

HEZEKIAH'S SIN

By the Rt. Rev. George de Charms

Lessons: Isaiah 38 and 39

Hezekiah, the King of Judah, stayed true to the Lord even when the Assyrians threatened to destroy Jerusalem. He believed it when Isaiah said the Lord would protect the city and its people. And the Lord sent a plague that destroyed 185,000 of Sennacherib's army in one night.

Hezekiah proved his trust in the Lord. And when Hezekiah became sick and was about to die, he prayed to the Lord to save him. The Lord listened to his prayer, promising that Hezekiah would live for fifteen more years. As proof of His mercy and compassion, the Lord caused the shadow to go back ten degrees on the sundial of Ahaz. This was a wonderful miracle and Hezekiah knew that this meant that the promise of recovery did not come from Isaiah, but was the true Word of the Lord. So Hezekiah rejoiced greatly.

Shortly after this, Merodac-Baladan, the King of Babylon, sent messengers to Jerusalem. The messengers came to ask about the health of the king but their real purpose was to spy out the land. They wanted to find out how strong the walls of the city were, the size of the Jewish army, how well they could withstand a siege, and whether they had valuable treasures which would make it worthwhile to attack them. Under the pretense of friendship, the Babylonians came to betray them.

Hezekiah would have learned this if he had consulted the Lord through Isaiah, and he would have sent the spies back to their king without showing them the city. But Hezekiah forgot about the Lord even though he had just healed him and done the miracle with the sun dial. He felt proud that a ruler from a distant land sent messengers to ask about his health. He noticed their rich garments, their badges and insignia, and he wanted to show them that he too possessed wealth and power. So he showed them all he had—everything in the city and even the sacred treasures of the Temple. The visitors were eager to get these riches for Babylon and returned to their king with information that would make it easier for him to capture Jerusalem.

Isaiah went to Hezekiah and questioned him after the messengers had gone. Hezekiah told him that the visitors came from Babylon and that he had shown them all the treasures of the Temple. Then Isaiah told him why they had come, how they had deceived him, and how his pride had helped to betray Jerusalem into their hands.

Family Talk

What do we have that is like the sacred treasures of the Temple? The Lord has revealed many hidden truths of the Old and New Testaments in the Heavenly Doctrines (also called the “Writings for the New Church”). People who learn these truths have a wonderful opportunity to use them to help other people. But it would be a mistake to take pride in having these teachings. They are a gift from the Lord to be cherished and protected. We should use them to serve the Lord, praying to Him for guidance in how to apply them in our lives.