

10486

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP 1981

HEZEKIAH - A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND

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Study #6

The gates of the grave

Reading: Isaiah 38

My beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and our dear young people.

That chapter opens with the words, 'In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death', and b&s, to come to some measure of appreciation of what that means, we need to consider that phrase, smack, bang in the midst of its context. We need to go back and have a look at what was happening in that day as we did this morning, and to again relive that situation. To comprehend in measure what that meant to Hezekiah, 'in those days' Hezekiah was sick unto death', when was those days?

In verses 5 and 6 we learn this, 'Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Yahweh, 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. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city', b&s, that city had not yet been besieged as Sennacherib had promised that he would besiege it. Rabshakeh had turned his back on the wall, the virgin daughter of Zion wagged her head at him, and said, 'I'm still a virgin', and away he went having not accomplished his purpose. Hezekiah would have been exalted in spirit and before, b&s, he could ever savour the glory of that previous deliverance, lo and behold, the man is taken with an incurable sickness.

Try and appreciate that situation! Remember the point, cast your minds back to when we spoke of 2 Chronicles 31 and 32, how that between those two chapters, there was a blank in history and the historian went straight through to tell us, that at the end of the wonderful reforms, that 'after these things' faithfully done, there commenced to come into Hezekiah's life, extreme trial! And b&s, we need to put this right in its context, we need to see this early to get the maximum amount of spiritual benefit out of this chapter, it's a classic chapter of scripture. But it's one I don't quite believe, is ever really been grasped in its entirety. Because you see, b&s, there was a serious matter here at stake! A very serious matter indeed! And there is Hezekiah severely tested, and if he had ever felt before, as a reward for his faithfulness, that Yahweh should send against him and his people, the great Assyrian host, what did he think now? and there bore in heavily

upon him, b&s, the awfulness of that trial. If ever he was needed, he was needed at this moment.

Rabshakeh had gone, the letter had come back from Sennacherib, there was a promise of a massive onslaught which Jerusalem would never be able to withstand, and if ever there was a man needed as Micah said, 'this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall tread in our land', and there he is, b&s, hours away from the grave. BUT, and this is the issue, we do a serious injustice to that chapter and the Creator if we don't realize this, that Hezekiah, b&s, was in a very, very serious fault! A very serious fault, he had neglected one of the absolute fundamental principles of the truth! and he was fronted up with the issue, and he had hours left to him, b&s, to contemplate it! And when death closed upon him, he could truthfully say, they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth! And he was talking about himself, and I want to show you in context what that truth was! He was in a very serious fault, and when he prayed to God and he says, 'Yahweh hath cast all my sin behind His back' he wasn't being pseudo humble, b&s. That was a fact, and Yahweh was fronting him up with a very serious issue!

But you know, Yahweh never left him as I'll show you in a moment!

It was an incredible chapter, and you know, if we look at this chapter as a mere trial of Hezekiah's faith, to see how much he loved God, we miss the issue, because Hezekiah didn't see it as a trial; he saw it, b&s, as a justifiable punishment because of his sins that Yahweh was going to cast behind His back. You know, when you read this chapter and you look at the outside commentators (which I don't often do) but sometimes you look at them and see what they have to say about these matters, and you know, one after another they say this, they say Hezekiah hadn't come to the fullness of the realization of the resurrection; Hezekiah couldn't see beyond his own present means and his own present existence. He wasn't like the apostle Paul who says, 'to depart and to be with Christ is far better'. He hadn't come to the fullness of the maturity of understanding; RUBBISH! he knew full well about the resurrection. He knew full well about the future hope, what was he worried about then, going into that grave? Because, b&s, he was fundamentally in error! And he came to realize that, and you'll pick it up as we go through this chapter, and it comes up time and again as he speaks to Yahweh on this matter!

But immediately the situation came upon him, Hezekiah, in the bitterness of his soul, grew a little bitter against his Creator. He might not consciously have done that, but he admits frankly that he did do that, and he had to seek God, b&s, first of all to forgive him for feeling bitter because there was justifiable cause for the situation, and secondly, he had to put matters right, which he was determined to do, if God would give him life; and God did give him life and he did put that matter right! Now here we need to see that, and if I've left you wondering as to what it is, good! then you'll concentrate the more to see what it was that was the problem here!

Now he's sick unto death; there's been many suggestions as to what his sickness was, he evidently only had one boil, but that word for 'boil', b&s, is the word that's used, of

course, in Leviticus 13 and 14, for 'the boil of leprosy'. And I believe, that what happened to the man was that he caught leprosy; that in the early stages of that leprosy he had one prominent boil which had gone so bad that he had blood poisoning; it was getting into his system and death is hours away when that happens. And he realized the enflaming of his body (he probably could feel it) and he says, 'I don't think I'll see the morning.' He committed himself to the grave and he woke up in the morning to find Yahweh standing over him like a lion; but he felt that within his body, and I believe, that he had some sort of blood poisoning, severe blood poisoning, and death was only hours away, from that boil!

And he was, b&s, in a situation to exercise his mind as he never exercised it before; and you know, there are great lessons in that! We think we're under trial in life, we moan and groan and complain and say, 'Yahweh's brought us through some trial', as if we were worthy of trial. Look, people who suffer trial are wonderful people, the apostles came out of their trials counting it all glory and joy to suffer for Christ's name. We are arrogant people to think that God is putting us under trial as if we're worth of it! Let's think again, b&s, not always a trial, let's think about the justifiable things that come upon us, and the reasons for that, and that Yahweh might be arresting our attention to a very great fault and to front that up, which we would never do! Now Hezekiah had gone through a trial with the Assyrians, the trial he had there was to hold the nation together, but now he's not worried about the nation, all he can see is a wall; and he turned his face to that wall. And all he could see was the wall, and he had nobody but Hezekiah to worry about him, he was under siege himself. And that very wall behind that wall he was, as if death was the other side, battering down that wall to get at him, and he alone had to face that! And that was the situation in which he found himself, and he had to do some hard and some fast thinking.

But Yahweh had never left him! and so he was sick unto death, and b&s, the first hint that he got, (and I don't believe he needed too many hints) as to where the problem lay, was when Isaiah came in and said to him, 'set your house in order, for you're a dead man'. The words 'thou shalt die' are literally in the Hebrew 'you are a dead man'; and that's important, those were the words, you remember, that were used against Abimelech when he took Sarah into his house, remember? And the message of Abraham, of course, by Yahweh was he was a dead man if he touched that woman! exactly the same Hebrew expression. And there's Isaiah coming into him with a message of death, and I want you to appreciate what that would have meant to Hezekiah, and as Isaiah looked at him and he said, 'now listen, fellow, set your house in order; you are a dead man!' What house? what house? He neither had a child and worse still, nor a wife! and into that man's hands, b&s, God had commended the truth which He swore unto David, 'I will set thy seed upon My throne'. He had hours to think about that; he hadn't made provision for the fundamental element of that promise, and he had prayed to God to deliver that city, for David's sake! And there was his problem! and I will show you as we go back into the Psalms, I'll show you some remarkable truths, b&s, which you know, but you probably haven't realized the importance of them. And when that man looked into the yawning grave, having neither wife nor child into whose hand was committed, the power and purpose of Almighty God, to continue the

glory of David's reign, that man alone was a problem to God, never mind about the Assyrian! And he had to front that up, and it was a serious matter, a very serious matter indeed, and Isaiah the prophet, standing in the background, was later to use his subsequent marriage to Hephzibah, and he aligned Hezekiah's marriage to Hephzibah as Yahweh's marriage to Israel and the Land, as the symbol of the guarantee of God's purpose to fulfill that promise! You work it out by a system of logic what that means! as we'll take you later on to the 62nd chapter of Isaiah, 'thy land shall no more be called Desolate, but thy land shall be called Beulah, 'married'; and Hephzibah 'for my delight is in her'.

Now that's not just a flowery statement based upon Hezekiah's lovely marriage; but take it back through the reverse, that as far as Hezekiah was concerned, if he hadn't married Hephzibah and if she hadn't become married to him, then as far as he was concerned, there would be no marriage for him with that Land either! That's what Isaiah is telling him, and he's saying, 'As thy sons marry their virgins, thy God shall rejoice over you' and there was the sign of divine approval, b&s, he wasn't healed when he got his health back, he was healed when he got his boy!, and I want to show you that's exactly what Psalm 89 says, and that man was caught in a graphic situation. And you know, people have criticized him and say, 'he didn't believe in the resurrection' because he said, 'they that go down to the pit, can't hope for thy truth'. Well, he was right, because once he'd gone past that lip of the grave, b&s, there was no coming back! And he was gone, and there as far as the purpose of Almighty God was concerned in his life, trusted in His hands, through his fault, had now ceased as far as He was concerned; and the great and enormous responsibility had gone forever, and never could he bring that back. And he was a frightened and a terrified man when Isaiah came in and said, 'set your house in order, you're a dead man!'

I tell you, b&s, when I entered into the spirit of that, I could tell you, that would have hit him enormously, look, it would have terrified him! Look, greater men and lesser men than he, had faced death with resolution and happiness; it wasn't death that he feared, it was his part in the plan and purpose of God which by his own neglect, had been brought to the lip of destruction. Now, that's a serious matter and now he's there, and he prays to Yahweh. Look, why would a man of that character, why would he pray like he did? You know, it's unnatural for a man like that with such faith, to pray so earnestly and to want to live longer, b&s, as they say like the apostle Paul, he looked death in the face and said, 'I hope it comes quickly, better for me'. Hezekiah had faith like that; you see, there were bigger issues at stake than just his life, bigger issues than just his life! and the very signs given to him spoke so clearly of those issues. And he had to realize that, and you know, b&s, when you put the matter like that, you have Hezekiah coming before Yahweh, he uses no titles, he just calls Him, Yahweh; and you have Yahweh his God and Hezekiah, and there are the two of them, locked together, and there they are! Never mind about the Assyrian, he's forgotten, never mind about Judah, never mind about Israel, here's an issue with Hezekiah! and it's got to be resolved. And it's a serious matter.

And he prays to God in the second verse of Isaiah chapter 38, he says after turning his

face to the wall, 'Remember now, O Yahweh, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart', and he had walked before God in truth with a perfect heart. There's no doubt about that, as Rotherham puts it, 'he walked before God in faithfulness with an undivided heart', and yet for all the facts, b&s, that he could claim that, he wept sore for life. Why? As I said, because he knew the problem. And what happened? Yahweh answered him! But you know, b&s, it's remarkable to read the scriptural record, look, bible study is wonderful and marvellous especially when you let the bible do it for you! Look, just keep your hand in Isaiah and come to 2 Kings chapter 20, where we have a little more detail concerning the answer of Yahweh to Hezekiah. And look at what happened in verse 4, as Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh, the end of verse 3 says, 'he wept sore'. Verse 4 says, 'And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of Yahweh came to him saying'. Before he had gone out into the middle court, and what is that telling us, b&s? that Yahweh was living in that palace with Hezekiah, that's what it means, and before Isaiah could get out of Hezekiah's presence, he was going to get out of God's presence because they lived together, and He caught him in the middle court before he ever got away from the presence of Hezekiah.

And He said this, 'Turn again, and tell Hezekiah (and here comes a magnificent phrase) the captain of My people'. See the point, b&s, if you don't see the point I'll spell it out for you; God has a people, and He has committed the trust of those people into the hands of a captain. He expects from that captain the exercise of the responsibility that's committed into his hands; what was the responsibility of the captain of God's people? Let me tell you, you know these references well, we save time by not turning them up because you know them so well; Isaiah said concerning the greater than Hezekiah, 'that He would be a leader and a commander of the people, Isa.55:4' and the word 'leader' there is exactly the same word as 'captain' here; so that Jesus Christ was going to be a leader or a captain of God's people. What was the responsibility of the captain of God's people? well Paul tells us that 'He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man; that in bringing many sons unto glory He made the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings'. The Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, came into this world knowing full well that He had to discharge a responsibility to God, in suffering death for humanity, to bring many sons to glory! Here's the captain of God's people with the same responsibility, facing death with not one single boy to save!

That's the issue! he hasn't got a son to save, and that's his fault, and he hasn't even made any preparations for it, at the age of 25, and 'he's the captain of My people'. And you know, when Isaiah was to go back with that message, the very title itself bore God's answer; he's going to get better, of course, because he's the captain of God's people, and he's going to lead many sons unto glory. The Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, had come into this world for no other purpose, than to demonstrate His own superlative righteousness before God and then to die and be raised again for Himself, and only for Himself. He never would have fulfilled God's purpose nor would He have been raised for that purpose; He came into the world to save us! and it was because He went out and made sons and daughters of the living God, by the power of His gospel message, and had a

great family to see His seed, that He was able to stand before God and to know this, that when He went to the cross, He wouldn't go there with no hope of the truth; He had established the truth because the truth is people! God's Word in people and that was left behind Him as a heritage, and He died to lead as the captain of God's people, those many sons unto glory! That was the issue!

And in that 5th verse He says, 'the captain of my people, Thus saith Yahweh Elohim of David thy father', there again, b&s, was the guarantee of God's intervention to bring life to him, because Hezekiah was recognized as the son of David. But again, the very phrase used which would have, at once been an encouragement, was also a very profound rebuke, because if he was the son of David to that point, who was going to be the son of David through him from then on? NOBODY! And He said, 'you stand today, Hezekiah, in a privileged and a unique position in this world, because David never neglected his responsibilities nor did those who followed him. And you're the son of David, and I have said that the truth, the truth which He swore unto David was 'I will set thy seed upon thy throne', and from you onwards, there is no seed. Not that there weren't other children of David, but as far as Hezekiah personally was concerned, it stayed there! And so the captain of God's people, son of David, wonderful encouraging phrases, b&s, which at the same time bore a very severe rebuke to that man, because he was in no situation to carry that on; and Hezekiah knew that!

In 2 Kings again, God told him, 'I have seen thy tears' at the end of verse 5, 'behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of Yahweh. And I will add unto thy days 15 years', and so he was to go up, b&s, on the third day unto the house of Yahweh. And you see what he's being told! oh, yes, it's obvious he's a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who rose on the third day and went into heaven itself, the great house of Yahweh, that's obvious! But you see, what God was impressing him with was this, he was in the words of Isaiah a dead man; but because God knew his heart, He healed him on the third day, and did not suffer His holy One, to see corruption, and the purpose of that, b&s, is that He might see His seed! That's Isaiah 53, and it truly applied in the primary sense to Hezekiah, and in the greater and ultimate sense to our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was in a serious position. The third day, you know, that was always established in the Law and in the principles of Israel as an eternal principle, the third day, which would see life without corruption. I'll just give you an example of that, b&s, in 19th chapter of Leviticus, where a singular point is made about the portion of the peace offering with respect to the third day. I want you to note the language that is used, this is the principle that was being established, in 19th chapter of Leviticus (and we're quoting this merely to get this principle fixed in our minds) and verse 5, 'And if you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto Yahweh, ye shall offer it at your own will. It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow: and if aught remain until the third day, it shall be destroyed in the fire. And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it is abominable; it shall not be accepted. Therefore, (now listen to this) every one that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the hallowed thing of Yahweh'. He hath profaned the hallowed thing of Yahweh, take a thing beyond three days and it's no longer the

hallowed thing of Yahweh, 'therefore, said the angel, 'that holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God', and He didn't go past three days! because He was the hallowed thing of Yahweh! Well, what was Hezekiah? and though he'd been pronounced a dead man, Yahweh took him out of that death, b&s, which was sure and certain unless Yahweh intervened, and took him on the third day into the temple, because he was the hallowed thing of Yahweh! And that holy thing that was born of Mary would be called the Son of God for the purpose that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. And that's what Hezekiah had to come to grips with; he was going to be a hallowed thing of Yahweh to be a son of God, that he might now have the opportunity to become, b&s, the firstborn from that death of many brethren. And he had his opportunity to do what he had neglected to do; there's no doubt whatever that that was the issue, because of Hezekiah's subsequent words in this chapter. It's a remarkable chapter of scripture!

And He gave him 15 years we learn in the 38th chapter of Isaiah and verse 5. Fifteen years, a lot written about that, b&s, a lot of opinions as to the meaning of it; well, I'm not going to stand here and tell you I'm going to solve the problem, because I don't really know the absolute answer as to why 15 years; I can make some suggestions for you. He went up to the house of God on the 3rd day and the addition, of course, of life to him was by the grace of God, and three times five is fifteen. I don't think that is without some propriety in that record, but there is this suggestion, b&s, which I'm going to make to you; one of the complaints that Hezekiah made against God was this, he said, 'I am cut off in the midst of my days', in the cutting off of my days, the AV has it. The Hebrew is very specific, it says 'at noon', and he complained to God that He had cut him off in the centre of his life. And at that time, b&s, he had reigned nearly 15 years; Yahweh's answer to him in his bitterness was, 'I'll give it to you all over again', and He doubled the length of his reign. There was no cause for anymore complaints, and I believe that that is not the ultimate answer to the meaning of the 15 years, it certainly had a profound effect upon Hezekiah's mind, because when he realized it, he said, 'What can I say to Yahweh? I complained against Him that I've been cut off at noon! and He said, 'Okay', and He gave him almost the exact amount of years to continue his reign. I believe that has some merit in the suggestion that that's one of the reasons why he got the 15 years.

Certainly, b&s, in the Psalm of degrees, of which some of them Hezekiah could have written, certainly he compiled them all together, 4 written by David, 1 by Solomon and the other 10 there's no author to them; whether he wrote them or not, certainly he collected them together, and there were 15 of them, to celebrate, no doubt, one for every year of life that he was given by Yahweh, by the grace of God. And in those Psalms which follow a very familiar pattern of a man in distress, praying to God and is delivered; and in every one of those Psalms that is the pattern, without exception. A man in distress prays to God and is delivered, and having collected them together, every one of them spoke of that simple principle of God having delivered a man out of all his troubles!

And then you know, in verse 6, God told him, 'that He would deliver thee and this city out of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city', now notice the import of that statement. You know, we read the bible ever so quickly and glibly sometimes, b&s, look,

you look at Isaiah, almost in the same breath, 'I will deliver thee and this city', and what he was telling him was this, 'Hezekiah, when Yahweh delivers you it's for the purpose that this city stands; whatever God has with this city, He has with you. I'm identifying you with it; if I deliver you, I'll deliver the city, if I deliver the city, I'll deliver you!' What is the purpose of Jerusalem? but that we might be born in her! That this man and that man might be born in her, so that it shall be said of all those people that come from those nations, most unlikely to produce spiritually minded people, like Tyre, Egypt, Philistia, Babylon, 'this and that man was born in her'. Hezekiah, if I'm going to save that city for that purpose, and you're the city and the city is you, I want that purpose continued in you'. That's what He was telling him, b&s, and every term that comes into this 38th chapter of Isaiah has overtones of the promises made to David and the responsibilities that go with it. And there was his problem!

Now we're told that He brought the sun-dial of Ahaz back by 10 degrees; but if we were to go back to the record in Kings (which there is no need to, because I'll tell you what it says) Isaiah gave Hezekiah the choice as to which way the shadow would fall. So the matter of bringing the degrees back was the way Hezekiah requested, b&s. 'You say what you want to do with it', we'll take it forward or we'll bring it back, it's no problem for Yahweh'. Well, of course, if the shadow fell forward it would mean that the day was going quicker, wasn't it? a phenomenon indeed, but ah, if He could pull it back, if He could redeem the time, b&s, that's another matter! How do you buy back time? He's going to pull that time back and that, of course, would be a remarkable phenomenon, and that's what Hezekiah requested. What for? that he might have a more difficult sign to give Yahweh? was he that sort of a man? Was he just like his father Ahaz who treated signs lightly or differently, or put Yahweh to a more severe test? I don't think so, b&s. Let's talk about this sun-dial of Ahaz, what was it?

First of all, take the word 'degrees'; it's the Hebrew word for 'step', and if you follow it through the scriptures you'll find it's not only used for steps but almost in every case, for 'steps going up'. You can have steps to go up and step to come down, I guess it matters not, they're still steps, but strangely enough you find the word mostly used for 'steps going up', and the idea of the word 'degree' is not only steps but steps going up. And when Hezekiah composed the Song of Degrees, which is the same Hebrew word, what do you find? you find that in several of them there's a progression of thought, of people beginning to go towards Jerusalem from their own habitat, and they go up to the city. So the Song of Degrees is a journey to a higher place, but before ever, Hezekiah could get that nation to go to a higher place, he had to pull something back. Now whatever form or shape the sundial took, there have been several suggestions, some say it was the steps of some building that Ahaz had, the other suggestion is that it was a circular range of steps in the middle of a court with a singular column in the middle where the shadow fell across the stairs and they could tell the time of day by the degrees which ever way it went. I wouldn't know how it worked, b&s, I'm not an astrologer, I wouldn't have any idea, but evidently there was some steps involved in the way that shadow fell on those steps, and the record is very explicit that it was the sundial of Ahaz that was in question! And we mustn't rule that out as being insignificant; why? there are two things, b&s, which are facts. One is this, that there is no record in scripture or in Jewish tradition that



the Jews ever measured time like that (they never measured time by shadows, the Jews ever measured time by light) and the heavenly bodies were for them, the measurement not shadows. And secondly, b&s, the other fact is that Ahaz, as the record of Kings and Chronicles tells us, had a particular liking for heathen objects. And it's quite evident that the sundial of Ahaz was in Israel as a heathen way of marking time, by shadows. And Ahaz had brought into the nation, the times of the Gentiles, and what Hezekiah wanted to do was to pull that back a full 10 degrees. Now whenever you make the significance of 10, one thing is for sure, (and in dealing with these matters I like to be sure) one thing is for sure, that 10 is used in the scriptures of the aggregate number of any thing. Want a few examples? Daniel's wisdom was 10 times better than the wisdom of the magicians of Chaldea; Laban had changed Jacob's wages 10 times; Zechariah tells us that 10 men out of all the languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew; Leviticus chapter 26 says that in the extremity of a siege, ten women shall bake bread in one oven; there were 10 virgins, and so we could go on, and in everyone of those cases, though the number 10 may not be the exact numerical quantity, it was the aggregate number of which it was spoken. And what Hezekiah wanted, b&s, was for Yahweh to get hold of the times of the Gentiles which had cast a shadow over Israel, and bend them back the whole way and to start again! And that's exactly what had happened. And he wanted that to continue to happen! And Yahweh got all those shadows and He bent them by the refraction of the sun's rays, and He bent them back a full 10 degrees, on the sundial of Ahaz, 'upon which, says the record, 'they had gone down'. And the sun was going down upon the nation.

Isaiah chapter 60, Isaiah the prophet said this, and you'll notice we're back to our lovely prophet again, always in this story. Verse 18, 'Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls, Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but Yahweh shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down', and Isaiah the prophet in eloquent terms, b&s, was speaking as if the sun had gone down, the shadow was falling over Israel, the times of the Gentiles had been brought in, there was wasting and destruction everywhere and Hezekiah cleaned it up, and Yahweh lent His hand, and bent down and yanked that shadow and brought it back a full 10 degrees. And the light and the glory of Yahweh shone in that country through the face of Hezekiah, and never while that man lived, was the sun of the truth ever to go down on that nation, as long as he had force and power as king, to maintain the truth in that nation. And there was a wonderful sign, I believe, on that occasion; you know, b&s, I do believe, by inference in one of the references we're given in Chronicles, that the bringing back of those degrees, was a local phenomenon! Now scientific experiments or discoveries, have proven in the days of Joshua, there is a lost day, when the sun stood still. The whole world, I believe, experienced that, but there's evidence to prove that this which happened in the land of Judah, didn't affect the time periods anywhere else, it was a local phenomenon, because we read that when the ambassadors came from Babylon to seek the glory of Hezekiah, the record says, 'they came to see the wonder that was done in that Land'. And the Babylonians were ever known to lead the field in astrology, and they were wondering what was going on! And if you like, b&s, to add detail to detail, wise men

came from the east, because of a sign in the heavenly bodies, to see a wonder that was done in the Land, of a man who had risen virtually from the dead, to walk into the house of Yahweh. You know, it must have been a remarkable thing for Hezekiah to go through that experience and to watch that shadow being pulled back by Yahweh.

And that sign having been given him, b&s, hardly had the shadow come back than he was up into the house of Yahweh on the third day, free from the disease, with pure blood again; the boil is gone, the man is clean and now he's going to speak about the experience and what he learnt by that experience. The writing of Hezekiah, Isaiah 38 and verse 9 tells us, 'the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness'. The word 'writing' there, of course, means what it says, but the writing is in poetic form, and it was obviously meant to be put to music, as verse 20 says, 'they shall sing my songs in the house of Yahweh'. This was intended to go down in the record, b&s, as a psalm, to be sung in the house of Yahweh, and here's the song. He said, 'In the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave'. As we read through here, I'll leave it up to you to pick out the echoes of Isaiah 53, I won't even mention them; that's a little exercise for the audience. It's not in my providence, b&s, I have determined in my studies that we'll study Hezekiah and leave the overtones of Jesus Christ for you to work out and to make your own application, because to do that would be to broaden these studies into another Easter camp. I want to concentrate upon Hezekiah's matter, and he speaks about the cutting off of my days, as Rotherham says, 'in the noontide of my days', and so Yahweh gave him another extension of 15 years almost the exact period has he had already reigned to this point of time.

And then he says, 'that he'd go to the gates of the grave'. The gates of the grave, they're awful gates, you know Job speaks of them, b&s, and the Psalms speak of them, and the poetic language both of Job and the Psalms and of Hezekiah, combine together to give a composite picture of what they see, as the article of death. It's all poetic language, of course, but they see it as a city of people who are still; the inhabitants of the world actually, in the end of verse 11, is really understood as 'the inhabitants of the land of stillness', and you know, it's an awful picture! You come to these ghostly gates, and those gates, b&s, can be defensive and offensive, depending upon which side you're on! I'm saying this because I've got a purpose in sight, so we come to those gates and they swing open to us, and we go through them and on the other side, there are fences to keep us in; if we can stay this side of them, they are defenses and they're keeping us out, that's where we want to be, we want to be out we don't want to be in! And Job and the Psalmist and Hezekiah see these ghostly gates, and when we come to these ghostly gates, behind them there are a lot of people but they're absolutely still! It's a world of stillness, of silence of absolute silence; deathness, it's an awful picture, a picture, of course, that we don't appreciate; young people bouncing around this Easter camp, in the effervescence of youth, never appreciate; there are many of our brethren and sisters who stood by those gates, and know that at any second, they pass through them! to the land of stillness. And you see, b&s, for a faithful man and a woman, that doesn't mean very much, we lost a very wonderful brother just recently like that, who looked death in the eye and laughed at it, and spoke about it as if it were a Sunday School picnic. And he meant it, a wonderful man; but of course, he wasn't in Hezekiah's

position! He was in an awful position! because he stood at the end of his life and behind him was a wonderful heritage of truth, and in front of him, NOTHING! And it was his fault!

And that's the situation that faced him! Do you know, that those words, 'the gates of the grave', b&s, were quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ? In the 16th chapter of Matthew, and I want to show you in what context they were quoted, and what they meant to the Lord, and I think you'll see the point from Hezekiah's point of view; we know the reference again, very familiar reference, the commendation of the Lord upon the wonderful disciple, Peter, in verse 17, 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven'. (He's no longer Simon son of Jonah, he's Peter the son of God) 'And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my ecclesia; and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it', and you see, He's quoting from the life of Hezekiah, isn't He? Well, if He's not why does He mention the keys of the kingdom? Why does He mention the third day, he shall rise again? What had He said before? that there should be a sign of the prophet Jonah; He's in the area of signs in the Old Testament, and He's talking about the gates of the grave, the keys of the kingdom, and rising the third day, that's all out of the life of Hezekiah, and the point the Lord is making is this, b&s, that here, the ecclesia is on the other side of the gates, to what side Hezekiah was on! They're dead; they will pass into the article of death; Peter died and along with him, all those who formed that ecclesia. Peter was not the foundation of the ecclesia, and neither was his confession the foundation of the ecclesia. The foundation of the ecclesia, b&s, is the confession in Peter; the foundation of the ecclesia is not that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, as an abstract saying, the foundation of God's ecclesia is that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God in you and in me! That's the ecclesia and that's why Peter is included; we exclude him because we argue against the Pope's doctrine. Let's forget the fool the Pope, let's talk about Peter; we can't exclude him, the Lord didn't! and though the words in the Greek may be different, they're so similar, there's a relationship that the Lord's talking about and conviction in Peter was the foundation of the ecclesia, but Peter died and went on that side of the gates, b&s. But you see, the gates of the grave could not prevail against Peter because he said, 'I am he that hath the keys of hell and death'. And he says, 'I also have the key of David', and the key of David, b&s, is needed to unlock the doors of hell and death. Why? Use your logic; because behind the door is the house of David, and the doors which unlock the houses of David, the houses of glory (no good unlocking those doors if all the people that constitute the living manifestation of that house, are locked behind the last door)!

So the one that has the key of David, has also got the keys of hell and death, and they must be held together, because David's house is in the dust of the grave, and the Lord will open the gates of death, He'll swing them open and out will come the house of David! My dear brethren and sisters, if Hezekiah passed through the gates of death which he was looking at then, and they closed upon him, there would be no point in opening those doors for the house of David as far as he was concerned, because he had no house to set in order! And that's what he was looking at, and that's why those

gates were so awful to him, because the gates were not to prevail against the ecclesia, and he wasn't an ecclesia, he was one man!

And that was his problem! And he says, 'Yahweh, Yahweh', he calls pathetically to Him, I said, I shall not see Yahweh, Yahweh in the land of the living', you see, b&s, this man's a faithful man, but he meant that; 'I shall not see Yahweh, even Yahweh, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more, I shall be with the inhabitants of the land of stillness'. Why? why? 'Mine age is departed', you know, b&s, the word for 'age' is the word 'generation', see he knew, I haven't got a generation, that's why, my generation is gone! 'Who shall declare his generation?' That's the issue, who shall declare his generation? and he likens that generation, b&s, to cutting off the weaver, and to a shepherd's tent. And the weaver is weaving away a wonderful pattern of life and the intricate patterns of life are being woven together through the loom. And the weaver, of course, has an objective, his objective is to finish the article, but Hezekiah sees the article unfinished, snipped right off at the loom, no longer is it going to be joined together and completed and he saw that as his generation gone; that's what he's talking about! Like a shepherd's tent, up today and down tomorrow; transiency of life, but he's got no flock, as far as he himself was concerned, and he was bitter about that!

And it says, in verse 13, 'I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones', I reckoned till the morning, do you know what he's saying? In the Hebrew the expression is, 'that I've adjusted myself in the night', all through the night until morning I have composed myself, I've got in control of myself, darkness came upon him and he composed himself, the word is used in Psalm 132 in the Song of Degrees where it's rendered 'behaved myself' or as the margin says 'he steeled or comforted himself, composed himself. And he composed himself through the night; morning came and realization dawned upon him and Yahweh was standing over his body like a lion, looking down at him and crushing all his bones. And there's a taint of bitterness, b&s, is those words for which later on he sincerely apologized for.

And he sees himself like a bird, several birds; Sennacherib had caged him up like a bird in Jerusalem, such was his boast. Hezekiah sees himself like a crane, or a swift, both birds noted, b&s, for stride and sounds. The swift for its shrieking sound as it sped through the air; you see it coming darting like the swallow (its from the swallow family) and it darts through the air almost faster than the eye can follow it, and it shrieks as it goes and it shrieks and it's gone; that's Hezekiah's life! And then the crane, you see it down in the pond, and when it's there, standing there in its mournful state, it brings up from the depth of its bowels a sound like 'boooooom' and unlike the shrieking of the swallow, a mournful 'boom' which reverberates and echoes down the lake, Hezekiah saw himself therefore, in the extremity of life, shrieking his way through the heavens to death, and booming out the mournful sorrow he felt, as he stood there like a crane and all its mournfulness. And the sound of a dove, the plaintive sound of the dove, helpless and hopeless as it cries in its extremity, as Isaiah 59 spoke about the plaintive, mournful sound of the dove, so Hezekiah, b&s, felt the pain and the anguish of the moment. And he asked God to undertake for him; to underwrite for him, to be his security; he'd been sold into the gates of the grave, and he asked God, b&s, to be his security!

And that brought him to the end of that particular feeling which he had, in which there was a taint of bitterness in that, there was a complaint that he had been perhaps not built with altogether as he should have been, but then he says, 'but what shall I say?' You see, here's another realization coming, 'look, he said, look, what of the facts? what can I say? how can I express myself in gratitude to God, because He said He would heal me, and He's done it? He's done it! and here he is in health, b&s, the Song opens up and tells us he's in health, Yahweh's cured him! So he's cured so he's talking from the viewpoint of being healthy, he's reminiscing about his bitterness, and here he says, 'Oh, my goodness, what have I done? what can I say? because He's promised and here I am!'

And then he starts, b&s, to make those fervent vows to Yahweh, and I can only appreciate this by a very careful analytical study in which you can lock into the mind of Hezekiah, and listen to the words of a man which are wrung out of him, in the depth of sincerity, what he would do for Yahweh. He said, 'I will go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul' (as the Hebrew has it) and you know, b&s, that word 'softly' there is only used one other place in the scripture and that's in Psalm 42, where David went with a group of people to the temple, and he says, 'what can I say to God for my bitterness?' He says, 'look, I'll walk the rest of my life, and I don't care where I am, whether I'm on the throne, whether I'm out in the field of battle, whether I'm among my subjects in the city or in the country, I will walk as if I'm treading reverently in the presence of God's house'. He promised, b&s, in the depth of his sincerity because of his bitterness, he promised to do that, he would walk softly in God's house. And he says, 'O LORD, by these things men live', by what things? When you walk up and look at the gates of the grave, b&s, and you stand there in the anxiety of waiting for them to open, it's then, and then only, that men come to realize what life is all about! Men have to die, to live! and he looked death in the face, he was a dead man!

And he says, 'for this is the life of my spirit'. He didn't mean, b&s, that God had merely brought him back to physical health, God had brought him back to spiritual health. When David committed his sin in relation to Bathsheba, he cried unto Yahweh to create within him, a right spirit, and having looked death in the face as a murderer and an adulterer, b&s, he then knew what spiritual life was all about! So did this man, 'make me to live' He's already done that! these words are coming after he'd been given life, but he wants now, b&s, to live it anew; he wants to live it like a spiritual man as if he wasn't before? but Hezekiah could see, and he says in verse 17, 'Behold, for peace I had great bitterness', the RSV says, 'Lo, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness'. It was good for him, b&s, to go through that experience, and though he deeply regretted having been bitter against Yahweh, it was good for his soul to now realize that. And it was for his great welfare that he had that bitterness!

But he says, 'Thou, thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption', now you know, the Hebrew expression means 'that Yahweh had embraced him and hung onto him' that as the gates of the grave yawned open, Yahweh hung onto him and pulled him back, like that; that's exactly what the expression means, 'thou hast taken

hold of my soul', the whole being of Hezekiah, Yahweh seized it and yawned him back out of the grave, and that's why He met Hezekiah in the centre court of the king's house, because He had hold of him, b&s! He had hold of him, and grabbing hold of him, He'd never let him go! they could never get him the gates of the grave, because Yahweh knew his heart and mind, and knew what he would do and He had already held him and that's what Hezekiah said, 'you had hold of me, and if you had let me go, I would have fallen in'; but they can't take God and He refused to let him go. And Hezekiah said, 'you cast all my sins behind thy back', and he said, 'I know this, that death can't celebrate you; in the grave none can praise you'. The words 'to celebrate' means 'to hold out the hands in worship' the word 'to praise' is 'halal' which means to make a loud and clear sound'.

And then he made this wonderful confession, b&s, in verse 18, 'for the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth'. And he wasn't speaking about 'the truth' in the intelligent sense of knowing it, because he knew it, b&s, inside out; he was talking about that part of the truth of which he had so grossly neglected. Now come with me to Psalm 132, one of the Songs of Degrees, why would you think that Hezekiah would include this psalm in the Songs of Degrees? Verse 11 of Psalm 132, 'Yahweh hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne'. There's the truth that Hezekiah's talking about! He cannot hope for thy truth, why? b&s, because of the fruit of thy body, Yahweh shall set upon thy throne, and as far as Hezekiah was concerned, that truth would be fulfilled; Hezekiah would not stand in the way of it, b&s, and God didn't depend upon Hezekiah to fulfil it. God's purpose wasn't impinging upon Hezekiah, but, b&s, Hezekiah's own personal involvement was! And he says, I can't hope for your truth if I go in there, because there's no way that he could produce a child in death.

And in Psalm 89, b&s, we have this wonderful statement of the extension of that truth, verse 26, speaking of the ultimate Son of David, 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me'. Now, b&s, what I'm trying to point out from those verses is this, that God's purpose is sure, but the continuation of that purpose from child to child to child, was to David a sign of God's faithfulness and mercy to him! because it was his children, and we often quote Adam Clark to get us out of the difficulty of 2 Samuel 7, throw that interpretation in the fire! There's the interpretation of 2 Samuel 7! 'if he commit iniquity, he's not talking about he the singular, he talking about the total seed; if his children do this, and if their children do that wrong, and if their children's children do that wrong, I will ultimately establish that purpose, is what Psalm 89 is saying, that's all we need as an exposition of

2 Samuel 7! But you see, it was the point of the continuation of those children in which God's truth and purpose was continued, and David's part and parcel in it, b&s, was because they were out of his body. And Hezekiah said, 'the father to the children shall make known the truth', that's what he's getting at, and you see, he didn't have any child to pass that on, but he says, 'Yahweh, among the things that I promise you, I promise you that; that I'll get married, I will find a bride, we will marry and we will have a child, in your good grace!' And three years later, b&s, Manasseh was born.

Three years later Manasseh was born, and do you know, he's gone down in the record of the history of the kings of Judah, as having the longest reign of any, be it Israel or Judah, 55 years. The greater part of which, was given over to organize the apostacy, 'but My mercy will not fail, nor shall My faithfulness fail', says God, once that truth is acknowledged, and you know, b&s, it's almost a cameo of God's total purpose in that promise, that at the very end, Manasseh turned again! Almost a cameo of the total plan and purpose with David's seed, through Hezekiah, that that boy lived through 55 years of debauchery, to be dragged into captivity and to then repent in a manner that was absolutely exemplary, and brought back to the throne in the fullness of the vigor of spirituality, as if God in one generation enacted the total purpose that He had with that seed! And many people have said that the 15 years given to Hezekiah, he'd have been better without them! that is utter rubbish! It was absolutely critical that he get those 15 years, or at least some years, that he might produce that child and that that line might go on; not that God's purpose would have been fulfilled in any case, b&s, could be fulfilled, but more importantly as far as Hezekiah was concerned, that he could stand there in the centre of that line and say, 'Yahweh, I will go ahead; I will be a father and I will teach the truth to the child'.

And by that he didn't just mean 'the truth' in the way that we mean it. The truth as it was incorporated in the promises made to David, of which his seed was absolutely an integral element. And so, b&s, the song of Hezekiah came to an end, in that wonderful chapter of Isaiah 38, a marvellous chapter. And he said that this song along with other songs that he wrote or composed or compiled would be sung and would be understood; and he says in verse 20, 'Yahweh was ready to save me', the Hebrew says 'Yahweh will save me and we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Yahweh'. And the song ended, b&s, on that very high note!

And you know, when you go to the Song of Degrees which were some of Hezekiah's songs, there it all is! there it all is; the expressions of Hezekiah, indicating, b&s, that he saw the issue. He spoke in Psalm 126 of sowing that precious seed that Isaiah promised, he spoke about that precious seed that we spoke about this morning, that he would sow that in faith because he believed the Assyrian wouldn't come back. He spoke in Psalm 127 of building the house of Yahweh, the family of Yahweh; 'they labour in vain that build it, if Yahweh doesn't build the family', and do you know, b&s, that's the Psalm of Solomon, and Solomon had 1,000 wives and the record of scripture leaves him with 1 son only, and the psalm is underlined that if Yahweh does not build the house, they labour in vain that built it', and I believe that Hezekiah got that psalm and took it out of its context and put it in his Song of Degrees, do you know why, b&s? not because the psalm merely said that they labour in vain if Yahweh doesn't build the house, the fact

that Solomon made provision by having a 1,000 wives, didn't necessarily mean that he'd have a big house! But you see, to Hezekiah, it had another meaning, because he had not made provision and to him to have one son, was all he needed! Imagine that psalm going! And Psalm 128, the figure of the olive plants around the table, of children growing up with the roots of their parents. Of the wife inside the house, with the vine of the family growing from within her bowels, as the Hebrew has it, the wife producing the children and growing around the house like the grape vine.

And all those figures, b&s, they would sing these songs of Hezekiah and they would be meaningful to him! because in those songs, b&s, was not only the glory and the power and the praise to His Creator, but there was his part in the kingdom of God! There was his redemption; there was, b&s, the salvation of that great man; there was the putting aright of the neglect, and there was the power of Yahweh, and the truth of Yahweh, 'I have sworn unto David that of the fruit of thy body, I will raise up thy seed to sit upon thy throne'. And Hezekiah now stood there, b&s, in the stream of life, in the stream of life that out of his body that seed had come, through which the great Emmanuel one day would come! And they were going to sing those songs in the house of Yahweh with stringed instruments. As I said before, they would pluck the strings of the heart and those songs would be sung, b&s, meaningfully, because they meant so much to Hezekiah, who had been saved from the jaws and the gates of the grave!