

III. HEZEKIAH RESPONDS WITH SELF-INTEREST (8)

“He says the Lord’s word is good because the judgment is not going to fall on him. How sad, and how short-sighted. This is not how we would like to remember such a good man. Yet this is how Isaiah has chosen for us to remember him” (Oswalt 2003: 437).

“Why did the Babylonian exile occur? Because the nation, like Hezekiah, saw trust as a one-time affair rather than a way of life. . . . They saw trust as a means of getting out of a crisis rather than as the lifelong expression of a covenant relationship” (Oswalt 2003: 438).

“Although another “death sentence” somewhat different from 38:1 is predicted for Hezekiah’s heirs in chap. 39, one cannot help but be shocked that Hezekiah does not even bother to weep for deliverance (contrast 38:2–3). There is not even a prayer or lament to try to get God to reverse his plans to send the people of Judah to Babylon. Where is this great righteous king that is mentioned in the earlier chapters?” (Smith 2007: 655).

FUNCTION OF CHAPTERS 36-39

“Thus chs. 36–39 make chs. 40–66 a necessity. Given that God may be trusted, what then? Given that salvation is not in Hezekiah, where is it? Given that one-time trust is not enough, how is a life of continuous trust possible? Given that the best of God’s people fail, where is our hope? Like the rest of the OT, Isa. 1–39 points the way to possibilities beyond themselves” (Oswalt 1986: 673).

“When all is said and done, while chs. 7–39 provide the groundwork for the solution to the problem raised in chs. 1–5, the problem still remains: how can sinful, rebellious Israel become holy, submissive Israel? Trust God? Yes, but how? Chs. 40–66 exist to provide the answer to that question” (Oswalt 1986: 698).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What is the basis of your confidence in the future? Is it your treasures, your family, or the Lord?

How do you respond to the praises of others? Is it difficult to surrender the glory to God?

What can you do so that your eyes are more consistently fixed on the Lord?

ISAIAH 39: BABYLONIAN EXILE PREDICTED

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

- I. Facing judgment by Assyria, the nation is called to trust the Lord (1–35)
 - A. Judah’s sin requires exile, but a remnant will return (1–12)
 - B. The nations will be judged, and therefore they should not be trusted (13–23)
 - C. The Lord will rule over the earth and redeem his people (24–27)
 - D. The Holy One of Israel will replace faithless rulers with a righteous king (28–35)
- II. Facing Assyria and Babylon, Hezekiah wavers in his trust in the Lord (36–39)
 - A. Hezekiah’s faith is tested by the Assyrian attack (36)
 - B. Hezekiah trusts the Lord and is delivered from the enemy (37)
 - C. Hezekiah’s faith is tested by a fatal illness (38)
 - D. **Hezekiah fails to trust the Lord and will be delivered to the enemy (39)**
- III. Facing exile by Babylon, the nation is called to trust the Lord (40–66)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 39

- I. Hezekiah displays his treasures to the Babylonians (39:1-2)
- II. Isaiah declares that the treasures will be carried off by the Babylonians (39:3-7)
- III. Hezekiah responds with self-interest (39:8)

SOURCES CITED

- J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, 1999.
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I. HEZEKIAH DISPLAYS TREASURES TO THE BABYLONIANS (1-2)

“There is something immensely flattering when someone whom we consider more important than we pays attention to us. But there is also something dangerous as well, namely, that we will succumb to the temptation to convince the important person that the attention being given is justified” (Oswalt 2003: 436).

“So Hezekiah could have used the visit to tell the story of what the sole God of the universe did for him. But instead of making God look good, Hezekiah, like Moses long before (Num. 20:9-12), takes the opportunity to make himself look good” (Oswalt 2003: 436).

“‘What should Hezekiah have said to the envoys?’ The answer is plain: ‘Thank you for coming and thank Merodach for his gift and invitation, but the fact is I have a divine promise to lean on; it has been confirmed personally in my return to health and cosmically in the sign of the sun. I cannot turn from faith in the promises of God.’ But he did turn—and Isaiah responded with impeccable logic: you want to commit all you have to Babylon, therefore all you have will go to Babylon (3-7); Rom. 6:16)” (Motyer 1999: 262).

“In the Bible, Babylon is more than an ancient culture; it represents everything in this world that is humanly impressive but opposed to God (cf. Gen. 11:1-9; Isa. 13:19; 1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 14:8; 18:2-3). . . . Hezekiah is dazzled—by a doomed culture” (ESV Study Bible).

“Idolatry is an attempt to manipulate our environment in such a way as to meet our needs. The idolatrous instinct is ever-present with us, and as soon as we abandon trust in God, idolatry in one form or another is waiting in the wings. This is even more likely if we evaluate our success in life, as Hezekiah seems to have done, by our possessions. We keep confusing ends and means. The intended end of our lives is abundant life, the life in which God’s fullness is poured into ours. A by-product of that fullness is physical and material blessing. But that is *only* a by-product. When we make it an end and put it forward as the evidence of our success in life, manipulation of God in order to secure that end is almost inescapable. Manipulation and trust are incompatible” (Oswalt 2003: 438).

“The person who has cultivated a life of trust, who knows that everything he or she has is a gift from God, will be constantly deflecting the praise and honor from himself or herself to God. If that kind of deflection is not

occurring, then perhaps I need to ask myself if I truly believe that what I am and have is a gift, or do I believe I produced it, either through my physical effort or, worse, through my spiritual effort. Hezekiah and his achievements cannot save the world; only Christ can. Neither can your achievements or mine. Who is getting the glory?” (Oswalt 2003: 439).

“If the focus of attention had been on what God promised to Hezekiah (“I will defend this city” in 38:6), it would have been obvious that there was no need to depend on the Babylonians for help in dealing with the Assyrians. The opportunity for failure came because the king was not focusing on what God had promised and graciously done in the past” (Smith 2007: 660).

“This is not to say that Hezekiah had to turn the Babylonian envoys out in the street, but it is instructive to note how Jesus treated the blandishments of Nicodemus (John 3) and of the man called “the rich young ruler” (Mark 10). He was not at all flattered by their words; instead, he plunged directly past the flattery to their real reasons for coming” (Oswalt 1986: 695).

II. ISAIAH DECLARES THAT TREASURES WILL BE CARRIED OFF (3-7)

“Isaiah’s questions have an ominous simplicity about them. He makes no pronouncements but invites the king to judge himself with his own mouth” (Oswalt 1986: 695).

“Hezekiah’s pride in his wealth and military resources (cf. 2 Chr 32:25) revealed that he was not fully trusting God to deliver Jerusalem from his enemies. Hezekiah actually believed that he could maintain his independence from Assyrian domination based on his own military strength and the assistance of the Babylonians. God’s response to this failure to trust him completely was to remove every material source of human trust. Everything that he and his fathers had stored up in their treasure house would be taken to Babylon” (Smith 2007: 658).

“We should not think that this one sin of Hezekiah’s pride doomed Judah to Babylonian captivity. Rather, this sin is illustrative of the kind of pride and refusal to trust that the entire nation would manifest and that would ultimately result in the captivity. Thus this act is not causal but typical” (Oswalt 1986: 696).