



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 36-39

TRANSCRIPT

“History, Prophecy and Son: the Difference That Jesus Christ Makes”

[Prayer].....the day in which we live and deliver us from the pitfalls into which sometimes ancient man fell. Help us to learn the lessons of history and father we would particularly pray that as we considered the revival that took place and Hezekiah day. We pray that we may see the principles that are found here and apply them personally because revival begins with me, with us. Now, may Thou blessing rest upon us in this hour for Jesus' sake, Amen!

Our subject tonight is Hezekiah, or “History, Prophecy and Son: the Difference Jesus Christ Makes.”

Chapter 36, 37, 38, and 39 are very interesting chapters in the prophecy of Isaiah and it would be nice if we could spend an hour on each one of them, but we do want to finish Isaiah by the end of the summer time and if we are, we have to hasten and this is a place unfortunately in which we have to hasten in spite of the great and tremendous spiritual lessons that are found in these chapters. So, let us consider the life of Hezekiah as it is set forth here and in the parallel passages and remember that it is against the background of this man's life that Isaiah writes most of the remainder of the prophecies of this great book.

Hezekiah’s name means, “God is might.” If you were to encounter Hezekiah on the streets of Jerusalem and you were to say to him, “Hello, King Hezekiah,” you would say to him, “Hello, King God-is-Might.” That was his name, “God is might.” He was Judah’s greatest king. According to 2 Kings chapter 18 and verse 5, now there is similar statement that is made of Josiah who was also a king of Judah, but I think that the reason that Hezekiah is singled out as Judah’s greatest king is because as an overall king, his life was most in accord with the will of God. Josiah was the greatest king in his turning to the Lord. The greatest revival of all occurred in Josiah’s day, as Josiah turned to Jehovah and so in that sense, Josiah was the greatest king in Judah, the greatest in his moral turn, but Hezekiah is the greatest king overall and he is particularly the greatest king in his faith.

Now, we also know Hezekiah as the missing book of the Bible. If you want to kid someone, we say turn to Hezekiah chapter 47 and verse 8 and you will find that statement and occasionally, you might hear me say that. I will say that, Bible teaches such and such, and if you want proof, turn to Hezekiah chapter 26, I mean of course that what I have said is my own personal opinion not in the Bible at all. It is the missing book of the Bible.

Dr. Walvoord, who is a president of Dallas Seminary, likes to tell a story of an event that happened in his early days when he was still in seminary. He was conducting daily vocation Bible school out in the country and so the final night came and all of the kids were there with their parents and of course, the kids knew something about the Bible, but the parents knew less, and they were going through their exercises of that night to demonstrate what they had learned. And one of the things that they were doing was Bible drill, and Dr. Walvoord was calling out a book of the Bible and the first child to find the book would jump up in the group, the moment that he found the book. He called out Exodus and they turned their Bibles quickly and some one reached Exodus and jumped up, “I have it” and so he was going, Romans, 1 Timothy, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Hezekiah, and there was a silence came over the audience. Dr. Walvoord said, he looked out at the parents and there was a pained expression on the parents’ face. They were looking around, why does not some look, why does not someone find it, why does not someone find it, and finally he said there was a little boy, who yelled out, “There is no such book and this great sense of relief and also shame came over the faces of quite of few of the parents, who thought of course, they should find Hezekiah. So it is the great missing book of the Bible, Hezekiah.

When you think of the great kings of Israel and compare them with Hezekiah, you think of men like Uzziah. Now, Uzziah, the king who prophesied, the king in whose reign, Isaiah first prophesied, was one of Israel’s or Judah’s greatest military kings. Hezekiah was not the king militarily that Uzziah was. Now was Hezekiah the wise king that Solomon was. Solomon was probably the wisest of all of the kings. Hezekiah was the wise man, but he could not compare with Solomon. Or when you think of David, for a man who understood human nature, there was no man like David and the exploits of David were surely greater than Hezekiah.

But then these men were also characterized by great falls. Solomon had his great falls. Uzziah had his. David had his great sin. So when you put it all together, I think you can understand why Hezekiah has singled out as the greatest king of Judah. He was not the great man that Solomon, and David, and Uzziah were in certain particulars, but overall, he was the greatest man of faith in Judah. I commented two to three times ago when we were studying the 30th and the 31st chapters about how strange Hezekiah’s life is in the light of his father and his son. His father was Uzziah, one of Israel’s or Judah’s wickedest kings and Manasseh his son has been called, the most wicked king of Judah. So, here is the man, whose father was wicked and whose son was wicked, but about whom the Scripture says, that he was the greatest king that Judah ever had.

Now, we have a text over in the Book of Proverbs, which goes something like this. It is Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and

when he is old, he will not depart from it.” And, as I think about Hezekiah stuck in between this wicked king Ahaz, I want to say how did he manage to become the king that he did become with a father like Ahaz, and then how did Manasseh become the king that he became with Hezekiah as his father and it is difficult to understand and yet there may be an explanation because it is entirely possible that Hezekiah derived his sins of the spiritual from his mother.

It is interesting that his mother is singled out for special mention in two places. He was the son of Abijah, it is stated, and so it may well be that she was a godly woman and that Hezekiah’s godliness is to be traced to his mother. Or it is entirely possible that Hezekiah’s godliness is to be traced to some servant in the house of the king. After all was not it Naaman, the great Syrian captain who was brought to Jehovah because he had a little servant girl who was a Hebrew and who knew the God of Jehovah and told him that the God of Jehovah would heal his leprosy?

Or perhaps it was Isaiah. Isaiah, you see was a very veteran servant of Jehovah at this time. Everybody knew Isaiah and the kings knew Isaiah because Isaiah was a noble. We suggested a long time ago and we know this he had access to the kings of Judah, and so it is entirely possible that Hezekiah had lived under the influence of the prophet Isaiah and for this reason, he became the king that he did. At any rate, he became the instrument for revival by God which made him one of the world’s great reformers.

When you think of Reformers, you usually think of Martin Luther or Augustine or Calvin, or Wesley, or Whitefield, but you should all so think of men like Paul and men like Josiah and men like Hezekiah, for he was a great reformer. He produced humanly one of the greatest of the world’s revivals. Now, we of course, do not know what a revival really is. We put signs outside of our churches, which read “Revival, May the 21st to May the 28<sup>th</sup>,” and then of course if the evangelist gets sick, we put out, “Revival Postponed.”

Revival is a work of God. It is not a work of man ultimately. That is why they should never call a meeting, a revival meeting. Of course, if you want to call it a revival meeting in the sense that you hope there is going to be some revival. Well, there is some sense in that, and I presume that if questioned, we would say that is probably why put that on our signs, but it surely gives a wrong impression. There is going to be a revival here, May the 21st, not before, not after, but on those days there will be revival.

Now, this was a revival. True revivals usually surprise the preachers, as much as they surprise anyone else. When Billy Graham was preaching in Los Angeles, he was just an ordinary preacher, but revival took place because God moved in the hearts of men and Billy Graham became a great evangelist because God saved souls and Hezekiah is a man then who was the human instrument in a revival which had been planned by God.

Now, Hezekiah fights four wars. It seems to me, the first is the war against idolatry and we are going to look at this first. War against idolatry. Now, you would not find it in Isaiah, but I think it is so important to understand Hezekiah’s life that we are going to turn over to I Chronicles, chapter 29, and we are going to look at some of the things that are stated here in a brief way at least. 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, verse 3 through chapter 31, verse 21. Let me put these verses here; 29, 30, and 31, these are the chapters that describe the great revival that took place under Hezekiah.

The Bible says that Hezekiah walked in the ways of King David, and the interesting thing about Hezekiah is this, by the way is that 1 Chronicles of that? It is, is not a shame? That should be 2 Chronicles, of course. Some of you were having a little difficulty like that Book Hezekiah, some of you were not disturbed at all. I know who you are. 2 Chronicles chapter 29, verse 3. Now, we are not going to read this, I want to just comment on a few points here and there. You will notice the second verse, however, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done.”

Now, for eight reigns in the Kingdom of Judah, it had never been said that one of the kings walked in the ways of David. Hezekiah is the first king now after eight kings of whom it is said that he walked in the ways of David. They had had their good kings or Isaiah was a good king, Joseph was a good king, but it is stated of Hezekiah that he walked in the ways of David, his father. He was a descendent of King David. Therefore, he was of the Messianic line.

Now, Hezekiah was a man who prepared for revival before revival came, because the moment that he came to rule, revival begins. Will you notice the third verse, “He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. Now, notice the 36th verse. “And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.” And, now will you notice the 17th verse? “Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.”

So, from the first day of the first month, of Hezekiah’s reign, a spiritual work began in the Kingdom of Judah. He was to bring Judah back to God and Hezekiah from the very first day that he became king, began to move. He was a man of preparation. He was a man in whom there had been then still, the fear of Jehovah, and I would imagine that Hezekiah was the kind of man who just could not wait to become king that he might undo some of the evil that Ahaz had done. So, he was a prepared man. You know it.

All things, anything never comes without preparation. I said a minute ago, that when Billy was preaching in Los Angeles that something happened and Billy Graham was immediately a famous evangelist for a few movie stars have been touched by the gospel message. But I am sure that there was preparation. I have met Billy and I know him. He is a man of unusual dedication, a man of tremendous sincerity, many things about his ministry, I would not agree with, would not practice, but no one can say that God has not

used him, and I am thankful for every single person who has come to know Jesus Christ through him. I think he has been an evangelist of God, but I am sure as I know Billy, and I happened to have known his father, that part of the preparation for that revival that took place in Los Angeles had been done years before when Billy sat around the table and his father, Mr. Graham, open the word of God and read it and talked about spiritual things. He was an elder in an independent church in the city of Charlotte, where I preached, and where I came to know him. Nothing ever happens in God’s work, that is not the product of preparation of heart.

May I say something to you? You shall never stumble in the fruitful service for Jesus Christ. It just does not happen. It comes only because we are anxious to be used by God and we are willing to get down upon our needs with the open Bible and allow God to teach us the truth of holy Scripture, get upon our knees and pour out our hearts in prayer to him, come to know him in an intimate way and it is not until we have become prepared, that God is able to use us, for he must have an instrument that he can use. And, if you want to be used by God, you can be sure that preparation is necessary. It will not just happen. You will just not sit in the pews and hope that perhaps some day, someone will lay his hand upon your shoulder and you will become fruitful for God. It will never happen if you do not prepare.

He was a man of preparation. He studied the Scriptures. He knew God in prayer. He sought to do the will of God, no doubt, he sat Isaiah’s feet and learnws what he could learn from the servant of Jehovah, Isaiah, and when he came to that thrown, he was ready, and God had an instrument and He used him. You know, it is like putting meals on the tables. Mothers, they just do not get there by accident. Do they? There is preparation, quite a bit of preparation and we come in and we sit down at 6 o’clock and there it is, it is all laid out, wonderfully prepared. Now then, let us turn to 2 Kings, chapter 18, verses 4 through 6, to read of the determination of this man, Hezekiah,

because here we have a description of the some of the things that he did and one of the things he did is one of the most interesting things in all of the Bible, I think.

You remember that years and years ago, when God through Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land or into the wilderness, on the way to the Promised Land, they had an experience in which the serpents came in and bit the murmuring children of Israel and Moses was told to prepare a serpent of brass and put that serpent of brass upon a pole, and when a member of the tribes of Israel had been bitten by a serpent and was destined to die, when he looked upon the serpent that was upon the pole, he lived. That was his way of salvation, physically. Now, that was the serpent of brass.

Now, is not it interesting to read in 2 Kings, chapter 18, that this serpent of brass had been preserved by Moses and had been preserved by the children of Israel, finally had come down to the days of Hezekiah and it was still there and what was it? Well, let us read, “He removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the idols, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. Now, the word, *nehosbat* means brass. Now, Nehushtan, that little bronze thing. It is a diminutive. And so what had happened was simply this. They had preserved that serpent of brass upon the pole which had been the means of the physical deliverance of many Israelites. They had put it aside. Whether Moses did it or not, the Bible does not say, but it had been put aside, and it had been kept, and finally the time had come, when men began to burn incense to it that which had been used by God as an instrument became a religious relic.

Now, there is a church today that is known for its relics and this passage has a message for them. Because you see when anything that God has used in the past, become simply a relic that we burn incense to, it has become that which instigates the sin. Now, I think it took a great deal of courage for Hezekiah to do this. After all, the children of Israel were burning incense to this traditional thing. How would you feel, for example,



in your church? If you should have something, suppose for example, you had an idol that was set upon the platform somewhere and you were burning incense to it and suppose I walked in and I went over and took it and threw it down. What would you say? You would be very much upset, would not you?

Well, I think that undoubtedly there were many people that were very much upset with King Hezekiah when he threw down this little thing, and I think that he probably came walked right in and he said and that little bronze thing over there, toss it out, I do not have anything to do with it. Yes, toss it out, throw it out, it is idolatry and I gather from this that Hezekiah was a kind of innovator too. He did not mind going against the tradition. He was not a man who blew with the breeze. He was a man who had his whole mind. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah nor any that were before him, for he clung to the Lord and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.

He knew the faith-rest technique and the reason that he was so successful was because he had had revival in his own heart first. Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you, and Hezekiah had drawn nigh unto God, so God drew nigh to Hezekiah and by means of Hezekiah, a great revival took place. I think it is interesting too, and you may turn back now if you wish to Isaiah, that in the restoration of Hezekiah, there were two primary things that happened. One, he restored the temple worship. And as a matter of fact, he called for a sin offering to be offered for all of Israel, now remember that ten tribes were to the North. They had come at this junction between the kingdom of the North and the kingdom of the South and the Northern kingdom lived in much greater apostasy than the Southern kingdom, but Hezekiah when he came to the throne of Judah, called for a sin offering for all the twelve tribes and he said outward and invited them all to come.

Now, you might say was he a man who would have been an ecumenist in the 20th century? Was he a man who believed in the ecumenical movement, calling upon the apostate kingdom of the North to unite with them in a sin offering? No, it was not that at all. As a matter of fact, he knew that in Judah, that were sin too. There was ecumenical sin and therefore there was need for an ecumenical sin offering, and so he invited Israel to come because he knew that in the mind of God, those twelve tribes would ultimately be united. It was the kind of ecumenical movement that we should have in the 20th Century. That is, it is a movement which is settled in the truths of holy Scriptures, and if for example, the ecumenical movement should unite in the acknowledgment of the Bible as the word of God and in our union in its teaching, what more could we hope for?

We should wish all of the Christians to unite in the fact that the word of God is our one standard of faith and practice and that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and we will unite on the basis of the teaching of Scripture. There can never be any true union, otherwise. Union that is only a union of organization is no union, but union that is spiritual is discernable and we shall ultimately have it and finally when we get to heaven, everybody is going to be a member of Believers Chapel. I am just kidding you of course, but that is really the way we ought to feel about our own assembly. We should feel that we are in accord with the teaching of Scripture. Should we not? If we are not, what should we do? We should get in accord with Scripture and we each should feel it.

We recognize, of course, that we are human and because we are human, we are probably going to differ and we do differ, but we at least, each one of us, should be honestly seeking to follow what the word of God teaches and so Hezekiah had that kind of broadness, a part that I love. He invited Israel and he invited Judah to gather at the foundation, the sin offering and to offer it. Now, of course, the Scripture says that when he did they mocked him in the North, but some came, some, some from certain tribes and you know it is very interesting, but one of the tribes was the tribe of Asher and some from the tribe of Asher came down and in the time of our Lord 700 to 800 years later, you

remember there was a woman from the tribe of Asher who was in the temple, who was able to see the Lord Jesus. You remember Anna? She was of that tribe, and it is entirely possible that she was a descendent of some of those who responded to Hezekiah’s appeal.

Another thing that Hezekiah did was to search the word of God and to discover that they ought to have the Passover and you remember that it was in the first day of the first month that his revival began, they had to cleanse the temple, they had to make ready for the offering of the sacrifices and by the time they were ready, the time for the passover had passed, but there was an ancient word in Moses’ writing that if some sojourners came and they had not been there for the Passover in the first month, they could have a Passover in the second month.

In Numbers, chapter 9, verses 10 and 11, and Hezekiah studied the word of God, and as he studied the word of God, and said, “You know look here, see the Bible says that we can have a Passover in the second month and the second month has not come yet, and we have the temple ready now. So why not have a Passover. It says here, it is for sojourners, and if anybody who has been sojourning, we have been sojourning, we have been for far away from God, but now we have come back and so they had a great Passover. So far as I know, I think this is the only time that they had this kind of Passover and it was King Hezekiah who studied the Scripture and brought it to pass. Nevertheless, some came from the North and observed. You know these are the great lessons, but we must go on, Hezekiah won that war, that war against idolatry, but he has another war that he is going to face and that is the war against the Assyria.

Now here we come over Isaiah because Isaiah really gives us some details about this. So this is Isaiah chapter 36, verse 1 through chapter 37, verse 38. Is it right? Is that the last verse of that chapter 37, verse 38. That is what I have in my notes, I hope its right and it is, the war against Assyria. Now, the story of the war against Assyria is essentially this. Remember, when Hezekiah came to the throne, Assyria was the great

power with which king Hezekiah had to deal and we read in the first verse, “Now it came to pass, in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them.”

In one of the other places in the Old Testament, it is stated that the Assyrians came up, they took the cities of Judah, and they produced such fear in Judah that Judah gave them tribute, but then they left. However, they violated their word and then they came again, and here is the second invasion described in verse 2 and following: “And the king of Assyria sent Rab-shakeh from Lachish, to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.”

Now, the fuller’s field was the place where the ladies washed their cloths. So this was washwoman’s row. And furthermore, it was in such a place that here you could get thousands of people in one spot and the Assyrian commander-in-chief, Rab-shakeh is a title, not a name, the Assyrian commander in chief chose that place because he had the greatest audience there. It was really a natural amphitheater there and so here he comes and he has some propaganda.

Now, as he begins his propaganda, he has such an effect on the Judaites who are listening that they send out some who are going to have a little conference with him. You notice in the third verse it reads, “Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah’s son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph’s son, the recorder. Now, these three men were very important in Hezekiah’s empire or kingdom. So, here we have a diplomatic conference and it is just outside the city walls apparently. The Assyrian commander in chief is there and the representatives from the kingdom of Judah.

It is very much like the conference that took place in Munich about 30 years ago, when Chamberlain and Hitler were there. Hitler was there with all of the force. Chamberlain was there with all of the weakness of the British Empire and the result of

course was an abysmal kind of agreement which has been a shameful thing for Great Britain ever since that day.

Well now, they meet and Rab-shakeh knows that he has the force and authority and so he does not talk with them. He talks to all the Judaites who are about and we have the one of most beautiful examples of psychological warfare that you have anywhere. I wish we could study this because you know the way same principles that this Assyrian commander in chief use or the principles that are used today in psychological warfare. He first of all got the place where he could get the loudest of the most number of people as his audience and of course today, if a man wants to wage psychological warfare, he goes the radio and to the television set, to the means of communication where he can have the widest audience. Then he engages in psychological argument. He says, “Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, We are great. We will bury you. You are all just peanuts. Hezekiah is nothing. He is nothing. He is a fink. Our king is the great king, Sennacherib.”

And, so psychology, you know, psyched-out, just like Joe Namath did the Baltimore Colts, they just went through the emotions that they then lost that when week before, when Joe starting about their quarterback. They were defeated. They believed him. So here, the next thing is political. “Lo,” verse 6, “Thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; you think Egypt is going to help you? It is just putting your hand on a reed and you are going to slip in that reeds going through your hand. Egypt is not going to help you. Egypt is going to hurt you.” And there is the military argument, verses 8 and 9, “Listen, give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give Thee two thousand horses. You don’t even have enough people to put a man on each one of the horses. You have nothing. You are nothing. You are a three putt on the 18th green.”

And, then finally, the religious argument, and that is, I think, the most telling of all. “And am I now,” verse 10, “come up without, the Lord against this land to destroy it? The

Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.” And, you know, we have some annals of Sennacherib, and you know what he says about Judah and Hezekiah? He said he shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage. Those worse words and so the committee from the State Department, Foggy Bottom, they report to king Hezekiah in the 22nd verse. Rab-shakeh, of course has, he has them all afraid and so now what will king Hezekiah do. In the 37th chapter in the first verse, we read “And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.”

Now you cannot help, but admire this man. Someone has said, I think it was George Adam Smith, “We pass from Rab-shakeh posing outside the walls of Zion, to Hezekiah prostrate within them.” And when you find a man on his face before God in sincerity, you know that there is where the victory lies.” Verse 2, “And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amoz. There is a time when our people finally will have to turn to the preachers, the true ones, and they had to turn to Isaiah.

“And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth,” like a pregnant woman whose birth pangs come but the child does not come, and Judah has now come to the place of birth, but does not have the strength to be delivered from the Assyrian lion who is outside the gates.

“It may be the Lord, Thy God, will hear the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord Thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up Thy prayer for the remnant that is left. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid, of, the words that Thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold,

I will send a wind upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” And, so Isaiah, gives the promise of ultimate victory.

Well, the rest of chapter 37 contains some further threats by the Assyrian commander-in-chief and Hezekiah’s great prayer and answer. He appeals to the God of Providence and he appeals to the God of Israel. Notice the 16th verse, “Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel.” And you know when a man really recognizes that the Lord is the Lord of Hosts, that He is the great God who controls men and also that He is the covenant-keeping God, the God of Israel, then the victory is sure. And you know, we who are Christians who have believed in Jesus Christ and know him as personal Savior when we come into difficulties, we have the right to appeal to the same God. “O Lord of Hosts, You control the whole of the earth and the God of the everlasting covenant in which I am by the blood of Jesus Christ.” And when you appeal this way in faith, you shall always have the victory. Even if you should lose your life, you still have the victory, for the victory lies with the men of faith.

And so the result of the chapter is in verse 36, “Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were dead.” The scholars have wrestled with this quite a bit. How did it happen? One hundred and eighty five thousand men. Well, the text says, the angel of the Lord is responsible for it. It may be that there was a bubonic plague. These things did happen and it is entirely possible that a plague like this might work so fast that they might lose 185,000 men in this way and it still might be attributed to the angel of the Lord who brought the rats and mice in to produce it. But as it stated, it is a miracle, and I am sure that it is a miracle, even though God may have used me. That the moment when that happened, Sennacherib heard a rumor, and with what he had left, he went back to his land and it was not long before he himself was murdered. He committed the great sin of blaspheming the Lord God of Israel.

Now, then Hezekiah won that war, going to face another war though. The war against death. Isaiah, chapter 38. It is not strange that in the Bible, we should have some chapters that precede others chronologically that which are nevertheless placed after the preceding chapters in the Bible. Apparently this war against death, this incident in Hezekiah’s life happened before the time of the war against Assyria that we have just discussed in chapters 36 and 37. This war against death, Isaiah wants to put it here, he wants us to learn some lessons from it here. He says, “In those days,” this is just a general heading, “In those days was Hezekiah sick, unto death. And Isaiah the Prophet the son of Amos came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for Thou shalt die, and not live.”

Now, I want you to notice what happens when this word comes to Hezekiah. “Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a sincere heart,” it should be, “and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” You might think that Hezekiah’s faith had failed but remember, in the Old Testament, men did not have the bright light of the knowledge of life after death that you and I have. There were only glimmers of it and only certain individuals had the clear understanding of life after death and you will notice in Hezekiah’s words, if you will read these chapters that he thinks of death as the closing in upon him of darkness. He says, Can men praise Thee in Sheol? They can praise Thee when they are alive, but they cannot praise Thee in death. You see they did not have the benefit of the revelation that you and I have. All the difference that Christ makes. The difference that the revelation of further truth makes. So, he wept bitterly.

“Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David Thy father,” notice the God of David Thy father, “I have heard Thy prayer, I have seen Thy tears: behold, I will add unto Thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver Thee and this city out of the hand, of the king of Assyria: and I will



defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto Thee from, the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.”

Now, there is an amazing sign. Some have read the Old Testament so critically that they have said of this, well, what is said here is that the whole world is thrown back on its axis, and such a thing is impossible, we would have all kinds of effects from that -- this is obviously just an imagination on the part of the Prophet Isaiah. This did not really happen. It could not happen. They fail to see of course, that all this may be some fresh aspect of retraction of light. But it is a miracle and the God who created this earth is well able to produce such a miracle.

I would think that what happened is something like this. Hezekiah, you see, was lying on his bed, he was very sick. I do not know what he had, but he had some kind of the sickness that was going to be fatal and everyday he would see the sun come up and he look out and there was Ahaz’s sun dial, and he would watch and you know, how when you are in a sick bed and you watch the sun come up and you watch the sun go down, and you learn a lots of things about the tree outside the window, the hospital or home. And pretty soon, you counted all of the leaves on the tree, and everything else. You know all about it. And, he just watched the sun as its shadow fell on dial day after day, and then the word came. “You are going to look out Hezekiah, as a sign, you are going to see that shadow instead of moving this way as it always does, it is going to move back this way. And that is the evidence that is the sign I am gong to do, what I say.”

Now how God produce that I do not know. I doubt that he did through the whole world back on its axis, probably some kind of refraction of light that produced this change. Anyway, it was a miracle. Hezekiah reckoned it to be so. I have a difficult time understanding how a thinking man can believe that God is the Creator and not believe that he can do a miracle like this. Admit a God, that Mystery Supreme, nothing is

marvelous for him to do. Deny him all his mystery besides and so Hezekiah, when he hears this word from God, prays this wonderful psalm, it is a psalm of complaint but then it is a psalm of thanksgiving.

In it of course, I say you can see the truth, that the New Testament contains a great deal more light about life after death than the Old Testament did. I think we have one of the best illustrations that we have in all the Bible of 2 Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 10 and Paul said in this verse, “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.” In other words, it is through the saving working of Jesus Christ, the death, burial and resection, that we now have a flood of light on immortality and life.

Now, there is no reason for us as we face death to turn to the wall and weep bitterly as if this is the end for us because to die is to pass into the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but Hezekiah did not know that true. Now, Isaiah engaged in little faith healing. Remember, you remember what he did? Well, it is stated down here, verse 21, “Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.” And when I want to find the new denomination, you know what I am going to call it? Because the faith healers overlooked this passage, I am going to call it “The Fig Plaster Denomination” and we are going to have big healing meetings and invite everybody to come, and I am going out in my backyard because I have a fig tree there, and I am going to make a fig poultice, and I am going to put that fig poultice upon any ill that people have and then I am going to pronounce you are healed and of course I am going to take up the collection at every service too.

Now for those of you, for whom I serve as a pastor, not the pastor, but as a pastor, if you would like a fig poultice at any time, I am offering you my fig tree in the back of my yard. [Laughter] Now be glad to come and put one on any wound that you are thinking about, even your head if you need some help there. So Isaiah, the physician, he is not only a preacher, but he practices, and is good to see a preacher who practices.

Now the war against pride in our time is up. Is it not fantastic? I am just having the good time. The war against pride. Isaiah chapter 39, I just tell the story very quickly and get you out in about a minute. The war against pride was occasion by the visit of some Babylonians, we will show on what regard. And so, he takes them in and he shows the delegation, They were rather close students of astronomy and they heard about this wonder of Hezekiah. The news passed all the way over to the Euphrates and they had been thinking about a little alliance with Judah any way because they were too happy about Assyria and so they sent a delegation over and they wanted to inquire about that wonder. So 2 Chronicles chapter 32 says they wanted to come over and investigate that wonder, that astronomical miracle that had happened and so while they are there, Hezekiah flattered.

Well, we have got a visit from the Great Kingdom of Babylonians. We will show on what regard and so he takes them in and he shows the delegation, all the riches of the kingdom of Judah, and now that is the stupid thing to do. That is just as if we should invite over the Russian Foreign Ministry together with the chief of their honors and take them all around the United States and show them all of our defense establishments and show them all of our money, all of our prosperity, and excite their cupidity and their desire to have this country, it is stupid. There is no need for an inspection system in that day because they have already inspected everything in Judah, but Hezekiah is lifted up by pride and Isaiah does not like it a bit and so Isaiah comes and asks him a few questions and Hezekiah is so out of it that he replies as if nothing has happened and Isaiah says simply this, “Hezekiah, because you done what you done, the time is coming when all that you have shown the Babylonians is going to Babylonians.” And Hezekiah says in the 8th verse, after Isaiah has said it is not going to happen in your time, he says, “Good is the word of the Lord which Thou hast spoken. He said moreover, for there shall be peace and truth in my days.”

And I will tell you the truth, I just cannot read this passage without going back to 1938 when that poor man, Neville Chamberlain came back to Britain after having been at Munich with Hitler and his forces, and when he was greeted by the great crowd in Britain by the way, this is an opinion, it is found in Hezekiah chapter 47, verse 10, Britain shall never win another war. They are gone. They are gone, unless something happens, but anyway he greeted the crowd, pulled out a piece of paper and says, “Peace in our days, Peace in our time.”

Hezekiah, I think, he lost this war; however, he did not seem like other men. It was the sin of pride and presumption and he failed, but not as great as some and I think that still while may say of Hezekiah with all of his humanity with all of his cruelty, with all of failure, he was greatest king that Judah ever had, because he cleaved unto the Lord. So one told King Croesus, “That you should never boast of a man until you know the nature of his death.” Hezekiah failed to some extent in his later days, but he was a great king. I think it would be wonderful if we had the same disposition to be of service to God, the same desire to cleave unto him when trouble comes, the same sense of appeal to him in difficulty, the same desire to the see the idols go, and Jehovah magnified.

Let us bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy words. We thank Thee for ...[tape ends]