

SEPTEMBER 21

This is a big day. We will see the defeat of the Assyrians, which is a major event in Isaiah. Also, we will finish Galatians. This might be a good day to get some fall air and something hot with pumpkin spice from your favorite coffee establishment.

Isaiah 37-38

It is too bad that chapters 36-39 are broken up like this. Chapters 36-37 show the faith of the leaders as they trust God against the Assyrians. In chapter 37 God destroys the Assyrian army. Chapters 38-39 show why and how Hezekiah stumbles in faith as he faces death and then basks in the glory of God's victory. In chapter 39 Hezekiah basically betrays the future generations of the people, and God promises that the nation will go into exile in Babylon.

Isaiah 37

There are a lot of things for the Spirit to point out to us here. What impresses me is that all of what God said regarding this event was foretold years earlier. We have been listening to Isaiah prophesy and prepare the people for this event for over 50 years. Some people listened. Hezekiah listened and the Word of God bore fruit in him as he led the people through this. His faith was genuine and deep.

Vs. 1-4 Hezekiah led the people in humility and in seeking God. It is interesting that Isaiah wasn't there and had to be found.

Vs. 5-7 Notice how short God's answer through Isaiah is. God knew the situation wasn't over.

Vs. 8-13 Lachish was where the camp of the Assyrians was located. It was their base of operations and was about 25 miles south, southwest of Jerusalem. Today 25 miles is nothing. If you were driving 60 mph that would only be 25 minutes. But back then that distance was hours. A fast jog is about 8 mph and I'm sure they didn't do that with their foot soldiers, so it probably took this army 4-6 hours. I'm sure this was a frustration for the Rabshakeh and it seems like his anger and arrogance got the better of him. The moral of this story is to be careful what you say to God.

V. 9 This king of Cush is really the king of Egypt. The Egyptians were slowly taken over by their relatives from the south of them.

V. 10 This is the Rabshakeh's pride speaking. He had probably expected to immediately begin a siege of Jerusalem. Now with this delay, Rabshakeh gave free expression to his pride and frustration. Notice that now he is accusing Israel's God of deception.

Vs. 14-20 What a prayer. I can almost visualize Hezekiah coming in and spreading this letter out before the Lord.

Vs. 21-35 This is God's response to Hezekiah. Notice that this time Hezekiah didn't have to send word to Isaiah. God spoke to Isaiah and Isaiah sent this message to Hezekiah. Notice too, that it is longer than the last response.

V. 21 Notice why God makes this response. I guess He's trying to teach us something, although it is a very deep lesson if you think about it.

V. 22 Here and in v. 35, notice what God is defending.

V. 26 In his ranting, Rabshakeh said God had sent him. He was so "right" he should have listened to his own words and been humbled. Now it's too late.

V. 29 Hooks were used by the Assyrians to lead people away into captivity.

Vs. 30-32 God is promising Hezekiah that life in Jerusalem will resemble a time of peace and would slowly get back to normal. Since they would be eating what the land naturally provided, God would provide for them. Also, I think God had a surprise in store for them.

Vs. 33-35 Amen. For all of their arrogance, the Assyrians wouldn't be allowed to even spit against the wall of Jerusalem.

Vs. 36-38 Notice this happened in one night. By now, you should know "who" *the angel of the Lord* is. We have seen the result of having a large army defeated by both Asa and Jehoshaphat. The gold, food, materials, and animals they found in those camps fed and provided for the people for a long time. I'm sure the Assyrians left a lot at Lachish, and Jerusalem was well supplied for the months ahead.

V. 38 According to history, this actually happened 20 years later. Assyria was still a world power but very much toned down. In about 50 years the Assyrians would lead King Manasseh by hooks to a prison in Babylon. But like God's humbling of Egypt years before, they never reestablished their might; and more importantly, they were never a real threat again to Judah and Jerusalem.

Isaiah 38

We have read this before in 2 Kings 20 (on July 2). God is very gracious. I think this shook Hezekiah's life and bent his faith a little. We'll see this more tomorrow. What we read here and tomorrow is a warning for us.

Vs. 1-3 Some suggest because of v. 6 that this happened before God humbled Assyria. But Assyria was still a world power. God didn't create a vacuum in world politics. Yet, Judah wouldn't have to worry about revenge or having any more problems with Assyria. So then, in my opinion, this happened chronologically after the events in chapters 36-37.

Vs. 4-8 I'm still amazed that God made the earth go backwards and it was "no sweat" for Him.

Vs. 9-20 So Hezekiah wrote a song of praise to God. I guess we can't blame Hezekiah for thinking that life is only worth living if it is on earth, but maturity in Christ says we need to have the same outlook as Paul did when he said, *for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

V. 17 Notice Hezekiah's recognition of his bitterness for himself, contrasted with the Lord's mercy.

Vs. 19-20 This is Hezekiah's promise to praise God for His deliverance.

V. 21 I don't know if this procedure is widely recognized in medical circles.

V. 22 Remember that over 20 years earlier when Isaiah told Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, to ask for a sign he wouldn't. The sign given then was Immanuel. Hezekiah trusted God and asked for a sign.

We'll leave Hezekiah in his health and glory. Tomorrow we'll see that something happened to him in all of this that affected his faith for the worse.

Galatians 6

Vs. 1-5 Is this what Paul did with Peter? *Restore* is the same word for "equip" in Ephesians 4:12, to set in order, to make useful, to mend.

So, what is happening in vs. 2 and 5? In one we are to *bear one another's burdens*, and in the other we each *bear our own burdens*. It seems to me that v. 2 is helping one another in times of grave weakness, falling and temptation. This is what happens to a fallen brother or sister, and maybe what happened to Peter and Barnabas. Verse 5 is the reality of our walk with Christ. We need to mature to the place where we maintain our own walk in following Christ in the reality of the life God has given us.

Vs. 6-10 This is generosity, beginning first where we find spiritual equipping and strengthening: the local church and pastor. Verses 9 and 10 express our faith that God will reward the giving of our lives and resources for others.

Vs. 11-18 Just like the opening of Galatians dealt with the problem, Paul ended here with a final jab. I think what started this again was the mention of his signature. It was proof of the authenticity of the letter. I'm also willing to bet that it had to do with Paul's sight, and that this might have been his "thorn in the flesh." It might have come from one of Paul's beatings. Paul paid the price to keep the gospel free and authentic for them. These Jewish teachers didn't bear fruit and were not willing to face persecution in order to serve churches like Philippi.

V. 17 really brings Paul's credentials into focus. They were borne on his body, as our Lord's were borne on His body. Literally, Paul was branded, showing who owned him. He had the marks of a disciple in the harvest, because he was willing to suffer with Christ to bring and protect the good news of the gospel.

The mark of a church is the love of Jesus Christ. How do you know if they have that love? They are in the harvest, reaching the lost, making disciples, loving one another. The Galatians and the Corinthians were missing it. Many churches miss this. In our work in the harvest we need to keep an eye on our church, so that we keep our hearts and our eye clear to follow Christ. Mixing our relationship to Jesus and our mission for Him with traditions becomes dangerous. We easily come under the bondage of doing things the same way. When we become a socially active, politically complaining church, we become so much like the world that you can't tell us apart. In both cases we are no longer living in the daily grace of Christ and we become ineffective. We need to guard the truth and keep moving forward, motivated by the love of our Savior, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

Psalm 65

For whatever reason, when I read this psalm, I thought of the celebration of the grace of God from Romans 8, *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?* What amazing hope we have. We are eternally secure and blessed by the God of our salvation. Is it works or duty to tell about Him? It is a privilege we don't deserve.

Vs. 1-4 Notice David's mention of Zion, the courts of the house or temple and his desire to dwell there. At this point David only had a tent set up, but he was collecting huge amounts of everything for the building of the future temple.

Vs. 5-8 Notice that God is not only sovereign over all creation, but also over all nations. That points to the plan of redemption. He will bring salvation to all.

Vs. 9-13 God not only blesses the earth, but as a result of that blessing, all mankind is cared for.

Proverbs 23:24

God says it, so it must be true.