

The House Of Precious Things

At the end of chapter 37 we learned about the destruction of the Assyrian army and Sennacherib's assassination in the temple of his god. Chapter 38 spoke of Hezekiah being sick unto death and his miraculous restoration. In chapter 39 we meet the Babylonians. This people, at the time subject to Assyria, would soon be the new regional superpower. God uses the rise and fall of empires to accomplish His will and to educate His people. May the Lord grant us grace to take the long view of God's sovereign purpose and not be fretful about day to day disappointments.

Sin must be judged

The ten tribes of Israel and their capital Samaria had previously fallen to the Assyrians. For the glory of His name and to fulfil His covenant plan for the coming of Christ, God delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib. Yet it was a mere delay of judgment. The sin of the Jewish nation could not long go unpunished and following the overthrow of Assyria, it would be Babylon that would destroy Jerusalem and send its inhabitants into exile; an exile long been prophesied.

Hezekiah's pride

Merodachbaladan, king of Babylon, sent an envoy to Hezekiah with a gift and good wishes upon his recovery from sickness. There were other reasons, too. The Babylonians were great astronomers and doubtless were intrigued and curious about the sign of the sun returning ten degrees. They were also concerned about Assyria and may have sought to retain Hezekiah as an ally. For his part, Hezekiah was pleased and flattered by the attention. Keen to impress his new friends and represent Judah as an able and worthy ally he opened his house for inspection and showed the Babylonians all the riches and armour at his disposal.

A deceitful heart

In 2 Chronicles 31:32 we learn the purpose of this incident in the spiritual experience of Hezekiah. We read, 'in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon ... God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Let us note, this leaving of Hezekiah was not that God might know the king's heart – He knew that already – but that Hezekiah might learn the true nature of his own heart. He had become over-confident and puffed up in his own estimation. Realising this foolishness would keep Hezekiah humble and reliant upon the Lord.

Friends with the world

Isaiah was sent by the Lord to apply the lesson. The prophet's questions drew from Hezekiah a truthful response. Hezekiah was a true child of God yet he struggled with his old nature as we all do. The king's motives for showing off his riches and military strength was to impress his guests and boost his prestige but it betrayed self-confidence. Hezekiah was dazzled by the prospect of Merodachbaladan's friendship and took his eyes off the Lord. Isaiah's censure reminded the king he was in God's hands and the future was His.

A sobering glimpse of things to come

The day would come, said Isaiah, that all the riches of Judah would be delivered to Babylon. Generations of the king's children would serve in the court of their foreign overlords. This was not punishment for Hezekiah's foolishness but a reproving, prophetic glimpse of what was to come so that the good king might be ashamed for his vanity and chastened in his pride.

A lesson learned

The rebuke had the desired effect as rebukes do in the lives of God's people. Hezekiah was at once convinced of his sin, acknowledged it and repented of it. He owned responsibility and recognised God's mercy. He realised he, too, was guilty and culpable and but for grace these judgments should happen at once and the kingdom be torn from his hand. For Hezekiah God's chastening was constructive and His longsuffering was salvation; an evidence of God's goodness. That Hezekiah received the rebuke calmly and reflectively tells us he learned this lesson.

A house of precious things

There are lessons here for us all. Let me speak personally. Am I not just like Hezekiah? Am I not full of contradictions, with a mind filled with worldly care and a heart prone to pride? I delight in the approval of others and dislike being

contradicted. I build for myself a little kingdom, a house of precious things, that in truth have no lasting value whatsoever. Ought not my thoughts to be on higher things?

An evidence of love

Let us never doubt our Lord Jesus Christ's constant love and care for us. Yet, for our present need, future good and personal spiritual development the Lord tries us and exposes our sin and humbles our fleshy pride. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth', says the apostle, 'and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth'. May the Lord give us grace to receive our lessons as wisely as did Hezekiah, declaring, 'Good is the word of the LORD, for there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Amen

Website: www.newfocus.church

Magazine: www.go-newfocus.co.uk

New Focus Church Online : www.youtube.com/@NewFocusChurchOnline