

Hezekiah's Illness (701 BC)

2 Kings 20:1–11	Isaiah 38:1–8, 21–22	2 Chronicles 32:24
<p>1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’” 2 Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3 “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 “Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 “I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.”” 7 Then Isaiah said, “Take a cake of figs.”</p> <p>And they took and laid <i>it</i> on the boil, and he recovered. 8 Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?” 9 Isaiah said, “This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?” 10 So Hezekiah answered, “It is easy for the shadow to decline ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps.” 11 Isaiah the prophet cried to the LORD,</p> <p>and He brought the shadow on the stairway back ten steps by which it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.</p>	<p>1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’” 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 3 and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.</p> <p>4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, 5 “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 “I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.”” 21 Now Isaiah had said, “Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.” 22 Then Hezekiah had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?” 7 “This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: 8 “Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.” So the sun’s <i>shadow</i> went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down.</p>	<p>24 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill;</p> <p>and he prayed to the LORD,</p> <p>and the LORD spoke to him</p> <p>and gave him a sign.</p>

Hezekiah's Prayer (701 BC)

Isaiah 38:9–20

9 A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery:

- 10 I said, "In the middle of my life
I am to enter the gates of Sheol;
I am to be deprived of the rest of my years."
- 11 I said, "I will not see the LORD,
The LORD in the land of the living;
I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.
- 12 "Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me;
As a weaver I rolled up my life.
He cuts me off from the loom;
From day until night You make an end of me.
- 13 "I composed *my soul* until morning.
Like a lion—so He breaks all my bones,
From day until night You make an end of me.
- 14 "Like a swallow, *like* a crane, so I twitter;
I moan like a dove;
My eyes look wistfully to the heights;
O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security.
- 15 "What shall I say?
For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it;
I will wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
- 16 "O Lord, by *these things men* live,
And in all these is the life of my spirit;
O restore me to health and let me live!
- 17 "Lo, for *my own* welfare I had great bitterness;
It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness,
For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.
- 18 "For Sheol cannot thank You,
Death cannot praise You;
Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.
- 19 "It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today;
A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.
- 20 "The LORD will surely save me;
So we will play my songs on stringed instruments
All *the* days of our life at the house of the LORD."

Hezekiah's Accomplishments (716t–687t BC)

2 Chronicles 32:27–30

- 27 Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles,
28 storehouses also for the produce of grain, wine and oil, pens for all kinds of cattle and sheepfolds for the flocks.
29 He made cities for himself and acquired flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great wealth.
30 It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did.

Hezekiah's Problem With Pride (701 BC)

2 Kings 20:12–19

Isaiah 39

2 Chronicles 32:25–26, 31

12 At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and

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25 But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.

<p>a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.</p> <p>13 Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.</p> <p>14 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon."</p> <p>15 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them."</p> <p>16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD.</p> <p>17 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD.</p> <p>18 'Some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away; and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"</p> <p>19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Is it not so, if there will be peace and truth in my days?"</p>	<p>a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.</p> <p>2 Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them <i>all</i> his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.</p> <p>3 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon."</p> <p>4 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them."</p> <p>5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts,</p> <p>6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD.</p> <p>7 'And <i>some</i> of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"</p> <p>8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days."</p>	<p>31 Even <i>in the matter of</i> the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him <i>alone only</i> to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.</p> <p>26 However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.</p>
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Manasseh, Hezekiah's Son, Becomes Coregent With Hezekiah (697t BC)

2 Kings 21:1

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah.

2 Chronicles 33:1

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

Chronological Notes

- 1) Many commentators argue that Isaiah 38–39 are out of place chronologically and should precede Isaiah 36–37.¹ The principle pieces of evidence offered are:
 - A) God’s promise to Hezekiah in Isaiah 38:6 appears to indicate that the threat from the king of Assyria lay in the present/future and not in the past.
 - B) If Hezekiah gave Sennacherib tribute money (2 Kgs 18:14–16), what did he have left to show the messengers from Merodach-Baladan (Isa 39:2; 2 Kgs 20:13)?
 - C) At the time following the invasion of Sennacherib, Merodach-Baladan was no longer king of Babylon.
- 2) I think Benjamin Downer has ably argued against this majority view:²
 - A) Concerning Isaiah 38:6—“But what was of more pressing concern to the inhabitants of the city than their future safety? From a human standpoint it was altogether probable that Sennacherib would return to the west land at no distant date and make another attempt on Jerusalem. The promise made to Hezekiah is therefore taken naturally to mean that, for the period to which his life was extended, he and his city should be safe from further aggression” (Downer, p. 255).
 - B) Concerning the tribute—“But how long the treasury was allowed to remain thus depleted is another question. There is no reason to think the city was impoverished. It had not been through a protracted siege, probably only a blockade for a brief period. It would have been deemed necessary to take immediate steps, after the withdrawal of Sennacherib from the land, to replenish the treasury, if for no other reason, to aid in the rehabilitation of the wasted country districts. Menahem of Israel had raised a thousand talents in an emergency to buy the aid of Pul of Assyria by taking a fixed sum from all the wealthy men of his realm (2 Kgs 15:19–20). Jehoiakim of Judah at a later time raised the amount demanded by Pharaoh-Necho by exacting it of the people according to their property valuation (2 Kgs 23:35). It is worth while to observe also that the treasures shown by Hezekiah did not consist altogether of gold and silver, but of costly articles of various kinds, and of warlike equipment (Isa 39:2). Besides it is stated in 2 Chr 32:23 that much had come in from other peoples in the way of gifts of honor after the deliverance of the city from Sennacherib” (Downer, p. 254).³
 - C) Concerning Merodach-Baladan—“Merodach-baladan had been already twice king of Babylon. He had ruled over the city, together with all southern Babylonia, for twelve years during the reign of Sargon II, from 721 to 709 B.C., and had held his own against all the power of Assyria (Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, II, 316ff, 336ff). He had himself made king again in 702 B.C., and was dislodged after a reign of nine months by Sennacherib (R. II, 356ff). A man by the name of Bel-ibni, of little force and ability apparently, but wholly subservient to Sennacherib, was placed on the throne. He is in the several lists put down as king for the next three years (R. I, 514, 533, 535), but according to McCurdy (*History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, II, p. 275), this mock kingship ‘was intended merely as a compromise and makeshift till the time should come for the formal annexation of the whole country.’ While Sennacherib was engaged in his campaign in Palestine in 701 B.C., rebellion broke out again in Babylon. Bel-ibni was forced into a position hostile to Assyria, while Merodach-baladan joined in the revolt (R. II, 373f). If we may trust his former record, he was the chief figure in the rebellion, and the one to whom the populace would turn as the only man capable of carrying the struggle to a successful issue. With the Babylonians then hostile to the rule of Sennacherib, refusing ever to acknowledge him as king because of his ignoring their time-honored customs as to the manner of his assuming the royal prerogative (R. II, 355f); and with Bel-ibni helpless against public sentiment, while Merodach-baladan was apparently the brains and organizer of the revolt, there does not seem to be any serious objection to his being styled king of Babylon, a position he had held during the greater part of the time from the beginning of Sargon’s reign until that very day. Moreover, one of the accounts (2 Chr 32:31) does not mention him by name, but simply speaks of ‘the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon.’ We may suppose that Hezekiah’s sickness followed soon after the deliverance of Jerusalem. The general note of time, ‘in those days,’ found in all the accounts is sufficiently explained by the fact that in all the narratives the disastrous ending of Sennacherib’s campaign had been made to include the circumstances of his death at the hands of his sons twenty years later. The news of these events would soon reach

¹ John N. Oswalt, “The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39,” *NICOT*, 674; Gary V. Smith, “Isaiah 1–39,” *NAC*, 635–636; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 289.

² Benjamin R. Downer, “The Added Years of Hezekiah’s Life,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 80.318 (Apr 1923): 251–271.

³ I would add that the tribute Hezekiah paid to Sennacherib prior to the siege of Jerusalem may well have been recovered in whole or in part after God’s destruction of Sennacherib’s forces in a single night.

Babylonia, for according to Rogers (II, 373) 'news traveled far and fast in the ancient orient.' Nothing would be of more importance to Merodach-baladan, knowing the certainty that Sennacherib would soon give his attention to the uprising in Babylon, than seeking to stir up more trouble for him in the west land. Therefore, hearing of Hezekiah's successful resistance, and of his sickness and recovery, the opportunity offered itself, under the guise of congratulations on his recovery and interest in the reported wonder connected with it, of finding what chance there was of stirring up a new revolt in Palestine" (Downer, 255–56).⁴

⁴ For those who argue that Hezekiah's illness took place during Merodach-baladan's first rule during Sargon's reign, it should be noted that a straightforward calculation from the end of Hezekiah's life in 687t bc yields the following: 687t + added 15 years of life = 702t or 701 bc. Thus we have an upper bound on the dating of Isaiah 38–39 of 702/701 bc.