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Isaiah 39

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Isaiah 39.

Topics.

- Merodach-baladan king of Babylon sends an envoy to Hezekiah.
- Isaiah tells Hezekiah all that is in his house will be carried to Babylon.
- Hezekiah thought the word of the LORD good for their will be peace.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it:

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).
3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.

4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application: of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

ISAIAH 39:1-2

Merodach-baladan king of Babylon sends an Envoy to Hezekiah.

- **Isaiah 39:1-2:** At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. ²And Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. And he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.

This story is also told in (2 Kings 20:12-19). The previous chapter ended with the LORD healing Hezekiah and giving him fifteen more years to live (Isa 38:5).

Merodach-baladan king of Babylon: was the son of Baladan, (Isaiah 39:1) known outside the Old Testament as Marduk-apla-iddina II and in the book of kings as Berodach-baladan (2 Kings 20:12). He was a strong, courageous leader and was by far the most successful rebel against the then dominant power of Assyria.

History of Merodach-Baladan: he was a king of the Chaldeans of the house of Yakin, and was the most dangerous and fierce enemy of Sargon and his son Sennacherib, kings of Assyria, with whom he continually contested the possession of Babylon and the surrounding provinces. In spite of Assyrian counterattack, he maintained his kingship in Babylon when he captured the city from Assyria immediately after the death of Shalmaneser king of Assyria in 721 B.C.

It was not until the 12th year of Merodach-Baladan reign that Sargon king of Assyria first subdued the Elamites and then entered Babylon and succeeded in overthrowing him. On the death of Sargon in 705, Merodach-Baladan supposed that he was released from any duty he owed to Assyria and worked again for an independent Babylonian.

He enjoyed a final and brief reign in the kingdom of Babylon until defeated and driven out by Sargon's son Sennacherib king of Assyria in 703 BC. Sennacherib pursued Merodach-Baladan and his family with relentless hostility and captured his son Nabushumishkun and the whole family of Merodach-Baladan was destroyed. Although Merodach Baladan had failed in his ambition to restore the power of the city of Babylon, the Chaldean people whose king he was eventually became the dominant people and power in Babylon. He is remembered as a clever and ambitious Babylonian king who bitterly opposed the influence of Assyria in Babylon.

Hezekiah alliance with Merodach-Baladan: from a worldly point of view it seemed good politics for Hezekiah and his western allies to come to an understanding with Merodach-Baladan and the Arameans, Elamites, and others, who were united with him to go up against the might of Assyria. However, from a strategical point of view, the weakness of the allied nations was in the fact that the Arabian Desert lay between the eastern and western nations of the confederacy, so that the Assyrian kings were able to attack their enemies one by one when they pleased and utterly defeat them.

The name Merodach-Baladan and Berodach-baladan: the Book of 2 Kings tells the same story, but in this version the king of Babylon is called Berodach-baladan (2 Kings 20:12). Over the years scholars have pondered why the author of 2 Kings would speak of Berodach instead of Merodach, there are far too many detailed explanations for this study to look at, however for those who are interested, Google provides many good insights.

Merodach-baladan sends and envoy to Hezekiah: (v1) as king of Babylon Merodach-baladan sent an envoy to Hezekiah, king of Judah shortly after Hezekiah's illness in order to congratulate him on his recovery of health, but also with the intention of inviting him to join in a confederacy with Babylon, Susiana, Phoenicia, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Egypt for a grand attack on the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah in pride foolishly showed the Babylonian ambassadors all his gold and silver, the treasures of his kingdom, his storehouses of food and his entire armoury (Isaiah 39:2).

Hezekiah welcomed them gladly: (v2) when it is considered that Hezekiah's kingdom was very small in comparison to some of the surrounding nations and that Merodach-baladan the king of Babylon was a fierce enemy of Assyria and was in league with other nations who were also enemies of Assyria it is easy to understand why Hezekiah would welcome these ambassadors from Babylon. In foolish pride (2 Chron. 32:25-26) Hezekiah not only showed the Babylonian ambassadors all his household treasures, gold and silver and the abundance of food in his storehouses, but also showed them his entire armoury.

Hezekiah's great wealth: (v2) as the Assyrians travelled through villages and towns on their march toward Jerusalem, they loaded donkeys and wagons with riches and treasures that they gathered from these places to take back to their own land. It is likely Hezekiah gathered vast amounts of gold and silver from their camp after the angel had destroyed the 185,000 Assyrian troops. Added to this in Chronicles it is written:

- Many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward. ²⁴In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. (2 Chron. 32:23-24).
- Hezekiah had very great riches and honour, and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly vessels; ²⁸storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds. ²⁹He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions. ³⁰This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. ³¹And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart. (2 Chron. 32:27-31).

Hezekiah had faced fierce opposition from the Assyrians, so it is very likely that he was showing all his wealth to the Babylonians to secure their, and the nations united with them friendship and protection against the Assyrians. This would be offensive to the LORD and to Isaiah because the LORD had promised Hezekiah He would defend and protect Jerusalem (Isaiah 38:6) which He had previously done by sending an angel into the

Assyrian camp who smote 185,000 soldiers causing Sennacherib the king of Assyria to leave Jerusalem and return to Nineveh. (Isaiah 37:36-37). It is certain had Israel remained faithful God would have continued to be their defender and protector. Under the covenant Israel had entered into with God they were to trust in the LORD their God and not enter into covenants with pagan nations.

The spices and precious oils (v2) would embrace any or all of the following:

- Precious healing ointments and creams made from the oil of olives.
- Myrrh, cinnamon which were common gifts offered to princes from a very early period and gumbenzoin which is used in Arab States of the Persian Gulf and India, where it is burned on charcoal as an incense and is also a major element of church incense used in Russia and some other Orthodox Christian societies, as well as Western Catholic Churches.
- Various kinds of aromatics which were used in public worship or for anointing of kings and priests.
- Spices used for the purposes of luxury and perfumes to smear or massage the body with after bathing, or to use when they were to appear in public.

The mention of these spices as being part of the king's treasures highlights the abundant commerce and trade of civilisation of that time.

ISAIAH 39:3-7

Isaiah tells Hezekiah all in His House will be carried to Babylon.

- **Isaiah 39:3-7:** Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?" Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." ⁴He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them." ⁵Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: ⁶Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. ⁷And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

Hezekiah in pride foolishly showed the Babylonian ambassadors all his gold and silver, the treasures of his kingdom, his storehouses of food and his entire armoury (v2). When Isaiah hears of this, he tells Hezekiah that all that he has will be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left (Isaiah 39:5-7). Perhaps it is somewhat understandable that Hezekiah, in his small and far-off kingdom of Judah, would be flattered and in pride lose his head when he was the recipient of a special delegation from Merodach-Baladan king of Babylon, especially since he was the front runner among the anti-Assyrian rebels and therefore Hezekiah would not have considered him to be a threat to him or his kingdom.

The days will come when all in your house will be carried to Babylon: (v6) this predicts the seventy-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon which commenced about one hundred and twenty years after this prediction.

Nothing shall be left, says the LORD: (v7) Moses had declared repeatedly that if Israel became a rebellious people the LORD would:

- Scatter Israel among the nations, and unsheathe the sword after them, and their land shall be a desolation, and their cities shall be a waste. ³⁴"Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while they are in their enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. (Lev 26:33-34).

- Scatter them among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there they shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither they nor their fathers have known. (Deut. 28:64).

And Ahijah, in the time of Jeroboam made the following prediction:

- The LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. (1 Kings 14:15).

Added to these Amos made the following prediction:

- I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts. (Amos 5:27).

In all these predictions the country is not named, but now all these prophecies come together in Babylon. This is the first time the country is distinctly announced by Isaiah that that Babylon was to be the land where Israel was to suffer for such a long and oppressing time in captivity (seventy years specifically). However, Moses also prophetically said:

- Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. (Deut. 30:3).

Though this punishment is linked to Hezekiah's pride, it is not solely a result of his pride at the time the inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken into captivity the following sins permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. Throughout their generations, unrestrained sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious center at Dan and at a religious center at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God, it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

ISAIAH 39:8

Hezekiah thought the Word of the LORD good for Peace.

- **Isaiah 39:8:** Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."

The fact that the king of Babylon would not come upon Jerusalem until Hezekiah's new born sons were older and able to be used as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon Hezekiah said, "Good is the word of the LORD," because it was not to be immediately executed and therefore during his lifetime there would be peace and prosperity and true worship. It does not necessarily mean that he was not concerned for his descendants, but that he accepted Isaiah prophetic word as the true word of God that cannot be rebelled against and was thankful for God's mercy that such punishment would not come sooner.

THE HISTORY OF ASSYRIA, ISRAEL, BABYLON AND JUDAH

God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them. But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deut. 28:1-14). The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

NOW HERE IS THE GOOD NEWS

While in captivity God molded them like a master potter molds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly, Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace