

THROUGH THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 36-39

You're watching TV when your regular programming is interrupted by late-breaking news. A war correspondent on a battlefield is reporting on a crisis.

This is what happens in tonight's text, Isaiah 36-39. In chapter 36 the prophet Isaiah becomes a reporter.

He interrupts his prophecy with news from the war zone. *The mighty Assyrian army has been slaughtered.*

Isaiah covers one of the most dramatic battles in OT history. What happened to the Assyrian troops outside Jerusalem was so significant the Bible records it three times: [2 Chronicles 32](#), [2 Kings 18-20](#), and [here!](#)

Chapter 36 begins, "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." Assyria was the Heavyweight Champ of the world! Their army appeared invincible.

They had a string of impressive knock-outs. And the Assyrian king was a man named, "[Sennacherib.](#)"

The Assyrian army rolled over the outposts north of Jerusalem - the border towns that served as the city's first line of defense. Their troops breezed through the barricades and camped just outside Jerusalem's walls.

Imagine, living in the city, peering over the stones at 200,000 soldiers, covering the landscape like ants on buttered bread. Armed to the teeth, they're dangerous.

They're in attack mode. They want to destroy your family. Fear reigns among the citizens of Jerusalem.

“Then the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem.” Lachish was field headquarters for the Assyrians. It was southwest of Jerusalem, and since the invaders swarmed into the land from the north, its position indicated that the city was surrounded.

The ***"Rabshakeh"*** was an Assyrian diplomat. He was officially the chief cupbearer. This was the position Nehemiah would later occupy among the Persians.

Think of him as the head of the Secret Service. He was in charge of the king's personal security. Here he's dispatched with a message to Jewish King, Hezekiah.

“And he stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field. And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.” This was a strategic location, and everyone at the time knew its significance.

Thirty-three years earlier, in Isaiah 7, the Prophet Isaiah had stood in this exact spot to warn Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, about putting his trust in Assyria.

Isaiah encouraged Ahaz to trust the Lord, not this foreign power. Ahaz though had failed to heed God's warning, now his son is facing the consequences.

It's an irony of life that when you fail to listen to God you find yourself returning to the same places, and encountering the same situations, you thought you would never face again. Sin takes you in circles.

Disobedience appears as a shortcut. Even a bypass to skirt difficulties. But it ends up the long way around.

Verse 4 "Then the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: "What confidence is this in which you trust?"

I say you speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. Now in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me?" An Assyrian trademark was its propaganda machine. Messengers played on the people's fears. The Assyrians were masters of intimidation. Cities often surrendered without a fight.

It reminds us of Satan. In John 8 Jesus calls him, "the father of lies." The devil also loves to intimidate.

He tries to frighten, and bully, and deceive.

This is why we need to know *who we are* and *what we have* in Christ, and not back down. We should rise up in *faith*, not cower away in *fear*. James 4:7 promises, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

The Rabshakeh had done his homework. He reasons with the Jews, "Look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him."

Assyrian intelligence knew that Hezekiah had just signed a protection treaty with the Egyptians, but the Rabshakeh assures Hezekiah Egypt will be no help.

At the time Egypt was in a state of decline. Ethiopia had become the dominant African nation. Egypt was a *“broken reed.”* Assyria was now threatening Hezekiah’s capitol, and his ally was nowhere to be found.

The Rabshakeh continues, *“But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?”* Here’s a foreigner addressing internal Jewish affairs, *and he’s getting it all wrong...*

The Rabshakeh mentions the *“high places”* Hezekiah had eradicated. He mistakes them as altars to Yahweh.

He’s saying, *“You trust your God, but you’ve torn down his places of worship? Why would He help you?”*

The truth of the matter is that God despised these high places. God’s Law required for sacrifices to be offered at the Temple. The high places were illegal altars that promoted aberrant, *“do-it-yourself religion.”*

God had outlawed these altars, and Hezekiah was being obedient in demolishing them. Here the Assyrian Rabshakeh is doing what Isaiah warned Judah about in 5:20, *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”*

This was an idolatrous Assyrian giving the Hebrews biblical advice. How silly? He didn’t know the difference between right and wrong - between darkness and light.

Verse 8 *“Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you 2000 horses - if you are able on your part to put riders on them!”*

He mocks the Jews. Surrender, and we'll give you 2000 horses, *if you even have 2000 able riders...*

Judah certainly didn't have much of a cavalry.

“How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Have I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.'”

Here the Rabshakeh claims to have the true God's own blessing. He says, *“Yahweh will fight for Assyria.”*

This is preposterous! Yet Satan is good at putting words in God's mouth! Recall, in the Garden of Eden Satan asked Adam and Eve, *“Has God indeed said...”* Then he went on to twist God's words out of context.

When Satan quotes Scripture, count on him to misquote the passage. He's not a reliable source.

“Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah (the Jewish delegation) said to the Rabshakeh, *“Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.”*

They saw that Jerusalem's citizens were nearby - sitting on the wall - listening to the conversation.

And the Assyrian's rhetoric was stirring up fear.

Apparently, the Rabshakeh was bilingual. He could speak in his own native tongue, Aramaic, instead he spoke in Hebrew. His intent was to frighten the Jews.

“But the Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?” It’s the citizens of Jerusalem that’ll suffer from a siege. *They have just as much right to hear the threat as the kings and officials.*

Here the Rabshakeh mentions the ultimate outcome of siege warfare. The invader surrounds the city, cuts off its supplies, and starves out the city. The inhabitants become so desperate for food and water they eat their own waste and drink their own urine. And at that moment the Assyrian army had Jerusalem under siege.

This would be the fate of the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 13, “Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew (He’s defiant), and said, “Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!

The bully is shouting so everyone in Jerusalem will hear his threats. “Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”’

He’s undermining Hezekiah. He’s telling his subjects their King can’t be trusted. He’s acting unwisely. Hezekiah’s obstinance will cause them great suffering.

“Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; 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.’”

Now he’s laying the propaganda on thick!

History tells us the Assyrians had no intention of taking the Jews away to a wonderland of *“bread and vineyards.”* Actually, Assyria was infamous for its barbaric and inhumane treatment of its captive foes.

They would pluck out eyes, and rip out tongues. They would skin a victim like you’d clean a fish. The Assyrian trademark, their calling card, was a pile of human skulls outside the gate of their conquered city.

For the Assyrian Rabshakeh to promise the Jews *“grain and new wine”* was a lie straight from hell...

And this is Satan’s one advantage. Unlike God, he doesn’t have to tell the truth. He’ll promise you anything with no intention of delivering on his promise.

Satan’s intention is *“to steal, kill, and destroy.”*

The Assyrian continues his rant in verse 18. *“Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria?*

Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?” These were cities in Syria. The Syrians fell to Assyria ten years earlier, in 732 BC. The Rabshakeh is pointing out that their gods were no help to them. *What makes the Jews think their God will be any more successful in defending them?*

When ancient armies went to battle they believed it was a contest between gods... *It was my god versus your god.* A *“may the best god win”* sort of proposition.

Here, the Assyrian diplomat lists all the gods that had fallen to Assyria on their current campaign... *what makes the Jews believe Yahweh will be any different?*

And this is the argument Satan uses on folks today, “Oh, you’ve tried religion... nothing really worked before. Why do you think Jesus will be any different?”

Satan doesn’t want you to consider that perhaps you haven’t tried the **right religion** or found the **right God**.

Not all gods are the same! There are false gods.

Yes, Assyria might’ve defeated *all the gods* of *all the nations* they had encountered to this point, but perhaps they had yet to meet the one God who is really God!

The Rabshakeh gets personal in verse 19. He hits close to home. “**Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand?**” Samaria was the capitol of Israel, the northern Hebrew nation. Samaria fell two decades earlier, 722 BC. Judah’s sister had been defeated.

Samaria supposedly worshipped the same God. Why will Jerusalem’s plight be any different than hers?

Of course, he doesn’t mention Samaria’s rebellion against God, and her idolatry. That God might have used the Assyrians to judge his disobedient people.

The Assyrian mouth concludes his blasphemous argument, “**Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?**”

If you were in Jerusalem facing 200,000 bloodthirsty troops - just outside the walls - a stones throw away - his line of reasoning might’ve grabbed your attention...

And he was loud enough for the wall sitters and all Jerusalem to hear. Yet the one person he didn’t count on listening to his blasphemy was the King of heaven.

The true God is about to show Assyria who's boss!

Verse 21 “But they held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, “Do not answer him.” As much as they wanted to defend their God they refused to respond to his blasphemies.

Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

Chapter 37, “So it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.” The King of Judah went into the Temple to seek the King of kings.

“Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.” This is revealing. Judah's head of state and his closest advisors are facing a life and death crisis. But rather than call for his generals, or senior officials, or cabinet - he sends for the godliest man he knows...

He calls for Isaiah. He summons a man who knows God's Word, and who can get in touch with God.

“And they said to (Isaiah), “Thus says Hezekiah: 'This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth.’”

This was a familiar proverb... There are children to be born, but not enough strength to deliver them.

He's saying, *"A great opportunity is before us, but we don't have the strength to take advantage."* God has opened a door, but we're too weak to walk through it.

"It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." Hezekiah had confidence in his friend's relationship with God. If anyone could connect with God it was Isaiah... *Do people call on you when they need spiritual help? When they have a prayer request?*

"So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah."

Apparently, Isaiah had already been talking to God about the situation. *"And Isaiah said to them, "Thus shall you say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."* And we'll read later that's exactly what happens!

Verse 8, *"Then the Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "He has come out to make war with you." So when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying..."*

Sennacherib had heard rumors of a possible conflict brewing with the Ethiopians of North Africa. He doesn't want a war on two fronts, so he tries again to intimidate Hezekiah into surrender. This time he sends a letter...

Verse 10 "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered?"

Notice this time there's no fictitious, sugar-coated promise of "grain and wine... bread and vineyards."

Sennacherib is getting direct. He's not telling the people not to trust in Hezekiah, he's warning the King not to trust in God. "*Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you*" - He thinks he's greater than God!

"Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?" Evidently, their gods didn't defend them.

"And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD." I love this reaction. Hezekiah came before God, he opened the letter, unrolled the scroll, then just spread it out before the Lord. *Okay Lord, here it is...*

Hezekiah wanted God to see that Sennacherib had insulted Him personally - questioned His faithfulness.

Sennacherib had made this an issue between him and God, and Hezekiah was happy to reinforce that.

When you're faced with a major decision, or threatened by a crisis, here's a great way to respond...

Like Hezekiah, get it off your chest - pour it out - spill the beans. Get out a pen and paper and write it out.

Spread out the problem before the Lord.

It reminds me of the pastor who also received a threatening letter. Only one word was written, **“Fool.”**

That Sunday he brought the letter to church. He told the congregation he’d received an unusual letter. **“Never before have I opened a letter where the writer signed his name, but forgot to write anything else...”**

Well, Hezekiah also brings his letter to the Temple...

“Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD...” And I love his prayer. I call it, **“A Back against the Wall Prayer.”**

There are times in everyone’s life when the odds are against us. Our back is against a wall with no way out.

When that happens, here’s what you can pray...

“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.” Certainly, Hezekiah has a *big problem*, but he has an even *bigger God*. He says of his God, **“You have made heaven and earth.”**

Our God is Creator of the universe. He’s sovereign over sea, sky, land. He’s king over all the nations of the world. No king is greater... no problem bigger...

Often our problem clouds our perspective. This is why once we spread it out - we need to immediately shift our focus off the problem and onto our God.

The only time a fly is bigger than a tree is when it's sitting on the end of my nose. Focus on God's greatness and the fly suddenly seems a lot smaller.

Then Hezekiah prays, "Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands - wood and stone.

Therefore they have destroyed them." So what if they've knocked off a few wooden trinkets and stone statutes. *Let's see how they do against the real God!*

Hezekiah sees the situation from God's perspective.

"Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, You alone." *He wants God to work not just to save his skin, but so God will be glorified.*

Remember this prayer when you have to pray it.

The five steps to a back against the wall prayer... **Take it to God... Spread it out... Focus on God and His greatness... See the situation from His perspective... And make your request with God's glory in mind.**

Verse 21 is God's answer to Hezekiah's prayer. It comes through Isaiah. "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the

word which the LORD has spoken concerning him: "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem Has shaken her head behind your back! "Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel." He's angered the one, true God.

"By your servants you have reproached the Lord, and said, 'By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress trees; I will enter its farthest height, to its fruitful forest. I have dug and drunk water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense.' Notice Isaiah's rendition of Assyria's boast...

Five times Sennacherib says, "*I have...*" A prideful king had taken credit for his victories and advances.

And God rebukes him. "Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins."

Though King Sennecherib and the Assyrians didn't realize it - nor would they ever admit it - Yahweh, the God of Judah, was the secret of Assyria's success.

For centuries the Hebrew prophets had predicted God would use Assyria as an instrument of His judgment. God was responsible for Assyria's rise to power, not Sennacherib or any of her former kings.

He concludes in verse 27, "**Therefore** (because of God's intervention) **their inhabitants** (of the cities Assyria had conquered) **had little power; they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass**

on the housetops and grain blighted before it is grown.” The God of Judah was the architect of Assyria’s success.

And I love God’s ominous words to Sennacherib in verse 28, “But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in...” *I know where you live!*

For 35 years my dad worked for the phone company. So when my mom starting getting obscene phone calls he traced the call. Dad got the name and address of the teenager making the calls. He drove by his house. He noticed his car. He got a good look at the culprit.

That’s when my dad called the boy. He told him his address... the make, model, and color of his car... He even gave him a description of what he’d been wearing that day... Then dad reminded the boy that he didn’t know what my dad looked like, but he could rest assured if my mom ever got another obscene phone call, my dad would strike when it was least expected.

My dad made sure that boy never made another obscene telephone call. It’s frightening to hear someone who has the advantage tell you... *“I know where you live!” Especially when that person is God!*

Verse 28, “But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me. Because your rage against Me and your tumult Have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came.” God will lead this great world empire around like a dog on a leash!

Ezekiel 38 says he’ll do the same to Russia’s army in the last days. God will set a hook in her jaw, and coax her into Israel where He’ll destroy her armies.

Verse 30, "This shall be a sign to you: you shall eat this year such as grows of itself, and the second year what springs from the same; also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them."

In other words, the siege will soon be over. It'll be back to business as normal. God is about to deal a surprising blow to the Assyrians on their doorstep.

"And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." And this is God's will for you and me...

"Take root downward..." Sink your roots deep into God. Develop a firsthand knowledge of God. Let Him build character in your life, and fortify your faith.

Then *"bear fruit upwards..."* Make a spiritual impact.

"For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." God will deliver His city and people!

Verse 33, "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it.' The Assyrians won't have time to dig in and wreak havoc.

"By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city,' says the LORD. 'For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" God will act!

Suddenly the hammer drops in verse 36, “Then the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead.”

A single combat angel sent by God annihilated an army of 185,000 troops in one night... 185,000 people is the population of Little Rock, AR or Columbus, GA.

Bedtime proved to be *dead time*... And who was this special-ops angel... this one-angel wrecking crew... God’s mighty *Ranger Angel*? It was our *Lord Jesus*!

Earlier in Isaiah 7-10 victory was predicted by Isaiah.

Chapter 7 tells us a virgin will bear a Son, and He’ll be called “Immanuel.” Isaiah 8 credits Immanuel with stopping the invaders. He’ll “break them in pieces.”

In Isaiah 9, “the government will be upon His shoulders.” His name is called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...”

Immanuel will reign forever and occupy “the throne of David.” Add it all up and “Immanuel” was Jesus!

Here’s the part of the Christmas story that’s seldom mentioned. Imagine Joseph, fluent in the OT, when the Angel tells him the baby will be called, “Immanuel.”

Joseph knew Isaiah and the story of “Immanuel, the Assyrian Avenger.” What did he think when the Angel told him Mary’s baby was this same “Immanuel”?

This baby was no newcomer. He’d been here before.

In fact, Mary’s baby had been to battle. It was baffling to comprehend, but the babe *Mary laid in the manger hay* had already *made hay* outside Jerusalem.

Seven centuries earlier the Babe of Bethlehem had slaughtered 185,000 Assyrian troops just up the road outside Jerusalem. He came brandishing a sword.

Jesus had flashed His medal, and by the time He returned it to its scabbard it dripped with rebel blood...

This baby's *first cry* had been a *battle cry*!

And this should cause us to appreciate the humility of Jesus all the more. God became a man. The warrior became a baby. The *invincible* became *vulnerable*.

Jesus left His command post for a cradle. For salvation to occur the *Slayer* became *the Slaughtered*.

One other note... not only does the Bible record this slaughter, the event also occurs in secular history. The Greek historian, Herodotus, mentions Assyria's defeat.

He says a plague of mice invaded the camp.

Verse 37 tells us, "So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place."

Secular historians tell us Sennecherib was worshipping his god, when his sons pushed the idol over, knocked him out, and carved him up. It fulfilled 37:7 - *he returned to his land, and fell by the sword.*

Chapter 38 “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’”

This is not good news. Isaiah tells the king to get his house in order - write out a will, buy a new suit that he’ll want to be buried in, purchase a grave plot, etc.

“Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD...” The idea is that he turned from those attending to his needs, and prayed privately.

“And (he) said, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” He wasn’t ready to die!

“And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.”

Because Hezekiah prayed God extended the king’s life fifteen additional years. Which brings up the question, *is it possible for us to change God’s mind?*

And I believe the answer is a **definitive yes and no.**

Some of God’s plans are unalterable. They’re set in stone. But God has other plans subject to our input.

As a father this is how I roll... At times I make decisions that aren’t going to change no matter how much pleading my kids do. My decision is a done deal!

Whereas there are other decisions where I’m open and flexible - in fact, I’m looking for input. *And you never know which decision is which until you ask.*

This is why God encourages us to pray. You never know. Sometimes God's will is written in cement.

More often than not, God is looking for our input.

Like any father, God wants us to feel a part of His family, so He gives us a say in decisions. This is why we're told in Ephesians 6:18 to be "praying always."

Now having said that, here's another question... *Is it wise to change God's mind once He's spoken?*

Hezekiah might tell us "no." In his bonus years two events occurred that negatively impacted the nation.

First was the birth of Manasseh. Hezekiah's son was the most evil king in Judah's history. If not for those 15 extra years, Manasseh would've never been born.

We'll see the other negative outcome in Isaiah 39...

Verse 7, "And this is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing which He has spoken: behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it had gone down." When Isaiah asks for a sign, God blows him away. He turns back the shadow on the sundial 10 degrees - or 40 minutes.

Some commentators try to explain this phenomena as a cloud formation that refracted the sunlight in a way that made it seem like the sun was backtracking.

But that's not what the text states.

It could be what caused “Joshua’s long day” may explain what happened here. A near fly-by with another planet, or a comet penetrating the Earth’s atmosphere, may’ve caused a 10 degree tilt in the Earth’s axis.

It’s interesting that prior to the days of King Hezekiah the ancient calendars were marked by 360 day years. All the calendars had twelve months of 30 days.

But around 700 BC, calendars started adjusting for an asymmetrical rotation caused by a tilted axis.

It’s possible that God’s attack on the Assyrians, and the loss of 40 minutes on the calendar - were both aided by some kind of unique, astronomical event.

Verse 9, “This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness...” In response to God’s mercy, King Hezekiah picks up a pen and writes a psalm to God...

“I said, “In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years.”

I said, “I shall not see YAH, the LORD in the land of the living; I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world.” King Hezekiah was disturbed by the prospects of dying in the prime of his life.

We also have this reaction when a young man dies. We say he was cut off in midstream... *but how do we know?* No one really knows the number of our days.

For one man 30 years is a full life. For another man God appoints 70 years. And “a full life” is never measured by *quantity*, but by *quality*. It’s been said, “A life is appraised not by its duration, but by its donation.”

Psalm 48:14 is helpful, "For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death."

Hezekiah comments in verse 12 "My life span is gone, taken from me like a shepherd's tent; I have cut off my life like a weaver. He cuts me off from the loom; from day until night You make an end of me.

I have considered until morning - like a lion, so He breaks all my bones; from day until night You make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so I chattered; I mourned like a dove; my eyes fail from looking upward.

O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me!"

Again, Hezekiah pleads for God's mercy.

"What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, and He Himself has done it. I shall walk carefully all my years in the bitterness of my soul." He says in light of God answering his prayer he'll walk carefully, gratefully... *but realize he doesn't*. He acts foolishly!

2 Chronicles 32:25 states, "Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem." The king became *haughty not humble*, and his pride brought on God's anger.

In verse 16 he continues to pray, "O LORD, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so You will restore me and make me live.

Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your

back.” Notice when God forgives a person, he puts “*all our sins behind His back...*” where He no longer sees them. Its *just-as-if-I’d* never sinned.

“For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. The living, the living man, he shall praise You, as I do this day; the father shall make known Your truth to the children.” If Hezekiah were dead he wouldn’t be able to praise God in the land of the living.

In verse 20 Hezekiah says that because “The LORD was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the LORD.” The Lord prescribed a remedy...

Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover." It must've been a combination of *medicine* and *miracle*... And Hezekiah had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?"

Isaiah 39, “At that time Merodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.” After their defeat at the hands of Immanuel, the Assyrian empire waned. Babylon became the rising power that would overthrow Assyria.

And here the Babylonian king is forming allies. He sends a get well card to his fellow king, Hezekiah.

Remember Hezekiah received an *intimidating letter* from Assyria, but he refused to buckle under to fear. Now he gets trapped by a *flattering letter* from Babylon.

And the letter was delivered by a delegation.

“Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them the house of his treasures - the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory - all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.” Hezekiah was so naïve.

These were *spies* in *disguise*. When the Babylonians attacks Jerusalem 100 years later, the invaders know where to find the treasure... *courtesy of Hezekiah!*

“Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came to me from a far country, from Babylon."

And he said, "What have they seen in your house?"

So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD.” Read about that invasion in 2 Kings 24:13.

The Babylonian army knew exactly where to find the Temple Treasures thanks to naivety of Hezekiah.

Verse 7, “And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” We know four by name: Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael. Their Babylonian names were *Belteshazzar*, and *Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego...*

“So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "At least there will be peace and truth in my days." Hezekiah's response is selfish. Future Jewish generations will reap the results of his foolishness, *but it won't affect him.*

This same attitude applies to our national debt. We hocking our children's future, but at least we're okay.