

# Hezekiah Stumbles - Isaiah 39

**Introduction** – Since Isaiah has told us the stories of Sennacherib and Morodach-Baladan backwards chronologically, it causes us to follow the argument of the whole book of Isaiah as it is given in the days of Hezekiah. Hezekiah in many ways reformed Judah and brought her back to right worship. Hezekiah prayed and God delivered Judah from the greatest world empire of its day. Hezekiah prayed and God healed him even after He had told him he would die. But Hezekiah is not a god. Hezekiah is not God. Hezekiah is not the son of God. Hezekiah is not the promised Immanuel. Then Who is?

**“In Order to Test Him”** – Those are the words in 2 Chronicles (32:31) that describe what God allowed to occur at this time with Babylon and Hezekiah. After being healed, *“his heart was lifted up”* (2 Chron 32:25), Hezekiah, dazzled by the envoy from Babylon, showed them his own treasures, all of them (Isaiah 39:1-2), indicating his intention to impress and align with Babylon at all costs. Here was the opportunity to give glory to God, but all Hezekiah revealed was his worldly riches. There is similarity to the self-glorifying declarations of Moses at the rock in the wilderness (Num 20:2-13) which also ended with consequences from the Lord. Isaiah shows up unbidden (v3) as the Word of God often does to confront us. God’s questions are like those to Adam and Eve (*“where are you...what did these men see...where are they from”*), questions that we know God already knows the answers to, but which indicate his judgment. Hezekiah tells the truth (either in repentance or brazenly, we are not sure – v4) and then Isaiah replies with deadly calm that one day all those treasures would belong to Babylon (vv5-6), and that Hezekiah’s descendants would become eunuchs serving in the courts of Babylon (v7). Hezekiah’s answer in v8 leaves us all scratching our heads (v8); he doesn’t seem to care (at that moment) about the future of the country he leads.

**Unanswered Questions** – We might have thought with the victory over Sennacherib and the personal healing of Hezekiah that we were coming to the end of Isaiah’s prophecies. But chapter 39 is set up to leave us with more questions. Over and over we have learned the answer to *“Whom shall we trust”*; God alone is trustworthy. But how do we get humans to trust in God and not only turn to Him when the times look desperate (like a magical rabbit’s foot)? How can we, in our human sinfulness, be reconciled to a holy God? How could God come and dwell with us (Immanuel) when we refuse to serve Him? Why would He? If He is not a king like Hezekiah, then what would He be like? Chapters 40-66 will provide the answers to these questions.

**What Do We Learn from This Story and From the Whole First Half of Isaiah?** – Step back and consider: there are many lessons.

**Always a Test in Which to Trust** – We often realize during times of trials how necessary it is for us to trust in God. We often forget in times of prosperity our need to trust God in the midst of that as well. The Puritan, Cotton Mather said, *“Religion begot prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother.”*

**Be Wary of Compliments from the Serpent’s Side** - We must not let our heads be turned by the affirmations, affections, and attractions of the world, but find our all in Jesus as King.

**Do Not Put Your Trust in Men** – Hezekiah was just who conservatives would have voted into office. But he was no savior. *“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin”* (Eccles 7:20); *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). Be careful of making an idol of a good man.

**God Sees All and Knows All** – *“...be sure your sin will find you out”* (Num 32:23). *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”* (Heb 3:12). Never forget your sanctification is still incomplete and every day you need to turn to the Lord as in that first day. To be honest with yourself is to admit you are far more evil, selfish, covetous, and petty than you realize.

**Run Well, Finish Well** – It is true that *“...He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6) and we are to be confident in this. It is just as true that *“...those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it...I discipline my body and bring it into subjection...”* (1 Cor 9:24-27). Faithfulness is not about yesterday or tomorrow. Faithfulness is about right now.

**God Restores Souls** – *“He restores my soul”* (Psalm 23:3). *“Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord”* (Jer 3:12). When your faith is weak, His love is strong. Christ loves ungrateful, wavering, stupid and confused sinners. He looks for lost sheep. He brings us to repentance with His kindness. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

Isaiah would turn to words of comfort (40:1), of a Servant Who would bear our sins (53:4-5), of a Spirit-filled preacher that would proclaim Good News (61:1-3), and bring forth a New Creation (65:17).

Hezekiah would not be Immanuel but Immanuel would come. And for us, Immanuel has come.