

of Samaria, i.e., 728-727 B.C. Edward J. Young submits the possibility of an early emendation to the Hebrew text—a slight change in one of the characters in a specific Hebrew word. Only a slight alteration could change the Hebrew word *'eseryis* (twenty-four) to *'esereh* (fourteen) and thus create the apparent discrepancy here. If this were the 24th year of Hezekiah's reign (703 B.C.) it would place the beginning of it 728-727 B.C. Young, however, offers no manuscript evidence for this possibility. Another possible explanation is that 703 B.C. may be noted as the fourteenth year in which Hezekiah was the sole ruler of Judah! It has been proven by ancient records uncovered by archaeologists that kings of antiquity often ruled a number of years in a *co-regency* with their aged father-kings. In other words, Hezekiah may have ruled the first 10-12 years *with* his father, and *without* his father from 717-715 B.C. for the next fourteen years. This would explain calling 703-701 B.C. Hezekiah's fourteenth year of rule. (see also, *Old Testament History*, Smith/Fields, College Press, p. 556-561).

The king of Assyria took 46 cities of Judah, as we have mentioned elsewhere. Now he, himself, is occupied with an assault upon Lachish, some 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. The king sends his Rab-shakeh to inquire of Jerusalem's intentions toward his campaign of conquest in Judah. *Rab* means chief, and *shakeh* probably is a military officer. The Rab-shakeh was probably the emperor's *personal*, most trusted military commander much like the American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who may be depended upon for absolute allegiance to carry out very important military/political functions the President himself cannot attend to. When he spoke it was with direct and absolute authority from the king himself. To make his mission more ominously impressive, he came to Jerusalem with a "great" army.

Now Hezekiah had been busily restoring true and holy religion to Judah. He had been breaking down idolatrous altars, reinstituting the Passover, rebelling against paying tribute to a pagan Assyrian empire, and defeating Philistine enemies, (II Kings 18:1-8; II Chron. 29-31). When the king

of Assyria came marching into Judah with his campaign of conquest, it appears Hezekiah had second thoughts about his refusal to pay tribute to Assyria and sent an apology to the king at Lachish (II Kings 18:13-16) and stripped the gold from the doors of the temple and took silver and gold from the treasury of the temple and the palace and gave it to the Assyrian emperor. What was Hezekiah's motive for such an apparent reversal of courage, faith and godliness being demonstrated by his unique and amazing religious reform? Perhaps he rationalized, The throne of David is in imminent danger of being overthrown and the House of David extinguished; I am old, my days are numbered, I have no child to succeed me and the king of Assyria must be placated awhile longer until a royal successor to David's throne is produced. Or, perhaps, Hezekiah, like many rulers, compromised his convictions simply from fear.

Lachish is approximately 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem (see Map #1) and would take the Rab-shakeh two days of marching, setting up camp at night, to reach Jerusalem. Upon arriving at Jerusalem the Assyrians probably set up their bivouac in the Kidron Valley or on the slope of the Mt. of Olives, eastward from the main gates of the city. Located there also is the Gihon Spring and the Upper Pool with its new secret conduit hewn out of solid rock by Hezekiah's workmen to hide Jerusalem's chief water supply from the Assyrians (cf. II Chron. 32:1-8). It was probably Hezekiah who first extended the wall to the western hill (known as Modern Zion). In 1970, Professor Nachman Avigad of Hebrew University unearthed a massive portion of ancient wall in the Jewish quarter of the Old City. This wall was 25 feet thick in some places and located opposite the Temple area (see Map #3). The reader may research this information in *The Biblical Archaeology Review*, September, 1975. Archaeologists date this wall in the late 8th century B.C. This is probably Hezekiah's "outer wall" of II Chronicles 32:5. Hezekiah's underground conduit (through which tourists can walk today) enabled the city successfully to withstand the Assyrian siege. A second unprotected earlier

conduit has been traced from Gihon Spring, directly southward, outside the walls of David's city, discharging its waters through a short tunnel behind a dam built across the mouth (lower end) of the Tyropoeon Valley. This was the Old Pool of Isaiah 22:11 and was the pool probably enlarged later by Hezekiah and called the "reservoir between the two walls" and was probably intended to take the overflow of his new conduit (see Map #3). Here by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field Ahaz had rejected the word of God and the promises of the true King and had turned to the Assyrians (cf. Isa. 7:3). Now, the Assyrians are here on this same spot, a terrifying, threatening consequence of the disobedience of the rulers of God's people.

Accompanying the Rab-shakeh were officers called "the Tartan and the Rab-saris" (II Kings 18:17) and upon their arrival at the "upper pool" they "called for the king" (II Kings 18:18). It was a calculated show of insolence and contempt for Hezekiah. But Hezekiah did not come in person. He was represented by Eliakim, Shebna and Joah. Eliakim has assumed the duties formerly assigned to Shebna, chief of the king's house (see our comments on ch. 22:20ff). Shebna has been demoted to scribe. What the Rab-shakeh has to say will be recorded.

It is interesting to note the Rab-shakeh always speaks of his own king with proper respect, calling him "the great king," but not once does he refer to Hezekiah as king. There is probably some psychological-warfare intended here as well as outright contempt. The Rab-shakeh's entire speech is masterfully, though rudely done.

The Assyrian begins by challenging the confidence of Judah. The Jews apparently had demonstrated a measure of military-political confidence in something. Perhaps Hezekiah's rebellion (II Kings 18:7) is referred to; perhaps Rab-shakeh knows of an alliance with Egypt—perhaps the Assyrian intelligence department has discovered such an alliance between Judah and Egypt. Whatever the case the Rab-shakeh is trying to destroy this "confidence" for he uses the word "trust" and

"rely" over and over in his speech. The Rab-shakeh also evidently knows something of the details of Hezekiah's basis for confidence. He intimates that he knows even of the words ("counsel") and the preparations ("strength") the Jews have made to war against the Assyrians! He arrogantly classifies them as useless.

V. 6-12 RABSHAKEH'S INTIMIDATION: After a rhetorical question, the Rab-shakeh gives his own answer. Judah has trusted in Egypt which he characterizes as a "bruised reed." Egypt was a land of reeds. For a man to try to lean on a reed was foolish, but to lean on a bruised reed was stupid. Isaiah has already characterized Egypt as "big mouth who does nothing" (30:7). King Hoshea of Israel had relied on Egypt for help against Assyria, but Egypt did not come to his aid (II Kings 17:4). Actually, to trust in Egypt caused nations to suffer worse disaster than if they had not relied upon her. So the figure of a man trying to lean on a bruised reed and having his hand pierced! Perhaps the battle of Eltekeh, between the allied armies of Egypt-Philistines and the Assyrians, had been fought already. Egypt was soundly defeated at this battle near Ekron, according to the annals of Sennacherib. So the Rab-shakeh makes his boast of the inferiority of Egypt.

Having cut the ground from under the Jews in respect to their cherished military alliance with Egypt, the Rab-shakeh turns his sarcasm upon their religious confidence. Implied is a certain knowledge among the Assyrians of the importance attached by the Jews to their worship and reliance on Jehovah. The Assyrian's reference to Hezekiah's reform manifests his misunderstanding of the One True God. Hezekiah caused to be "hewed down the Asherim" (II Kings 18:4-5; II Chron. 31:1) and the Nehushtan (the bronze serpent the people had begun to burn incense to). The altars he tore down were evidently Canaanitish places of worship along with some altars the Jews had made for themselves contrary to God's command that He was to be worshipped in only one place. Yet, in spite of the truth of Hezekiah's reform, the rank and file of the people of Judah had become so accustomed to worshipping in the high

places at the half-idolatrous altars, they were probably impressed with Rab-shakeh's argument that Jehovah was displeased with them.

The Assyrian commander's next form of intimidation is a dare. He dares the Jews to barter, negotiate (Heb. *'arav*), or, one might translate "make a wager" with the king of Assyria that they have 2000 men to ride war horses. If they can prove they have only that many, the king of Assyria will give them 2000 horses! The Rab-shakeh has no doubt already determined that Hezekiah does not have that many cavalrymen. He then continues his tirade of contempt by boasting the Jews are unable to offer reasonable opposition to the *smallest* and least significant of *one* of Assyria's divisions of fighting-men. This would be as frightening as were the boasts and sabre-rattling of Adolph Hitler when he intimidated Neville Chamberlain in the 1930's.

Adding to the trepidation of the Jews would be the announcement of the Rab-shakeh that he had come up to Jerusalem with Jehovah's commission to destroy it. He represents Jehovah as speaking directly to him a command to go against Judah and destroy it! The Rab-shakeh's claim is interesting, to say the least. There are indications that Jehovah would "call" the Assyrians to chasten the Jews (Isa. 5:26ff; 7:18ff; 10:5ff; 28:11ff). God spoke to a number of pagan emperors through dreams, visions and prophets. We are more inclined to believe in this case, however, the Rab-shakeh is self-deceived and thinks he has been sent by the Hebrew God, or is deliberately lying to the Hebrews and received no call whatsoever. There is an inscription of Cyrus, king of Persia, claiming that the Babylonian god, Marduk (Bel), was with him in his conquests of Babylon. It was apparently a widely practiced bit of psychological-warfare among the ancients.

This so unnerved the Hebrew officials for fear his arguments would spread from the mouths of those upon the walls who were listening to the ears of all in the city, exaggerated with each telling, of course, they insist that the Rab-shakeh speak to them in *aramiyth*, Aramaic, and not in *yehudiyth*, Jewish.

Though Aramaic was the common language of diplomacy at this time, it is probable that most of the Jews could not understand it. After their captivity in Babylon they could only understand Aramaic and not Hebrew. The Hebrew language is called here "Jewish" after Judah since the northern kingdom has already gone into captivity and Judah is the only Hebrew nation left. The people of Judah may have been calling themselves *Yehudiyth* for a long time to distinguish themselves from the northern kingdom. It is interesting to note the Rab-shakeh knew the Hebrew language. He was not only the "chief" military man, a master psychologist and well versed in world affairs; he was also a linguist.

In verse 12 the Rab-shakeh makes it plain in the crudest and most humiliating language his purpose for coming to Jerusalem was not diplomacy but intimidation. He did not come to banter pleasantries and subterfuge with Hezekiah or his noblemen. He says bluntly his purpose was to intimidate the common people of the city, threatening them with the most degrading threats. He warns them in their own language they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine if they dare to go to war and resist the Assyrian conquest of their city. People besieged in ancient cities for three and four years in succession often resorted to atrocities such as this and worse for survival (see Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.).

The Rab-shakeh has thoroughly intimidated the populace. They have heard him ridicule their counsels for war as if he knew every move they were making; they have heard him ridicule their "dinky" army as if he knew how few soldiers they really had; they have heard him claim a divine commission from Jehovah for destroying their city; they have heard terrifying threats of human privation—all in their own language. And to impress them with his power to carry out his threats, he brought along a great number of troops. The Rab-shakeh is a skillful propagandist. He will make a psychological turn from intimidation to indulgence. He knows how to "psych" people.

QUIZ

1. What is the "fourteenth" year of Hezekiah's reign?
2. What had Hezekiah done, according to II Kings, to attempt to appease the king of Assyria?
3. Where, most likely, did the Rabshakeh set up camp upon his arrival at Jerusalem?
4. Name four different areas in which the Rabshakeh attempted to intimidate the people of Jerusalem.
5. Why did the Hebrew officials wish Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic?
6. Evaluate the Rabshakeh's ability as a psychologist?

2. PROPOSITION

TEXT: 36:13-20

- 13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.
- 14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you:
- 15 neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
- 16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;
- 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
- 18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?
- 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out

of my hand?

20 Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

QUERIES

- a. Was Hezekiah trying to deceive the people?
- b. Why would the Assyrian king take them from their land?
- c. Why refer to the gods of other nations?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Assyrian commander-in-chief stepped forth and shouted loudly in the Hebrew language toward the people gathered on the city walls, Listen to the words of the greatest of all kings, the king of Assyria: Do not let Hezekiah's promises deceive you—nothing he can do will save you. Do not let Hezekiah deceive you by telling you to trust in your Jehovah—that He will save you—that He will not let this city be taken over by the king of Assyria. I repeat, do not listen to Hezekiah! You had better listen to this proposition from the king of Assyria: He says, Surrender on my terms, open the gates of the city and come out in peace and I will let each of you go ahead living on your own land, conducting your own business, prospering, until I have time to come and take you away to a land very similar to this one where you will find as much prosperity as you do here. My taking your city is inevitable. You will be much better off to surrender. Beware that you do not be fooled by Hezekiah's promise that your Jehovah will save you from me. The gods of no other nation have been able to deliver from the king of Assyria. Remember Hamath and Arpad? Their gods did not deliver them. Neither did Sepharvaim's gods and Samaria's gods. Of all the gods of these nations, which one has ever delivered them from my power?

Not a one! And do you think this god of yours can deliver Jerusalem from me? Do not be foolish!

COMMENTS

v. 13-15 TAUNT: The Assyrians were noted for their arrogant disregard of the most basic diplomatic etiquette. Their reputation was that of baseness, cruelty and insolence. Rabshakeh, asked to address his words in Aramaic to the representatives of King Hezekiah, insolently rises from his seat, steps forward (probably past the three Hebrew officials) and yells his taunt in the Hebrew language at the people gathered along the walls of the city of Jerusalem. His taunt is that Hezekiah does not know what he is talking about—that Hezekiah is leading the people down the path of deception. It is really an accusation that the people are being exploited by Hezekiah. It is interesting to note the emphatic repetition (4 times) of the Rabshakeh that the people not let Hezekiah deceive them. Evidently Hezekiah had impressed the people that Jehovah would deliver the city from the Assyrians. When Sennacherib first marched into Judah, Hezekiah sent a letter of apology for rebelling against him (see comments 36:1-12). Hezekiah even sent tribute to Lachish to Sennacherib. Isaiah must have convinced Hezekiah in the interval between Sennacherib's initial invasion and Rabshakeh's journey to Jerusalem that the Lord would indeed deliver Jerusalem. Hezekiah made an impassioned plea to the people (II Chron. 32:6-8), after redirecting the city's water supply and building new walls, that "there is one greater with us than with him." It appears the Assyrians had heard of this new courage of Hezekiah and his persuasion of the people. Rabshakeh's words must have indicated to the people that the Assyrians knew even about the passionate pleas Hezekiah made within the confines of their city walls! It would be disconcerting and frightening.

v. 16-17 TEMPTATION: The Rabshakeh applies the pressure of fleshly concern for physical well-being, innocent enough in

itself but idolatrous when it supercedes godliness as a first concern. He urges the people to think first of their stomachs. He promises that all will be well with them if they will surrender to the terms of the king of Assyria. The only sacrifice they will have to make, according to the Rabshakeh, is to be taken from their homeland. Even then, he promises, they will be taken to a land as fertile, productive and prosperous as their own. Rabshakeh does not specifically promise them they will participate as citizens or land-owners in the "new land." The fertility of Mesopotamia was, in some ways, greater than that of Palestine. And that was the catch! The appeal was fleshly. The temptation was casting physical survival against a spiritual birthright. It was the age-old temptation begun with Jacob and Esau and epitomized at Christ's temptation in the wilderness to turn stones into bread. The land of Palestine was more than mere physical sustenance to the Hebrews. It was the *covenant* land of their fathers. They were given this land by the mighty hand of Jehovah for a spiritual purpose. It was the land where the only altar to the One True God could be erected. If they, of their own deliberate choice, should surrender to be taken from the land, it would demonstrate their total disregard of their spiritual birthright. Later, when God removed them from their land, it was a graphic object lesson to the Jews that they had forfeited their spiritual legacy by sin and idolatry and no longer deserved to occupy the covenant land. The temptation was to weigh the invisible, ideal matters of faith against the visible, practical matters of the flesh. They were being tempted to think they were, after all, clinging to a religious illusion while they might deprive themselves of a present happiness.

The Hebrew people should have known the practice of pagan empires in transplanting people away from their homelands was not for the pleasure of the conquered people but for the security of the empire. It was a well known practice (cf. II Kings 18:11, etc.) and functioned well in keeping subjugated people from rebelling. Such a practice not only humiliated people and dispersed them widely but it also de-culturized them. They

tended to lose their national identity and thus any strong motivation for rebellion.

V. 18-20 TABULATION: Now Rabshakeh appeals to *seeming* facts of history. He tabulates all the victories the king of Assyria has had over the gods of the nations he has conquered. He begins by warning the Hebrew people not to let Hezekiah "sweet talk" them into depending upon their God. The Hebrew word translated *persuade* is *yasiyth* (from *suth*) meaning "to soothe." It is almost as if Rabshakeh warns the people that Hezekiah may be trying to soothingly seduce them by saying, Jehovah will deliver us. The gods of the nations appear to have been powerless against the great king of Assyria. When the power showdown came, none of the gods of the nations could deliver from the Assyrians. The gods of the nations now sat as trophies in the Assyrian pantheon of gods. In ancient thought, religion and political power were closely connected. If a city or a nation survived and maintained its sovereignty, it was because of the power of its national god; a nation's wanderings were accompanied by the wanderings of its gods, its victories accomplished by its gods, its defeats signs of the inferiority of its gods. If all the powerful gods of the many nations conquered by Assyria were proven powerless, what hope could the Hebrews hold that their God was any more powerful. This appeal to the power of paganism over Jehovah may seem strange to us but to the mind of the heathen, and from the heathen view of politics, religion and history, it was not strange. In fact, in some godless lands today, the same reasoning prevails. See Map #1 for the location of Hamath, Arpad and Sepharvaim.

QUIZ

1. How did Rabshakeh react to the request of the Hebrew officials to refrain from speaking so the people on the wall could hear?
2. What does the repeated warning of Rabshakeh that Hezekiah should not deceive the people about deliverance infer

about Hezekiah's appeals to them?

3. Where is the record of Hezekiah's appeal to the people to trust God?
4. What basic temptation did Rabshakeh hold out to the people to get them to surrender to Assyria's terms?
5. Why did ancient empires transplant conquered peoples away from their homelands?
6. What significance did Palestine have for the Jew besides a land to live on?
7. Why did Rabshakeh refer to the pagan gods defeated by Assyria?

3. PATIENCE

TEXT: 36:21-22

- 21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.
- 22 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

QUERIES

- a. Why did the king command no answer be made?
- b. Why did the officials tear their clothing?

PARAPHRASE

But in the face of all these taunts and temptations, the people were silent, because King Hezekiah had ordered the people, Do not answer the Assyrian Rabshakeh. Then Eliakim, chief administrator, and Shebna, the royal scribe, and Joah,

the royal chronicler, returned to the presence of Hezekiah with their clothes ripped and torn as a sign of their grief and misery and told him all that had been said by the Rabshakeh.

COMMENTS

V. 21 SILENCE: The usual Hebrew word for peace, *shallom*, is not in this sentence. The word is *yaheriyshu* and is translated "held their peace" but literally means "were dumb, silent," and is from the same root word which speaks of engraved sculpture. The idea probably is that the Hebrew officials stood before the Rabshakeh as silent as stone statues! Wise King Solomon said, "there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak . . ." (Eccl. 3:7). This was a time for silence. Hezekiah commanded it. The Hebrew word for command is *mitzvah*. The *bar-mitzvah* literally means "son of command" and is the ceremony observed for all Jewish boys at the age of 13 when they become "sons of responsibility." In this sentence it is the *mitzvah* of the *melek*; the command of the king. Hezekiah knew that any answer his representatives or his people might give about Jehovah delivering them would not convince the Assyrians to refrain from their threats and actions. It would only agitate them. There are times when "pearls and bread should not be cast before swine and dogs, lest they turn and rend you." There are times, in heated, emotional confrontations when answering taunt with taunt would inflame the situation out of control. Matthew Henry said, "It is sometimes prudent not to answer a fool according to his folly." Hezekiah and Isaiah had reason enough to make an answer to Rabshakeh that God would deliver them, but such an answer would hardly appease such an unreasonable braggart as Rabshakeh. Jesus, facing just such a brazen, foolish and ungodly man in Herod, "answered him not a word."

V. 22 SUFFERING: It was not easy for the Hebrew officials to keep silent. Their dismay and despair is demonstrated in the tearing of their clothing. The Jews tore their clothing when

they were sorrowful, penitent, distraught, confused and angry. All of these emotions may have been welling up within these men. One thing they knew, the Assyrians were powerful and had done all (and more) that the Rabshakeh recounted. What the future held for their city was unknown, as yet. The only alternative they had to the Rabshakeh's tabulation of Assyrian victories was faith in Jehovah. Often, the known is distinct and threatening; the unknown veiled and sometimes even more threatening. So we are often defeated by our own reasoning. Our problems seem insoluble to our thinking. But there is enough evidence of the power of God to deliver the faithful, the believer may have victory over every threat of the enemy.

QUIZ

1. How silent were the people?
2. Why did Hezekiah command them to keep silent?
3. How do we know it was a struggle for them to do so?

B. PERSEVERANCE, CHAPTER 37

1. THE PLEA

TEXT: 37:1-7

- 1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah.
- 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah, the prophet the son of Amoz.
- 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

- 4 It may be Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.
- 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.
- 6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.
- 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

QUERIES

- a. What is a "day of contumely"?
- b. Why say, "children are come to the birth . . ." etc.?
- c. When did the king of Assyria return to his own land?

PARAPHRASE

When King Hezekiah listened to the report of the men sent to meet with Rabshakeh, he tore his robes indicating his anguish of soul, put on camel's-hair clothing indicating his penitence and went into the Temple to humble himself before the Lord. Just before doing this he had sent Eliakim, his chief administrator, and Shebna, his royal scribe, and the chief priests—all in camel's-hair clothing of humility—to Isaiah, the prophet of God, son of Amoz. They were sent to Isaiah with this message from King Hezekiah: This is a day of distress and anguish, punishment and rebuke, reproach and rejection from the Lord—it is a day from which only a miracle can deliver us like a day when children are ready to be born but the mothers' wombs will not open! So I am hoping, Isaiah,

your God will take note of the defiant, insulting words of the Rabshakeh, who was sent by the king of Assyria for that very purpose and will punish him for the words He has heard the Rabshakeh speak. So pray, Isaiah, for those of us remaining, as many as we can find. So, they came to Isaiah with this message. And this was Isaiah's reply to them: Say this to Hezekiah, your master; Jehovah's word is, Do not be afraid of the threats and insults of the men sent by the king of Assyria, because I will dispose the king of Assyria to leave Judah through a report that will come to him from his homeland that he is needed back there at once, and he will return to his own land, and he will eventually die a violent death by the hand of his own people.

COMMENTS

V. 1-5 WORSHIP: It is significant that Hezekiah, upon hearing the report of Rabshakeh's scoffing intimidation and insulting blasphemy of Jehovah, turned immediately to worship God in penitence and sent to get God's word from God's prophet. Happy is any nation whose ruler turns in penitence to worship Jehovah and seek His word in national crises. It was a Hebrew custom in times of great stress and turmoil, sorrow and remorse to both rend the clothing and put on sackcloth (cf. Gen. 27:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kings 21:27; Esther 4:1, etc.). In addition to all this Hezekiah went into the Temple (the house of the Lord) undoubtedly to pray. He did not pray to have the Lord's will revealed directly to himself—for that he sent to the messenger of God, Isaiah. His prayer was probably one of penitence.

Not only did Hezekiah devote himself to penitence and seeking the Lord's will, but he instructed his officials to do so also. Most political potentates are accustomed to depend too much on their own power and expertise and consult God's spokesmen only on matters of morality and religion. Many potentates have made that mistake (Saul, Ahaz, Zedekiah,

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, the Caesars, ad infinitum). Then he sent them to Isaiah. He did not order Isaiah to come to him, as many rulers would have done. Respecting God's prophet shows Hezekiah's deep reverence for God! There was no question in Hezekiah's mind who was the King of the Universe—Jehovah. This is true worship, acknowledging God's sovereignty and seeking His will.

King Hezekiah sends Isaiah his analysis of the current political-military crisis. It is dark and foreboding. The following Hebrew words are used by Hezekiah to describe the situation: *tzar* (trouble, anguish, distress, oppression); *thokekhah* (re-buke, correction, punishment); *natzah* (contumely, contempt, blasphemy). It was a day so dire and catastrophic that it was like a woman in labor struggling to give birth and her womb will not open to deliver. Unless some extraordinary help is forthcoming death will be the result. Hezekiah realizes Judah is at this critical juncture.

Hezekiah's "It may be Jehovah . . . will hear" is like the "Who knows whether he will not turn and repent . . ." of Joel 2:14 and Jonah 3:9, etc. It is not a guess! It is an expression of hope that God will intervene based upon known deeds of God in the past (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, College Press, pg. 176, 249, 250, 251). Hezekiah's description of the day, trouble, rebuke, contempt, indicates his persuasion that their circumstances were by the permissive will of God to correct them for their trouble, rebuke and contempt of God. Their circumstances were designed to bring them back to God and Hezekiah was one of the first to recognize and admit it. It is no wonder God compared Hezekiah to David—after God's own heart.

So, the good king commits the defiance of the Rab-shakeh to the Living God who is being defied. The Hebrew word translated defy is *lekharek* and means literally to reproach and blaspheme—to insult and scoff at. Hezekiah requests Isaiah to pray for the *shariyth* (remnant) that is *nimetzaah* (findable, or remaining). Apparently the king is referring to besieged Jerusalem as all that is left of Judah. So Hezekiah's servants

brought his request to Isaiah.

V. 6-7 WORD: Isaiah's answer is authoritative, direct and simple. It is as simple as Thus saith the Lord. The answer is simple but the application of it (be not afraid) may be difficult in view of the present circumstances. This is where man's faith is put to the test. If faith fails then he is by his own choice not of the nature fit to companion with God. Isaiah told Ahaz (7:4) not to fear the enemies of the covenant people earlier, but Ahaz failed in faith.

The Lord promises, through Isaiah, to "put a spirit" in the king of Assyria. The Hebrew word is *ruakh* which is usually translated spirit but literally means breath or wind. It is sometimes translated mind (Ezek. 11:5; 20:32) and sometimes means an emotion (Prov. 29:11; Gen. 26:35). Just how God "puts a spirit, mind, emotion, disposition" in a pagan ruler to return to his homeland when he seems of a mind to do something other must remain one of the mysteries of the Infinite and Omnipotent God. We are told in other places of such action by God (Isa. 10:5-19; 44:28—45:6; Jer. 51:20-23; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). God is capable of speaking to pagan rulers in dreams and visions (as He did to Nebuchadnezzar) or stirring up their spirits (as He did to Cyrus). It does not appear that God gave Sennacherib a vision. He heard something from his own land that caused him to return, and 20 years later he was violently slain by his own sons. We will document this event in later comments. It should be noted here Isaiah does not predict Sennacherib's death immediately upon his arrival back in Assyria. It is not the prophet's purpose to predict all the details—only those which are essential to Hezekiah's trust in the Lord.

QUIZ

1. Why did Hezekiah rend his clothes and put on sackcloth?
2. How drastic had the political-military situation of Judah become?

3. What is the "remnant" that is left?
4. What is the character of Isaiah's reply?
5. How did God put a "spirit" in the king of Assyria?
6. Why did the king of Assyria return to his own land?

2. THE POTENTATE

TEXT: 37:8-13

- 8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.
- 9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopa, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
- 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
- 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?
- 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Talassar?
- 13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

QUERIES

- a. Why is Tirhakah attacking the Assyrian forces?
- b. Who were the children of Eden?

PARAPHRASE

So the Assyrian army general left Jerusalem and returned to his king. But he found his king waging war on Libnah, having already departed from Lachish. Then the king of Assyria received an intelligence report that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was marching toward southern Palestine to fight against him. Immediately, the king of Assyria sent messengers with a warning to Hezekiah, saying to him, Do not be fooled with any oracle from your God that Jerusalem will be delivered from my hand—if you trust in your God you will be deceived. Let me remind you that the reports of Assyrian destruction and victory over all the world are not exaggerated. Now, what makes you think you will be delivered? None of the gods of the different peoples of the world, such as those of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, or the gods of territories like Beth-eden or Telassar, have been able to deliver them from Assyrian conquest—do you think yours shall deliver you? Where are the kings of nations like Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? They are gone—dethroned by the mighty Assyrian king.

COMMENTS

V. 8-9 **WARY WARRIOR:** The Assyrian army commander (the Rabshakeh) left Jerusalem and went directly to Libnah, 10 and 12 miles north of Lachish and 25 miles west (and a little south) of Jerusalem. Libnah and Lachish were cities along the "Gaza strip" and were strategic military positions on the Egyptian frontier. The king of Assyria probably felt he had secured Lachish and now he must secure Libnah since he apparently had received word that an Egyptian force was marching toward his deployed troops in Palestine.

Now Tirhakah was not yet king of Egypt. He was nephew of the man (Shabaka 715-701 B.C.) who was then king of Egypt. It appears from ancient records that Tirhakah was

approximately 20 years of age at the time of Sennacherib's (701 B.C.) expedition into Judah. He would be old enough, since he was royalty, to be put in charge of a military force. Tirhakah's brother (Shabataka 701-689 B.C.) was the Pharaoh after Shabaka and then Tirhakah became Pharaoh (689-664 B.C.). Edward J. Young thinks Tirhakah is proleptically called king. That is, Isaiah, writing some years after these events occurred, when Tirhakah was in fact king, calls him king in an event that took place before he was king. This is not unusual. Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar "king of Babylon" proleptically in Daniel 1:1. Tirhakah was the third and last Pharaoh of the 25th Ethiopian dynasty. His Ethiopian kingdom was quite Egyptian in character. Sennacherib was successful against Tirhakah, but the mysterious loss of Assyrian troops forced Sennacherib back to Assyria. Tirhakah enjoyed a respite from the Assyrian threat for some years, but was defeated by Esarhaddon and later by Assurbanipal. He was driven south where he retained rule of that portion of Egypt.

Sennacherib apparently associated Tirhakah's show of force with Hezekiah's refusal to surrender to Rabshakeh. He evidently assumed the Egyptians were in collusion with the Hebrews and they were coming to rescue Jerusalem from Assyrian conquest. So the Assyrian king sent a written (37:14) message to Hezekiah.

V. 10-13 WRITTEN WARNING: Verse 10 makes it appear as if the Assyrians have spies within the very chambers of King Hezekiah. It almost seems as if the Assyrians knew the very words Isaiah spoke in reply to Hezekiah's request (37:5-6). Here the Assyrian messengers are told to "speak" the message to Hezekiah. In 37:14 Hezekiah takes a "letter" from the messengers and reads it. Perhaps the messengers read the letter to Hezekiah upon their arrival and then he took it from their hand and read it for himself. The message from Sennacherib was a warning. It intended to remind Hezekiah of current political history. It was common knowledge in the world at that time of the ruthless, overwhelming, destructive power of the Assyrians and the extensiveness of their conquests.

They had conquered or at least dominated the whole Asia Minor-Mesopotamian-Palestinian area. Sufficient power to resist the Assyrians could not be found anywhere in the world! Cities and territories which had existed for centuries were swiftly conquered. Famous kings and potentates had been deposed and taken captive and either killed or deported into slavery. Whole cities and areas had been repopulated with Mesopotamian immigrants. The political, cultural, racial face of the inhabited world was being drastically changed. And does little, weak, religiously-oriented Judah think it can stand against a military machine like Assyria?

Some of the cities and territories listed have been located by the archaeologists and historians. Some are still lost in the sands and dust of antiquity. The reader may refer to Map #1 for locations of those known and those conjecturally placed. Beth-eden is the Eden referred to in verse 12. Since many leading scholars and archaeologists believe the Garden of Eden was in Mesopotamia (Greek for "between the rivers"), Beth-eden may very well have retained its name from the Garden of Eden. William F. Albright, renowned archaeologist and scholar of antiquity says, "Archaeological research has thus established beyond doubt that there is no focus of civilization in the earth that can begin to compete in antiquity and activity with the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean and the region immediately to the east of it. . . ." (Tigris-Euphrates, Mesopotamian area). Very ancient clay tablets with "creation accounts" written on them have been discovered in that general area. Ur and Haran are cities directly associated with Abraham. Telassar was probably a territory near the region of ancient Elam (Media).

The imposing, overwhelming, seemingly omnipotent power of the Assyrian Empire (and other ancient world empires) was beyond anything, comparatively speaking, modern geopolitics has ever experienced. No empire has completely ruled the known world since Rome. None was ever as cruel and terrifying as the Assyrian. Hezekiah could not take Assyrian threats lightly! These threats were extremely critical tests

of the faith of the Judeans. So Hezekiah did the only thing he could do—he took it to the Lord!

QUIZ

1. Why would the king of Assyria want to conquer Libnah?
2. Why may we conjecture that the king of Assyria suspected a collusion between Tirhakah and Hezekiah?
3. Why would it seem the Assyrians had spies in the Hebrew palace?
4. Why would the king of Assyria remind the Hebrews of current world events?
5. Could the Eden of verse 12 have any association with the Garden of Eden in Genesis? Why?
6. Why could Hezekiah not take lightly these threats of Assyria?

3. THE PRAYER

TEXT: 37:14-20

- 14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah.
- 15 And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying,
- 16 O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.
- 17 Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God.
- 18 Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land,
- 19 and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

20 Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only.

QUERIES

- a. Why spread the letter before Jehovah?
- b. Why say God sits above the cherubim?
- c. Why cast the nation's gods into the fire?

PARAPHRASE

Hezekiah took the letter from the Assyrian messengers and read it for himself. Then, taking it to the Temple, he presented it before the Lord and prayed, saying, O Lord of hosts, Great God of Israel enthroned upon Thy Mercy Seat here in this Thy Temple, Thou art the Only God, King of all kingdoms, and Omnipotent Creator of the universe. Please turn Thine ears to hear my pleas and direct Thine eyes, O Lord, to see what I have to present to Thee. See, Lord, this letter of Sennacherib; it is a mocking defiance of Thy sovereignty. Admittedly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have conquered and destroyed all those peoples listed in the letter. Yes, they have thrown their gods into the fire and proved they were not gods at all but just pieces of wood and stone carved into images by men's hands. Of course, men can destroy gods like those. In view of this, my prayer to Thee, O Living God, is that Thou wilt save us so that all the world may know that Thou art the Only God.

COMMENTS

v. 14-16 PRAISE: Unlike Ahaz, when threatened by the Syrian-Israeli coalition, who went to the king of Assyria for help (see comments on Isa. 7:10-16), Hezekiah turned

immediately to the Lord for help from his enemies. Hezekiah did not spread the letter before the Lord because he believed God would not know what it said had he not taken it to the Temple. His concept of God was not that of mysticism or paganism, as his prayer demonstrates. Hezekiah believed in a God who was omnipotent and omniscient.

Hezekiah's prayer ranks alongside the great prayers of the Bible as a model men today would do well to follow. It is brief, compared to the grand prayer of Daniel (ch. 9), but equally as reverent and believing. All praying should begin and end with *praise* to God. Jesus taught, "Pray this way, Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed* be thy name. . . ." The holiness, majesty, righteousness, faithfulness, and sovereignty of God should be our *first* concern in prayer or evangelism or worship. Our salvation, our blessedness, our development into His nature all depends upon who He is—not upon what we are or what we want. Of course, we cannot be saved or blessed unless we want it, but we could want it forever and never have it if God is not Who He Is. Too much prayer is focused on petition and not enough on praise. Too much asking has a tendency to make our wants sovereign. Let us *first* pray, "*Thy* kingdom come, *thy* will be done, on earth just like it is in heaven. . . ."

The cherubim were the angel-like figures with wings, one on each end of the ark of the covenant, within the Holy of Holies in the Temple. They hovered over the "mercy seat" and were symbols to represent the place where God's presence dwelt. Hezekiah, of course, did not think his God was a provincial God like those of the pagans, restricted to houses made with hands. He was merely reiterating his belief that Jehovah God was present where God said He would be—in His Temple. He was affirming his faith that God was with the nation in their extremity.

v. 17-19 PETITION: Hezekiah refers to God anthropomorphically. That is, he refers to God as having human attributes (ears, eyes, etc.). This is true of both Old and New Testaments. Human attributes are the highest forms or symbols within

man's experience by which he may express nonexperienced attributes! Anthropomorphism is an attempt to express the non-rational aspects of God's being in terms of the rational. Biblical anthropomorphism is quite different from pagan concepts of their gods. The anthropomorphism of pagan religions describes their gods in forms of man and animals, trees, stars, or even a mixture of elements. To regard Jehovah God solely as Absolute Being or The Great Unknown is to refer to *him* or *it*, but if man is ever to think of God as personal, one with whom he can fellowship, man must think of God as *Thou*, and man can only conceive of *Thou* in anthropomorphic symbols. Hezekiah is praying, not to an Idea, but to a Person.

Note also Hezekiah's preciseness in prayer. He does not pray a generalized prayer for delivery from a general enemy. He prays the Lord to take action on the very words of Sennacherib. Specific prayer for a specific need. But what is the need? Hezekiah focuses on the fact that Sennacherib has defied the living God. The primary need, as Hezekiah sees it, is not physical deliverance but vindication of the sovereignty of Jehovah God (see v. 20). Hezekiah is well aware of the power of Assyria. He is a realist and no foolish optimist. The kings of Assyria have done all they brag about. They have laid waste the major portion of the inhabited world. They have even wreaked havoc and desolation in their own land (Mesopotamia) (cf. Isa. 14:20). This characterizes the Assyrians as a people thriving on war and desolation. They cared not that their warlike nature brought destitution even to their own land! One concept thoroughly established by the Assyrian conquests was the demonstration that the gods of all the nations conquered by them were *not* gods at all. When the Assyrians conquered a nation they took that nation's gods (idols and images) and threw them into the fire and burned (wood and metal and stone) and melted them. The Assyrians proved that the gods of other nations were powerless. But what about the gods of the Assyrians?

v. 20 PURPOSE: Hezekiah's primary purpose was not for himself, not even for his country, but for the glory of God.

Hezekiah is concerned for the honor of God. He prays that the power, sovereignty and uniqueness of Jehovah be vindicated before the eyes of the world. He is not willing that Jehovah be considered just another one of the provincial gods of the nations. God repeats over and over in the Old Testament that He acts for "his own sake," and the men of faith in the Old Testament always prayed that God would act for "his own name's sake" (cf. II Sam. 7:21; I Kings 8:41; II Chron. 6:32; Psa. 6:4; 31:16; 23:3; 31:3; 25:7, 11; 44:26; 79:9; 106:8; 115:1; 143:11; Isa. 37:35; 42:21; 45:4; 48:9, 11; Jer. 14:7, 21; Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:22; Dan. 9:17, 19). This is the most important concept of the Bible. All of man's hopes in this world or the next rest upon the vindication of the Absoluteness of God's Person. Our every motive, desire, aim, prayer, action and concern must be that God will first act for His own sake. If His Word is not verified and confirmed and established, we are lost! *The faith*, once for all delivered to the saints, is the veracity, sovereignty, mercy, faithfulness, holiness of God as demonstrated and manifested in the Incarnate Son of God, who was Immanuel, "God with us." (see special study, "The Faith Once Delivered For All Time," p. 248.)

QUIZ

1. How does Hezekiah's reaction when threatened by enemies compare with the reaction of Ahaz (Isa. 7)?
2. Why is Hezekiah's prayer great?
3. What is anthropomorphism and why is it necessary when speaking of God?
4. How does Hezekiah express his realism about Assyria?
5. What is the primary purpose of Hezekiah's prayer?
6. Why is this purpose so important in our relationship to God?

4. THE PRONOUNCEMENT

TEXT: 37:21-35

- 21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying,
Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast
prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria,
22 this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him:
The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed
thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her
head at thee.
23 Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom
hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high?
even against the Holy One of Israel.
24 By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said,
With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the
height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon;
and I will cut down the fall cedars thereof, and the choice
fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height,
the forest of its fruitful field.
25 I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet
will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.
26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and
formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass,
that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into
ruinous heaps.
27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were
dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the
field, as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and
as a field of grain before it is grown up.
28 But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy
coming in, and thy raging against me.
29 Because of thy raging against me, and because thine ar-
rogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my
hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn
thee back by the way by which thou camest.
30 And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year

that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

- 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
- 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they shall escape: the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.
- 33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it.
- 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah.
- 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

QUERIES

- a. When did Jerusalem laugh Assyria to scorn?
- b. What hook will God put in the nose of Assyria?
- c. Did the king of Assyria come to Jerusalem or not?

PARAPHRASE

Immediately Isaiah sent this message to Hezekiah: This is what Jehovah, the God of Israel says: In answer to your prayer to Me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the Word of Jehovah about Sennacherib: The untouchable daughter of Zion laughs and scorns you despicable Assyrians. Jerusalem shows her disdain of you by a shake of her head. Who do you Assyrians think you are defying and mocking? At whom are you railing with your loud boasting and haughtiness? You are defying the Holy One of Israel! You have sent your aides to threaten the Lord, and they have boasted, We have come over

the great mountains of Lebanon with thousands of my chariots and have plundered every nation in my path of its treasures. We have taken whatever we wanted from any nation. We have conquered and occupied many nations and dug wells for our occupation forces. Egypt with its Nile River is no obstacle to me—I simply walk across it as if it were dry land. How is it you do not know that it was I, The Holy One of Israel, who decreed all of this long ago? How is it you do not acknowledge that you do what you do only by My permissive will? I have allowed you to have all this power to devastate nations and cities. This is the only reason other nations have had no power against you. This is why they were as helpless as grass and tender plants before you and as dead and used-up as the dead grass on a thatched roof. I, the Lord God, know everything you do. I know when you sit down, when you go out, when you come in, and I know every word of defiance you have uttered against me. Now because of your arrogance and challenge to My sovereignty, manifested by your intimidations toward My people, I will lead you in humility and docility back to where you came from like a bull is led with a ring in its nose or a horse is led with a bit in its mouth. And I will prove that I, The Holy One of Israel, am delivering this city by giving this sign to My people: Before the year is over the Assyrians will be gone. The time will again come when you will reap abundantly from the fruits of your toil and your enemy will not plunder your fields. It will not be immediately. It is too late now to plant your crops for this year. You will harvest first only that which comes up from volunteer seed. The next year will be about the same, due to the devastation of the land by the enemy. But in the third year you will once again sow and reap good crops from this land. Those of you who are left in Judah will be firmly established in your land again without interference from foreign occupation, and you will flourish as a nation again. For I, the Lord, have purposed to always preserve, small though it may be, a Messianic people for Myself. And because I am very zealous to fulfill My Messianic covenant, I will deliver Jerusalem from the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria

will not be allowed by Jehovah to make war on Jerusalem. In fact, he will not even come to the city, but he will return to his own land by the same route he entered Palestine. I, even I, will defend this city and save it for the vindication of My Name and to fulfill the promise I made to David.

COMMENTS

V. 21-25 DEFIANCE: Perhaps some of the details of what transpired between Hezekiah and Isaiah are omitted. Perhaps Isaiah was informed in writing or by messenger of Hezekiah's prayer. Or, perhaps God began to answer Hezekiah's prayer even as Hezekiah was praying! (cf. Dan. 9:20-23). The Lord knows our hearts and minds better than we—He is able to answer our prayer before we ask. Whatever the case, the Lord answered in a propositional, verbal message, through a messenger, Isaiah. Hezekiah was not left to try to discern the Lord's answer through a mystical feeling or through a providential "fleece."

The expression, virgin (Heb. *bethulath*) daughter of Zion, is probably to symbolize Jerusalem's untouchableness by the Assyrian king who desires to ravish the city. Virgin is sometimes used to symbolize faithfulness. It is also used to symbolize covenant relationship between Israel and God. Amos speaks of Israel's (the northern kingdom) unfaithfulness and covenant-breaking as a "fallen virgin's" behavior (Amos 5:1-2; see also Ezek. 16:1ff). Perhaps all of this, untouchableness, faithfulness and covenant relationship, are involved in the figure virgin here. The point may be that Jerusalem, for its persistent refusal to prostitute itself to the Assyrian intimidations and dogged determination to trust faithfully in God, is being despised by its antagonists. But God promises the reversal of that. Soon, very soon, Assyria the despiser will be despised. God's promise is so certain it may be predicted as having already occurred! The proud, arrogant, powerful Assyrian king will soon return to his own land, his boasting unfulfilled, to die by assassination.

For shaking of the head as a gesture of scorn, see Psa. 22:7; 109:25; Mt. 27:39.

The question of verse 23 is rhetorical. God is not asking for information, He is challenging the arrogance of Assyria. The king of Assyria, through the servants he sent to Hezekiah, has defied the Sovereign God of the universe. Sennacherib is being warned that he is not dealing with a god of wood or stone, a provincial god of man's making. This is Almighty God, the Only True God. This is The God who holds *all* kings and potentates mentally and morally responsible to Himself, whether they acknowledge him or not (cf. Amos, ch. 2-3; Isaiah, ch. 13-23; Jeremiah ch. 46-51; Ezekiel, ch. 26-32; Daniel, ch. 1-6, etc.). Even in the New Testament, rulers and men of *all* nations are declared morally responsible to the Sovereign God, whether they believe in Him or not (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:1-29; etc.).

The Assyrian monarch boasted that nothing could stand in his way if he decided to march with his army. Not even the mountains of Lebanon (a range of mountains 20 miles long, with two of its peaks rising to over 9000 feet, and remaining snow-capped the year round) could stop him. The mountains of Lebanon formed a formidable natural barrier against invasion of Palestine. To go over the mountains was the only alternative to going across the Arabian desert for those Mesopotamian nations who wished to conquer Palestine. Chariots are made for flat open country. To move an army of chariots over forest-laden, snow-capped mountains 10,000 feet in altitude, would be no small task. But Sennacherib did it and considered such a feat proof that he could conquer any land or people he wished. Egypt's Nile River would not stop him—he would go across that as if he were walking on dry land. Hezekiah's God would not stop him—he boasted—he considered himself god of the world! Nothing could stand in his way. If it were mountains, he would cross over them; if it were the absence of water, he would dig wells and sustain his army; if it were the presence of waters, he would bridge them and take his armies across. He considered himself sovereign

over all circumstances and persons. That is blasphemy!

v. 26-29 DOWNFALL: How could the king of Assyria have heard of the predetermined plan of God to use him to "waste fortified cities"? Perhaps God is saying, has it never occurred to you through conscience or common sense that there is Someone greater than you controlling circumstances and lives. There is abundant evidence that God spoke or revealed His will to the ancients, including pagan rulers, in direct ways. He spoke to the Assyrians once through Jonah, the prophet. He spoke to others through dreams, visions, and prophets (cf. Dan. 1-6). He also spoke of His eternal power and deity through nature (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 14:14-18; 17:22-29, etc.). Whatever the case, the Assyrian nation had plenty of proof (through Jonah's demonstration of the sovereignty of Jehovah and through nature) that man does not control circumstances or destiny. God uses governments and nations as tools to carry out His sovereign purposes (cf. Jer. 27:5-7; Daniel, ch. 7-12; Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. ch. 1-22; Isa. 10:5-34, etc.). That the Assyrian monarch did not recognize the certainty of a Higher Power directing history, in light of all the evidence, indicates his pride overcame conscience and common sense. In other words, his unbelief was deliberate and moral. (See Special Study, Unbelief Is Deliberate, pg. 99). It was God who gave other nations into the hand of the Assyrian. They fell because God permitted it. It was the height of moral perversity for Assyria to think they controlled the world. There are men today who think by their scientific expertise (atomic or nuclear physics; genetic restructuring; space exploration) they are approaching the ability to control circumstances and destiny. That is just as intellectually dishonest and morally perverse as Sennacherib's boasting.

Whatever the king of Assyria does is not outside the knowledge of God. God knows Sennacherib's "sitting down, and going out, and coming in," (cf. Psa. 11:4; 44:20-21; 139:1-12; Jer. 12:3; 17:9-10). God knows man's thoughts and deeds (Jn. 2:23-25; Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 9:46-48; Mt. 25:31-46). God knows when arrogant men rage against Him and He deals with

them in His own good time (cf. Dan. 4-6). The Lord declares He will put a *khakhiy* (a hook for animal's noses) in the Assyrian's nose and a *mitheggiy* (a bridle for animals) in the Assyrian's mouth and turn him back to his own land.

The arrogance that blasphemes must be dealt with by the Sovereign God. When a human ruler attempts usurpation of Divine sovereignty he must be brought low. God must show that He is still sovereign, so He will intervene through supernatural and providential actions to humiliate the Assyrian braggart and lead him around where God would have him to be. There are *bas reliefs* in ancient Assyrian monuments depicting prisoners being led by ropes attached to rings in their noses. God will put His own "ring" in Sennacherib's nose and lead him (slaying 185,000 soldiers, and a rumor from Nineveh that he should come home).

v. 30-35 DELIVERANCE: One must not forget that God's central purpose in the Assyrian downfall was the deliverance of His faithful remnant and the fulfillment of His redemptive plan in them. God uses the wicked schemes of wicked men as tools to work out His redemptive purpose. When God's people became so wicked they needed chastening, He allowed the cruel Assyrians to bring them back to dependence upon Him. Now that Hezekiah has led the nation in a turning back to God, He will punish the arrogant boasting of the Assyrian (cf. Isa. 10:5-34) as further evidence of His power to fulfill His redemptive program.

Isaiah is predicting a complete removal of the Assyrians from the land of Palestine—not just a temporary let-up of the siege of Jerusalem. The massiveness of the Assyrian army, its need to live off the land it occupied and its complete disregard for life or property would have brought unparalleled devastation to the agricultural and economic situation of Palestine! The Assyrians had conquered 46 cities of Judah and had ravaged the whole land except Jerusalem. He had been there for more than a year. But Isaiah predicts the Assyrian will be gone and as soon as can be expected, the people left in Judah will be reaping and harvesting their own crops again. There will be

no miraculous, immediate restoration of the agricultural-economic prosperity. For the immediate year and the one following the people will suffer the effects of the Assyrian devastation of their land; that is, they will eat from crops produced by volunteer seed for the first two years. There would not be enough harvest for two years to provide seed for a full sowing. But the third year would see agriculture returned to its normal processes. That would signify to them God had delivered them from the Assyrian.

The *remnant* will be saved. God has always carried out His work with a "left-over" segment of mankind. The cosmic work of redemption has always been trusted to a minority. It will not be any different when God closes the historical, human part of this work. The New Testament indicates the way that leads to life is "strait and narrow" and few will find it. The majority will be found, at any time, on the broad way that leads to destruction. Great men like Isaiah and Hezekiah were able to persuade a few to trust God and make themselves available to Him that He might bring the Messiah into the world. The *remnant* of this faithful few can be traced throughout the Old Testament right up to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The zeal (*kineath*, in Hebrew) of the Lord will accomplish this (see comments on Isa. 9:7). The Lord is jealous for His own work and His own people. He is jealous for His own sovereignty, so He will not let the king of Assyria carry out his boast to ravage Jerusalem. In fact, God will not even permit the king of Assyria to come to the city. No siege mound will be built up surrounding Jerusalem by the Assyrians. God is going to save it to vindicate His own power and fulfill His promise to David (II Sam. 7:12, etc.). This is quite a prediction by Isaiah in view of the fact that the Assyrians at that moment controlled all of Palestine except the immediate city of Jerusalem! But if God is for us, who can be against us?! (cf. Rom. 8:28-39).

QUIZ

1. What does the use of the term "virgin" mean in reference to Jerusalem?
2. Why does God ask Sennacherib who he thinks he is raging against?
3. How would God expect the king of Assyria to hear of His sovereignty?
4. Why did God have to put a "hook" in the nose of the Assyrian?
5. What is the sign that God had delivered Palestine from the Assyrians?

5. THE PHENOMENON

TEXT: 37:36-38

- 36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camps of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.
- 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
- 38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

QUERIES

- a. How did the angel of the Lord kill so many?
- b. Why did Sennacherib's sons kill him?

PARAPHRASE

That night the angel of the Lord went out to the camp of the Assyrian army and killed 185,000 warriors. When those who were still alive awakened in the morning they beheld the terrible sight of all the dead bodies strewn throughout their camp. Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, set out to leave and he went immediately, returning to his own country, Nineveh. A number of years later, while he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer assassinated him with their swords. They escaped into the land of Ararat, and Esar-haddon, another of Sennacherib's sons became king.

COMMENTS

v. 36-37 DEPARTURE: This epilogue is an historical record of the fulfillment of all of Isaiah's prophecies of the failure of the Assyrian empire to destroy the covenant people of God. The only possible way God could carry out His promise to deliver Jerusalem and Palestine from the Assyrian was by supernatural intervention (either directly or indirectly through providence). It is a matter of record (see also II Kings 19:35-37, and II Chronicles 32:20-23), that God intervened supernaturally and directly. An angel (Heb. *maleak*) of Jehovah (Heb. *Yahweh*) went into the Assyrian army camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. The account in II Kings 19 records that the slaying took place the same night Sennacherib's message of arrogant blasphemy was delivered to Hezekiah. How would the angel of the Lord perform such a herculean task? This event reminds the Bible student of the destroying angel of Exodus 12:12-23 and II Samuel 24:1-16. The ministry of angels is spectacular and comprehensive in the Biblical record (see our special study, "The Mystery and Ministry of Angels," commentary on Daniel, College Press, p. 387-404.) One angel had the power to restrain Persia and Greece (cf.

Dan. 10:15-21). One angel has the power to harm a third of the earth (Revelation 8 & 9). God is able to make His angels wind and fire (Heb. 1:7), and sends them forth as "ministering spirits to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Angels do not necessarily have to take human form to do God's service. They may serve in any form, wind, fire, disease, pestilence, war, famine, or whatever suits God's purposes. We simply do not know how the angel of the Lord smote 185,000 men in one night. The Hebrew verb *yaceh* generally means to smite with a disease. America suffered approximately 50,000 war deaths in the more than two years of war in Korea. There were over 55,000 American soldiers slain in the over ten years of war in Viet Nam. With all man's modern technology and massive destructive powers 185,000 dead in a single night still seems a staggering number.

The annals of King Sennacherib make no mention of a disaster to his troops in Palestine. However, there is an interesting tradition preserved by Herodotus (II, 141) which relates that Sennacherib, "king of the Assyrians and the Arabians," led a great army against Egypt. This military move seems to have been subsequent to the subjugation of Philistia and Judea, and to have been a final stroke to secure one of the ultimate objects of his expedition—the conquest of Egypt. The tradition states that the Egyptian army was made up of "traders, artisans, and merchants, and that in great fear they encamped at Pelusium, within range of the enemy (Assyrians)." The Assyrian's camp was completely overrun by an army of field mice, which gnawed apart all of their leather trappings, such as bowstrings, quivers, and shield-straps. On the next morning with only fragments of weapons, the Assyrian troops were routed, put to flight, and many of them slain. This tradition probably has some basis in fact and is an echo of some calamity to the Assyrian army. Some have suggested the mice may have carried bubonic plague, which is both swift and deadly in its working. When Sennacherib and the remainder of his army awoke in the morning the scene must have stunned them. Death on such a massive, sudden scale would cause first,

dumbfoundedness, then fear, then, perhaps, chaos. The Hebrew language is forceful—"and behold! all of them, corpses, dead ones!" What else could Sennacherib conclude but that a Power greater than he and his army had visited during the night. This great catastrophe had happened so unexpectedly, so silently, so suddenly. No one had awakened during the night when it was happening. This was no place for Sennacherib. He would not dare go boasting to Hezekiah now. He had never before suffered such an inglorious defeat. So he left Judea. His departure is stated in the Hebrew language in short, rapid terms, "And he set out, and he went, and he returned to Nineveh."

Although Sennacherib subjugated the entire eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, carried off a vast amount of booty, and levied tribute on the conquered cities and provinces, there is no hint in his records during the remaining 20 years of his reign that he ever again visited this territory. Nor does the Babylonian chronicler of this period mention any such campaign. It seems that some specter haunted his memory and chilled his ambition regarding the final conquest of Egypt.

V. 38 DEATH: Sennacherib lived another 20 years after he left Judea. Then one day as he was worshipping in the temple of his god, Nisroch (which Edward J. Young thinks is an intentional corruption of Marduk), he is slain by two of his sons who apparently are attempting an insurrection. Sennacherib's son, Esar-haddon, in an inscription found by archaeologists at the Dog River near Beirut, Lebanon, tells of this event (see our comments, *Isaiah*, Vol. I, pg. 189-190). Hezekiah worshipped his God and Jehovah delivered him from his enemies. Sennacherib worshipped his god and found not deliverance but assassination. The two assassins did not gain the throne. They had to flee for their own lives to the land of Ararat (modern Armenia). Esar-haddon, another son of Sennacherib, succeeded to the throne of Assyria, eventually restored the city of Babylon, conquered Egypt, imported foreigners into Samaria, forced Manasseh (Hezekiah's son) to pay heavy tribute to help build Esar-haddon's palace in

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Nineveh, and extended the Assyrian empire to its greatest power. In a second Egyptian campaign, Esar-haddon died and his son, the famous Assurbanipal, the one who built the great library from which archaeologists get most of their Assyrian artifacts, succeeded him.

QUIZ

1. Where else in the Bible does God use angels to kill people?
2. What form may angels take to do their work of killing?
3. What tradition from antiquity may be a parallel to the Biblical account of the slaughter of the Assyrian army?
4. How did Sennacherib come to his end?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED FOR ALL TIME

by

Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. JUDE IS A MOST NEGLECTED EPISTLE OF THE N.T.

- A. Because it is brief.
- B. Because its language is different than most of the N.T.
- C. Because the circumstances calling for its writing are obscure.
- D. Many preachers have preached from vs. 3 but few have left it in its own context when they used it.

II. JUDE IS A MOST RELEVANT EPISTLE OF THE N.T. FOR TODAY.

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- A. "There have been times in the history of the church when Jude was the most relevant book in the N.T." Barclay
- B. Jude's intention
 - 1. First to discuss in a treatise the common salvation of Christians
 - 2. But, there arose men whose beliefs and conduct were a threat and a menace to the church.
 - 3. The need was not so much to expound the faith as to rally Christians in defense of the faith.
- C. The menace of *Antinomianism*
 - 1. Lawless grace; grace without any conditions; what matters is not keeping a code but what's in the heart.
 - 2. Antinomians considered themselves so spiritual that sin did not exist for them. Their idea was that since salvation was by grace there need be no law.
 - 3. They believed that if we love God with our heart, we can do what we want with our bodies.
 - 4. They perverted the grace of God which is in essence
A PERVERSION OF THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD!
- D. The menace of *Gnosticism*
 - 1. They denied the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. They taught that the creator was sort of an "off-shoot" or emanation from God because matter is evil and God could not create matter or be touched by matter (flesh) for that would make God evil.
 - 3. They taught a definite dichotomy of spirit and matter.
 - 4. If there was a divine Messiah He would have to be totally spirit and not flesh—and since Jesus of Nazareth was flesh, He could not be the divine Messiah.
 - 5. They divided mankind into two classes:
 - a. the *pneumatikoi* - the spiritual elite, that select few who were able to embark on the long intellectual search for God
 - b. the *psuchikoi* - those who had physical life, but whose spiritual life was quite inadequate ever to

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attain to the knowledge which was necessary to reach God.

6. They denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- E. There are two major reasons for the church today to contend for the faith.
 1. Antinomianism - under grace we are so spiritual we cannot sin.
 2. Gnosticism - Neo-orthodoxy: God is "Wholly Other"; denial of the Divine/Human nature of Jesus Christ.
 3. BOTH ARE A PERVERSION OF THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD AND JESUS.

III. SOME OBVIOUS CONCLUSIONS FROM JUDE 3

- A. The faith is something *delivered* to us. It is not something manufactured or discovered on our own. IT IS REVEALED FROM GOD!
- B. The faith is something *once for all delivered*. Each generation is obligated to relearn and rethink and reexperience it, BUT IT IS OF PERMANENT AND UN-CHANGING NATURE.
- C. The faith is something which is entrusted to God's consecrated people. IT IS NO MAN'S PRIVATE PROPERTY!
- D. The faith is something which must be defended or tended for. A duty such as this is the obligation of every generation of Christians.

I. WHAT IS "THE FAITH"?

- A. According to this context, and according to the general theme of the whole Bible, THE FAITH IS: THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST!

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1. Jude said "contend for the faith" because some were perverting the "grace of God," and "denying the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
2. The first attack upon THE FAITH was an attack upon the *veracity* of God in the Garden of Eden (God lied or would not be faithful to keep His word).
3. The Bible, from beginning to end, is one majestic, historical account of the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (historical demonstrations of God's mighty and powerful fulfillments of His promises) finally demonstrated in The Son.

The Bible is also God's revelation of guidelines and commandments on the proper human responses to that FAITHFULNESS.

4. The FAITH is not what man must do, however; it is what God has done! The FAITH is not our response systematized. . . . THE FAITH IS NOT baptism, Lord's Supper, prayer, stewardship. THESE ARE OUR RESPONSES TO THE FAITH! THEY ARE OBEDIENCES TO THE FAITH. (Incidentally, THE FAITH is not a particular political philosophy, theological system, evangelistic method, nor an emotion).
5. Our faith, our trust, is not in our response, BUT IN THE PERSON OF GOD AND JESUS. IT IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP. . . . NOT A SYSTEM.

Systems may offer guidelines and opportunities within which we may express this personal relationship, BUT IF WE GET TO PREACHING THE SYSTEM INSTEAD OF THE PERSON, WE WILL DEPERSONALIZE THE RELATIONSHIP!

6. I like the way Leroy Garrett says it: "The Faith is response to the fact that Jesus Christ is God's Son and the Lord of life . . . It is the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ, the yielded life. All else is peripheral. The faith is that Jesus Christ is God's Son and Lord of all our lives."

Carl Ketcherside says it this way: "When you have skimmed off all the theological wranglings and interpretations, and strained out all the gnats, the opinions and deductions of men, the one faith is Jesus. He is the center of it. He is also the circumference of it . . ."

7. O.T. Prophets, faced with materialistic, immoral, flippant inhumane society focused their preaching on GOD'S HOLINESS, JUSTICE, FAITHFULNESS, LOVE AND JUDGMENT. If they were ever to redirect those people it would be in response—not to budgets, buildings and banquets—but to *God* who is holy, faithful and just.
8. Isa. 30:9-11 "Preach to us smooth things, illusions; speak no more of the Holy One of Israel."
9. The Woman at the Well — needed not a social program but to know and trust Jesus.
The 5000 in Galilee — needed not to be fed but to assimilate the very nature of Jesus into their minds.
10. The churches of Asia Minor, at the close of the first century, faced the onslaught of political oppression, false teaching and carnal materialism. HOW DID JESUS TELL JOHN TO PREPARE THEM FOR THIS? REPENT!! MOTIVATION FOR REPENTANCE? VISION OF THE GLORIFIED, FAITHFUL, OMNIPOTENT LORD JESUS. . . . AND SOVEREIGN, RULING THRONE OF GOD.
11. When Jesus took the 12 aside to crystalize their faith in preparation for the coming crucible of His arrest, trial and crucifixion, HE DID NOT TRY TO ENTERTAIN THEM, ORGANIZE THEM INTO COMMITTEES . . . HE SAID, WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?!
12. On the day of questioning in His final encounter with the Jewish nation during the last week of His

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ministry MANY ASKED HIM RELEVANT SOCIAL, THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL QUESTIONS . . . BUT THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THE RIGHT QUESTION TO ASK!

THE RIGHT QUESTION IS: "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST; WHOSE SON IS HE?"

That is the burning issue. Always has been—always will be! That is *the faith*!

B. What is the Church doing about THE FAITH?

1. I think she has neglected The Faith and put too much emphasis on response.
 - a. Too much emphasis on sharing, caring, experiencing, feeling . . . and NOT ENOUGH ON WHO GOD IS, WHO CHRIST IS AND WHAT THEY HAVE DONE!
 - b. Too often the church has assumed everyone (including believers) have all the depth and width and breadth and height they need in knowing God!
 - c. There is no way to know God except as we learn of His deeds in history and in the historical personage, Christ.
 - d. Too many Christians want to talk about knowing God through main-street existentialism called "my feeling," "my experience."
 - e. We cannot assimilate the faithfulness of God, His justice, holiness, righteousness EXCEPT THROUGH BELIEVING, TRUSTING THE DIVINE RECORD OF HIS NATURE . . . THE BIBLE.
 - f. We dare not trust our feelings or experiences! FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES VACILLATE.
 - g. A man does not know he is saved and forgiven because he *feels* good after he is baptized! He may only feel wet, cold, half-drowned. He knows he is saved and forgiven because GOD IS WHO HE IS AND GOD KEEPS HIS WORD AND GOD

ISAIAH

HAS SAID IT! THAT MAY MAKE HIM FEEL GOOD,
BUT IT IS THE VERACITY OF GOD THAT MAKES
HIM FORGIVEN!

2. Let me make some suggestions:

- a. Preachers, Bible school teachers, take the great book of Isaiah and preach through it—teach through it, chapter by chapter. I guarantee you you'll meet THE HOLY, FAITHFUL, RIGHTEOUS GOD. The problems those O.T. prophets faced are as relevant as your morning newspaper . . . and they met them by preaching WHO GOD IS!
- b. Preach through the book of Revelation. WHAT THE CHURCH FACED THEN IS WHAT THE CHURCH FACES NOW. THE ANSWER FOR THE CHURCH NOW!
- c. Preach and teach through the book of Hebrews, chapter by chapter. The humanity of Christ, Christ conquering sin in the flesh, earning our redemption through His absolute faithfulness, is one of the grandest themes of the N.T. But not much is ever heard about it!

IF EVER WE NEED TO TAKE THE PULSE OF LOST HUMANITY IT IS NOW. THAT PULSE BEAT CRIES OUT . . . "IS THERE SOMEONE I CAN TRUST ABSOLUTELY?" "IS ANYONE WISE, FAITHFUL AND JUST IN CHARGE OF THIS CHAOTIC WORLD OF OURS?" WILL JUSTICE EVER BE DONE? WILL GOOD TRIUMPH? IS THERE AN ABSOLUTE BEING? THE PULSE BEAT OF HUMANITY IS IN ITS LITERATURE AND MUSIC—MODERN LITERATURE AND MUSIC SAYS NOTHING SOLID, ABSOLUTE, DEPENDABLE, HONEST.

C. Peter tells us that (II Pet. 1:3-4) through His precious and very great promises, we escape from the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the divine nature.

1. A most significant passage is in II Cor. 1:20 . . . "All the promises of God find their 'Yes' in him."
2. In other words, men need above all else to hold on to the veracity of God. . . . and the whole work of

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Jesus was to establish beyond any reasonable doubt the veracity of God!

3. The great need of the church of the first century was *not* to find God in their own experience, but to remember the veracity of God confirmed by the resurrected Christ. TOO OFTEN THERE IS NOT MUCH IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE WHERE GOD MAY BE FOUND!

Governments betray us; friends betray us, even the human heart is deceitful above all things.

The great apostle Paul, dealing with the frustration of men when they experience the unfaithfulness of their fellow men, advised, "What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every man be false . . ." Rom. 3:4

When David Livingstone sailed for Africa the first time a group of his friends accompanied him to the pier to wish him Bon Voyage. Some of them, concerned for the safety of the missionary, reminded him of the dangers which would confront him in the dark land to which he was journeying. In fact, one man urged Livingstone to remain in England.

In response, David Livingstone opened his Bible and read aloud the portion of our Lord's last recorded words in Matthew's gospel, chapter 28: "Lo, I am with you always." Turning to the one who would have prevented his going, the missionary said: "That, my friend, is the word of a Gentleman. So let us be going."

4. The world tries to motivate people and change people into peace-loving, caring, helping individuals by programming, entertaining, indulging, feasting, organizing, working, legislating them—AND IT HASN'T WORKED YET!
5. I fear that in some places the church has tried to copy the world. . . . BUT LIFE'S GREATEST CRISES AND PROBLEMS CANNOT BE DEALT WITH BY ORGANIZATION, ENTERTAINMENT.

ISAIAH

THE ONLY SURE THING UPON WHICH TO CLING IN THE STORMS AND DARKNESSES IS THE FAITHFULNESS, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, MERCY OF GOD. . . . THIS IS SURE WHETHER WE FEEL GOOD OR HAPPY, OR WHETHER WE ARE FED OR HUNGRY, AND WHETHER WE CAN DO ANY WORK OR NOT!

6. When this fleshly light begins to go out—all I want to know is: WHO IS GOD? WHO IS CHRIST? DO THEY KEEP THEIR WORD?

It would be comforting, should I linger at death to have friends and family reassure me of their love and concern. . . . BUT WHAT I WILL REALLY BE CRYING OUT IN THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL, IS, IS JESUS WHO HE CLAIMED—WILL HE MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISES—WILL I GO ON LIVING—WILL I STAND BEFORE HIM JUSTIFIED. It certainly won't be, Was my program right—did I do enough for Him—

EVERYBODY WANTS SOMEBODY TO CARE Isaiah cared, Daniel cared, Ezekiel cared, Paul cared, John cared, BUT WHAT THEY PREACHED WAS THE FAITHFULNESS AND MERCIFULNESS OF GOD, MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH IN JESUS CHRIST.

Lots of people cared about Mary and Martha and Lazarus at the graveyard. Lots of people were trying to comfort them by sharing in their suffering. BUT WHAT THEY REALLY NEEDED . . . THE REALLY CRITICAL QUESTION . . . THE FOCAL POINT OF THEIR VERY BEING WAS . . . IS JESUS REALLY THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE! WHO IS THIS JESUS?!

E. J. B. Phillips, author of the famous Phillips N.T., wrote, *Your God Is Too Small*. In it he says:

"The trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs. While their experience of life has grown in a score of directions, and their mental horizons have been

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expanded . . . their ideas of God have remained largely static. It is obviously impossible for an adult to worship the conception of God that exists in the mind of a child of Sunday school age, unless he is prepared to deny his own experience of life. . . . if he tries it he worships or serves a God who is really too small to command his adult loyalty and cooperation."

Then he goes on to list 13 "Unreal Gods" which are too small. **YOU OUGHT TO READ THIS BOOK!**

It seemed as if all seven hundred reporters from newspapers, radio stations, and TV networks wanted to talk to Wernher von Braun following the launching of the mighty Saturn V. The Cape Kennedy noise was at a high decibel range. And von Braun wanted to escape it all for the moment. He grabbed the arm of a newspaper friend, Adon Taft. "Come on, let's get away where we can talk." Taft, religion writer of the Miami Herald, pushed away from the crowd with the space scientist and made his way toward the shoreline. Pacing rapidly back and forth, von Braun seemed to be in deep thought. Taft waited for his companion to speak. "We must learn to consider God as creator of the universe and master of everything," von Braun began. "We need a greater Lord than we have had in the past."

This is life eternal that they know thee—the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Jn. 17:3

II. WHY MUST WE "CONTEND FOR THE FAITH"?

A. Because "evil *homilia* corrupts good morals" I Cor. 15:33

1. The false teaching that denied the resurrection was corrupting the morals of the Corinthian Christians.
2. It was the false teaching in the church that prompted Jude to exhort the brethren to "contend for the faith."
3. The symbolically representative churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation had one great problem above all others—false teachers.

4. The first line of attack for the church is not in the area of doing—but in the area of thinking. The doing will never be right until the thinking is right.
5. In a very small but dynamic book, John Stott's *Your Mind Matters*, the author says, "The battle is nearly always won in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become transformed." He says further, ". . . there must be *solid content* in our evangelistic proclamation of Christ. It is our responsibility to set Jesus Christ forth in the fullness of his divine-human person and saving work so that through this . . . God may arouse faith in the hearer. Such evangelistic preaching is far removed from its tragic caricature, all too common today, namely an emotional, anti-intellectual appeal for 'decisions' when the hearers have but the haziest notion what they are to decide about or why."
6. Brethren, short-term, high-pressure, emotional-manipulation of men and women is not only contrary to scriptural principles—and not only fails to bring true and lasting discipleship—the sheer superficiality of it makes enemies of the faith, those who have been dishonestly manipulated.
 - a. One minister wrote in to *Christianity Today*, "Motivational talks . . . are not needed . . . Supply techniques . . . Please show us the 'tricks of the trade.'"
 - b. It is imperative that the church get serious about its whole teaching program. Sermons, Bible school classes, mid-week Bible studies, youth programs ALL MUST BECOME GEARED AND FOCUSED ON PLANTING THE WORD OF GOD CONSTANTLY ON THE CONSCIOUS MINDS OF CHRISTIANS! The church must become an intense, thorough, honest educational organism! It's program must be Biblical with continuity. Not just a verse here and there, BUT WHOLE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN

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CONTINUITY.

- c. A startling, shocking book was written two years ago. *Subliminal Seduction: Ad Media's manipulation of a Not So Innocent America*, by Wilson Bryan Key.

A reviewer in *Christianity Today*, 1-31-75, says: "Quite disturbing from the Christian point of view, is Key's assertion that 'no significant belief or attitude held by any individual is apparently made on the basis of consciously perceived data.' "

- d. The word subliminal is derived from the Latin *sub*, (below) plus *limen* (lintel or threshold). Thus *below the threshold* of consciousness.
- e. Satan is wise enough to know that most people will not consciously do evil. HE SEEKS TO BY-PASS OUR CONSCIOUS MINDS.

THERE IS A WIDE-SPREAD CONSPIRACY OF SATAN AND HIS ARMY OF HELPERS TO BYPASS THE RATIONAL FACULTIES OF MEN AND WOMEN TODAY. PRACTICALLY UNNOTICED AND UNCHALLENGED, HE IS SLIPPING FALSE INFORMATION, UNHOLY SUGGESTIONS INTO MEN'S SUBCONSCIOUS MINDS AT THE RATE OF LITERALLY 1000's OF STIMULI DAILY!

AND THE TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES IS IN MANY PLACES THE CHURCH IS UNWITTINGLY AIDING AND ABETTING THE ENEMY BY ITS HALF-HEARTED, SUPERFICIAL, EMOTIONAL, ENTERTAINMENT-ORIENTED PROGRAM.

- f. The reviewer mentioned earlier, states: "Satan now seems to be making extensive use of the merely emotional as his special ploy. Satan, the author of imbalance and disharmony, is responsible for the current pendulum-swing away from God-ordained reason toward a mindless emotionalism, from thought to 'touchy-feely' sensation, from the reasonableness of sound doctrine to the

intuition of visionary experience." WHAT'S THE ANSWER? Listen: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts (lintel) of your house and on your gates. Deut. 6:4-9

- g. CHRISTIANS MUST DAILY, CONSTANTLY, SPRINKLE THE THRESHOLDS OF THEIR MINDS WITH THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD TO GUARD AGAINST UNHOLY STIMULI THAT WOULD ENTER UNNOTICED BELOW THE THRESHOLD . . . INTO THE SUBLIMINAL!

B. Satan was trying to destroy the church in Jude's day by scoffers, those who rejected Christ's authority, false teachers attempting to subvert the veracity of God and Christ.

1. What the church must do is contend mightily for the authority and veracity of God and Christ.
2. The church has been fighting the diversionary actions of Satan. We get all excited and spend our energies on the more immediate, spectacular symptoms of man's problem. BUT THE REAL BATTLE IS WHERE, PRACTICALLY UNNOTICED AND UNCHALLENGED, SATAN IS PLANTING UNBELIEF IN THE SUBLIMINAL!
3. Evolutionism in our public schools and on TV—not only in science classes but in literature classes. The constant barrage of destructive teaching made respectable by calling it scientific . . . is subliminally planting attacks upon the veracity of God and the

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authority of Christ.

4. *Passover Plot* — nationwide best-seller at one time. Destroyed the veracity of the word of God.
5. *Life* magazine, December, 1964 — whole issue devoted to destroying the veracity of the Bible and of God.
6. The superficiality of some of our church programs—entertaining people, programming people, contesting people—PLANTS SUBLIMINALLY IN THINKING PEOPLE'S MINDS THAT CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ALL THAT SERIOUS . . . GOD IS NOT ALL THAT HOLY OR ALL THAT HONEST (IF THE CHURCH MANIPULATES PEOPLE, WHAT ABOUT GOD?)
7. The very core of false teaching is denial of the veracity, sovereignty and authority of Christ and the Bible. The very essence of a powerless church is not smallness in number but non-existent curriculum of training in Bible evidence and exposition!!

When we reduce God to a program or contest or entertainment, we get back only what we have put in — we get back programmed people, contested people, entertained people.

HOW MANY PREACHERS, SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, PARENTS, ARE READY TO DEFEND AGAINST EVOLUTION, PASS-OVER PLOT, DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE SCRIPTURES? DON'T THINK YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS, YOUR CHILDREN AND THE WHOLE WORLD ISN'T BEING SUBLIMINALLY ATTACKED!

SOME CHURCH EDUCATION, PREACHING-TEACHING PROGRAMS ARE SHALLOW AND SUPERFICIAL, AND SO . . . MEN AND WOMEN GET THE SUBLIMINAL IMPRESSION THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT IT . . . THAT IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER WE PUT IN OUR MINDS WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS AS LONG AS WE GET TO SERVICES, BE SPECTATORS FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS PER WEEK, AND GO HOME FEELING GOOD!

- C. Serious, constant, thorough, contextual Bible exposition is the answer.
1. We want men and women to take on the nature of Christ "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another . . ." II Cor. 3:18
 2. We want men and women to be able to check the indulgences of the flesh.
"human regulations and systems have an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh. . . . Set your minds on things that are above . . . seek the things that are above . . ." Col. 2:23—3:2
 3. We want men and women to serve Christ. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Rom. 12:2

IGNORANCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IN SATAN'S SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION. WE DARE NOT ABANDON THE MIND OF MAN . . . ESPECIALLY THE SUBCONSCIOUS . . . TO THE ENEMY. "THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MINE HEART, THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST THEE."

- D. One of the most profound statements in all scripture is Hosea 9:10. They came to Baal-Peor and consecrated themselves to Baal, etc.
1. Men inevitably assimilate and take on the nature of that which they worship, adore, enthrone, place supreme value upon.
 2. There is no such thing as detachment in worship.
 3. When men adore or worship the god of deception, they will become deceitful; materialism—they will become materialistic; sensuality—they will become sensual.

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4. If they worship a god of religion, they will become religious; a god of superficialities, they will become superficial.
5. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE CONTEND FOR THE HOLINESS AND FAITHFULNESS, AND HONESTY AND PURITY OF GOD IF WE WANT PEOPLE TO BECOME HOLY, FAITHFUL, HONEST AND PURE!

III. HOW SHALL WE CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED? (Jude's answer)

- A. Study the Scriptures, Jude 17, "remember the predictions of the apostles."
 1. The reason Christian preachers and Christian Bible school teachers and Christian families are not contending for the faith once for all delivered, IS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT STUDYING!
 2. Why not?
 - a. Too busy organizing
 - b. Too busy committeeing
 - c. Too busy going, going, going
 - d. Too busy watching the TV
 - e. Too difficult to really put to practice the disciplines of hermeneutics and exegesis (contextual relationships, word studies, background studies, original language studies)
 3. Paul told Timothy to "give himself to, or attend to, the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching, . . . to devote himself to them."
 4. Jesus relied totally on His knowledge of and trust in the Scriptures to overcome the temptations of the devil.
 5. A PREACHER OR A CHURCH THAT IS NOT SERIOUS AND INTENSELY DEVOTED TO A PROGRAM OF THOROUGH BIBLE STUDY IS NEVER GOING TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH! THERE MAY BE STATISTICS TO QUOTE, BUT WHAT DO STATISTICS PROVE....ANYTHING YOU WANT THEM TO!

ISAIAH

FIVE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR (REVELATION) HAD GOOD STATISTICS BUT WERE TOLD TO REPENT OF THE FALSE TEACHING AND IMMORALITY RAMPANT IN THEM LEST THEIR CANDLE-STICK BE REMOVED.

TWO OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR WERE STATISTICALLY "POOR" AND "POWERLESS" BUT CHRIST SAID THEY WERE RICH AND HAD AN OPEN DOOR SET BEFORE THEM!

6. The teachings of the apostles cannot be remembered if they are not constantly and thoroughly studied!

If you dare, give your church members the Bible Knowledge Test we give our freshmen when they come to OBC!

SHOULD WE EXPECT TO DEVOTE OUR MINDS AND ENERGIES TO LEARNING TO REMEMBER HOW TO FRAME A HOUSE, ASSEMBLE AN AUTO, OPERATE ON THE HUMAN BODY. . . . AND NOT DEVOTE OUR MINDS AND ENERGIES TO LEARNING IN ORDER TO REMEMBER THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED!

MAY GOD HAVE MERCY UPON US!

- B. Preaching, Teaching, Jude 20-22 "... build yourselves up (edify) on your most holy faith . . . And convince some, who doubt . . ."

1. Preaching is persuasion. This concept has fallen on hard times. Too many have the idea that preaching is emotionalism or entertainment. I'm not denying there is an element of emotion in persuasion. BUT I DESPISE AND RESIST ANY EFFORT TO BYPASS REASON TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE BY PLAYING UPON EMOTIONS SO THAT THEIR CHOICE OR COMMITMENT IS DEPENDENT UPON THE FEELINGS AND NOT UPON THE FACTS!

2. I'm a strong advocate of Alexander Campbell's formula, FACT, TESTIMONY, FAITH, FEELING . . . in that order.

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3. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to give us an exhilarating, mind-by-passing, feeling. . . . IT IS TO CONVICT, CONVINCE, PERSUADE! John 16
4. Paul went into the synagogues and reasoned daily with them from the scriptures. . . . Paul said, Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Jesus was a Master logician.
5. In a little book entitled, *Your Emotions and Your Faith*, by Franklin M. Segler, the author says:
"The efficacy of faith depends not upon the faith but upon the object of faith, namely Christ."

EMOTIONS ARE NOT CONSTANT. . . . CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NOT CONSTANT. . . . BUT GOD IS CONSTANT!

OUR PREACHING AND TEACHING, IF IT IS TO BE EDIFYING, IF IT IS TO BUILD CONSTANCY AND SOLIDNESS INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES, MUST BE PERSUASIVE.

C. Discipline, Jude 23, "save some by snatching them out of the fire."

1. College cheating is astonishingly high according to a report of an experiment in *Intellectual Digest*. When teachers appealed to students' consciences, cheating increased! Threatening punishment was discovered to be the only way to cut down on the dishonesty!
2. Discipline is another concept that has fallen on hard times, both in the home, in the school and in the church. Discipline is correction. People do not like to be corrected. None of us. Hebrews 12:11 "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."
3. What else could Jude mean here? NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN "SNATCHED FROM THE FIRE" GENTLY OR TENDERLY OR PAINLESSLY!
4. Psychologists all over the country are changing their tune about permissiveness. *Reader's Digest*, February,

1975, article "Back To Basics In The Schoolhouse": "N.Y. psychiatrist Richard Robertiello . . . has rethought his once-permissive policies on child rearing. The children of permissiveness who are now his psychiatric patients, he says, are 'warm, loving and lovable,' but they can't hang on to anything, they can't master anything."

5. Jesus was firm, almost rough, with His mother, His disciples, His hard-headed countrymen.
6. The apostles were firm with one another (Paul with Peter) . . . with their converts and with those who would oppose their preaching.
7. Jesus was firm and rough with the seven churches of Asia Minor in snatching them from the fire of Roman worldliness. He admonished them to wake up and repent. He threatened them!

BRETHREN, THERE CAN BE NO DISCIPLESHIP WITHOUT DISCIPLINE. THERE CAN BE NO CONVERSION WITHOUT CORRECTION. NOT FOR ANY OF US! IF WE ARE GOING TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH IN A WORLD DEDICATED TO DECEIT, DECADANCE AND DESTRUCTION, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE FIRM, RESOLUTE, AND CONSTANT. SOME ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE "SNATCHED" FROM THE CONSUMING FIRE OF UNBELIEF AND IMMORALITY!

8. Listen to a characterization of these people Jude had to deal with.
 - a. defiling the flesh in their dreams
 - b. rejecting authority
 - c. reviling glorious things and persons
 - d. acting on instincts like animals
 - e. walking in the way of Cain
 - f. abandoning themselves for the sake of gain
 - g. boldly carousing together
 - h. looking after themselves
 - i. waterless clouds (empty) carried along by winds
 - j. fruitless trees

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- k. wild as the waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame
- l. wandering stars, out of orbit
- m. grumblers, malcontents, loud-mouthed boasters
- n. flattering people to gain advantage
- o. scoffers
- p. those who cause divisions

ENTERTAINMENT, PARTIES, CONTESTS. . . . FRIEND, IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN THAT TO DEAL WITH THAT LIST!

D. Compassion, "on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." v. 23

- 1. There are some whom we must pity and fear at once and the same time.
- 2. Sinners are in danger. But, sometimes, so are the rescuers.
- 3. Before a man can rescue others, he must himself be strong in the faith. His own feet must be firm on the dry land before he can throw a life-jacket to the man who is being swept away.
- 4. THE OLD SAYING IS TRUE; WE OUGHT TO LOVE THE SINNER AND HATE THE SIN.

C.S. Lewis said that troubled him unceasingly about Christianity until he realized he had been doing it all his life . . . HIMSELF HE LOVED BUT HATED HIS SIN!

- 5. We are not prepared to have true, saving compassion on a man if, while loving the man, we do not hate his sin. COMPASSION WILL NOT HELP A MAN COMPROMISE WITH SIN . . . JESUS NEVER DID!
- 6. The essence of mercy is to treat a man or woman as you would want to be treated were you in their difficulty.

THE SINNER IS NOT GOING TO BE MERCIFULLY RESCUED BY A LIBERAL, WATERED-DOWN GOSPEL WHICH DENIES THE DEITY OF JESUS, THE HOLINESS OF GOD OR THE AUTHORITY OF HIS WORD!

BRETHREN, TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH IS TO BE MERCIFUL!

CONCLUSION

I. BRETHREN, WE MUST CONTEND, EARNESTLY, INTENTLY, AGONIZINGLY.

A. The Greek word *epagonizesthai* means *agonize, struggle, wrestle*.

1. Paul said, "We *wrestle* not against flesh and blood . . ."
2. He said, "The weapons of our *warfare* are not carnal . . ."
3. We are in a struggle. . . . this is not a game that matters not whether we win or lose . . . IT IS A LIFE OR DEATH STRUGGLE.

B. We must put on the whole armor and take up the sword of the Spirit.

1. We must bring every thought into captivity unto Christ,
2. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

C. Vance Havner tells this incident: A minister asked a famous actor once, "Why do you draw out crowds to see you act while very few come to hear me preach?" The answer came back, "I act my fiction as though it were fact; you preach your facts as though they were fiction!"

BRETHREN, NOWHERE IS IT EASIER TO PLAY WITH THE GOSPEL THAN IN THE MINISTRY. WITH A PLEASING PERSONALITY, A GIFT OF ELOQUENCE, ADEPTNESS AT EMOTIONALISM, AND PLENTY OF BUSINESS SENSE, ONE CAN TAKE THE GOSPEL FOR A FOOTBALL AND MAKE A FEW SCORES FOR THE SPECTATORS.

BUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH IS NO GAME, AND WOE UNTO HIM WHO PLAYS AT IT!

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II. BRETHREN, THE FAITH WE MUST AGONIZE FOR
IS ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS.

- A. It is the sovereign grace of an absolutely faithful God accomplished in and demonstrated by the Incarnate God—Jesus Christ. The Faith is the Divine Person and Authority of Jesus Christ.
- B. Our appropriation of The Faith is by a personal response of faith and obedience to His authoritative commandments.
- C. WE NEED CONTEND FOR NOTHING ELSE . . .
- D. "Is there any word from the Lord?" Zedekiah asked Jeremiah that (Jer. 37:17) after Jeremiah had been preaching for 23 years the word from the Lord! SURE THERE WAS A WORD FROM THE LORD . . . BUT ZEDEKIAH WANTED A WORD THAT WOULD SUIT HIS CARNAL, WORLDLY PURPOSES!

AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION TODAY SEEKS A SIGN . . . ANOTHER WORD FROM THE LORD. . . . THE WORD HAS ONCE FOR ALL BEEN DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS!

One of the most significant statements of this generation, in my opinion, was made by Edward John Carnell, when he said, "IF IT IS TRUE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS TO SAVE SINNERS, HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO SAY THAT WE LOVE SINNERS IF WE FAIL TO CONFRONT THEM WITH THIS TRUTH? AND WHERE CAN WE FIND A DIVINELY VALIDATED ACCOUNT OF THIS TRUTH APART FROM SCRIPTURE? IN SUM, WE CAN EXPRESS NO HIGHER LOVE TO LOST HUMANITY THAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PRECISE FORM IN WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO REVEAL IT!

MAY GOD HELP HIS CHURCH TO CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS!

ISAIAH

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-SIX AND THIRTY-SEVEN

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

(Identify and locate the following by telling all you know about them.)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Sennacherib | 10. Assyria |
| 2. Rabshakeh | 11. Hamath |
| 3. Lachish | 12. Nineveh |
| 4. Upper pool | 13. Nisroch |
| 5. Samaria | 14. Adrammelech |
| 6. son of Amoz | 15. Sharezer |
| 7. Libnah | 16. land of Ararat |
| 8. Lebanon | 17. Esar-haddon |
| 9. virgin daughter of Zion | 18. Haran |

MEMORIZATION

And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying, O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the _____, thou art the God, even thou _____, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made _____ and earth. Incline thine _____, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine _____, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of _____, who hath sent to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of _____ have laid waste all the countries, and their land, and have cast their _____ into the fire: for they were no _____, but the work of _____ hands, wood and _____; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, _____ us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art _____ even thou only. Isaiah 37:15-20

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why the king of Assyria is at this particular time in history delivering an ultimatum to Hezekiah, king of Judah? (Isa. 36:1ff)
2. Explain why the representatives of Hezekiah asked the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic? (Isa. 36:11)
3. Explain how 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were slain in one night. (Isa. 37:36-38)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Are there times when it is best to remain silent in the face of threats by those who oppose God as Hezekiah's representatives were before the threats of the Rabshakeh? Why? What examples of this are there in the N.T.? (Isa. 36:21)
2. When Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from the threats of the Rabshakeh he made the glory of God his primary request. Should we pray that way today? What other O.T. and N.T. examples of this do we have? (Isa. 37:20)
3. Can pagan rulers defy the living God and get away with it? Is God aware of their defiance? What about godless nations today who defy God's sovereignty over the world? (Isa. 37:21-29)

C. PROSTRATION, CHAPTER 38

1. PERPLEXITY

TEXT: 38:1-8

- 1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah. Set thy house in order; for thou

shalt die, and not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah,

3 and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.

7 And this shall be the sign unto thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah will do this thing that he hath spoken:

8 behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the dial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the dial whereon it was gone down.

QUERIES

- a. Was Hezekiah claiming he had been perfect?
- b. Why did God add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life?
- c. What was the sign to signify?

PARAPHRASE

About nine years earlier in the reign of Hezekiah, he had become deathly ill. Isaiah the prophet and son of Amoz was sent to the king with this message from the Lord: Thus says The Covenant God, Jehovah, You are going to die from this illness, so you had better give your last word of instruction and get things in order for you are about to be succeeded on the throne. When Hezekiah heard these words from Isaiah

he was very upset because he had no son to succeed him and the menace of the Assyrian empire had become critical. The only recourse left to Hezekiah in the face of these impossible circumstances was the Lord, so Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed. He said, O Lord, please remember that I have always tried to live my life according to Thy truth with my whole heart, and I have always tried to do what Thou hast said is good. Overcome with the emotions of this moment Hezekiah began to weep with great sobs. Immediately the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says The Covenant God, Jehovah, the same God who promised your ancestor David that his throne would abide forever, I have heard your prayer and I have seen your tears. Since you have such true concern for the promise of Thy God through David's throne I will let you live fifteen more years and produce an heir to David's throne. (Isaiah told him to put a poultice of figs on his boil and he would recover). I will also deliver you and Jerusalem from any Assyrian menace. I, Jehovah, will defend this city. (Hezekiah asked what sign he would be given to verify God's promise of the extension of his life and deliverance from the Assyrian menace. Isaiah asked Hezekiah whether he would prefer the shadow of the sun to go immediately forward ten steps on Ahaz' "step-sun-dial" or backward ten steps. Hezekiah replied that the shadow going forward would be easy so he preferred it to go backward. Isaiah prayed to the Lord). So Isaiah said to Hezekiah, This will be the sign to you from Jehovah. He will do what you asked. Jehovah says, I will cause the shadow on the step-sun-dial of Ahaz to go backward ten steps from where it is now. So the sun went backward ten steps on the step-dial from where it was at that time.

COMMENTS

V. REPINING: Hezekiah died in 695 B.C. The phrase "In those days," of verse 1 must refer to a time at least 15 years prior to 695 B.C. or somewhere near 710 B.C. Hezekiah was "sick unto death" at least nine or ten years prior to the

confrontation at Jerusalem recorded in chapters 36-37 (Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.) Therefore, Isaiah, chapter 38, is chronologically out of order. That is no problem. The historical data of chapter 38 is accurate, and that is what is important. The Hebrews were not as concerned with chronology as they were with the events and their meanings. Matthew's gospel is a prime example of a Hebrew man writing as an eyewitness what he saw accurately, but recording it out of chronological order. The proper order of these chapters in Isaiah might be as follows: 38, 39, 36, 37.

Isaiah came to the king with this message from the Lord: "Order your house, for die you shall, and not live" (literally from the Hebrew). With the Hebrew language, the verb is usually first in the sentence because the action being done or to be done is more important than the actor. The Hebrews were not as egotistical as Westerners. Leupold translates it, "Give your last orders, for you shall die and not recover." Isaiah's message is very blunt. We do not know what the king's sickness was. There were evidently boils associated with it. Lange has suggested the Hebrew word *shehiyn* translated in 38:21 *boil* "stands not only for the plague boil, but also for other burning ulcers, as it occurs in reference to leprosy (Lev. 13:18ff) and other inflammable cutaneous diseases (Ex. 9:9; Deut. 28:27, 35; Job. 2:7)."

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall to pray not that there was any special efficacy in facing the wall but probably as an instinctive reaction to hide his countenance from others standing near. It may be he did it to gain what little privacy he could obtain. Hezekiah appeals to God on the basis of Old Testament standards (see Psa. 15). Hezekiah surely does not claim for himself sinlessness. His claim is that of a life based upon the truth as he knew it from God and a complete (perfect) heart's motivation to do what was good in God's sight. It was a prayer of faith, trusting God to fulfill His will in Hezekiah's life. "Wept sore" would better be translated "wept greatly." The Hebrew *bechiy gadol* might well be translated, as the RSV does, "wept bitterly."

But why did not Hezekiah resign himself to what apparently was God's will—his immediate death? Hezekiah was only 39 or 40 years old when this terminal illness struck him. Manasseh was not to be born for three more years (Mannaseh was 12 years old when Hezekiah died at the age of 54; see II Kings 21:1; II Chron. 33:1). It was contrary to all Hezekiah believed concerning the perpetuation of the dynasty of David (which God had certainly promised) that he should die without a successor to the throne of David! It was also considered by any Jewish male to be a sign of Divine disfavor to be cut off in the midst of one's life without a male child to carry on the family name (Job 15:32; 22:15-16; Psa. 55:23; Prov. 10:27; Eccl. 7:17). As much as anything else, Hezekiah was questioning whether, in view of his godly life, he deserved such an untimely death or not. Death with such suddenness and in the prime of life has a sobering effect—a humbling effect.

V. 4-8 REPRIEVE: While Isaiah was walking "in the middle court" (II Kings 20:4) the word of Jehovah came to him. He was to go back and tell Hezekiah that his prayer was heard. Note, it does not say answered. God answered Hezekiah with His own answer. God hears our prayers and He cares about our difficulties. He is sad that we have to suffer. He is hurt by our disobedience. He is gladdened by our praise and supplications. But, He is not convinced, argued into, worn down by persistence, God's mind is not changed by the perfect logic, massive amount or unending persistence of our prayers. He knows what is best for us and always answers according to His will. He insists that we pray in order that we may put ourselves in the proper attitude of faith, humility and dependence to receive what He wills—whether it be weal or woe. The apostle Paul did not want a thorn in the flesh, and, in fact, prayed three times that it be removed. God's answer was, every time, No! So here, Hezekiah did not change the mind of God, but by his prayer of faith, humility and dependence upon God put himself in the proper condition to be the agent through whom God could continue His work of perpetuating the throne of David. God added to Hezekiah's life 15 years—time to produce

an heir and prepare him for the throne of David. The very fact that Jehovah said, "the God of David thy father," indicates God was answering according to His own purposes and not simply to satisfy Hezekiah's desire for more years of life. And it is not just Hezekiah's life that is to be spared—the city of David and its inhabitants are also to be protected from annihilation. God will continue His program of redemption through Hezekiah and his countrymen in spite of all the threats of the Assyrians.

In II Kings 20:8-11 and Isa. 38:22 we are informed that Hezekiah asked for a sign. To Ahaz God had offered a sign (Isa. 7) but Ahaz did not want a sign for he was depending upon help from Assyria. Hezekiah, realizing the severity of his situation, asks for a sign to strengthen him for the great task of leading his nation to trust Jehovah for deliverance.

The Hebrew word *ma'eloth* may be translated *dials, degrees or steps*, (cf. Ex. 20:26; I Kings 10:19; II Kings 20:9-11). We quote in part a footnote from *Old Testament History*, Smith & Fields, College Press, p. 643: "In the absence of any materials for determining the shape and structure of the . . . instrument . . . the best course is to follow the most strictly natural meaning of the word, and to consider that the dial was really stairs, and that the shadow (perhaps of some column or obelisk on the top) fell on a greater or smaller number of them according as the sun was low or high. The terrace of a palace might easily be thus ornamented. Ahaz's tastes seem to have led him in pursuit of foreign curiosities (II Kings 6:10), and his intimacy with Tiglath-pileser gave him probably an opportunity of procuring from Assyria the pattern of some such structure."

When Hezekiah asked for a sign, Isaiah said, ". . . shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?" Hezekiah replied that it was easier for the shadow to lengthen than go back, so he asked that the shadow go back ten steps. (II Kings 20:8-11) Isaiah says the *sun* returned ten steps while II Kings 20:11 says the Lord brought the *shadow* back ten steps. The Lord used the sun to produce the moving of the

shadow backward. Whatever the method, whether by refraction of light or by suspending or reversing the laws governing the orbit of the earth around the sun, it was an act performed by the supernatural power of God at work upon the natural world and provided a sign of supernatural verification to Hezekiah.

Alas, Hezekiah was still a man with weaknesses. He was like many men (even the apostle Paul, Rom. 7:13-25) whose intentions are higher than their deeds. After his recovery, Hezekiah "did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud," (II Chron. 32:24-25), when the envoys of Merodachbaladan came (39:1ff). On the other hand, when Hezekiah's ideals and deeds are compared with some of his ungodly predecessors and successors he was, like his ancestor David, "a man after God's own heart." His faith, humility and trust in God saved the nation and preserved a remnant through which redemption came to all men.

Let every reader be here reminded of the uncertainty of this life and the imperative need to "set your house in order." As a poet once wailed, too commonly "at the mercy of a moment are left the vast concerns of an eternal scene." Too often men and women procrastinate setting themselves in order with God until there is no more time or they are incapable. *Now* is the time; *Today* is the day of salvation!

QUIZ

1. When was Hezekiah sick?
2. What is probably the proper chronological order of Isaiah 36-39?
3. What is the meaning, "Set your house in order"?
4. What may have been the nature of the king's illness?
5. Why was Hezekiah upset that he was about to die?
6. For whose sake did God prolong Hezekiah's life?
7. Was Hezekiah always true to God after this?

2. PRAISE

TEXT: 38:9-20

- 9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.
- 10 I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years.
- 11 I said, I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.
- 12 My dwelling is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent: I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life; he will cut me off from the loom: From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
- 13 I quieted myself until morning; as a lion, so he breaketh all my bones: From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
- 14 Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chatter; I did moan as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed, be thou my surety.
- 15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
- 16 O Lord, by these things men live; And wholly therein is the life of my spirit: Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live.
- 17 Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness: But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
- 18 For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.
- 19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the children shall make known thy truth.
- 20 Jehovah is ready to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hezekiah feel the need to write?
- b. Was Hezekiah bitter toward the Lord?
- c. Why could there be no hope for God's truth in Sheol?

PARAPHRASE

When Hezekiah had recovered from his deathly illness, he wrote this psalm expressing his thanksgiving to God for his recovery. This is what my thoughts were: Just as my life has reached its zenith, suddenly I must depart this life and enter into the place of disembodied souls—the unknown and unknowing realm of the dead: I have been consigned to this nether-world for the rest of my existence. I was saying, I will never be able to be in the Lord's presence again in this living existence and I will never again enjoy the fellowship of living people. My life is to suddenly disappear from this place like a Bedouin's tent when it is moved from its place; my life is terminated like a rug being woven is suddenly rolled up and cut loose from the loom; as swiftly as the day passes into night, so swiftly is my life to end. After the first shock of my illness I composed myself. But my composure was shattered, like bones are shattered when broken by a lion, by the message of Isaiah that I would die from my illness. How swiftly the Lord brings my life to an end! Delirious with grief, I chattered like a swallow and mourned like a dove; I looked with weary eyes, despairing of help, and cried, O Lord, I am crushed down under this heavy grief, help me!

I am so astounded at my miraculous recovery I do not know what to say! Surely the Lord Himself has done this. I shall live submissively the rest of my days as a result of the distressing experiences I have just come through. O Lord, it is through these disciplinary experiences men live—they are the well-springs of spiritual life. O Lord, give me full recovery and restore me to life again. At first, only grief for my shortened

life possessed me. But I learned a great deal about Thy love, O Lord, and that Thou art in control of my dying and my living. From this great experience I know also, Lord; that thou has pardoned my sins. I am so glad I am alive to praise Thee, O Lord, for when men die and their spirits leave their bodies and go to the place of disembodied spirits, they cannot praise Thee; disembodied spirits cannot join in the joy and celebration of the feasts consecrated to Thee—they cannot know hope in Thy truth. The man still living, yes, only the living, like I am, shall praise Thee. Life is for the experience of the father teaching his son the word of God—there is no joy like that for the dead. I have learned from this experience that I need Thy help always and Thou art ready to give it always. On account of Thy helpfulness, O Lord, my compatriots will join me and we will sing my songs of praise all the rest of our lives, to the accompaniment of stringed instruments in Thy Temple.

COMMENTS

v. 9-14 **TURMOIL:** The first five verses of Hezekiah's psalm record his grief and distress ("bitterness") when first he was told by Isaiah he would die from his illness. The last six verses of the psalm express the king's gratitude for his miraculous healing. The psalm is interesting for its frankness and its pathos. Hezekiah has suffered the most extreme experience a man can suffer—he has faced death in the very prime of his life. It is totally unexpected in the life of a man 39 years of age. Then, almost as completely unexpected, he receives a reprieve from death. This experience reaches into the deepest recesses of a man's soul. Out of this experience Hezekiah wishes to permanently record his testimony of praise.

What distressed Hezekiah most was it appeared he would die at the zenith of his life. His great religious reform was just getting under way. There were political problems and foreign policies that needed his attention. There were great public works around the city of Jerusalem to be accomplished. But

most important, he had no son, no heir to the throne of David. If, in the "noontide" of his days, he should go to Sheol he would suffer the frustration of leaving all this unfulfilled. Sheol, though a few times used to designate the place of punishment after this life, is most often used in the Old Testament to designate simply the place of disembodied spirits of the dead. The KJV rendering "Hell" is not a good translation. Sheol corresponds better to the New Testament word Hades.

The Hebrew word *phukadeti* ("deprived") might better be translated *appointed, ordered, consigned*, and is so translated in the Paraphrase of this section. The idea is that Jehovah has ordered an end to Hezekiah's life on earth.

Hezekiah's concept of Sheol raises the problem as to the Old Testament believer's view of life after death. It is clear that O.T. saints had a very dim and shadowy concept of life after death. Part of the confusion of thought concerning Sheol arises from the invisibility of the soul. The O.T. teaches immortality, but not with the clarity of the N.T., chiefly because God's revelation in Scripture is progressive and gradually increases in clearness. It was not until "the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death" that "life and immortality was brought to *light* through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). But there is definitely a doctrine of a future life taught in the Old Testament (see Special Study, The Future Life, by R. C. Foster, p. 287).

It is a mark of the godliness of Hezekiah that one of his main concerns in having to depart this life was his concern that he would apparently not be able to do two of the things most dear to him—worship the Lord and join in companionship with his friends. These, of all our human experiences, enrich this life the most.

In verse 12, the grieving king uses figures of speech to describe his feelings which would be graphically arresting to the Palestinian herdsmen and weavers. The desolation and unfulfillment he feels is likened to the desolation of a spot where the tent of a shepherd had once been staked and made home, but has been pulled up and moved away. Abruptly, there

is nothing left! The second figure is his life likened to a piece of cloth or carpet finished on the loom and clipped off without anything to follow. "From day even to night . . ." emphasizes the abruptness of Hezekiah's death. It probably is a proverbial form meaning that in the morning a man wakes up not expecting any great crisis and by evening catastrophe has fallen upon him. It could have reference to how swiftly day passes into night; just as swiftly was the king's life to be over! The phrase is used again in verse 13 showing the intense feeling of the king about the shortness of his life. Evidently, after the first shock of Isaiah's announcement of his imminent death, Hezekiah composed himself temporarily; then the depression came upon him again tearing him to pieces psychologically, like a lion tears a carcass apart. The Hebrew word *shuiythy* is a form of the word meaning *equal* or *even* and is translated in v. 13 *quieted*. Hezekiah apparently struggled long and hard in his soul until he got himself back on even keel. Then he was in some way reminded of his impending death and he began to "come apart" all over again. He began talking and chattering, like a bird, to himself or anyone else who would listen. Occasionally a long, low moan would interrupt the chattering. He has worn himself out crying unto the Lord and is so weak he can hardly lift his eyes in prayer once more. Yet, the Lord is his only hope. He is *oppressed*. The Hebrew word *'ashak* literally means *extort*, indicating the intense oppression Hezekiah feels. He asks the Lord to be his *'arebeniy* (pledge, surety). In effect he is asking the Lord "to bail him out."

V. 15-20 **THANKSGIVING:** Verse 15 seems to form a new division in the king's hymn of praise. It is as if he says, "What else can I say about this whole experience of mine? After the vexation of my soul and the wonderful deed of the Lord in restoring my life, what else am I to conclude but that the Lord has done it for my good?" It is to Hezekiah's great credit that he learned the way of the Lord from his traumatic confrontation of death. He learned that the way of the Lord was discipline. The Hebrew word *edadeh*, translated *softly*, really means *submissively*. The king is acknowledging that the

stressful experiences he has just gone through have taught him humility. He vows to live the remainder of his life in submission to God's discipline. He has learned through his "valley of the shadow of death" that troubles are oftentimes the doors to hope (see Hosea 1:14-15, *Minor Prophets*, Butler, College Press). Crises and severities are the stuff of which character is formed. Ease and luxury debilitate character. King Hezekiah learned that it was by the tests and trials of men's lives that they "lived." All the great men of God who have contributed anything at all to the salvation of the human race have been purified and refined by their trials. The very wellsprings of purposeful living are trials (II Cor. 1:3-11; James 1:2-4; etc.).

At first, says the king in verse 17, he was distressed for selfish reasons. His major concern in sickness was that his personal comfort had been taken away. But after prayer and the word of Isaiah concerning his recovery, he realized that the real blessing in restoration to physical health was not personal comfort but the confirmation it gave him that he was in right relationship to God and that God had pardoned him from his sin. This is another concept of the Old Testament that, though true in a sense, was qualified in the New Testament. It is true, as the Mosaic law teaches, health and long life will be granted by God to those who keep His commandments and do not sin against them. It is also true that death, disease and ill-health are often the direct result of disobeying the commandments of God. But it is also true that not all disease, ill-health and tribulation are a consequence of the particular sins of a particular person. So that good health does not always mean a person is not a sinner any more than ill-health always means a person is a sinner. Hezekiah was correct in assuming that God's extension of his life showed that God was pleased with Hezekiah's humility and submission to His discipline. God's forgiveness is by grace to all men. Men are obligated to surrender to God's covenant program in order to receive that grace.

The king rejoiced not only in the evidence of forgiveness he

experienced by his extended life, but also in the opportunity to worship God. His concept of Sheol (state of disembodied spirits of men) did not include worshipping God as the N.T. book of Revelation does. Worshipping at the feast days—partaking of God's truth—none of this was for the dead. The Hebrew word *hay hay, the living one, the living one*, emphasizes Hezekiah's joy that he has been granted an extension of life. The phrase, "even as I do this day," makes it intensely personal. His joy at being allowed to live and praise God was nearly overwhelming. The father making known God's truth to his children was another joyful experience Hezekiah hoped would result from his extension of life. He had no son yet, so he is wistfully hoping God will provide that joy for him also.

The Hebrew word *lehoshiy'eny* is composed of prepositional and infinitive prefixes attached to the verb and probably expresses an aim, tendency, or direction. Thus Leupold translates, "The Lord is *minded* to deliver me." Because the Lord has made it His purpose to deliver Hezekiah from an untimely death, he is moved to express the deep, heartfelt gratitude of his soul in songs accompanied by stringed instruments. It will not be a "spur-of-the-moment" praise—but deliberate, planned, arranged, scored musical production. Hezekiah's praise will be set to musical composition and lyric in order that others may share with him in praising the Lord. The great Christian hymn writers have left us a heritage of their personal praise in lyric and tune so that we may share in their experiences. Their experiences and expressions of praise are so nearly our own that we can sing their songs as expressions of our hearts to God also. Such personal expressions become monuments and sacrifices offered to the honor of God. Hezekiah was such a man. How sad, how utterly sad, that Judah did not have a man like Hezekiah to succeed him on the throne.

QUIZ

1. Why was Hezekiah so upset about the news of his imminent death?

2. What was Hezekiah's concept of existence after death?
3. What is the difference in Hezekiah's concept of life after death and that of the New Testament?
4. How intense was Hezekiah's reaction to the prediction of his death?
5. What was Hezekiah's eventual attitude toward his traumatic experiences?
6. How did Hezekiah relate his extension of life to his relationship to God?
7. How did Hezekiah say he would express his thanks to God?

3. PRESCRIPTION

TEXT: 38:21-22

- 21 Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.
- 22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of Jehovah?

QUERIES

- a. What value did the cake of figs have for Hezekiah?

PARAPHRASE

For Isaiah had told Hezekiah's servants, Make an ointment of crushed figs and spread it over the boil, and he will get well again. And then Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, What sign will the Lord give me to prove that He will heal me?

COMMENTS

V. 21 OINTMENT: The Hebrew word *marahk*, translated *plaster*, means literally, *rub, bruise, crush*. Isaiah's instructions evidently were to crush some figs into a soft, fluid ointment that could be rubbed on the boil. If the reader will compare the parallel account of Hezekiah's illness in II Kings 20:1-11 he will find the psalm of thanksgiving omitted. The account in II Kings ends with the medicinal ointment and the omen. Verses 21 and 22 are not out of order here. The psalm of thanksgiving is simply inserted in Isaiah's account and omitted in the Kings account. The Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) literature indicates that figs and their juices were used by the ancients for healing purposes. However, it would seem here the fig ointment was used more as a symbolic agent rather than an actual medicinal cure. Hezekiah's illness was terminal! Hezekiah's healing was miraculous. The fig ointment was commanded of God as a test of Hezekiah's faith. It is the same principle with our "eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood." The emblems are symbolic, not the actual flesh and blood of the physical body of Jesus. Partaking of the emblems serves as a means of proving our faith. They serve as a test of our obedience. What the *shehkiyn* (boil) was is difficult to know. The word may mean *hot* or *inflamed* or *ulcerated*. It would bring death in Hezekiah's case.

V. 22 OMEN: The Hebrew word *aoth* is translated *sign* and also may be translated *token*, or *type*. One of the great differences between Ahaz, the king who displeased God in his leadership of the nation of Judah, and Hezekiah who pleased God in his leadership, was that Ahaz refused to seek God's sign of divine guidance while Hezekiah sought a sign from God of His divine help. When an abundance of divine signs have been demonstrated it is displeasing to God to seek after more signs (cf. Mt. 12:38-42). It would not honor God for men and women today to seek signs from God. He has given His greatest miraculous sign, once and for all, Jesus Christ, God Incarnate! (cf. Heb. 1:1). Many eyewitnesses have left us a record of God's

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complete and final supernatural revelation—the New Testament. But Hezekiah did not have such an abundance of confirmation. He was not wrong in asking for a sign.

QUIZ

1. What was the nature of the medicinal application made to Hezekiah's boil?
2. Are these two verses out of order?
3. How could fig juice heal a terminal disease?
4. Was Hezekiah correct in asking for a sign?
5. Why would it displease God for men to ask for more signs today?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE FUTURE LIFE

A Study of the Teaching of the Bible concerning the Future Life, with special attention given to the Revelation in the Old Testament.

by

R. C. Foster

We are living in an age in which the belief in the life after death is being widely doubted and denied. This is to be expected in an atheistic age, for the belief in the future life is the necessary corollary of a belief in God. Atheistic groups have seized the government of nations, as in Russia and Germany, and seek to destroy the very remnants of those who still cling to the Bible. Investigations reveal that in our own country at least 40 percent of the young people in our colleges are turning

to atheism under the strong pressure of atheistic professors. Preachers, supposed to be Christian, disavow belief in the future life, although questionnaires show that the percentage of preachers who deny the existence of hell is larger than those who deny entirely the life after death! What more timely topic than to consider "The Teaching of the Bible Concerning the Future Life"?

The Christian is the salt that is to save a dissolute world from utter corruption; he is the light set on the hill to shine out and save the world from despair. Now is the time for Christians everywhere to obey the command of their divine Lord and preach the gospel. The belief in the future life is the very crown of glory which adorns this gospel. To preach the gospel in an age like this requires not merely an intimate mastery of the teaching of the Bible, but a thorough knowledge of the criticisms of the opponents of Christianity, and of the grounds on which they rest.

The universality of the belief in the life after death has always been a convincing argument. Even the most degraded savages have had their conception of the future life. It seems rather strange to hear so many voices of doubt raised in an age so boastful of its intellectualism, its culture and its own infallibility. But reflection upon this leads one to doubt the wisdom and worth of this generation rather than the truth and value of belief in eternal life. The more one studies this present generation and perceives its vaunting egotism, its shallow reasoning, its stupid prejudice and its polluted morals, the more one is inclined to cling to the anchor of hope which has sustained the Christian through the centuries.

VIEW OF THE ATHEIST

Those who question the teaching of the Bible in regard to the future life are divided into various groups. First, there is the outright atheist. Many sermons have been preached on "The Search for an Atheist." The thought of the sermons has been

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that such a person does not exist. It is said that deep down in the heart of the so-called atheist there is still the latent faith in God, smothered, but sure to break into a flame when misfortune or death comes. The speech of Robert Ingersol at the grave of his brother, when he could almost hear the rustle of angels' wings, was often cited. Likewise the dying statement of Voltaire that if the devil had ever had a hand in anything, it had been in his attacks on the Bible. But it is perhaps more than any one can affirm with assurance that every one who has denied the existence of God and the future life has sooner or later recanted. It is better to rest on the declaration of the Bible without qualifications: "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." H. J. Allen, of Kansas, tells of a young Russian guide, a college graduate, who ridiculed him, as he was touring Moscow, because he frankly admitted that he still read and believed the Bible. He finally asked her where she expected to go when she died. She replied, "Into fertilizer."

THE HUMANISTS' AND MODERNISTS' POSITION

The humanists who reduce God to a mere idea seem to be in utter confusion concerning the future life, and the impression most of them make is that they believe in annihilation, although they use a variety of phrases and illustrations and still talk about "eternity" as they do about "God." Modernists who are not so extreme center their attacks on the Old Testament to prove that the future life is not taught there, or at least only in a very vague way, until later books were written. This theory has been so widely disseminated that quite frequently preachers who think that they believe the Bible proclaim that the future life is not taught in the O.T., but only in the N.T. They think they are exalting Christ and the N.T. by so affirming, but the truth is they have merely consciously or unconsciously adopted a modernistic theory without examining its basis or implications. It is the purpose of this essay to examine both the O.T. and the N.T. to determine the general outline

of teaching concerning the life after death, with special emphasis upon the question as to whether the O.T. actually teaches the future life.

THE MODERNISTS' PRESUPPOSITION

The presupposition which underlies the modernists' denial that the Old Testament teaches the future life is their theory as to the development of the O.T. They deny that it is revealed of God, and affirm it is merely man's gradual discovery of what is therein affirmed. In support of this they dissect various O.T. books, such as the Pentateuch and Isaiah, and whenever they find a statement or teaching which their theory of evolutionary development of the O.T. supposes could not have prevailed until a late period in the thinking of the Jews, they immediately declare this passage is by some later writer, J, E, D, P, or a second Isaiah. A free use of the evolutionary shears enables them to cut up the O.T. and rearrange its contents so as to make a gradual development throughout of the idea of a life after death. Thus they slyly attempt to prove one presupposition by another presupposition, and depend upon their solemn use of big words and scientific terms to prevent the reader from discovering the hoax.

Prof. Kyrsoff Lake, the famous humanist of Harvard, was pressing in his class one day this theory that the O.T. does not teach the future life. A student spoke up and said: "But, Professor Lake, what about the time when the spirit of Samuel returned and talked to Saul before the battle where the latter was slain?" After a moment's hesitation, Prof. Lake responded: "Well, IF that is in the O.T., I will have to admit that it teaches the future life, but have not the critics been able to cut that passage out?"

A MORE MODERATE VIEW

Prof. A. C. Knudson, of Boston University, who is not so extreme in his modernism, has recently published a book

entitled, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*. He has a chapter on "The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life." He does not attempt to *cut* out the passages that affirm such a belief; he just tries to *rub* them out, to insist that these passages do not really represent the belief of the Jews of the time. At times he resorts to the dissection of books to relegate certain statements to a late period.

The Christian believes the Bible to be inspired of God. The miraculous proof it offers sustains its claim. That the teaching concerning the future should be more clearly and emphatically presented in the New Testament than the O.T. is to be expected, for the new and final revelation is superior to the old, and it was Christ who "brought life and immortality to light." But that the O.T. does not teach the future life is the theory of unbelievers like the Sadducees in the time of Jesus and the modernists of today. Anyone who has become confused upon this topic should read repeatedly the discussion of Jesus as to whether the O.T. teaches the future life in Matt. 22:23-33, and the great review of this problem in the 11th chapter of Hebrews.

HEATHENISM AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Prof. Knudson quotes several authors on the question as to why the O.T. has so much less to say on the future life than the religions of Egypt, Greece and other nations. Prof. Salmond declares the O.T. to be below the standard of other religions of ancient times, "less tolerable than the Greek, less ethical than the Egyptian, less adequate and certain than the Persian. These had a more special mission than can be claimed for the Hebrew faith, in the preservation and transmission of the truth of a future life." Kant, the German philosopher, held that, because of this lack of emphasis on the future life, the O.T. lacks a genuinely religious character. While his compatriot, Schopenhauer, calls the O.T. on this basis, "The rudest of all religions."

REPLY TO THE ACCUSATION

A sufficient answer to all this unfavorable comparison of the O.T. to the heathen religions of the times is the reminder that it is not how much, but what is said on a subject that counts. Read the endless silly ideas advanced by these pagan religions. Visit the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen, filled with the rations and decorations prepared for the dead king. Is the religion of Israel inferior to Egypt because the O.T. is not filled with instructions about burying food and gold chariots, etc., with the dead, for them to use hereafter? Prof. Knudson claims that ancient Hebrew graves have been unearthed in Palestine that contain such primitive preparations for the future life. But if this be so, it only proves again what the O.T. continually relates that the Jewish people at times deserted the true faith and became contaminated by the false religions about them. Prof. Knudson cannot find any passage in the O.T. which instructs that such physical equipment be provided for the dead. He argues at great length that the Jews generally accepted the crude practices of their pagan neighbors concerning the future life, such as ancestor worship, citing Deut. 26:14; Jer. 16:7; Psa. 106:28; Hos. 9:4; Ezek. 24:17; Lev. 19:28; 21:5; II Sam. 15:30; Ezek. 24:17. A reading of these passages will show the absolute absence of proof; they warn against excess or mourning. Psa. 106:28 condemns Israel for having joined the heathen in the wilderness in "sacrifices of the dead," but such a reference, together with those that warn Israel against the practice of witchcraft in regard to the dead, shows that the teaching of the O.T. plainly recognizes the life after death, and warns the Jews against the false heathen practices concerning it.

The critics who argue that the O.T. does not teach the future life until a very late period, when they had borrowed the idea from their heathen neighbors, are in desperate straits trying to explain the amazing difference between the teaching of the O.T. and that of the surrounding pagan nations. Some suggest that the reason the future life is not emphasized more is the

"strong sense of solidarity" which held the nation immortal. They say, "The Messianic hope rendered unnecessary the belief in personal immortality." But this falsifies the facts as to the O.T. teaching and as to the natural and inevitable longings of the human heart. The Messianic hope was one that the individual was to share. Prof. Toy holds that the lack of teaching on the life after death is due to the lack of constructive imagination on the part of the Semites; the Jews knew nothing of drama or metaphysics. In other words, if the Jews could have just seen one or two Greek plays, it might have occurred to them that life after death would be desirable! Another explanation of this difficulty seems to have been overlooked: that it may be caused by a lack of eye-sight on the part of the critics.

EVIDENCE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

What evidence does the Old Testament bear that the writers who led and molded the faith of the nation believed in the future life? What evidence that God was revealing to His chosen people in His own way and time the glories of the beyond, drawing them away from the foolish and degrading teaching of the heathen, and leading up to the natural climax of the revelation in Christ?

- (1) Actual cases of resurrection of the dead (I Kgs. 17:22; II Kgs. 4:35; 13:21)
- (2) Actual cases of translation where the individual did not die, but was translated by God. (Gen. 5:22-24; II Kgs. 2:11)

The modernists argue that these cases do not mean that the people would be led by such to believe in a future life. How so, unless we presume the Jews were a nation of imbeciles?

- (3) Actual case of reappearance of Samuel, after his death, to talk with Saul. (I Sam. 28:12-19)
- (4) Definite declarations of belief in future life.

After David's extravagant mourning on the ash heap

during the illness of his child, as he prayed for forgiveness and for the child's life, his servants feared to report to him the death of his child, and were astounded at the calmness with which he heard the news and ceased his mourning. His statement is a classic for all time: "But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." (II Sam. 12:15-23). David's statement does not mean annihilation, for his whole conduct was that of hope instead of despair. And his repeated declarations voice his faith in the future life.

OVERLOOKING THAT EVIDENCE

Prof. Knudson overlooks the above incident. He quotes four Psalms (16, 17, 49, 73) as teaching vaguely (16, 17) or definitely (49, 73) the future life, but claims they are all of late origin. His theory compels him to hold that no clear statements of the future life were made until about the Maccabean period, when the Jews could have had time to learn this from the Persians. The apostle Peter did not feel compelled to trim the O.T. to fit the theory of evolution, for on the day of Pentecost he made the teaching of the O.T. on the future life one of the central points of argument in his sermon as he quoted David as saying in Ps. 16:8ff.: "Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither shalt thou give thy holy one to see corruption." He declared that David was predicting the resurrection of Jesus.

Just to show that the belief in the future life underlies the whole O.T., and to take a Psalm which nobody denies is written by David, read the famous 23rd Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. . . ." He does not say "into the valley," but "through the valley." Death was not a destination to him, but a thoroughfare. He had the mountain-top vision. He was traveling through the valley and on to the heights of glory beyond. Hear him as he closes: "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever.*"

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THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

Many other passages might be quoted, such as Ezek. 37:1-14; Isa. 14:9; 25:8; 26:19; 53:10-12; 66:24; Dan. 12:2. The last passage is particularly interesting: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Critics hold that this teaches man is immortal; i.e., some will be raised and some annihilated (not raised). But this would mean that man may achieve the resurrection by either pre-eminent righteousness or pre-eminent wickedness! Ewald holds the "many" means all Israelites as contrasted with the heathen; Charles and Knudson hold it means "The pre-eminent good and bad in Israel." But the next verse makes quite clear that all the wise and noble are to be raised to a blessed existence, and it immediately follows that all the wicked shall also be raised, but to everlasting punishment.

THE OLD TESTAMENT ANSWERS DOUBTERS

The fact that a number of O.T. writers argue the question of the future life, and state both the position of doubt and of faith, does not alter the fact of what the O.T. teaches. For the point is not that some verse may be quoted from Job or Ecclesiastes or Psalms which expresses doubt as to the life after death, but the question is: To what conclusion did the author come in the end? It is futile to quote the earlier expressions of doubt in Ecclesiastes. What does he say is his conclusion after he has considered the whole range of human pleasures, doubt and despair? "Man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it . . . This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into

judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:5-14). It is true that Job ponders the side of doubt as he asks, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). But hear his conclusion: "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he shall stand up upon the earth: And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26). The same is true of the Psalmist.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

A question of supreme interest is: What did Jesus have to say on the teaching of the Old Testament as to the future life? The skeptics of His day rendered a negative verdict as today. But hear the Son of God as He tore apart the flimsy argument of the Sadducees "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). No better comment could be written across the face of many books on this subject, written by men who claim to be scholars. After answering the puzzle about the seven husbands and one wife, and pausing to press it home that there are angels in heaven even as there is a resurrection, even though the Sadducees denied both, Jesus offered just one passage from the Old Testament to prove that it teaches the future life. And what an extraordinary passage it is! Ye blind leaders of the blind, hear His words! "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Not invented by man; not learned in Egypt, Greece or Persia, but "spoken unto you by God." And as if to meet the critics of the 20th century, He does not quote Daniel, Isaiah or the Psalms; He quotes from the words of God to Moses, recorded in Exodus 3:6. No room for late development of ideas! His argument is this: Abraham had been dead many years, also Isaac and Jacob; but God does not say to Moses, "I was the God of Abraham"

(while he was living, but not now), but, "I *am* the God of Abraham"; he is alive now, for a dead person who is no longer in existence can have had a creator, but he cannot have a God. It is as if Jesus said: "Approach the Old Testament where you will, and scratch the surface; you will find the life after death implied, if not stated."

TESTIMONY IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Like most problems which concern the Old Testament, the question as to its attitude toward the life after death finds a sublime discussion in the Epistle to the Hebrews. One might well write across the magnificent 11th chapter, the title, "The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life." It reviews the first glimmer of hope in Abel's obedient sacrifice; the translation of Enoch; the faith and hope of Abraham. "These all died in faith, not having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13). By its emphatic study of the word "pilgrim" which Abraham used, Hebrews analyzes his faith. It pictures Abraham standing by the grave of Sarah and solemnly affirming that he was a pilgrim (Gen. 23:4). A pilgrim is a traveler with a destination. So with Abraham in his sojourn in Palestine: he dwelt in tents and kept looking for a permanent city. It was not Ur of the Chaldees, for the way was open to return there. "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (11:16). Hebrews pictures Abraham with uplifted knife, about to kill Isaac, in obedience to God's command. How was this possible? Because Abraham believed that death did not end all, but that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead. What strong faith was this in the future life! The faith of Isaac and Jacob as they died, and the specific command of Joseph "concerning his bones," all are cited. The critics who cite this longing of Joseph to be buried with his fathers as proof that the O.T. leaders counted the geographical location of burial more important than righteous

living, ought to be given the first prize for intellectual confusion. It proves this much, however, that Joseph was looking forward to a blessed life hereafter, or why bother about any command "concerning his bones," that his body should be taken with the Israelites to Palestine? Moses' hope in the "re-compense of reward," which was to offset all his sacrifice and suffering for the Lord here on earth, receives great emphasis. Special mention is made of the fact that "women received their dead by a resurrection; others were tortured not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35).

The Old Testament thus was God's message to Israel to clear their minds of the confused and false teaching of pagan nations about the after life, and to prepare the way for His final and complete revelation in the New Testament. The second coming of Jesus, the end of the world, the judgment of men according to the deeds done in the body, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, the blessed life of the redeemed with God forever, the eternal punishment of the wicked—all this has tremendous emphasis in the teaching of Jesus and the whole New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone on which all this is builded. It is the very type of our resurrection. It contains a double miracle: not merely the rejoining of the soul and body of Jesus, but the final translation of this earthly body into the heavenly at the time of the ascension.

PAUL'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

Of this mystery Paul speaks in I Corinthians, when he seeks to explain the fact that, although the Christian is to expect a resurrection, he is not expected to have in heaven exactly the same body as on earth. People were disturbed at Corinth with the question as to "how are the dead raised? . . . and with what manner of body do they come?" Paul illustrates by the grain of wheat planted in the ground. It is the same grain of wheat and it is not the same grain of wheat which comes forth.

We see different kinds of flesh here: beasts, birds, fish. This should illustrate God's power to give us a heavenly body according to His own will. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." We shall preserve our identity. We shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. "These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they and whence came they? . . . These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13, 14). In this blessed hope let us live and die, for death is but the beginning of life, unending and blessed, for those who follow the Son of God.

Addendum: For an excellent expose' of Modern Higher Criticism dealing at length with the Pentateuch, see Dr. John L. Campbell's book, *The Bible Under Fire*. Read especially the first chapter which deals with the Polychrome ("Rainbow") Bible where the critics literally took shears and cut and pasted until they made a Bible which would "prove" their theories of "gradual development."

D. PRESUMPTION, CHAPTER 39

1. PRIDE

TEXT: 39:1-4

- 1 At that time Merodachbaladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.
- 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

- 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.
- 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

QUERIES

- a. Why was the king of Babylon so interested in Hezekiah?
b. Why did the prophet Isaiah question Hezekiah?

PARAPHRASE

About nine years before Hezekiah's confrontation with the Assyrian Rabshakeh, soon after his recovery from his illness, the king of Babylon, Merodachbaladan, son of Baladan, sent his envoys with a letter and a gift to Hezekiah. The King of Babylon was interested in the reports of Hezekiah's phenomenal recovery from terminal illness. Hezekiah was proud of the fact that the king of Babylon had sent envoys to inquire of his recovery so he took them on a tour of his palace, showing them the wealth of his treasury and the armaments in his armory. Hezekiah was so taken with the overtures of the Babylonians, he showed them everything in his city they wanted to see. Immediately, Isaiah the prophet confronted King Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say to you—where are they from? Hezekiah did not tell Isaiah what the men said but did reply, They are from far away in Babylon. Then Isaiah asked the king, what have you shown them of your kingdom? Hezekiah replied, I have shown them everything about my kingdom—everything in my treasury and in my armory.

COMMENTS

V. 1-2 **VANITY OF THE KING:** II Chronicles 32:31 relates that the envoys from Babylon were sent to "inquire about the sign that had been done in the land." Evidently word had filtered into the courts of foreign potentates of the phenomenal, miraculous recovery of King Hezekiah from a terminal illness. Some commentators are inclined to think the inquiry of the envoys about Hezekiah's recovery was simply a ploy, a ruse, to approach Judah for a military alliance against Assyria. Whatever the case, the text in II Chronicles indicates Hezekiah did not seek the Lord's guidance in dealing with the Babylonians so, "God left him to himself, in order to try him and to know all that was in his heart."

If our chronology is correct (see comments on 38:1-3) the Babylonian envoys came to Hezekiah before the invasion of Sennacherib (Isa. 36-37). They came soon after Hezekiah's recovery. This would place their visit sometime in 710 B.C. Merodachbaladan (which means, Marduk has given a son) was probably named for the pagan god Marduk. He was the valiant leader of a people known as Chaldeans who gained power and rule over the southern territory of Mesopotamia. In 722 B.C. he rebelled against the Assyrian rule of that territory and formed his own kingdom. Sargon, king of Assyria (Isa. 20), recognized his domain in 721 B.C. so he reigned over that small southern territory for 11 years. About 710 B.C. he sent envoys to Jerusalem, supposedly to give his best wishes to Hezekiah at his recovery from illness. What the envoys really came for was to invite Hezekiah to join in an alliance against Assyria. Merodachbaladan had already persuaded Susa, Phoenicia, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Egypt to join him in a military attack upon Assyria. Sargon learned of the planned attack and set about to defeat these nations, one by one. He took Babylon and Bit-Yakin (Merodachbaladan's home in the swamps of southern Mesopotamia) and Merodachbaladan himself was captured. He managed to be reinstated as ruler of a small principedom at Bit-Yakin. Around 702 or 701 he occupied

Babylon and ruled there again but only briefly. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor drove him back to the swamps and Bit-Yakin. Later he was forced to flee to Elam (Persia) and Chaldean influence was silenced in Mesopotamia. Although Merodachbaladan was unsuccessful in his attempt to overthrow Assyria and revive the power of ancient Babylon, the Chaldeans rose after his death to the dominant power in Mesopotamia.

Merodachbaladan's escapades and seditions are documented in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sennacherib found by archaeologists (See *Archaeology and Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pg. 210-211).

The Hebrew word *samahk* expresses more than *gladness*. It often means *to shine cheerfully*. Hezekiah was evidently very impressed with his visitors. He was flattered that the king of Babylon would send him a present. He was also momentarily charmed by their invitation to join in the efforts to break the Assyrian yoke. With such charming visitors Hezekiah felt it would be an opportune time to "show off" the grandeur of his country's wealth and armament. He probably wanted to prove to them he was no second-rate king. Hezekiah committed a two-fold *faux pas*; a political blunder and a personal transgression. For the king of God's covenant people to display all his treasures and weapons to pagan envoys who represented inevitable enemies was political stupidity. The envoys undoubtedly made mental note of fortifications, weapons and financial resources for future use. The personal blunder was in succumbing to vanity, pride, egotism and self-sufficiency. This detracted from his faith and trust in Jehovah. And this almost immediately after his great psalm of praise and trust in Jehovah! How like us mortal men he was!

V. 3-4 VOICE OF THE PROPHET: It appears Isaiah came almost immediately after the tour of the envoys and confronted Hezekiah with his blunder. Isaiah was sent by Jehovah as verse 5 confirms. His approach reminds one of the confrontation between the prophet Nathan and King David. Hezekiah is so charmed by the prestige apparently accorded him by this visit he misses the ominous inferences of the

prophet. Isaiah asks, what have these men said? and where are they from? Hezekiah places first importance on where they were from—Babylon. Never mind what they say—even though they may be talking about a Babylonian-Judean alliance. The important thing to notice is how important I am that they would come all the way from the great city of Babylon to see me.

Isaiah's next question is one of foreboding also, What have they seen in your house? In other words, How much have you shown them of your armament and treasures? Have you been discreet or indiscreet? Still elated over being flattered by such auspicious visitors, the King blurts out that he has shown them *everything*! Nothing has been kept secret. Isaiah's questions were intended to reveal to the king his blunder. They were specifically to remind him he had not kept his promise to trust in Jehovah but he had been seduced through his egotism to trust in men.

QUIZ

1. What does II Chronicles 32 tell us about this incident?
2. When did the envoys from Babylon come to Hezekiah?
3. What was Hezekiah's reaction to their visit?

2. PUNISHMENT

TEXT: 39:5-8

- 5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts.
- 6 Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah.
- 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt

beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon.

8 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

QUERIES

- a. Why carried away to Babylon instead of Assyria?
- b. Why did Hezekiah say the prediction was "good"?

PARAPHRASE

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts. Behold, the time is coming when all of the armament and treasures which you have so boastfully shown your Babylonian visitors—everything your ancestors have worked so hard to accumulate and store up—will be carried off by the Babylonians as the booty of war. None of your wealth or weapons will be left, says the Lord. Your own sons and grandsons will be taken away by these same Babylonians and made slaves in the palace of their king. Hezekiah was humbled by the prophet's words and said, Yes, the word of the Lord is good and just. Furthermore, the word of the Lord is merciful. The Lord will make peace and truth to prevail for us at least for the rest of my days.

COMMENTS

V. 5-7 CARRYING AWAY: Isaiah came, not in a human advisory capacity, but as a prophet of God. His prediction carried all the authority of Almighty God. It was, in fact, *the word* of Jehovah.

It is ironic that all the treasures Hezekiah had shown to the Babylonian envoys will someday, Isaiah predicts, be carried off

by the Babylonians as the booty of conquest. Isaiah's prediction is enigmatic and problematical, to say the least. Here are the Babylonian envoys bringing gifts, expressing concern about Hezekiah's health, making friendly and charming inquiries about the grandeur of Judah's beautiful Temple vessels, diplomatically inviting Hezekiah to join forces with a great crusade against the common enemy, Assyria, and Isaiah is predicting they will be Judah's real conquerors. What appears to be the real threat, which has terrified the people, Assyria, Isaiah has predicted will disappear and pose no threat at all to Judah. What it really amounts to is a confrontation between the finite knowledge (limited only to the past and present) and the infinite knowledge of God (unlimited). Hezekiah's part in the drama is to decide which he will trust.

A prediction even more piercing to the heart of Hezekiah was the one concerning his sons. He does not even have a son yet! Now the dark news comes that when he shall have a son, his destiny is that of conquest and slavery in a pagan palace. The fulfillment of this prediction may be seen in Dan. 1:3-6; II Chron. 33:11; II Kings 24:12-16. Manasseh, Hezekiah's immediate son, was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians; Jehoiachin, a great-great-great-great grandson of Hezekiah was taken captive by the Babylonians. The throne of Judah, the house of David, so precious to Hezekiah, will not only cease to exist, but the sovereign crowned heads which sit upon it will be forced into shameful servitude in an unclean, idolatrous, pagan court.

V. 8 CALM ACQUIESCENCE: Hezekiah reacts to the rebuke of Isaiah and the word of the Lord as one would expect a man of his calibre to react. He is a man of great faith, but not a perfect man. He has weaknesses. But he is a man of a good and malleable heart. He is capable of acknowledging his sin and repenting when confronted with the will of God. In this respect, he is like his progenitor, David. It is not only the sin of Hezekiah that brings on the Babylonian captivity (cf. Deut. 28:32), but the whole nation has defaulted on their covenant with God. Already other prophets have arraigned Judah before

the judgment bar of God (Amos 2:4-5; Hosea 6:11, etc.).

Hezekiah should not be accused of a selfish attitude when he says, "For there shall be peace and truth in my days." He has resigned his will to that of the Lord and pronounced the will of the Lord "good"! What all does he mean? We cannot be certain. Perhaps he is acknowledging the justness of God's chastisement. Perhaps he is acknowledging the good that will result from the chastening of a rebellious and unfaithful people through the coming captivity. He himself has just endured a chastening in his illness, and it has made him a man more responsive to the revealed will of God. Now he thanks the Lord, not only for himself but for his nation, that there will be a time of peace and truth for Judah before the darkness of the Babylonian captivity falls. E. J. Young paraphrases Hezekiah, "There will be peace and truth at least in my days, but I am not spared the misfortune of the knowledge that my descendants will go into captivity."

The great forces of evil that oppose the redemptive work of God through His covenant loom on the horizon in Babylon. The mercy of God is extended to the covenant people for a short time. But soon they must be cast into the crucible and purified. Soon they must suffer the discipline of God that produces the fruit of righteousness. Soon the remnant must be refined that through it may come the Messiah and redemption to all peoples. It is no comfort to know that "peace and truth" will last only for Hezekiah's day. What about the future fortunes of the people of God? What ultimate and everlasting comfort can be given to God's people? What about peace and truth forever?

The answers to these questions are reserved for the second great section of the book of Isaiah, chapters 40-66.

QUIZ

1. What is so enigmatic about predicting captivity by Babylon?
2. Which sons of Hezekiah were taken captive?

3. Was Hezekiah selfish in being glad of peace and truth in his own days?
4. Where is the answer to the enigma of the captivities?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-EIGHT AND THIRTY-NINE

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

(Identify and locate the following by telling all you know about them.)

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Hezekiah | 7. the house of Jehovah |
| 2. the wall | 8. cake of figs |
| 3. dial of Ahaz | 9. Merodachbaladan |
| 4. Sheol | 10. the house of his armor |
| 5. the loom | 11. Babylon |
| 6. the pit | 12. thy sons that shall issue
from thee |

MEMORIZATION

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto _____. And Isaiah the prophet the son of _____ came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, _____; for thou shalt _____, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his _____ to the _____, and prayed unto Jehovah, and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in _____ and with a _____ heart, and have done that which is _____ in thy sight. And Hezekiah _____ sore. (Isa. 38:1-3)

Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, _____ is the word of Jehovah which thou has spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be _____ and _____ in my _____. (Isa. 39:8)

I S A I A H

EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain why Hezekiah was so distraught when he learned he would die (Isa. 38:1-22).
2. Explain why it was proper for Hezekiah to ask for a sign of his healing, when the N.T. denounces the Pharisees for continually seeking a sign from Jesus (Isa. 38:7-8).
3. Explain why Hezekiah could say the prediction of the Lord of the Babylonian captivity for Judah was "good" (Isa. 39:5-8).

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. What is the difference between the Old Testament concept of life after death and that of the New Testament and what difference should this make in our relationship to God?
2. What did Hezekiah do wrong in showing the Babylonians his treasury and what application could be made in the church's (the New Kingdom of God) relationship to the world?
3. What overall application could be made for the Church and the World in this whole section, chapters 24-39?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:1-11

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THIS MESSAGE?

A. The general tenor of thought and action today

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

1. Freedom means license.
2. Lawlessness is sin.

Note: Billy Graham, *Eternity*, November, 1965, says, "What we need in the Church today is a new holy discipline—and a disciplined life."

II. DISCIPLINE DEFINED (Baker's *Dictionary of Theology*)

"Discipline implies instruction and correction, the training which improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects character. It is the moral education obtained by the enforcement of obedience through supervision and control."

The concept of discipline is usually, in Scriptural terms, called *chastening*, *chastisement*, *instruction*.

The concept is usually illustrated in the Scriptures by the correction of human fathers toward their sons.

III. THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE (may be taken from this text)

- A. Demands (There are some who think man must be free of any authority or discipline to attain his greatest good.)
- B. Designs (Discipline is not an end in itself, but the means to an end . . . the means must be endured to reach the purposed end.)
- C. Derivatives (If we are to endure it and it is to reach the right end, discipline must have the right motivation or derivative.)

I. DISCIPLINE DEMANDED

- A. The nature of our being demands it.
 1. Man is an organism—without discipline he loses balance; without authority he disintegrates; an organism is an integrated structure and it must have discipline and authority to remain integrated.
 2. Without discipline man's life is chaotic—insecure—

purposeless—Psychologically we must have discipline to feel needed and cared for—look at Hebrews 12:8, “If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” Illustration: A preacher took a 17 year old delinquent boy into his home. When the boy broke the rules that had been laid down, the preacher punished him bodily. Sobbing, the boy exclaimed that it was the first time anyone had shown true concern for him!

This is the heart rending cry of many despairing souls today . . . “We live in an indifferent universe . . .”

Reader's Digest, November, 1965: “There seems to be no doubt whatsoever that parents who have the least trouble with their children take the task of discipline seriously. Psychologists, once so permissive, now point out that the worst thing we can do for our children is to be too kind, for children whose parents love them too much to punish them are like pedestrians wandering in traffic where there are no stop signs. Frightened, children may provoke their parents with worse and worse behavior. It is as though they were saying, “If we get snarled up *enough*, somebody will *have* to take over.”

It's sobering to find that children themselves frequently testify they'd like their parents to be stricter. In a survey taken a few years ago, one high-school child in five thought the discipline in his life inadequate; 13% even felt that a good whack was a fine idea!

“Maybe I'm old-fashioned,” a young mother told me after she had dispatched a whining, showing-off five year old to her room, “but I can't believe that being allowed to make everybody else miserable now is going to make her more lovable twenty years

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

from now."

Perhaps parents would not be so afraid of discipline if they could think of it as something more than punishment and reward. In fact, it is a question of putting our children so in control of themselves that they can use their best qualities. It is a question of giving them the ability to make decisions and to accept the consequences of their choice.

3. A libertine existence, a life without the restraints of Godly discipline, leads inevitably to pessimism, cynicism and despair . . . sometimes to suicide. I could tell you of people I have known who, suddenly made bereft of the security of authority and discipline they had rested in, took their own lives.
 - a. Nietzsche went insane when he cast off all discipline of the mind and will.
 - b. Comte suffered a mental breakdown and attempted suicide as a result of his undisciplined philosophic ramblings.
 - c. King Saul, Herod the Great—both suffered similarly.
4. Yes, even man's thinking and learning processes are dependent upon discipline; authority; order. Without discipline, there is no learning. Illustration: Gary Boyd tells of the little boy attending a school of progressive education where the student was told that $2 + 2$ equals whatever he discovered he wants it to equal. His father showed him an old fashioned school book where students were taught the discipline of the multiplication tables on authority . . . HE WAS ALMOST OVERCOME WITH JOY.
5. Man's moral balance is dependent upon discipline. Man must obey and submit to what is right and orderly or else he comes to guilt, anarchy, disorientation.

B. The nature of our association demands it:

Illustration: Chas. E. Whittaker, former Supreme Court Justice, in December *Reader's Digest*, says, "Can a disorderly society survive? In all recorded history none ever has."

1. Every society must have order, and discipline is necessary to order.
2. The church is a kingdom; a kingdom without authority and discipline results in anarchy.
3. The church is a family; a home without discipline results in misery and heartache.
4. The church is a body; an organism without discipline results in frustration.
5. The church is a flock; a flock without discipline and submission to the leadership of its shepherds is destined for disaster through the straying of its lambs.
6. The church is an army; an army without discipline, order and submission to its commanders is headed for certain defeat!
7. The Christian life is like an athletic contest; an athlete without discipline will lose!

C. The word of God and God's very nature demands it.

1. God ordered the church into existence.

By His Word He has given her a constitution; there is a sense of being under law to Christ, I Cor. 9:21.

By His Word He has appointed shepherds for His flock. When the church of the Lord, following the guidance of the word of the Lord, appoints elders and leaders—they have been appointed by the Lord.

2. Hebrews 13:17 - Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.
3. Paul wrote to the young preacher, Timothy, listing certain disciplines for him to follow and said, "I hope

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth." I Tim. 3:14-15

4. There are many references to the Divine wisdom in God's demands for discipline.

"The rod of reproof gives wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Prov. 29:15

"Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." Prov. 29:17

5. One very pertinent example: The chosen people of the O.T. intended to be a disciplined people . . . God said through Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk there in, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken." Jer. 6:16-17

So they were disciplined by judgment and captivity.

6. The Word of God demands that Christians live in harmony with the discipline of their employers, their homes, their governments. THE WORD OF GOD DECLARES BOTH BY PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE THAT THE BODILY LIFE IS A CONTINUAL LIFE OF DISCIPLINE.

THE VERY CALL OF CHRIST IS THE CALL TO BECOME A "DISCIPLE."

SO, EACH ONE OF US IS OBLIGATED TO CONFORM TO DISCIPLINE; OUR NATURE DEMANDS IT, OUR ASSOCIATION DEMANDS IT, OUR LORD DEMANDS IT!

One never outgrows in this life the obligation to follow discipline—the child must follow it; the teenager must follow it; the college student must follow it; the college teacher must follow it, THE PREACHER, THE PREACHER'S WIFE MUST FOLLOW IT!

II. THE DESIGN OF DISCIPLINE (Its Purpose)

- A. To build character - "the purpose of discipline is the correction, the improvement, the obedience, the faith, and the faithfulness of God's child. The outcome is a happiness (Job 5:17) a blessedness; and assurance (Rev. 3:15).
1. Moses learned discipline and grew in character from his 40 years of schooling in the deserts of Midian.
 2. David learned discipline and grew in character from his schooling in the caves and wilderness of Judea fleeing from Saul.
 3. Even the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting the limitations of flesh, returned to Nazareth as a boy and was obedient to Mary and Joseph and "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." Lk. 2:51-52 Yes, even Jesus experienced obedience through the things He suffered and has become the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey Him. Hebrews 5:9

YOU ARE BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER EACH MOMENT OF EACH DAY ACCORDING TO YOUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMANDS FOR DISCIPLINE. . . .EVEN IN SMALL MATTERS.

- a. When committing yourself to serve in a certain capacity . . . SEE IT THROUGH EVEN THOUGH IT INTERFERES WITH YOUR SOCIAL LIFE!
- B. To fit one as a vessel for use by Christ
- "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work." II Tim. 2:20-21 So SHUN YOUTHFUL PASSIONS.
1. The discipline of the Lord is to make us more Christ-like; self-surrendering; self-giving.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

"When He had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master. . . . If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13:12-17

YES, THERE ARE CERTAIN DISCIPLINES NECESSARY TO HUMBLE US THAT WE MAY BECOME PROPER VESSELS.

I REFER YOU TO JOHN 13 . . . the servant is not greater than his Master!

Have this mind in you, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross . . ." Phil. 2:5-8

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." I Cor. 6:19

Even our text says we are disciplined to share His holiness, 12:10.

- C. The discipline of the Lord is to cause you to bear fruit. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (disciplines) that it may bear more fruit . . ." Jn. 15:1-2
1. One of the clearest statements as to the purpose of discipline and chastening is found in II Cor. 1:3-11. Paul says there he was afflicted in order that he might

learn to strengthen others who were afflicted . . . to bear fruit.

OUR TEXT IN Heb. 12 says "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." v. 11

2. Another important discussion of the discipline of the Holy Spirit within a man which bears fruit is Paul's discussion of Christian liberty and expediency in I Cor. 8 and 9. "All things are lawful but all things are not expedient."

"If eating meat causes my brother to stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall."

". . . we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."

THIS IS THE DISCIPLINE WE ALL SHOULD SEEK. . .

III. THE DERIVATIVES OF DISCIPLINE

C. S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, outlines the reasons for chastening of God as God's Omnipotence, God's Goodness.

- A. The Fear of God should motivate us to lead lives of holy discipline.

1. As Mr. Lewis says, "It is hardly complimentary to God that we should choose Him as an alternative to Hell; yet even this He accepts. The creature's illusion of self sufficiency must, for the creature's sake, be shattered; and by trouble or fear of trouble on earth, by fear of the eternal flames, God shatters it . . ."

Paul wrote, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." He wrote, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

He wrote, "For if we sin wilfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment,

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

and fury of fire which will consume the adversaries."

REBELLION WAS NOT TREATED LIGHTLY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT; NEITHER WILL IT BE FOR THOSE UNDER THE NEW.

IF YOU'RE IN REBELLION AGAINST DISCIPLINE, YOU HAD BETTER STUDY AGAIN WHAT THE N.T. HAS TO SAY ABOUT OBEDIENCE TO APPOINTED LEADERS!

YOU HAD BETTER CULTIVATE AGAIN AN AWESOME RESPECT AND HEALTHY FEAR OF GOD. . . . THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM.

B. Another derivative is the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. By His leading we may put to death the deeds of the body.
2. By the weapons He affords us we may bring every thought into captivity to Christ.
3. By His supernatural word is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
4. Being born again by the word of the Spirit planted in our hearts, having been raised with Christ we may "set our minds on things that are above, where Christ is seated. . . ."
5. We may purify our souls by obeying the truth.
6. By the exceeding precious promises we become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world.

C. The ultimate derivative is the love of Christ.

1. Paul wrote, "The love of Christ constrains us . . ."
II Cor. 5:14 NOTHING WILL BRING US TO FOLLOW THE LEADING OF DISCIPLINE LIKE LOVE. . . .

Illustration: *Time*, Birds, Beetles and Butterflies.
"Timbertop, patterned largely after Gordonstoun, is a branch of Australia's Geelong Grammar School, an exclusive institution operated by the Church of England. It is designed to toughen up 130 young aristocrats every year. The boys do all their own housekeeping except cook.

They make overnight hikes across 1,300 acres of rugged Crown land, watch birds, hunt beetles, collect butterflies.

Young Charles will live in a rustic wooden dormitory, get up at 7 a.m., dress in jeans, an open shirt, sweater and desert boots. He will take his turn at serving a breakfast of cooked meal, tea, toast and milk from a nearby dairy barn, attend compulsory chapel, then turn to rigorous academic work until 3 p.m. After that come the chores, which range from polishing the chapel's huge picture window to varnishing floors, feeding the pigs, washing the dishes, cutting and carting a portion of the 500 tons of wood that the school consumes each year. In the evening he will study under a master's eye. Lights go out at 9:15."

Spurgeon, that great preacher, once said, "Christ is our great example in discipline, cross-bearing. He had not where to lay his head in life, nor a rag to cover him in death, nor anything but a borrowed grave in burial. What manner of persons ought we to be in all unselfishness when we have such a Lord! He has not said to us in matters of self-denial, "Take up thy cross and go!" but "Come, take up thy cross and follow me." Well may the soldiers endure hardness when the King himself roughs it among us; and suffers more than the lowest private in our ranks. My soul, I charge thee, bear thy cross, and look not for ease where Jesus found his death."

"For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps"; I Pet. 2:21.

JERUSALEM IN
DAVID'S TIME



TYROPOEON VALLEY

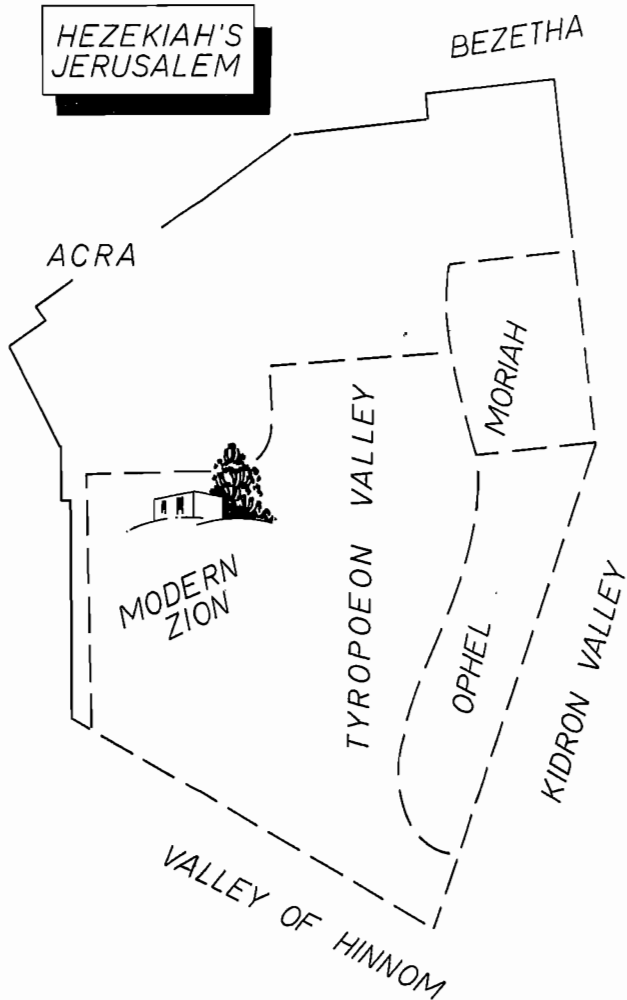
MORIAH
(Temple Area)

OPHEL (ZION)

KIDRON VALLEY

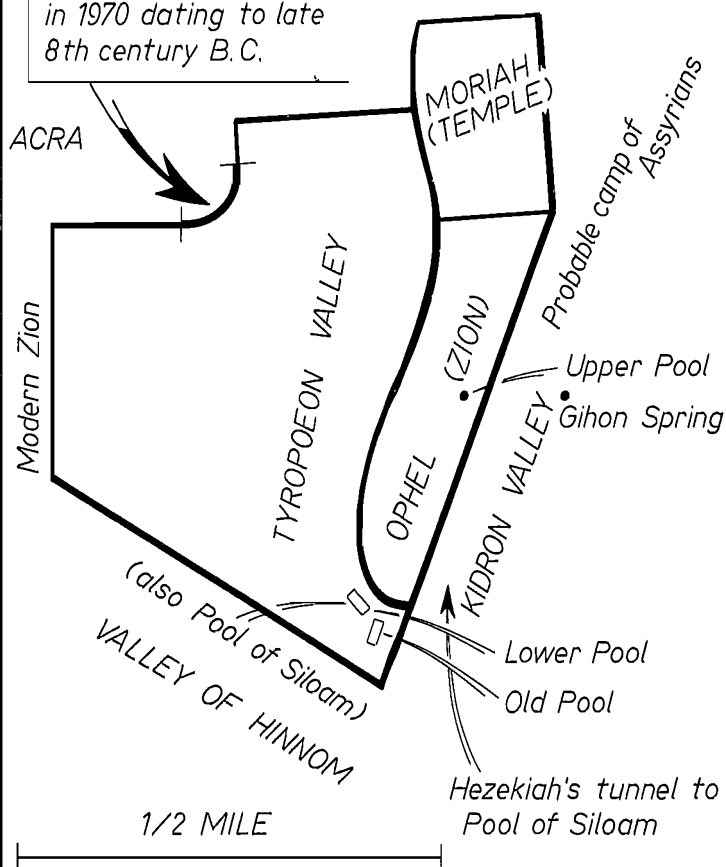
VALLEY OF HINNOM

HEZEKIAH'S
JERUSALEM



JERUSALEM IN HEZEKIAH'S TIME

Portion of wall discovered
in 1970 dating to late
8th century B.C.



Original Jerusalem is indicated by
areas labeled Moriah and Ophel.

The other area is inclosed by Hezekiah's outer wall.



"And when he (Sennacherib) heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee; he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying . . . Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee . . ."

(II Kings 19:9, 10).

"And they brought archers, chariots and horses of the king of Ethiopia, soldiers without number . . ."

With these words taken from the annals of his campaign, Sennacherib corroborated the statement in the Bible.

This is a bronze statuette of Pharaoh Taharka, called Tirhakah in the Bible. The short curly hair, high cheek bones, thick lips, round chin and short neck mark him out clearly as an Ethiopian. On the top of his close-fitting cap sat the double crown of Egypt with two heraldic vipers. When Taharka set out in 701 B. C. to assist Hezekiah he was in fact only commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army.

His intervention was unsuccessful as his army was defeated by Sennacherib's forces and he had to return to Egypt. In 689 B. C. Taharka became King of Egypt.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
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