SECOND KINGS

Chapter 20

*Hezekiah’s Illness*

**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, O 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 Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: 5 “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’ ” 7 Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a poultice of figs.” They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered. 8 Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?” 9 Isaiah answered, “This is the Lord’s sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?” 10 “It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps,” said Hezekiah. “Rather, have it go back ten steps.” 11 Then the prophet Isaiah called upon the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.**

**20:1** *In those days.* Hezekiah’s illness (vv. 1–11) as well as his reception of envoys from Babylon (vv. 12–19) must have preceded the Assyrian campaign in 701 b.c. (see v. 6; see also notes on vv. 12–13). Babylonian records indicate that Merodach-Baladan (v. 12) died in Elam after being expelled from Babylon in 703. *Put your house in order.* Arrangements of a testamentary nature needed to be made, especially with respect to throne succession. (CSB)

 *you are going to die.* Assuming that Hezekiah was 25 years old in 715 when he began his sole reign (see 18:2) and that his illness occurred a little more than 15 years prior to his death (see note on v. 6), he would have been about 37 or 38 years old at this time. (CSB)

**20:3** *walked before you faithfully … and have done what is good.* Hezekiah’s prayer is not an appeal for divine favor that is based on good works, but it expresses the realization that the Lord graciously favors those who earnestly serve him (see note on 2Sa 22:21). (CSB)

**20:5** *I will heal you.* God is the one who sovereignly ordains all that comes to pass (Ps 139:16; Eph 1:11). Hezekiah’s petition and God’s response demonstrate that (1) divine sovereignty does not make prayer inappropriate but, on the contrary, it establishes it, and (2) both prayer and the divine response to prayer are to be included in one’s conception of God’s sovereign plan (see 1Ki 21:29; Eze 33:13–16). (CSB)

**20:6** *add fifteen years to your life.* Hezekiah died in 686 b.c. The beginning of the extension of his life is thus to be placed no later than 702. (CSB)

*for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.* See 19:34; see also note on 1Ki 11:13. (CSB)

**20:7** *poultice.* The Lord healed Hezekiah (see v. 5), but divine healing does not necessarily exclude the use of known remedies. (CSB)

**20:9** *steps.* See v. 11 (see also note on Isa 38:8). (CSB)

***Envoys From Babylon***

**12 At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah’s illness. 13 Hezekiah received the messengers and showed them all that was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices and the fine oil—his armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. 14 Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, “What did those men say, and where did they come from?” “From a distant land,” Hezekiah replied. “They came from Babylon.” 15 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.” 16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord: 17 The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. 18 And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” 19 “The word of the Lord you have spoken is good,” Hezekiah replied. For he thought, “Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?” 20 As for the other events of Hezekiah’s reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? 21 Hezekiah rested with his fathers. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king.**

**20:12** *Merodach-Baladan.* Means “(The god) Marduk has given me a son.” He ruled in Babylon 721–710 b.c. before being forced to submit to Assyrian domination by Sargon II of Assyria. Sometime after Sargon’s death in 705, Merodach-Baladan briefly reestablished Babylonian independence and ruled in Babylon until Sennacherib forced him to flee in 703 (see note on v. 1). (CSB)

 *sent Hezekiah letters and a gift.* See 2Ch 32:31; Isa 39. It is likely that Merodach-Baladan was attempting to draw Hezekiah into an alliance against Assyria. Although Hezekiah rejected the pro-Assyrian policies of his father Ahaz (see 16:7) and rebelled against Assyria (see 18:7), he erred in seeking to strengthen Israel’s security by friendship with Babylon and Egypt (see 2Ch 32:31; Isa 30–31; see also notes on 1Sa 17:11; 1Ki 15:19). (CSB)

**20:13** *received the messengers and showed them all.* Hezekiah’s reception of the delegation from Babylon was overly hospitable. Perhaps it was an attempt to bolster Judah’s security by impressing the Babylonians with the wealth and power of his kingdom as a basis for mutual cooperation against the Assyrians. In principle this was a denial of the covenantal nature of the royal office in Israel (see note on 2Sa 24:2). (CSB)

 *silver … oil.* The presence of these treasures in Jerusalem is evidence that this incident occurred before the payment of tribute to Sennacherib in 701 b.c. (see 18:15–16). (CSB)

**20:14** *What did those men say … ?* Hezekiah gave no response to Isaiah’s question concerning the diplomatic purpose of the Babylonian envoys. (CSB)

**20:17** *carried off to Babylon.* Hezekiah’s reception of the Babylonians would bring the exact opposite of what he desired and expected. Isaiah’s prediction of Babylonian exile at least 115 years before it happened is all the more remarkable because, when he spoke, it appeared that Assyria rather than Babylon was the world power from whom Judah had the most to fear. (CSB)

**20:18** *some of your descendants … will be taken away.* Hezekiah’s own son Manasseh was taken by the Assyrians and held prisoner for a while in Babylon (see 2Ch 33:11); later, many more from the house of David were to follow (see 24:15; 25:7; Da 1:3). (CSB)

**20:19** *word … is good.* Although it is possible to understand Hezekiah’s statement as a selfish expression of relief that he himself would not experience the announced adversity, it seems better to take it as a humble acceptance of the Lord’s judgment (see 2Ch 32:26) and as gratefulness for the intervening time of peace that the Lord in his mercy was granting to his people. (CSB)

**20:20** *the pool and the tunnel.* Hezekiah built a tunnel from the Gihon spring (see 1Ki 1:33, 38) to a reservoir (2Ch 32:30) within the city’s walls (see map No. 8 at the end of the Study Bible). This greatly reduced Jerusalem’s vulnerability to siege by guaranteeing a continuing water supply. In 1880 an inscription (the Siloam inscription; see chart on “Ancient Texts Relating to the OT”) was found in the rock wall at the entrance to this tunnel, describing the method of its construction. The tunnel, cut through solid rock, is over 1,700 feet long; its height varies from 3 2/3 feet to 11 1/2 feet and it averages 2 feet in width. (CSB)

 *annals of the kings of Judah.* See note on 1Ki 14:29. (CSB)

**20:21** *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1Ki 1:21. (CSB)