

<u>Isaiah 1-5</u> Introduction How can one be spared judgement and live happily ever after?	<u>Isaiah 6-39</u> New Creation God will rule over a new, perfect and eternal creation	<u>Isaiah 40-55</u> New relationship God will restore his people from exile to a permanent relationship	<u>Isaiah 56-66</u> Who God will choose the humble and reject the proud
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<u>Isaiah 6-12</u> Kings compared 	<u>Isaiah 13-27</u> End of the world God will destroy evil and dismantle this creation	<u>Isaiah 28-35</u> Epic reversals God will instantly reverse bad and sad situations to become happy and glad	<u>Isaiah 36-39</u> Humans are not enough Human kings cannot enable long-term peace and happiness
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For a 3-minute video that summarises Isaiah 36-39: youtu.be/Ni9UKNjindU

<u>Isaiah 36 - 37</u> Assyria threatens Hezekiah's Jerusalem (Ch36), but YHWH powerfully defeats Assyria (Ch37) <i>Judah's greatest rescue under a righteous king!</i>	<u>Isaiah 38</u> Hezekiah is about to die, but YHWH gives him 15 more years <i>But their king will die...</i>	<u>Isaiah 39</u> YHWH tells Hezekiah that Babylon will exile Judah <i>...and another invasion is inevitable</i>
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Isaiah 36-39 (NIVUK)

Sunday 4 January 2025

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign,

Opening scene (36:1-3)

Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.

Assyria threaten Hezekiah's Jerusalem

² Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem.

When the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field,

Isaiah 7:3 – like father, like son
 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, 'Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field.'

³ Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to him.

Déjà vu
 In Isaiah 22:15-25, YHWH announced judgment on both Eliakim and Shebna, foretelling their downfall.

⁴ The field commander said to them,

'Tell Hezekiah:

Dialogue scene #1 (36:4-10)

Field commander addresses Hezekiah's civil servants

'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: on what are you basing this confidence of yours?

⁵ You say you have counsel and might for war – but you speak only empty words.

On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me?

⁶ Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.

- 'trust in Egypt is powerless' (36:6)

⁷ But if you say to me, 'We are depending on the LORD our God' – isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before this altar'?

- 'trust in YHWH is powerless' (36:7)

⁸ Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses – if you can put riders on them!

- 'your army is powerless' (36:8-9)

⁹ How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen^a?

¹⁰ Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it."

- 'YHWH is on Assyria's side' (36:10)

^a Or charioteers

¹¹ Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander,

‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it.
Don’t speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.’

Dialogue scene #2 (36:11-21)

Field commander addresses people on the wall

¹² But the commander replied,

‘Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things,
and not to the people sitting on the wall
– who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?’

- ‘they can hear this warning!’
(36:12)

¹³ Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew,

‘Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!

¹⁴ This is what the king says:

- ‘don’t trust King Hezekiah!’
(36:14-16a)

do not let Hezekiah deceive you.

He cannot deliver you!

¹⁵ Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says,

“The LORD will surely deliver us;
this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”

¹⁶ ‘Do not listen to Hezekiah.

This is what the king of Assyria says:

make peace with me and come out to me.

- ‘surrender and live!’ (36:16b-17)

Then each of you will

eat fruit from your own vine and fig-tree

and drink water from your own cistern,

¹⁷ until I come and take you to a land like your own

– a land of corn and new wine,

a land of bread and vineyards.

The good life

This is a parody of:

- the Mosaic blessings (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:10–11, 7:12–13, 8:7–10, 11:10–15)
- the happy days of King Solomon (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20-25)

¹⁸ ‘Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says,

“The LORD will deliver us.”

- ‘don’t trust your god’ (36:18a)

Have the gods of any nations ever delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria?

- ‘none of the other gods helped!’
(36:18b-20)

¹⁹ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?

Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?

Have they rescued Samaria from my hand?

²⁰ Who of all the gods of these countries have been able to save their lands from me?

How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’

²¹ But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply,

because the king had commanded, ‘Do not answer him.’

- civil servants’ impotence (36:21)

²² Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator,

Shebna the secretary

and Joah son of Asaph the recorder

went to Hezekiah,

with their clothes torn,

and told him what the field commander had said.

Dialogue scene #3 (36:22-37:7)

King Hezekiah and Isaiah

- civil servants report threat (36:22)

37 When King Hezekiah heard this,

he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth

and went into the temple of the LORD.

- distressed Hezekiah goes to God
(37:1-2)

² He sent

Eliakim the palace administrator,

Shebna the secretary,

and the leading priests,

all wearing sackcloth,

to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

³ They told him,

‘This is what Hezekiah says:

this day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace,
as when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.

⁴ It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the field commander,
whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God,
and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard.

Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives.’

- Hezekiah appeals to YHWH’S
honour (37:3-4)

⁵ When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah,

⁶ Isaiah said to them,

‘Tell your master,

“This is what the LORD says:

do not be afraid of what you have heard

– those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

⁷ Listen! When he hears a certain report,

I will make him want to return to his own country,

and there I will have him cut down with the sword.”’

- God promises to defeat Assyria:
(37:5-7)

(37:7a) When he hears a rumour,
(37:7b) Sennacherib will return home,
(37:7c) and be killed in Assyria

⁸ When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish,

he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah.

Dialogue scene #4 (37:8-13)
King Sennacherib to King Hezekiah

⁹ Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the king of Cush,^b
was marching out to fight against him.

When he heard it,

he sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word:

¹⁰ ‘Say to Hezekiah king of Judah:

do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says,

“Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.”

¹¹ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries,
destroying them completely.

And will you be delivered?

- Fulfilment 37:7a – the rumour!

- ‘(again) don’t trust your god’
(37:10-11)

¹² Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessors deliver them

– the gods of Gozan, Harran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar?

¹³ Where is the king of Hamath or the king of Arpad?

Where are the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah?’

- ‘(again) none of the other gods
helped’ (37:12-13)

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it.

Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

¹⁶ ‘LORD Almighty,

the God of Israel,

enthroned between the cherubim,

you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.

You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁷ Give ear, LORD, and hear;

open your eyes, LORD, and see;

listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

Dialogue scene #5 (37:14-35)
King Hezekiah and YHWH

- (again) Hezekiah appeals to
YHWH’S honour (37:16-20)

¹⁸ It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands.

¹⁹ They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them,

for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands.

²⁰ Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand,

so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, LORD, are the only God.’^c

^b That is, the upper Nile region

^c Dead Sea Scrolls (see also 2 Kings 19:19); Masoretic Text *you alone are the LORD*

²¹ Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah:

‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says:

because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria,

²² this is the word the LORD has spoken against him:

‘Virgin Daughter Zion despises and mocks you.

Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee.

²³ Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed?

Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride?

Against the Holy One of Israel!

²⁴ By your messengers you have ridiculed the Lord.

And you have said,

“With my many chariots

I have ascended the heights of the mountains,

the utmost heights of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars,

the choicest of its junipers.

I have reached its remotest heights,

the finest of its forests.

²⁵ I have dug wells in foreign lands^d and drunk the water there.

With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.”

²⁶ Have you not heard?

Long ago I ordained it.

In days of old I planned it;

now I have brought it to pass,

that you have turned fortified cities

into piles of stone.

²⁷ Their people, drained of power,

are dismayed and put to shame.

They are like plants in the field,

like tender green shoots,

like grass sprouting on the roof,

scorched^e before it grows up.

²⁸ But I know where you are

and when you come and go

and how you rage against me.

²⁹ Because you rage against me

and because your insolence has reached my ears,

I will put my hook in your nose

and my bit in your mouth,

and I will make you return

by the way you came.’

³⁰ ‘This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah:

‘This year you will eat what grows by itself,

and the second year what springs from that.

But in the third year sow and reap,

plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

³¹ Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah

will take root below and bear fruit above.

³² For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant,

and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

YHWH’s reply:

- ‘Assyria, Jerusalem will mock you!’
(37:22)

- ‘You mocked me, the living God!’
(37:23-25)

- ‘Assyria, I planned for you to be my
tool of destruction!’ (37:26-27)

- ‘I see and hear everything!’
(37:28-29a)

- ‘I’ll send you home like the creature
that you are!’ (37:29b)

- ‘Jerusalem, you will be restored!’
(37:30-32)

^d Dead Sea Scrolls (see also 2 Kings 19:24); Masoretic Text does not have *in foreign lands*.

^e Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Dead Sea Scrolls and some Septuagint manuscripts (see also 2 Kings 19:26); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *roof/ and terraced fields*

³³ ‘Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria:

‘He will not enter this city
or shoot an arrow here.

He will not come before it with shield
or build a siege ramp against it.

³⁴ By the way that he came he will return;
he will not enter this city,’

declares the LORD.

³⁵ ‘I will defend this city and save it,
for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!’

³⁶ Then the angel of the LORD went out
and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp.

When the people got up the next morning – there were all the dead bodies!

³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew.
He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

³⁸ One day, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisrok,
his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword,
and they escaped to the land of Ararat.

And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.

- ‘Jerusalem, I will protect you from
Assyria!’ (37:33-35)

Concluding scene (37:36-38)

YHWH defeats Assyria powerfully!

- Fulfilment 37:7b – Sennacherib
goes home to Assyria

- Fulfilment 37:7c – Sennacherib
killed in Assyria

38:1-21

DAILY DOSE FOR HEBREWS

**ASSYRIA TELLS JUDAH
TO PREPARE FOR TROUBLE**



*Rabshakeh says
“make it double”*

Assyria claim to be “protecting
the world from devastation.”

The big-cupbearer for the
King of Assyria tells Judah
that each man will enjoy
their own vine, fig tree and
cistern, and enjoy grain
and wine if they surrender.
If not, Judah are doomed
to eat their own dung and
drink their own urine.

Furthermore, Assyria
claims that the LORD
is on their side. Senior
civil servants were left
speechless, and early
reports indicate that
as they returned to the
royal palace, clothes
were indeed torn.

THE HERALD OF JUDAH

**THE LORD OUR GOD STRIKES DOWN
185,000 ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS**

*The greatest victory
in Judah’s history*



An angel of the LORD struck
them down, and Assyria
have now retreated.

How it happened

Isaiah reports that Hezekiah
prayed to the LORD, and that
the LORD promised to “put
his hook in Assyria’s nose
and turn him back”

Isaiah also prophesied:
“And the Assyrian shall
fall by a sword, not of
man”. Shebna confirmed
that no men from Judah
were deployed.

**THE ANNALS OF
THE KINGS OF JUDAH**

**GOD GRANTS KING HEZEKIAH
15 MORE YEARS**

“The living, the living
thank you, as I do now”



Isaiah told our king to set
his house in order, for he
would not recover from his illness. King
Hezekiah prayed to God and God
granted him 15 more years to live.

**BABYLON DUE TO TAKE
JUDAH INTO EXILE**

*Hezekiah appears relaxed
about the prospect somehow*



36:1-22 & 37:1-38

39:1-8

38 In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death.

The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said,

‘This is what the LORD says:
put your house in order,
because you are going to die;
you will not recover.’

² Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,

³ ‘Remember, LORD,
how I have walked before you faithfully
and with wholehearted devotion
and have done what is good in your eyes.’
And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah:

⁵ ‘Go and tell Hezekiah,
“This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says:
I have heard your prayer and seen your tears;
I will add fifteen years to your life.
⁶ And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.
I will defend this city.
⁷ This is the LORD’s sign to you
that the LORD will do what he has promised:
⁸ I will make the shadow cast by the sun
go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.”’

So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down.

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

¹⁰ I said, ‘In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death
and be robbed of the rest of my years?’

¹¹ I said, ‘I will not again see the LORD himself
in the land of the living;
no longer will I look on my fellow man,
or be with those who now dwell in this world.

¹² Like a shepherd’s tent my house
has been pulled down and taken from me.
Like a weaver I have rolled up my life,
and he has cut me off from the loom;
day and night you made an end of me.

¹³ I waited patiently till dawn,
but like a lion he broke all my bones;
day and night you made an end of me.

¹⁴ I cried like a swift or thrush,
I moaned like a mourning dove.
My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens.
I am being threatened; Lord, come to my aid!’

¹⁵ But what can I say?
He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this.
I will walk humbly all my years
because of this anguish of my soul.

¹⁶ Lord, by such things people live;
and my spirit finds life in them too.
You restored me to health and let me live.^f

¹⁷ Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.

Hezekiah’s illness, prayer and promise of healing (38:1-8)

- fatal illness (38:1)

- sad prayer (38:2-3)

- YHWH gifts 15 more years! (38:4-8)

Isaiah 7:10-16 – like father, unlike son

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ ‘Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.’ ¹² But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.’

¹³ Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.’ ¹⁵ He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, ¹⁶ for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Hezekiah’s psalm (38:9-20)

- ‘such distress!’ (38:10-14a)

- ‘I waited humbly for YHWH’
(38:14b-17a)

^f ESV opts for *Oh restore me to health and make me live!*

In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction;
you have put all my sins behind your back.

- 'praise YHWH for his salvation!'
(38:17b-20)

¹⁸ For the grave cannot praise you,
death cannot sing your praise;
those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

¹⁹ The living, the living – they praise you,
as I am doing today;
parents tell their children about your faithfulness.

²⁰ The LORD will save me,
and we will sing with stringed instruments
all the days of our lives in the temple of the LORD.

<p><u>Poultice</u> a soft, moist mass of material, typically of plant material or flour, applied to the body to relieve soreness and inflammation and kept in place with a cloth. (OED)</p>

²¹ Isaiah had said,
'Prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover.'

Hezekiah's healing (38:21-22)

²² Hezekiah had asked,
'What will be the sign that I will go up to the temple of the LORD?'

- 'when can I see God to give him
thanks in the temple?'

39 At that time Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift,
because he had heard of his illness and recovery.

**Babylon's embassy to Hezekiah
(39:1-2)**

² Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses
– the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine olive oil
– his entire armoury and everything found among his treasures.

There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.

³ Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked,
'What did those men say, and where did they come from?'

YHWH's word for Hezekiah (39:3-8)

'From a distant land,' Hezekiah replied.
'They came to me from Babylon.'

⁴ The prophet asked,
'What did they see in your palace?'

'They saw everything in my palace,' Hezekiah said.
'There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.'

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah,
'Hear the word of the LORD Almighty:

⁶ the time will surely come when
everything in your palace,
and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day,
will be carried off to Babylon.
Nothing will be left,
says the LORD.

⁷ And some of your descendants,
your own flesh and blood who will be born to you,
will be taken away,
and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'

⁸ 'The word of the LORD you have spoken is good,'
Hezekiah replied.
For he thought,
'There will be peace and security in my lifetime.'

<p><u>Is Hezekiah sinning?</u> Scholars debate just how wrong Hezekiah was in receiving the Babylonian envoys (39:1–2) and in his response to YHWH's word (39:8). Whilst 1 & 2 Kings do focus on the <i>sinfulness</i> of kings, the emphasis of Isaiah 6–39 is comparing human kings' <i>agency</i> to YHWH's <i>agency</i>!</p> <p>Battles such as Ahaz vs Pekah-Rezin (Isaiah 7-8), Hezekiah vs Sennacherib (Isaiah 28-39) function primarily to highlight YHWH's sovereign power. Even the greatest salvation in Judah's history (Isaiah 36–37) is immediately followed by Hezekiah's vulnerability (Isaiah 38) and the foreboding emergence of a new national security threat (Isaiah 39). Isaiah leaves the reader longing for YHWH's promised everlasting King (cf. Isaiah 9; 11; 33).</p>

For reflection

Diagnostic

1. To what extent do you take (a) dissatisfaction with human leaders in this world to (b) hoping for God's promised forever-king? Why?
2. What might be the equivalent of the *Assyrian crisis* for you today? And when experiencing that stress/anxiety, to what extent do you hope for God's promised forever-king?

Devotion

3. To what extent do you feel the glory of Isaiah 36-37 and then the deflation and futility of Isaiah 38-39? Are there parts you need God's help to read?
4. What particular parts of Isaiah 36-39 captured your imagination? Are there parts you need help to picture?