

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Isaiah Message 88*

*October 25, 2020*



*Hezekiah showing off his wealth to the Babylonian envoys . By Vicente Lopez Cir. 1789*

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# Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Eighty-Eight

HEZEKIAH SHOWS HIS WEALTH TO THE BABYLONIANS

October 25, 2020

Daniel E. Woodhead

## HEZEKIAH'S ERROR

Isaiah 39:1–8

*At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. <sup>2</sup>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 oil, 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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. <sup>5</sup>Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts: <sup>6</sup>Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah. <sup>7</sup>And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. <sup>8</sup>Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For, there shall be peace and truth in my days (ASV, 1901).*

## INTRODUCTION

Coming off a massive life-threatening illness and a major threat of the Assyrian's attempt to conquer Jerusalem, Hezekiah was relieved and comforted with his prolonged life and the assurance of God's promises to him. When the Babylonian emissaries came to him, he was happy to share his good fortune and wealth with them. The news of the miraculous recovery and the fact that the sun dial had moved backward were events that the king of Babylon, *Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan*, sought to verify. These events caused a spirit of pride to enter Hezekiah (II Chronicles 32:25).

Both in the deliverance of him and his people from the king of Assyria, as well as God sending recovery to him from his sickness resulted in *his heart was lifted up*; with pride, because of the wonderful defeat of the Assyrian army, the miracle of his recovery from illness, the riches and honor conferred upon him, and the presents brought him from his neighbors. Adding to this was the royal emissaries of the king of Babylon to him. The text in II Chronicles 32 says *therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem* (II Chronicles 32:26). Because a leader

easily influences his followers, the general population of Judah fell into the same sin of pride. This is what led to Hezekiah offering to reveal far too much of Jerusalem's wealth to an enemy.

#### HEZEKIAH'S FOREIGN VISITORS

Isaiah 39:1

*<sup>1</sup>At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered (ASV, 1901).*

Starting in 728 B.C. the king of Assyria also officially held the title of the king of Babylonia.<sup>1</sup> At the time of Hezekiah, Babylon was a tribute city of the Assyrian Kings

The same is called Berodach, found in II Kings 20:12. He is also most likely Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib. It is uncertain whether he was raised by one called Yagin or was the son of the former king, Sennacherib. Because of the various names used it is uncertain of whom he descended. The various cuneiform tablets found provide an uncertain exact succession of all the Mesopotamian kings. They seem to have taken more than one name in honor of their gods or military victories adding to the confusion. This visit was best viewed as a political one with seemingly espionage at its heart.

Sending letters by ambassadors, was a usual custom in embassies and visits, and still is in the eastern countries. In this visit it would be natural to think that they were very interested in the sundial moving backwards.

It is well known that the Babylonians and Chaldeans were distinguished for their attention to astronomy. The science of astronomy was first developed by them. They had a superior knowledge of that science. The report which they had heard of this miracle would be of interest to them. This would be their guise to enter Jerusalem in so-called seemingly peaceful purposes. For nearly 2,000 years Babylon was the most important city in the world. It was a commercial and financial center of Mesopotamia. The arts of divination, astronomy, astrology, accounting, mathematics and private and commercial law all sprang up from Babylon. In short many of our world systems came from that region. They had tables of squares, square roots, cubes, cube roots, reciprocals, exponential functions, and log functions. They had knowledge of trigonometry, the Pythagorean theorem 1200 years before Pythagoras did, and pi. They divided the circle into 360 degrees. The Babylonians divided the day into 24 hours, each hour into 60 minutes, each minute into 60 seconds. This form of counting (hexasegimal or base 60) has survived for 4000 years. Their yearly calendar had 30-month days and 360-day years. (Same as Genesis 7 & 8, Daniel 7:25 Revelation 12:6, 14 and Revelation 13:5)

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, *On Line Encyclopedia* <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Merodach-Baladan-II>, accessed October 24, 2020

## HEZEKIAH'S WEAK MOMENT

Isaiah 39:2

*<sup>2</sup>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 oil, 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 (ASV, 1901).*

Because of the pride he sensed due to all his good fortune, he let himself as flattered by an embassy from a so-called former enemy, and so celebrated a place as Babylon. Pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). It is certain that he erred in some way regarding the manner in which he received them, and especially in the pretentious display which he made of his treasures. Now God would test Hezekiah as recorded in II Chronicles and use this event to prophecy.

II Chronicles 32:31

*<sup>31</sup>Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart (ASV, 1901).*

God who knows everything, that is all events past, present, and future knew what Hezekiah would do afterwards and Hezekiah would learn why God was allowing this to occur. The meaning is, that, without any reserve, Hezekiah showed all that he could show.

*And showed them the house of his precious things.* The house of Nechotha which is the Hebrew word Spicery. it was mainly a place in which to keep spices, perfumes, and the various kinds of aromatic powder which were used either in public worship, or for the purposes of luxury.

*The silver and the gold.* Possibly Hezekiah had a large quantity of silver and gold from the Temple ornaments. A considerable part of this wealth arose from presents which were made to him, as well as from gifts which were made for the service of the temple.

II Chronicles 32:27–28

*<sup>27</sup>And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he provided him treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels; <sup>28</sup>store-houses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds (ASV, 1901).*

This treasure had been seemingly exhausted by meeting the demand of Sennacherib's demands. So, the source of this wealth came from somewhere.

## II Kings 18:14–16

*<sup>14</sup>And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. <sup>15</sup>And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of Jehovah, and in the treasures of the king's house. <sup>16</sup>At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of Jehovah, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria (ASV, 1901).*

So it is reasonable to ask, how did he so soon accumulate all this treasure? It is probably that it came from multiple sources. Surely, some part of the royal treasure was hidden, and he might have since received presents from his own nobles, and from foreign princes. This also was chiefly from the spoils found in the Assyrian camp, after the angel had made such a slaughter of them (II Kings 19:35).

## ISAIAH GOES TO HEZEKIAH

### Isaiah 39:3–4

*<sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them (ASV, 1901).*

Shortly after the ambassadors had been with the king, and he had shown them all his treasures; the prophet Isaiah was sent by the Lord. As Hezekiah was in a prideful spirit he forgot to send for Isaiah, and solicit his advice before they came, as to how he should act towards these men, and to not offend the Lord. Isaiah then said to him *what said these men?* In other words, being very skeptical he wanted to know what was their stated business with the king? How did they communicate to him, and what did they request of you? Then Isaiah wanted to know *from whence came they unto thee?* That is, from what country? Isaiah did not ask the king these questions because he was ignorant of the who the ambassadors were, their business, and country, but in order to learn everything from the king himself. This would lead on to further conversation with him on these things. Then answering *and Hezekiah said, they are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.* Now he does not answer to the first question, but replies to the second. In his pride and his heart was lifted up with, *one*, that ambassadors should come to him from a very distant country, and *two* from so famous and renowned a place as Babylon; and *three* so great a prince as the king of Babylon was concerned for him and wanted his friendship.

Isaiah continued his questioning asking, *what have they seen in thine house?* Isaiah is leading the questioning which is now coming nearer to the point he had in mind. Which, was the aspect of this that was displeasing to the Lord. It was not that he had received the ambassadors, but that he had shown them what he ought not to have done, and especially from such a motive of pride and vanity.

Then *Hezekiah answered*; honestly and without any reserve, very openly, not suspecting that the prophet had come with a rebuke, or to blame him, or would blame him for what he had done. He said, *all that is in my house have they seen*; the several royal apartments, and the furniture of them: *there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them*; which were more secret, laid up in cabinets, under lock and key; his gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones, spices, and ointments.

#### THE FUTURE INVASION OF JUDAH PROPHECIED

Isaiah 39:5–8

*<sup>5</sup>Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts: <sup>6</sup>Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah. <sup>7</sup>And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. <sup>8</sup>Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For, there shall be peace and truth in my days (ASV, 1901).*

Now the Babylonians knew the extent of the riches of the king of Judah they would be able to pass this information to future generations of Babylonian kings to provide an incentive to invade Judah. Interesting is the statement from God that, *thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon*. This is one of the evidences that Daniel and his three friends who were taken to Babylon in the first invasion in 605 B.C. were made eunuchs.

Daniel: 1:6–7

*<sup>6</sup>Now among these were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>7</sup>And the prince of the eunuchs gave names unto them: unto Daniel he gave the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego (ASV, 1901).*

The second invasion of Nebuchadrezzar in 597 B.C. would remove another prophet. Ezekiel.

Babylonia had chased the Assyrians out of Nineveh, their capital city, in 612 B.C. They fled to Harran and then finally to Carchemish. In 609 B.C., Pharaoh Neco of Egypt aligned himself with the Assyrians, and marched to fight with them against the Babylonians. However, he was waylaid when the Israeli Judean king, Josiah, unexpectedly met Neco to fight him at Megiddo. Josiah was killed, the Israelis were defeated, and Neco continued on to Carchemish. The net result of the battle of Carchemish was the defeat of both Assyria and Egypt, by Babylon who became the new Gentile world empire. Meanwhile, the Jews made Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, king, but he only reigned for three months. Neco returned to Egypt, by way of Jerusalem, deposed Jehoahaz, got tribute money of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold, and set up Eliakim as King. Neco also changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim, and took his brother Jehoahaz to Egypt. King Jehoiakim was evil.

Immediately following the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon successfully besieged Jerusalem in reign of the Judean King Jehoiakim, resulting in the fettering of King Jehoiakim, as well as the carrying away of many of Israel's best young men including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The Temple was also plundered (II Chronicles 36:6–7). Jehoiakim submitted to Nebuchadnezzar for three years as a vassal king, but then revolted and unsuccessfully appealed to Egypt for help. He was eventually taken prisoner to Babylon but was released and died in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 36:6). Jeremiah the prophet despised Jehoiakim for his wickedness (Jeremiah 22:18–19; 26:20–23; 36).

Nebuchadnezzar had sent troops in a second siege against Jerusalem late in Jehoiakim's reign because he continued to resist Babylonian control, and tried to make an alliance with Egypt against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself decided to go up against Jerusalem, but by the time he arrived in 598 B.C., Jehoiakim had died. His son Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah or Coniah) had replaced him as king. The Babylonians dethroned him in the second siege and took him captive to Babylon, along with his mother, wives, princes, and servants. Ezekiel was included in this group of captives taken back to Babylon. The Babylonian king set up Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, as king. Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah, and made him another vassal king, who was to control the territory according to what Nebuchadnezzar commanded. For several years Zedekiah submitted obediently to Nebuchadnezzar. But finally, under continuing pressure from nationalists at home, he foolishly made an alliance with Pharaoh, and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 37–38).

This action prompted a third siege in January 588 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar returning to Jerusalem. The siege was lifted briefly when Egypt attacked Nebuchadnezzar. But the Babylonians again defeated Egypt, and easily resumed their attack on Jerusalem (Jeremiah 37:5). Finally, the Babylonians broke through the wall of Jerusalem on July 16, 586 B.C., the fourth month of Zedekiah's 11th year reign as king. A few remaining soldiers fled by night but were overtaken and captured near Jericho. Zedekiah fled with the soldiers and was also captured (Jeremiah 39:4). He was taken to Nebuchadnezzar's field headquarters at Ribald on the Orontes River north of Damascus (II Kings 23:33). There Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah's sons (to cut off the heirs to the throne), blinded Zedekiah (to make further rebellion virtually impossible), placed him in shackles, and transported him to Babylon (Jeremiah 32:4; 34:1–3; 39; Ezekiel 12:3).

Realizing that this would be a future event and not in his time Hezekiah responded to Isaiah by saying, *Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For, there shall be peace and truth in my days.* God may have been using the circumstances here to prepare the Babylonians for this and provide a warning to the Israelites that they should not be so wicked as the prophet Jeremiah repeatedly told them. This is the first time that the Babylonian invasions were prophesied in Scripture.

Next message: JERUSALEM IS PARDONED; JOHN THE BAPTIST IS PROPHECIED  
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