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## Isaiah 39

Ambassadors from Babylon are sent to visit King Hezekiah when they heard that he was sick unto death but recovered. Hezekiah is *magnified in the sight of all the nations* and gets carried away in showing the Babylonian visitors that which he ought not to have shown them. Now, Hezekiah's descendants would be *carried away* captive into Babylon. This would not happen right away, but at the time of Jehoiakim. (When the Lord blesses our lives, it is easy to forget the fountain of these blessings and forget to give all honor and glory to Him from whom these blessings flow.)

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2 Chronicles 32

**22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all [other], and guided them on every side.**

**23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.**

vv. 1–4. Babylonian embassy visits Hezekiah after he recovers from his illness. Hezekiah shows them everything, holding nothing back.

**1 ¶ AT that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he\* had been sick, and was recovered.**

\* 2 Kings 20:12, Hezekiah.

*AT that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon.* Faussett explains: “*Merodach-baladan*] – For a hundred fifty years before the overthrow of Nineveh by Cyaxares the Mede, a succession of rulers, mostly viceroys of Assyria, ruled Babylon, from the time of Nabonassar, 747 BC. That date is called ‘the Era of Nabonassar.’ Pul or Phallukha was then expelled, and a new dynasty set up at Nineveh, under Tiglath-pileser. Semiramis, Pul’s wife, then retired to Babylon, with Nabonassar, her son, whose advent to the throne of Babylon, after the overthrow of the old line at Nineveh, marked a new era. Sometimes the viceroys of Babylon made themselves, for a time, independent of Assyria; thus Merodach-baladan at this time did so, encouraged by the Assyrian disaster in the Jewish campaign. He had done so before, and was defeated in the first year of Sennacherib’s reign, as is

recorded in cuneiform characters in that monarchs palace of Koyunjik. Nabopolassar was the first who established, *permanently*, his independence; his son, Nebuchadnezzar, raised Babylon to the position which Nineveh once occupied; but from the want of stone near the Lower Euphrates, the buildings of Babylon, formed of sun-dried brick, have not stood the wear of ages as Nineveh has.” Barnes tells us how Babylonian kings’ names often incorporated the name of one of their favorite idols: “Merodach was an idol of the Babylonians (Jeremiah 50:2): ‘Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is confounded.’ This idol, according to Gesenius, was probably the planet Mars, or Mars the god of war. To this god, as well as to Saturn, the ancient Semitic nations offered human sacrifices (see Gesenius’ Lexicon and Corem. *in loc.*) The word ‘Balddan’ is also a compound word, and means ‘Bel is his lord.’ The name of this idol, Merodach, was often incorporated into the proper names of kings, and of others. Thus we have the names Evil-Merodach, Messi-Mordachus, Sisimor-dachus, Mardocentes, etc.” Barnes also explains that Merodachbaladan was a usurper (see Barnes for the more complete narrative): “Thus we have it certainly explained how there was a king, or rather a usurper in Babylon at the time when it was really a provincial city of the Assyrian empire. Nothing was more probable than that Merodach-baladan, having seized the throne, should endeavor to unite himself in league and amity with the enemies of his master, against whom he had revolted. Hezekiah, who, no less than himself, had thrown off the Assyrian yoke, and was in powerful alliance with the king of Egypt, would be his first resource. No embassy, on the other hand, could be more welcome to the Jewish monarch who had the common enemy in his neighborhood, and who would be glad to see a division made in his favor by a rebellion in the very heart of that enemy’s kingdom. Hence arose that excessive attention which he paid to the envoys of the usurper, and which so offended Isaiah, or rather God, who, as a consequence, threatened the Babylonian captivity (see Dr. Wiseman’s Lectures on Science and Revealed Religion, pp. 369–371 Ed. And. 1837). ¶ *Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he*

*had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.* Alexander suggests: “It is not improbable that Merodach Baladan was meditating a revolt, and sent this embassy to gain Hezekiah’s co-operation. The congratulation on his recovery may have been a secondary object, or perhaps a mere pretext. In 2 Chronicles 32:31, a further design is mentioned, namely, to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, whether this be understood to mean the destruction of Sennacherib’s army, or the miraculous recession of the shadow. There is no incompatibility between these different designs.”

2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, ✓ the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, ✓ ✓ and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

✓ or, spicery

✓ ✓ or, jewels

\* 2 Chronicles 32:25–31, But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit [done] unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, [both] he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit in [the business of] the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was [done] in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all [that was] in his heart.

*And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures:* The Talmud tradition (Seder Nezikin, Sanhedrin 104a) has this interesting exchange: “And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment etc. Rab said: What is meant by ‘the house of his precious things’? — His wife, who mixed the drinks for them. Samuel said: He shewed them his treasury. R. Johanan said: He shewed

them weapons which could destroy other weapons” (Talmud, Soncino). This is a particularly sad story. As we wish to rejoice in the righteousness of Hezekiah, we find that he was lifted up in pride. But that ought to be a lesson for us. We ought not look but to God the Eternal Father and His son, Jesus Christ, for an example of true and enduring righteousness. We also ought to be ever vigilant of the sin of pride. Barnes says: “*And Hezekiah was glad of them*] – Possibly he regarded himself as flattered by an embassy from so great a distance, and so celebrated a place as Babylon. It is certain that he erred in some way in regard to the manner in which he received them, and especially in the ostentatious display which he made of his treasures. *And showed them the house of his precious things*] – The Septuagint renders this, Νεχωθα̃ – ‘The house of Nechotha,’ retaining the Hebrew word. The Margin ||, ‘Spicery.’ The Hebrew word (נִכְתָּה) properly means, according to Gesenius, a contusion, a breaking to pieces; hence, aromatic powder, or spices reduced to powder, and then any kind of aromatics. Hence, the word here may mean ‘the house of his spices,’ as Aquila, Symmachus, and the Vulgate translate it; or ‘a treasury,’ ‘a storehouse,’ as the Chaldee and the Syriac here render it. It was undoubtedly a treasure or store house; but it may have taken its name from the fact, that it was mainly employed as a place in which to keep spices, unguents, and the various kinds of aromatics which were used either in public worship, or for the purposes of luxury. *The silver and the gold*] – Possibly Hezekiah may have obtained no small quantity of silver and gold from what was left in the camp of the Assyrians. It is certain that after he was delivered from danger he was signally prospered, and became one of the most wealthy and magnificent monarchs of the east; (2 Chronicles 32:27–28): ‘And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor; and he made himself treasuries for silver and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of grain, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.’ A considerable part of this wealth arose from presents which were made to him, and from gifts which were made for the service of the temple (2 Chronicles 32:23). *And the precious ointment*] – Used for anointing kings and priests. Or more probably the ointment here referred to was that which was in more common use, to anoint the body after bathing, or when they were to appear in public. *And all the house of his armor*] – Margin ||, ‘Vessels,’ or ‘instruments,’ or ‘jewels.’ The word כְּלִי denotes any article of furniture, utensil, or vessel; any trapping, instrument, or tool; and any implement of war, weapon, or arms. Probably it here refers to the latter, and denotes shields, swords, spears, such as were used in war, and such as Hezekiah had

prepared for defense. The phrase is equivalent to our word arsenal (compare 2 Chronicles 32:27). Solomon had an extensive arsenal of this description (1 Kings 10:16–17), and it is probable that these were regarded as a part of the necessary defense of the kingdom.”

¶ *There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.* The Brethren have counseled us to hold our sacred experiences and not share them unless we have been moved by the Spirit to do so. We are to keep these things in our hearts as very sacred. To share that which we have not been permitted to share is to trample on these sacred things. It is also a prideful behavior. Likewise, it was with Hezekiah, the Lord had given him many wonderful things, many which he could share, but there were others that he ought not to have shared. These things were of a *sacred* nature. This sacredness has two parts. Do we hold sacred and heed and value the things of God that we have received? Do we only share them as moved by the Spirit, and then only for the glory of God?

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**3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, [even] from Babylon.**

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*Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee?* Isaiah reprimanded Hezekiah as moved by the Spirit of God. He begins with a question, trying to find out the intent of the visitors. It would not be surprising that the Spirit had already revealed to Isaiah the unrighteous acts of Hezekiah. Gill suggests: “Quickly after the ambassadors had been with the king, and he had shown them all his treasures; the prophet did not come of himself, but was sent by the Lord, though he was not sent for by the king; in the time of his distress and illness he could send for him, but now being well, and in prosperity, he forgot the prophet, to send for him, and have his advice, how he should behave towards these men, as not to offend the Lord.”

¶ *And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, [even] from Babylon.* Gill well says: “*And said unto him, what said these men?*” – what was their errand to thee, and their business to thee? what did they communicate to thee, or request of thee? *And from whence came they unto thee?* – from what country? these questions the prophet put to the king, not as ignorant of the men, and their business, and country, but in order to have everything from the king himself, and to lead on to further conversation with him on these

things: *And Hezekiah said, they are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon* – he makes no answer to the first question, but at once replies to the second, as being what his heart was lifted up with; that ambassadors should come to him from a very distant country, and from so famous and renowned a place as Babylon; which showed that his name was great in foreign parts, and was in high esteem in distant countries, and even so great a prince as the king of Babylon courted his friendship.”

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**4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that [is] in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.**

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Hezekiah tells all when Isaiah asks this pointed question. Barnes says: “Here was the confessions of a frank, an honest, and a pious man. There was no concealment; no disguise. Hezekiah knew that he was dealing with a man of God—a man too to whom he had been under great obligations. He knew that Isaiah had come commissioned by God, and that it would be in vain to attempt to conceal anything. Nor does he seem to have wished to make any concealment. If he was conscious that what he had done had been improper, he was willing to confess it; and at any rate he was willing that the exact truth should be known. Had Hezekiah been like Ahaz, he might have spurned Isaiah from his presence as presenting improper inquiries. But Hezekiah was accustomed to regard with respect the messengers of God, and he was therefore willing to submit his whole conduct to the divine adjudication and reproof. Piety makes a man willing that all that he has done should be known. It saves him from double-dealing and subterfuges, and a disposition to make vain excuses; and it inclines him to fear God, to respect his ambassadors, and to listen to the voice of eternal truth.”

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vv. 5–8. The Lord, through the Prophet Isaiah, lets Hezekiah know that his unwise actions—of showing the Babylonian embassy everything—would have a negative future consequence. Hezekiah calls this “good” as a well-deserved punishment.

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**5 ¶ Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:**

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Sometimes the prophets received their answers after a time, and sometimes in an instant as we have here. It is even possible, that these words were received by Isaiah before he came to speak to Hezekiah. Alexander says:

“This form of expression gives to what follows the solemnity and authority of a divine decree. The parallel passage (2 Kings 20:16) omits **צְבֹאוֹת**,<sup>1</sup> which Vitringa regards as emphatic here, implying a signal exercise of divine providence and power.”

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**6 Behold, the days come, that all that [is] in thine house, and [that] which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.**

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Just as Hezekiah had shared *everything* with Babylonians, the Prophet Isaiah explained, speaking for the Lord, that *nothing* would be left that would not be taken away by Babylon. Gill says: “*Behold, the days come* – Or, ‘are coming’ and which quickly came; after a few reigns more, even in Jehoiakim's time: *That all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon* – as it was, when Jehoiakim king of Judah, his mother, servants, princes, and officers, were taken by the king of Babylon, and carried captive, and along with them the treasures of the king's house, and also all the treasures of the house of the Lord, 2 Kings 24:12. *Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord*]; this was, as Jarchi says, measure for measure; as there was nothing that was not shown to the ambassadors, so nothing should be left untaken away by the Babylonians.” Gil has: “*Behold, the days come* – The captivity of the Jews in Babylon commenced about one hundred and twenty years after this prediction (compare Jeremiah 20:5). *That all that is in thine house* – That is, all the treasures that are in the treasure-house (ISAIAH 39:2). *And that which thy fathers have laid up in store* - In 2 Kings 18:15–16, we are told that Hezekiah, in order to meet the demands of the king of Assyria, had cut off even the ornaments of the temple, and taken all the treasures which were in ‘the king’s house.’ . . . *Nothing shall be left*] – This was literally fulfilled (see 2 Chronicles 36:18). It is remarkable, says Vitringa, that this is the first intimation that the Jews would be carried to Babylon – the first designation of the place where they would be so long punished and oppressed. Micah (Micah 4:10), a contemporary of Isaiah, declares the same thing, but probably this was not before the declaration here made by Isaiah. Moses had declared repeatedly, that, if they were a rebellious people, they should be removed from their own to a foreign land [in *Rain in Due Season*—GB]; but he had not designated the country (Leviticus 26:33–34; Deuteronomy 28:64–

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<sup>1</sup> Hosts. As in Lord of Sabaoth (D&C 87:7; 88:2). That is, Lord of Hosts.

67; 30:3). Ahijah, in the time of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:15), had predicted that they should be carried ‘beyond the river,’ that is, the Euphrates; and Amos (Amos 5:27) had said that God would carry them ‘into captivity beyond Damascus.’ But all these predictions were now concentrated on Babylon; and it was for the first time distinctly announced by Isaiah that that was to be the land where they were to suffer so long and so painful a captivity.”

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**7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.**

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Alexander says: “The fulfilment of this prophecy is recorded in 2 Kings 24:12–16 and Daniel 1:1–7.”

Alexander also explains: “**סְרִיסִים** is strictly understood by the Septuagint (σπαδοντας), and the Vulgate (*eunuchi*), but explained by the Targum to mean nobles . . . , *i.e.* courtiers or household-officers, an extension of the meaning which agrees well with the usages of oriental courts.” Barnes writes: “*That shall issue from thee* – Of the royal family. The captivity at Babylon occurred more than a hundred years after this, and of course those who were carried there were somewhat remote descendants of Hezekiah. *And they shall be eunuchs*] – The word used here (**סְרִיסִים**) denotes properly and strictly eunuchs, or such persons as were accustomed to attend on the harems of Oriental monarchs (Esther 2:3, 14–15). These persons were also employed often in various offices of the court (Esther 1:10, 12, 15), and hence, the word often means a minister of court, a court-officer, though not literally an eunuch (Genesis 37:6; 39:1). It is not easy, however, to tell when the word is to be understood literally, and when not. The Targum understands it of those who should be nurtured, or become great in the kingdom of Babylon. That the Jews were advanced to some offices of trust and power in Babylon, is evident from the case of Daniel (Daniel 1:2–7). It is by no means improbable, also, that the king of Babylon would have a pride in having among the attendants at his court, or even over the harem, the descendants of the once magnificent monarchs of the Jews.” Rawlinson explains: “Hezekiah had at the time, probably, no son, since Manasseh, who succeeded him upon the throne, was not born till two years later. Besides Manasseh, he appears to have had a son, Amariah, who was an ancestor of the Prophet Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1:1). He may, of course, have also had others. His descendants, rather than his actual sons, seem to be here intended; and the fulfilment of the prophecy is to be found in Daniel 1:3, where certain ‘of

the king's seed' are mentioned among the Israelites who served as eunuchs in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar."

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**8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good [is] the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.\***

\* 2 Kings 20:18, And he said, [Is it] not [good], if peace and truth be in my days?

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Alexander writes: "The word *good* [טוֹב] is here used, neither in the sense of *gracious* nor in that of *just* exclusively, but in that of *right*, as comprehending both. While the king acquiesces in the threatening prophecy as righteous and deserved, he gratefully acknowledges the mercy with which it is tempered. That he looked upon the woes denounced against his children as a personal misfortune of his own, is clear from his regarding the postponement of the execution as a mitigation of the sentence on himself. The expression of thankfulness at this exemption shews how true the narrative is to nature and experience. Umbreit has the good sense and feeling to describe it as a natural and child-like acknowledgment." Gill likewise has: "*Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken* – Hezekiah was at once convinced of his sin, acknowledged it and repented of it, and owned that the sentence pronounced was but just and right; and that there was a mixture of mercy and goodness in it, in that time was given, and it was not immediately executed. *He said moreover, for there*

*shall be peace and truth in my days*] – or a confirmed peace, lasting prosperity ..." One final point worth making here is that Hezekiah could have wept before the Lord with the same passion as when his life was to be cut short, but did not. The Lord made it clear over and over that the Babylonian captivity was not predetermined, or some form of predestination. Instead, going back to *Rain in Due Season*, all blessings and all punishments were—like our Patriarchal blessings and other blessings obtained in the House of the Lord—dependent on our comportment.

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2 Chronicles 32

**32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they [are] written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, [and] in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.**

**33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.**

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