

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 • Read Isaiah 39

Questions from the Scripture text: When does this occur (v1)? Who acts in v1? Whose son is he? Of where/what is he king? What two things does he send? To whom? Why? What did Hezekiah think of the envoys (v2)? What did he show them? What five things, specifically? How much of them? What didn't he show them? Who goes to King Hezekiah in v3? Whose envoy is he? What two things does he ask? Which one does Hezekiah answer? What two things does he say in his answer? What does Isaiah ask in v4? What does Hezekiah answer? From Whom does the prophet now deliver a message (v5)? How do the words in v6 relate to the second halves of v3 and v4? What will be carried away where? Who else will be carried away (v7, cf. 2Ki 24:15)? Where will they end up, there, in Babylon (cf. 2Ki 25:27–30)? Who speaks to whom in v8? About Whose Word does he speak? What does he say about this word? What has the Lord promised? For how long (cf. 38:5–6)?

What do we see in God's response to Hezekiah's spiritual pride? Isaiah 39 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God's power is such that we do not advance His interests at all by our own impressiveness, and God's mercy is such that we may have hope for temporal mercy even when we are being chastened for wicked pride before Him.**

An evangelistic opportunity? We've seen this passage before, in another context (2Ki 20:12–19). In v1, the letters and the present are instigated by Hezekiah's recovery. The message of the letters themselves is implied by Hezekiah's response to the letters in verse 2. Obviously, Babylon desires an ally for its upcoming campaign to overthrow Assyria. But since the instigating event was medical not military, it seems clear that Babylon is looking not only for the alliance of Israel's king but Israel's God.

This makes it more understandable that a man like Hezekiah would do something like what we see in this chapter. He is hoping to advance the fame of YHWH by his own YHWH-given impressiveness. But we must be careful from ever striving for, or being enamored with, our own impressiveness. Pride is the enemy of faith. Hezekiah thought that he was something, but this weakened his felt-necessity to depend upon the Lord. The worst variety of pride is spiritual pride. And understanding v1–2 rightly, it is probably implied that there is something of a misplaced evangelistic zeal in Hezekiah's "show and tell." In light of v1, the letters must have mentioned the recovery. It is not difficult to see Hezekiah saying, "what YHWH has done for me, He can also do for Merodach." But such a presentation of the "gospel" unwittingly offers the Lord as a means to our ends, rather than bringing us into grateful (and delivered) submission to His.

It is the "alone" part of "grace alone, faith alone, and glory of God alone" that is the great difference Maker between spiritual humility and spiritual pride. Hezekiah may have thought that others' interest in him and his God were an opportunity for him to advance the Lord's Name through his own newfound impressiveness. But it is God *alone* that is impressive.

Reading Hezekiah's "tour" in terms, not of temporal pride but of evangelism (and subtle, spiritual pride), also explains why he was unashamed, and even eager, to answer the prophet's questions in v3, 4. He was probably even expecting the equivalent of a "well done my good and faithful servant."

The God Who doesn't need or make alliances, and doesn't offer Himself in others' service. Hezekiah had not fully learned the lesson of Ahaz in his alliance with the Assyrians, or even Hezekiah's own being brought low by dependence upon anyone else. As the Rabshakeh painfully pointed out, Judah had been brought to the point where there was no help to be found—whether from Egypt or any other source human or purportedly divine. This was a mercy that brought Hezekiah to a point where he refused to make any alliances, because YHWH had brought him to the point where there simply were none to make.

YHWH does not make alliances with other gods or other nations. And we must not let others' flattery of us, or hope that we can "win one for God" deceive us into false evangelism like Hezekiah's. We must tell them the truth. Other hopes, helps, or happiness must be abandoned entirely. All creatures, even the most "impressive" men and nations, must submit themselves to His will. He and his power are not on the market for the carrying out of the creature's will. Do not tell people that the Lord can give them what they want, when having the Lord means having our desires changed to what He wants.

When the Lord has done us good, and other people notice, we must be aware of the spiritual pride that thinks that "this is our opportunity to advance His name." He does not need our help to advance His name. He is not "grateful" when others think that He might be useful to them. To think that the Lord of heaven and earth, the living and true God, might be useful to a creature is not anything like Spirit-given faith. Indeed, when we hear or write or think or say it out loud, we must realize that this is exactly the opposite of genuine faith.

God's great and glorious mercy, even in the midst of just and appropriate discipline/chastening. The appropriateness of the Lord's response in v5–7 can be seen by His prophet's use of Hezekiah's own words about "all that is in his house" and about "Babylon." Hezekiah himself seems to recognize that he deserved much worse. He was ready to join Babylon in war, but the Lord is continuing to him the promised "peace" (v8) of the 15 years from chapter 38 :6. Hezekiah realizes that he has not been faithful to depend entirely upon the Lord, but the Lord continues to be "true" (v8; the core concept of the word is "faithful") to him.

Indeed, there is even a great mercy at the end of v7, to which Hezekiah may be responding with gratitude in v8. This is certainly the view of the Spirit. The whole of the kings material concludes on the hopeful note of 2Ki 25:27–30, where Jehoiachin is elevated to the palace. Who could read the repetitive unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah in the 1–2 Kings and not see such a conclusion as a great mercy?

Indeed, when we read the plural of sons in verse 7 of our text, we may conclude that the entire royal family who are mentioned in 2Ki 24:15 are subject to the inexplicable mercy in 2Ki 25:28–30, where Jehoiachin is not only released from prison, not only brought into the palace, but even elevated above all (!) of the other subordinate kings there.

Responding to God's power and mercy. How great is the power of God! Let us not think that our impressiveness (even remembering that it comes by His mercy and grace) somehow advances His Name. Let us be full of thankfulness—and of love and zeal to do whatever He has assigned to us. And should others ever be impressed and indicate a desire for Him, let us be plain that coming to Him means renouncing all else. And let us be plain that it is always for submitting to His purposes, lest, we somehow think that it is He Who is useful for our own purposes.

And how great is the mercy of God! Even for someone who has committed such a sin, against so much grace, as we see Hezekiah do here, God still shows such covenant mercy! Indeed, the Word of YHWH to Hezekiah was good, as Hezekiah said! And, when we know that we deserve immediate and complete devastation (as Hezekiah deserved), we may hope that His providential response in this world will yet be full of mercy (as it was to Hezekiah). And we are all the more sure, through Christ and His cross, that His ultimate response in eternity is not just greatly merciful but wholly and entirely mercy!

Who has been impressed with you and your Christianity? What temptations does this present to your own heart? And what temptations in how you testify for the Lord (or, possibly/sadly, show yourself as if that is to testify to the Lord)? How is God showing you mercy? How are you responding to that mercy? How are you responding to His ultimate mercy?

Sample prayer: Lord, like Hezekiah, we are often guilty of being more impressed with Your work in us than we are of You Yourself. Forgive us, for this sin is gross and wicked. Forgive us, for we have even presented to others Your great work in our life but not the infinitely greater work of Christ in His life. Your personal greatness and glory are beyond compare! Forgive us, also, for failing to see just how marvelous Your mercy is in our lives. Indeed, Your providence is so gentle. Forgive us, and give us grace to see rightly, and respond rightly, to Your great power and mercy. Especially in Christ, through whom we ask it, AMEN!!

Suggested songs: ARP100 "All Earth With Joy" or TPH214 "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah 39. These are God's words. At that time, meredachapalidan the son of baladan, king of Babylon. Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah. For, he heard. That he had been sick and had recovered. And Hezekiah was pleased with them. And showed them the house of his treasures, the silver and gold.

The spices and precious ointment and all his armory, all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his domain. That has a kaya did not show them. Than isaiah. The prophet went to king Hezekiah and said to him, what did these men say and from where did they come to you?

So it hasakaya said they came to me from a far country from Babylon. And he said, what have they seen in your house? So it has a coyote answered. They have seen all that is in my house. There's nothing among my treasures that i have notched them. Then isaiah said to Hezekiah, hear the word.

If you always hosts behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house? And what your fathers have accumulated until this day? Shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left says, yahua. And they shall take away some of your sons, a little descend from you, you will beget.

And they shall beginx in the palace. Of the king of Babylon. So Hezekiah said to Isaiah the word of yahweh which you have spoken is good. For he said at least there will be peace and truth. In my days. Man, thus far. The reading of gods inspired and And Aaron twerked.

Pride is ever the enemy of faith. The More confident. We are in ourselves or the more secure, we feel And what we have or what we are able to do. The less we depend. Upon the lord. But there is a unique species of pride. That is even more subtle, more sneaky.

More difficult to detect and that is Spiritual. Pride. And one of the Reasons, i think many. Misunderstand or at least do not fully understand. Isaiah 39, is that they do not realize that what is here? Is not so much personal pride as it is. Spiritual pride. Now, the the holy spirit by isaiah gives us Uh, enough indication.

Uh, that This is not merely. Uh, has a kaya kind of stupidly. Being full of himself. Uh, to show all Uh, that he has and all that. He is and all that he can offer. I think the spirit gives us indication in the text that he actually thinks. He was showing meridak baladin.

Uh, king of Babylon. All that yahweh has to quote unquote. Offer, why do we say that? Well, one reason we say that is that the, what instigated This in verse 1. Was not some sort of military victory. Or supposition of powerfulness on the part of israel. But when he heard that has a kaya had been sick and recovered He sent to Hezekiah.

So, the implication is That merido balladin believes something supernatural has taken place in jerusalem. And with jerusalem's king. And you remember, according to The way that men thought and In those times and men still do. Although we don't realize it so much about ourselves. That differer. Different powers ruled and different places.

And so if Meridek, balladin could add. Uh, to The kings of Babylon. Um, If he could add the, an alliance, With a king so powerful that he could heal from a mortal disease. Like the god, he had just healed Hezekiah. That, that would really, uh, Soup up his. Uh, spiritual supernatural.

Uh, support as he was about to overthrow serious. Other reason in addition to that which instigated these letters and present. Um, to Hezekiah Um, the other indicator in the text that this has really spiritual pride and Hezekiah was not saying look at all. Look at all, i have and all that i am, but he's saying look at all that y'all i can do for you.

Is. When Isaiah, the prophet comes and asks him. The pointed questions Hezekiah is not embarrassed at all. If he had been, Promoting himself and how great he is. And isaiah, the prophet shows up and asks him questions about it. Surely Hezekiah at least before isaiah the man of god, after all that has happened so far would have been ashamed.

To say what he had done. But what Hezekiah thought he had done was he had just finished giving Envoys from Babylon. An evangelistic tour. Of the palace and temple and treasures. How wonderful the Babylon. Which think themselves, so great and think of their gods bell and Nebo and others.

Being so powerful. Have come to the conclusion. Not like some akron did that Nizrock has god, was greater than all the gods, especially the god of jerusalem, but how wonderful? That the king of Babylon had concluded. He needs yahweh. Surely Though, how impressive hasakaya has become to Babylon in this way is an opportunity for him?

Um, To show the greatness of yahweh and forged this alliance with Babylon in which Yahweh is shown. As equal to any other god, and Babylon, needy of him. That's almost certainly. Based on what verse 1 says, about the instigation and based on Hezekiah unashamedly, telling i isaiah that he thought and spiritual pride, Not necessarily even.

Thinking that it has come from us. But just thinking that we are something spiritually. And that. Men who see what god has made us. Really should be impressed with god. On account of how well god has done with us. Look at how strong we have become. And, You know, perhaps.

Hezekiah thought Babylon would be impressed with all those things. Of course, Babylon had sent him a gift or a bribe and Uh, we can. Infer, the content of the letters. With this gift. And With what Hezekiah shed them. That babbling wanted an alliance now with With judah. And And jerusalem.

But it is so sneaky. Spiritual pride is so. Sneaky. And we don't even realize it's wrong. Let us not be impressed. Or let us not. Be impressed with ourselves. If others are impressed with us. Let us certainly not. Think that we have come into Satra condition that we would go around and When people say, oh, your god must be so great.

I wonder what he can do for me. And we say, oh yes, let me tell you. How? How much he can do for you? No, when Uh, when someone wants to add the lord, To all the other things that they're trusting in all of the other things that they're living for all the other things, you desire.

He said, that's not the way. The one true living god works. You actually have to abandon All your other hope. All your other purpose. All your other pleasure. To have him alone as your hope to have him alone as your purpose. To have him alone as your great pleasure and any other sub-purpose is, is according to what he wills, and what he says And any other pleasure.

Is not just because he made it and he obtains it and enables you to have it provides it for you in his providence. It is a pleasure only if it is if you are enjoying him in it and if you only, if you're enjoying it, according to his word.

Um, And so, there is There is a philosophy of evangelism. Here. And what Hezekiah does? That even churches today, even in our own personal lives today, we are susceptible to And especially if we have spiritual pride. Over, what the lord. Has done for us. And so only, if we remember, That we are nothing.

And that whoever the other men are that are impressed with us or that we certainly would like to be valued by or our flesh. Would like to be in alliance with that. They are nothing. But only the lord is everything. Only then we be prepared. Uh, Evangelize according to the philosophy of evangelism of the bible.

That's how may god maintain for us. Gratitude. For all that he has given us and done for us. But a humility. The humility that says. Even these things. And even we Are not impressive. Except for the fact that we belong to him, he alone, Is impressive. So that So that we will not.

Make the evangelistic mistakes that were made. Often. And how the gospel was presented, to me growing up. And to others whom i love dearly. Who came to think of the lord being offered to them as the one. Who could get for them? The kind of life that they wanted.

And who could be dependent upon? Along with our intelligence and our finances and Those things, and Who was a means to get you. Whether it was the protection that you want, From trouble or the provision that you want for your own pleasure. And garden. His mercy. Um, Brought me.

To an end of myself at some point in my life, and Saved me anyway. But someone very, very dear to me.

Is not trusting in the lord Jesus as he's presented and The scripture is his own fault. I don't mean to say that, it doesn't. But certainly, there is some culpability in those Who evangelized him the way. Hezekiah evangelized quote about these Babylonian. On voice. And yet, god is so Merciful.

Now he's merciful and Hezekiah recognizes that in verse 8. Although many of us reading it in our flash, Um, think that Hezekiah is Being callous. Uh, towards Everything and everyone and just Um, Being very worldly-minded. Say well, i get 15 years of enjoyment. Um, But the word that Isaiah spoke has taken its effect in him.

And notice. Hezekiah, identifies the word itself, particularly as good as Hezekiah, said to Isaiah the word of yahweh which you have spoken, his good For he said at least there will be peace and truth. In my days. And, Uh, just on its face. That's a great mercy. When Hezekiah, realizes what he has actually done.

After isaac confronts him. Surely he knows. That he ought to have been destroyed. But even when he says at least, there will be peace in my days. The lord had promised him 15 years of peace. Back in chapter 38, and Verse 5, the 15 years in verse 6 defense from Uh, the king of Assyria.

The lord had promised as a guy of 15 years apiece and Hezekiah in his spiritual pride, had signed up to go to war. To be Babylons, ally. In a war against Assyria. And so here you always goodness is not just in mercy by delaying, what has akaiah and what Judah deserved.

Yahoo is mercy. Is actually in giving Hezekiah. That good that he had originally promised. Which is opposite that ill that misery. That hasakaya had tried to sign up for. To become an ally of the king of Babylon. And so, there will be peace and there will be truth. And Uh, you probably know by now the more fundamental Uh meaning of the word.

That's translated truth and our hebrew bible is faithfulness. Hezekiah had been unfaithful. Even after the catastrophe with a has Trusting in tiglith believer and Assyria because of the threat. Of Syria and Ephraim. Even after god brought Hezekiah to an end to of himself, So that there was no hope in egypt just as Uh, the rabshaka had Had repeated several times.

There was no hope in anyone or anything. And yet the lord alone by himself executed 185 thousand Assyrians. Even after all of that. Has a coyote was going to trust. And the hallway, plus rather than He always say alone. And, Uh, and Hezekiah was unfaithful untrue to god.

But the lord would continue to be faithful and true to him. Faithful and true to his word. And so, Even the way he says, the last sentence. Indicates a Uh, confession of sin and repentance and marveling at god's mercy. But one more clue. That that's the. Uh, that's the connotation that's the tone.

Of verses seven and eight is In the last part. Of verse 7 in the palace. Of the king of Babylon. For that. In fact is a note of great mercy, and it takes a while. Before that happens, even when the exile comes. Um, It takes a while, but that's the note upon, which second kings and The very last four verses of second kings.

As the king of Babylon. Releasing jehoyachin from prison. And not just releasing him from prison but bringing him into the Palace. And he gets seated at the king's table as as one of his chief men, his his eunuchs, his high officials and babble of the eunuchs We're high officials and also later in persia.

And not only that, but if you remember at the end of second kings, he elevates joejin above all the other kings, His act as high officials. At the king of Babylon's table. And, if we remember back to the end of second kings, Joint wasn't by himself. And second kings, 24 verse 15.

He had wives and children, he had a big household. Uh, who had been carried off to Babylon with him? And his being seated at the table and giving king's table in the king's palace. And and Being given a kingly portion and elevated above all of the other kings. This was a fulfillment of Your sons whom you will begin.

They shall be unix in the palace. Of the king of Babylon. So it's not just that god is going to continue to be faithful. And give peace. In the 15 years to, which Hezekiah was refers in verse 8. It's also that god has made a promise of Amazing mercy.

You you read second kings and you come to the end. After all of the unfaithfulness and treachery. Of god's people against their god, and that's how second kings ends and you're not sure what to do with it. Well, here's what you do with it. For hold. How great is the mercy of god?

Even To his faithful sinning failing people. And how merciful that is to us. Because i hope none of us can read a chapter in which spiritual pride is the great sin. That is condemned, and think that somehow this isn't about us. But it isn't only about us it's especially about god, isn't it?

How marvelous? That he is merciful even to. Such failing people as we are. And that's the goodness that Hezekiah is responding to here. So let us take away. To marvel at god's power and keep that alone in the Salvation by grace. Alone, through faith. Alone. In christ, who is yahweh?

Alone to the glory of god. Alone. Because that's That's the place. Where spiritual humility and spiritual pride are distinguished, isn't it? And that word alone. In each of those things. That we might ever be lowly before him. And let us be amazed, not only at his power. But also his mercy so that when we stumble and fall, We know that god, Has a track record, a history.

Of being more, merciful to us and time. Then we ought to expect. And not only, is he greatly merciful to us? In the providence and time. And of course, even the chastenings are mercy. But everything is mercy and eternity. There's no chastening at all. The lord Jesus has taken it all upon himself.

Praise God. Let's pray.

Lord, we do, pray that you'd protect us from spiritual pride that Spirit would protect us from. Falling forward when others are impressed with us and even Impressed with things you have done in us, or For us. Lest. Diminish, you Lord help us to evangelize by. Presenting you, as The only living and true god.

All of our power, all of our purpose, all of our pleasure. And, Calling others to be reconciled to you. And through abandoning of anything apart from you, An entire submission to you. Lord help us ourselves. Not to see you. As a means to our ends. And certainly not to present you that way to others.

Thank you for reminding us of the greatness of your mercy. That even when you chase an us, You do so with so much gentleness. And we thank you, lord for that. We pray that Your spirit would are encourage our hearts with this knowledge of you. That we would live in thankfulness.

And awareness. Of your mercies that are continual and new. And sometimes, so great even As to be bewildering. And we pray that you would be. Glorified by the work that you continue to do in each of our minds. The nature of our hearts through this portion of your word.

For we ask it all in jesus name. Amen.