

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 was stricken with a terminal illness.</p> <p>The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz visited him and told him, "This is what the LORD says, 'Give your household instructions, for you are about to die; you will not get well.'"</p> <p>2 He turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,</p> <p>3 "Please, LORD. Remember how I have served you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion, and how I have carried out your will." Then Hezekiah wept bitterly.</p> <p>4 Isaiah was still in the middle courtyard when the LORD told him,</p> <p>5 "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people: 'This is what the LORD God of your ancestor David says: "I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you. The day after tomorrow you will go up to the LORD's temple.</p> <p>6 I will add fifteen years to your life and rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will shield this city for the sake of my reputation and because of my promise to David my servant.'"</p> <p>7 Isaiah ordered, "Get a fig cake." So they did as he ordered and placed it on the ulcerated sore, and he recovered.</p> <p>8 Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, "What is the confirming sign that the LORD will heal me and that I will go up to the LORD's temple the day after tomorrow?"</p> <p>9 Isaiah replied, "This is your sign from the LORD confirming that the LORD will do what he has said. Do you want the shadow to move ahead ten steps or to go back ten steps?"</p> <p>10 Hezekiah answered, "It is easy for the shadow to lengthen ten steps, but not for it to go back ten steps."</p> <p>11 Isaiah the prophet called out to the LORD,</p> <p>and the LORD made the shadow go back ten steps on the stairs of Ahaz.</p>	<p>1 In those days Hezekiah was stricken with a terminal illness.</p> <p>The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz visited him and told him, "This is what the LORD says, 'Give instructions to your household, for you are about to die; you will not get well.'"</p> <p>2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,</p> <p>3 "Please, LORD. Remember how I have served you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion, and how I have carried out your will." Then Hezekiah wept bitterly.</p> <p>4 The LORD told Isaiah,</p> <p>5 "Go and tell Hezekiah:</p> <p>'This is what the LORD God of your ancestor David says: "I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look,</p> <p>I will add fifteen years to your life, 6 and rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will shield this city.'"</p> <p>21 Isaiah ordered, "Let them take a fig cake and apply it to the ulcerated sore and he will get well."</p> <p>22 Hezekiah said, "What is the confirming sign that I will go up to the LORD's temple?"</p> <p>7 Isaiah replied, "This is your sign from the LORD confirming that the LORD will do what he has said:</p> <p>8 Look, I will make the shadow go back ten steps on the stairs of Ahaz." And then the shadow went back ten steps.</p>	<p>24 In those days Hezekiah was stricken with a terminal illness.</p> <p>He prayed to the LORD,</p> <p>who answered him and gave him a sign confirming that he would be healed.</p>

Hezekiah's Prayer (701 BC)

Isaiah 38:9–20

9 This is the prayer of King Hezekiah of Judah when he was sick and then recovered from his illness:

10 "I thought, 'In the middle of my life I must walk through the gates of Sheol, I am deprived of the rest of my years.'

11 "I thought, 'I will no longer see the LORD in the land of the living, I will no longer look on humankind with the inhabitants of the world.

12 My dwelling place is removed and taken away from me like a shepherd's tent. I rolled up my life like a weaver rolls cloth; from the loom he cuts me off. You turn day into night and end my life.

13 I cry out until morning; like a lion he shatters all my bones; you turn day into night and end my life.

14 Like a swallow or a thrush I chirp, I coo like a dove; my eyes grow tired from looking up to the sky. O sovereign master, I am oppressed; help me!

15 What can I say? He has decreed and acted. I will walk slowly all my years because I am overcome with grief.

16 O sovereign master, your decrees can give men life; may years of life be restored to me. Restore my health and preserve my life.'

17 "Look, the grief I experienced was for my benefit. You delivered me from the pit of oblivion. For you removed all my sins from your sight.

18 Indeed Sheol does not give you thanks; death does not praise you. Those who descend into the pit do not anticipate your faithfulness.

19 The living person, the living person, he gives you thanks, as I do today. A father tells his sons about your faithfulness.

20 The LORD is about to deliver me, and we will celebrate with music for the rest of our lives in the LORD's temple."

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

2 Chronicles 32:27–30

27 Hezekiah was very wealthy and greatly respected. He made storehouses for his silver, gold, precious stones, spices, and all his other valuable possessions.

28 He made storerooms for the harvest of grain, wine, and olive oil, and stalls for all his various kinds of livestock and his flocks.

29 He built royal cities and owned a large number of sheep and cattle, for God gave him a huge amount of possessions.

30 Hezekiah dammed up the source of the waters of the Upper Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah succeeded 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 Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah was ill.

13 Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them his whole storehouse, with its silver, gold, spices, and high-quality olive oil, as well as his armory and everything in his treasuries. Hezekiah showed them everything in his palace and in his whole kingdom.
14 Isaiah the prophet visited King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say? Where do they come from?" Hezekiah replied, "They come from the

1 At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been ill and had recovered.

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3 Isaiah the prophet visited King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say? Where do they come from?" Hezekiah replied, "They come from the

25 But Hezekiah was ungrateful; he had a proud attitude, provoking God to be angry at him, as well as Judah and Jerusalem.

31 So when the envoys arrived from the Babylonian officials to visit him and inquire about the sign that occurred in the land, God left him alone to test him, in order to know his true motives.

<p>distant land of Babylon.”</p> <p>15 Isaiah asked, “What have they seen in your palace?” Hezekiah replied, “They have seen everything in my palace. I showed them everything in my treasuries.”</p> <p>16 Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to the word of the LORD,</p> <p>17 ‘Look, a time is coming when everything in your palace and the things your ancestors have accumulated to this day will be carried away to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD.</p> <p>18 ‘Some of your very own descendants whom you father will be taken away and will be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”</p> <p>19 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The LORD’s word which you have announced is appropriate.” Then he added, “At least there will be peace and stability during my lifetime.”</p>	<p>distant land of Babylon.”</p> <p>4 Isaiah asked, “What have they seen in your palace?” Hezekiah replied, “They have seen everything in my palace. I showed them everything in my treasuries.”</p> <p>5 Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to the word of the LORD who commands armies:</p> <p>6 ‘Look, a time is coming when everything in your palace and the things your ancestors have accumulated to this day will be carried away to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD.</p> <p>7 ‘Some of your very own descendants whom you father will be taken away and will be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”</p> <p>8 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The LORD’s word which you have announced is appropriate.” Then he thought, “For there will be peace and stability during my lifetime.”</p>	<p>26 But then Hezekiah and the residents of Jerusalem humbled themselves and abandoned their pride, and the LORD was not angry with them for the rest of Hezekiah’s reign.</p>
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Manasseh, Hezekiah’s Son, Becomes Coregent With Hezekiah (697t BC)

2 Kings 21:1	2 Chronicles 33:1
1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah.	1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

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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.

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) 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 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

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.

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.