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SERIES: Isaiah, Part 1 (Judgment – But Hope)

TITLE: Program 70 – Hezekiah’s Blessing

FRIDAY

OPEN

We hear so much about illness, and there is so much illness. And it brings grief to families, and pain and agony, and it isn’t good. And yet what if you could discover that there could be a blessing that could come out of your illness? Would that make it easier for you to go through that illness? We’re gonna talk about that as we look at God’s precepts for life.

PART ONE

We have come, Beloved, to Isaiah 38 and 39, to the last two chapters of the very first segment of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah divides between chapter 39 and 40. It’s just like the Old Testament, 39 books: 27 books in the New Testament, 27 chapters left to go in Isaiah. And when we come to this division, God ends this division in telling us about the illness of Hezekiah, and his recovery, and what happens during that illness. Now what is so interesting is, that if you study the Scriptures carefully, if you take Isaiah and put down the events of Isaiah that tell us about Hezekiah’s life, then you take

2 Kings and you plug in 2 Kings, and then you plug in 2 Chronicles, the passages, the chapters that cover the same, you see something very, very interesting. And you see it if you observe Isaiah 38 carefully. In Isaiah 39 verse 1, you see that Isaiah 38 and Isaiah 39 chronologically precede Isaiah 36 and 37. And you say, “Well why did God not put it in chronological order? Why does God leave us with chapter 39? As He then makes and transitions into the second part of Isaiah that deals with our God as a Redeemer and us as the redeemed one, and then showing us who it is. All these incredible prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah, there in the Old Testament for us to see, why does He do this?” Well, I believe He wants to leave us with a lesson. I believe He wants us to think about these things very carefully. Now remember, we’re already in Isaiah chapter 38. [Hezekiah is going to die. God tells him to get his house in order. Hezekiah turns to the wall. He begins to weep bitterly. He cries out to God. And he prays, and God hears and says, “OK, I’m going to give you 15 more years. I’m going to add that to your life.”] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 38:1-5) Now we know from studying 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles that Hezekiah ruled for 29 years. We know that when you open up Isaiah chapter 36, you see that it’s the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign. (See Isaiah 36:1) We are told that he is going to have 15 more years. If he has 15 more years and he’s in the 14th year of his reign, then that’s going to make him rule for 29 years before he dies. And that’s exactly what happens. So you say, “But maybe this happened right after Isaiah chapter 36 when the king of Assyria came against him.” Well now, let’s go back and let’s look at what God says. He says, **“...I will add fifteen years to your life....” (Isaiah 38:5)** Verse 6, **“I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.” (Isaiah 38:6)** Well according to Isaiah 37, the deliverance has already happened. But now watch what He says because God wants us to get a point. And this is what He says, **“This shall be [a] sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing as He has spoken: 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....” (Isaiah 38:7-8) It’s on the stairway of Ahaz, on the stairway of Ahaz. Ahaz is the one who was told if you will not believe, you will not last. Ahaz is the father of Hezekiah. Ahaz is a king that does evil in the sight of the Lord. Ahaz is the one that goes over to the side of Assyria. Ahaz is the one that looks at an altar in Assyria and comes down and builds it in Jerusalem. Ahaz is bad. Hezekiah is good. Ahaz refuses a sign. God gives Hezekiah a sign because Hezekiah asked for it. You’re gonna see it in just a minute. So it says, **“...So the sun’s shadow went back ten steps on the stairway [the stairway of Ahaz] on which it had gone down.” (Isaiah 38:8)** Now what is included in Isaiah is, **“A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and his recovery. I said, ‘In the middle of my life I [will] enter the gates of Sheol; I [will] be deprived of the rest of my years.’” (Isaiah 38:9-10)** Is that the way you feel, Precious One? You have gotten a death sentence. You have been told that you have cancer, or that you have something, and it’s like a death sentence. And you feel like you’re gonna be deprived of the rest of your years. **“I said, ‘I will not see the LORD...in the land of the living; I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. Like a shepherd’s tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; as a weaver I rolled up my life...,’” he says, “...He cuts me off from the loom; from day until night You make an end of me.” (Isaiah 38:11-12)** Now listen, Precious One, it is God that does make an end of us. It’s not man, and it’s not an illness. It’s God that causes us to step into eternity. And we know from 2 Corinthians 5, and from Philippians chapter 1 and 1 Corinthians 15, that **“...‘DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory....” (1 Corinthians 15:54)** We know that when we put off this earthly tent, we have a heavenly tent. We know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (See 2 Corinthians 5:1, 8) Paul says in Philippians that that is far better. (See Philippians 1:23) And yet we dread death. But as

a child of God we don't need to. I mean we're different from Hezekiah because Hezekiah would go to the holding place. But now that Jesus has died, and been buried, and raised from the dead, and the first born from among the dead, the minute that we die we are absent from the body and we are present with the Lord. So he says, **"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."** (Isaiah 38:14) This is so good for you to read, and so good for you to know if you're in this kind of illness. **"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. O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit; O restore...to health and let me live! Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness...."** I told you about the blessing of illness. **"...it is You who has kept my soul from the pit of [nothing], for You have cast all my sins behind Your back."** He says, **"For Sheol cannot thank You...,"** that's the grave. **"...Death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness."** Now he's talking pre-Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It's different for us now. But listen, **"It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; a father tells his sons about Your faithfulness. The LORD will surely save me; so we will play...songs on stringed instruments all the days of our life at the house of the LORD."** (Isaiah 38:14-20) In other words, as long as I live, the place where I'm going to run, the place where I'm going to linger is in the house of the Lord, in the temple of God. That's where I'm going to go. O Precious One, listen to what he said, **"...For my own welfare I had great bitterness...."** (Isaiah 38:17) I remember when a friend of mine was diagnosed with cancer. She's still living. And this is 30 years ago. But she said, "You know, I'm so glad that the Lord let me have that diagnosis because it made me stop and say, 'God teach me to number my days so that every day is lived for God, every day is lived in the presence of God the

sense of God the awareness of God, the fact that you're going to meet God face to face.'" Every day that you and I live is to be lived that way. But many times it doesn't happen until there comes, so to speak, a sentence of death or some sort of diagnosis of an illness. Now listen to what he says. He says, **"Now Isaiah had said..."** He's telling you. He's writing this letter and now he's telling you what happened when he was told he was going to live. **"...Now Isaiah had said, 'Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.' Then Hezekiah had said..."** You want to underline that. **"...What is the sign that I [should] go up to the house of the LORD?" (Isaiah 38:21-22)** One of the key words that you've marked, and you marked it in Isaiah chapter 7 and Isaiah chapter 8. And now you're to mark it here in the end of Isaiah. What is the sign? Well, the sign was that the sun would go back ten steps on the stairway of Ahaz. In other words, here is a man who believed and therefore is going to last, is going to have those extra days. Now does this mean that you're going to last if you have this diagnosis? I don't know, Beloved. I'm not God. But I know this, that no man can take your life until God is finished with your work here on earth. We are going to look at chapter 39, and you don't want to miss it.

PART TWO

We're gonna make it, Beloved. I'm going to get you through Isaiah chapter 39 right now. Now how is God bringing it to an end? Well chapter 39 verse 1, it says, **"At that time..."**, time phrase, very important here.

"...Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. [And] Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and [the] 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." (Isaiah 39:1-2) Now wait a minute, what's going on?

Well first of all, you have to know, and I would do this in your Bible next to Isaiah 36 verse 1: write “701 B.C.” We have it in the annals, the Assyrian annals and that, that this is when Sennacharib came against Jerusalem, okay? Or threatened Jerusalem. All right now, when we look at that time, Merodach-baladan came from Babylon and sent these letters. And then visits Hezekiah, we know when he reigned. He reigned between 721 and 710 B.C. Now in 722 Assyria takes Samaria and the Northern Kingdom captive. Then we know that Merodach-baladan ruled again between 703 and 702. So uh it was probably during his second reign that this happened because we know that when Hezekiah got sick he had 15 years left. We know that he reigned for 29 years. So what do we know? We know that this had to happen before Isaiah 36. Now I want to give you an insight, and this is the importance of comparing scripture with scripture. I want you to go to 2 Chronicles, chapter 32, and let me show you something. It says in verse 24, **“In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to the LORD, and the LORD spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud....”** (2 Chronicles 32:24-25) Hezekiah’s sickness and his cure, made him proud, and God has to bring down arrogance. That’s what we’ve seen all the way through Isaiah. God has to bring the pride down. He has to humble them. And it says, **“...Therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.”** (2 Chronicles 32:25) Why did Assyria come to him? Why did his enemies come against him? Remember sometimes the enemies are blessings from God. And so they came. **“However, Hezekiah humbled to the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem...,”** also Jerusalem was humbled when Assyria came against them. **“...So that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.”** (2 Chronicles 32:26) Then it goes on to tell all that Hezekiah did, and all the wealth that he had. And then it drops down to verse 30, and this is what it says, **“...Hezekiah prospered in all that he did.”** verse 30. **“Even in the**

matter of the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who [had] sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land....” That he got, that the sun went back ten steps that he got 15 years to his life. “...God left him alone...,” now listen carefully, “...only to test him, that He might know...[what] was in his heart.” (2 Chronicles 32:30-31) Precious One, listen to me, if an illness causes us to see what’s in our heart, if an illness exposes our pride, if an enemy exposes our pride, whatever it is that causes us to get rid of that pride and to run to God and to pray to God and to depend on God, Precious One it is worth it. The temporal pain, the temporal anguish, the temporal fear so to speak that comes your way because of an illness or this, is worth it if it turns you back to the Lord. So go back with me to chapter 39, verse 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.’ [And] he said, ‘What have they seen in your house?’ So Hezekiah answered, ‘They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my treasuries that I have not shown them.’ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, “Behold...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; [and] nothing will be left....”’” (Isaiah 39:3-6) He’s telling him about the Babylonian captivity that is yet to come. ““And some of your sons who...issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.”” Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were among them, “Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.’ For he thought, ‘...There will be peace and truth in my days.’” (Isaiah 39:7-8) And then comes the threat from the king of Assyria. And we move chronologically to Isaiah chapter 36, and what we see is, we see the blessings that enemies can bring and illness can bring when we who love

God, who are the called according to His purpose run into His arms and remember that God causes all things to work together for our good and for His glory. (See Romans 8:28) O Precious One, O Precious One, you can know that God has a purpose for your life. And even though enemies and illness may come against you, you can walk as more than a conqueror. If God heals you, don't be proud. There are people that have been healed, there are people that say that they have gone to heaven and they have come down, and some of them have been proud. And others have put them on a pedestal. God says, "Oh no, oh no." The only one that goes on a pedestal is the One who has earned the right to be there, and that's God Almighty. And He didn't have to earn the right. He owns the right. He is the sovereign ruler of all the universe. So now he tells us about Babylon. We're going to learn more about Babylon and the Babylonian captivity and the end of it as we move into the second segment of Isaiah. Now when we get ready to air that second segment of Isaiah, you don't want to miss it because Isaiah is not complete without chapter 40 through chapter 66. You've got to have that. You've got to know it. And I want you to know that I am so proud of you, so proud of you for studying, so proud of you for hungering and thirsting after righteousness! "[May] **the LORD bless you, and keep you...[and] make His face shine on you....**" (Numbers 6:24-25)