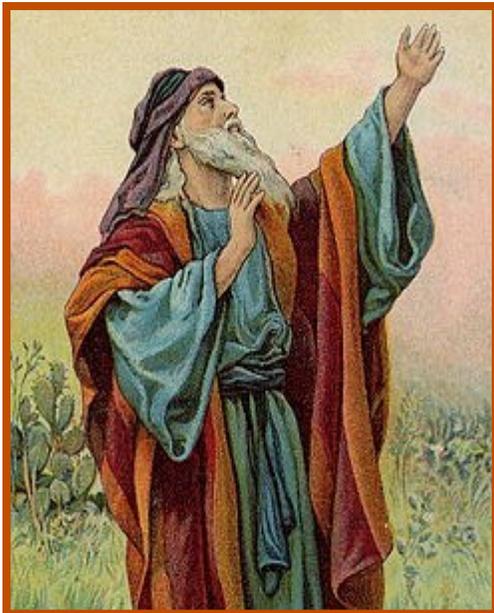
in the Limbo of the Patriarchs. There they would not know what went on earth, unless God decided to reveal something to them. And of course there would be no grand liturgical praise there, though they might praise God in a lesser way. Some of the Psalms show expectation that even in death they would not be totally cut off from association with God: cf. Ps 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:15 and Job 19:25-27.

When Merodach-Baladan king of Babylon heard of the illness and recovery of Hezekiah, he sent an embassy to him with gifts. 2 Chronicles 3:21 says that the ambassadors came from Babylon to investigate the sign. If this means the change on the sundial, it seems to imply that the change in the sun was visible in Babylon. Hezekiah received the envoys gladly, and showed them everything in his storehouses (cf. 2 Kings 20:12-19).

Isaiah came to Hezekiah and asked where the men came from and what did he show them. Hezekiah said he showed them everything in his palace. This looks a bit boastful. Isaiah then said: A time will come when everything in the palace will be carried to Babylon, and some of the descendants of Hezekiah will be carried there too to become members of the court of the King of Babylon (cf. Daniel 1).

Hezekiah seems to have picked up the implication that it would not happen in his own time. So he said: "There will be peace and security in my lifetime."

End of Chapters 38-39



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTERS 38-39

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapters 38-39

Hezekiah's Illness and the Embassy from Babylon. Chapters 38-39. Summary and Comments

"In those days" Hezekiah became seriously ill, near to death. The time expression is vague. Since God promised him through Isaiah at this time that He would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib, it is clear that these events belong before or during the invasion. More likely they are before the invasion.

Isaiah came to the king and told him to put his house in order, for he was going to die. Hezekiah then turned his face to the wall and prayed earnestly. He appealed to the fact that he had carried out the commands of the Lord. And he wept bitterly.

In what sense could he appeal to his own good conduct? It would be a mistake to say that eternal salvation is by faith not merits. That is true. But Hezekiah is not thinking of eternal salvation, but he seems to think of the covenant, in which God had said in Exodus 19:5: "If you really hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my special people."

"That is, you will get special favor. It was reasonable then to appeal to this covenant. Some protestants say the covenant consisted primarily in the exercise of faith. They are preoccupied with Luther's misinterpretation of faith, and have not noted that the covenant originally referred to temporal blessings. Did Hezekiah know the later (cf. Galatians 3:15-22) reinterpretation of the covenant, that it would refer to eternal salvation? Not too likely. He probably took it to refer to temporal things.

Then the word of God came again to Isaiah: Go tell Hezekiah. God has heard his prayer. He will add 15 years to his life, and deliver him from the king of Assyria and defend the city.

What was the illness? We read in 2 Kings 20:7, that after God's promise, Isaiah ordered a poultice of figs to be put on the boil that Hezekiah had. Such a poultice is used even today in the Near East.

Then Hezekiah asked for a sign that these things would come true. We do not approve of such a lack of confidence when God has already spoken. Yet in Isaiah 7:10-16 God offered Achaz a sign to make him believe.

The sign was this: God made the sun go back the ten steps it had already gone down on the stairway.

It may have been some sort of a sundial - sundials had been known for some time among the Babylonians. In what way was this done? Did God actually change the course of the heavenly bodies? Or just change the light on the dial? We do not know. He surely could act either way.

Next we find inserted in the text a sort of Psalm said to have been composed by Hezekiah. It is poetic in form, tells of his illness and recovery and praises God. In 38:17 Hezekiah says God put all his sins behind His back. This seems to reflect the common belief then that sickness came as a result of sin.

The psalm adds that those who go down into the pit, the grave, cannot hope for God's faithfulness, meaning that He would observe the covenant. That covenant applied only to the present life. It said that only the living praise God. He has in mind the grand liturgical praise in the Temple, which of course was absent from the realm of the dead. We must add that up to the time of the death of Christ, the just who had died, and had had all their bills paid, were still not admitted to the vision of God, they were