

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
August 18, 2016

Isaiah 37:14–38:22. Hezekiah’s prayer, national deliverance, and healing.

Luke 13:1–35. Tower of Siloam and natural law/consequences.

Job 9:1–11. How can a man be righteous before the Lord?

COMMENTS:

Isaiah 37:14–38:22. With the threat from Sennacherib, Hezekiah prayed a great prayer of faith in the Temple. By placing the matter in God’s hands, he was calling God’s attention to it (though of course he believed that God already knew). The king began his prayer with praise (**Isa. 37:15–16**). Referring to Him as the God of Israel, the king recalled the special covenant position Israel had with the LORD. God’s being enthroned between the cherubim refers to His presence in the Jerusalem temple and thus with His people. Besides being the God of Israel, the LORD is also over all the kingdoms of the earth, including Assyria! Note that Hezekiah also recognizes that God is the Creator. Then, Hezekiah asked God to intervene for His glory, so that the other nations would know that He, the LORD of Israel, is the true God (**Isa. 37:17–20**). Hezekiah requested deliverance from the Assyrians so that nations everywhere would acknowledge God’s sovereignty (**Isa. 37:21–35**). Responding to Hezekiah’s prayer, the Lord sent a message to him through Isaiah that Assyria would be defeated. That message included three parts. *First*, the Assyrians would be driven back (**37:21–29**). *Second*, God assured Hezekiah that a remnant would remain (**37:30–32**) and that life would go on as usual. *Third*, the message again addressed the king of Assyria (**37:33–35**). God told him that he would not set foot inside the city of Jerusalem or even build a siege ramp against its walls. He would have to return home because God Himself would defend the city of David (**37:36–38**). The overnight slaughter did not come from the hand of an enemy but by the Angel of the LORD, who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. This Angel is no other than the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ.

Luke 13:1–35. Consider the first five verses in light of what we have studied on the problem of evil and natural law and consequences. Jesus made it clear that human tragedies are not always divine punishments and that it is wrong for us to “play God” and pass judgment. As we have seen, Job’s friends made this mistake when they said that Job’s afflictions were evidence that he was a sinner. If we take that approach to tragedy, then we will have a hard time explaining the sufferings of the Prophets and Apostles, and even of our Lord Himself. Regarding the deaths of the people on whom the tower in Siloam fell, it was not the fault of Pilate or God. How dare anyone blame God! The eighteen who were killed were just doing their job, yet they died. They were not protesting or creating trouble. This does not mean that God never supernaturally intervenes, but that is always His call. Note how Jesus went on to show the logical conclusion of their argument: if God *does* punish sinners in this way, then they themselves had better repent because all men are sinners! The question is not, “Why did these people die?” but, “What right do you have to live?” None of us is sinless, so we had all better get prepared for our inevitable death, for die we shall sooner or later. We, Christians, all should be preparing ourselves to meet our Maker to give an account of our lives and what we have done with them—read Heb. 4:13; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12, and note the emphasis in these passages.

Job 9:1–11. In Job 9 and 10, Job asks three questions: (1) “How can I be righteous before God?” (9:1–13) (2) “How can I meet God in court?” (9:14–35) and (3) “Why was I born?” (10:1–22) Note how these questions are connected. Job is righteous, but he has to prove it. How can a mortal man prove himself righteous before God? Can he take God to court? But if God doesn’t step in and testify on Job’s behalf, what is the purpose of all this suffering? Why was Job even born? “*How can I be righteous before God?*” (וַיֹּמַר-יְצִדְקָא אֲנֹשׁ עִם-אֱלֹ) remarks Job. This is not a question about salvation (“How may I be justified?”) but about vindication (“How can I be declared innocent?”). If a man tried to take God to court, he would not be able to answer God’s questions one time in a thousand! Yet Job doesn’t know any other way to clear himself before his friends. Job focuses on the attributes of God, especially His invincible wisdom and power that control the earth and the heavens. Would anybody dare go to court with an opponent powerful enough to shake the earth, make the stars, and walk on the waves? But God is not only invincible, He is also *invisible*. Job couldn’t see Him or stop him to give Him a summons to court. God can do whatever He pleases, and nobody can question Him! That’s right! He is God after all. God does not owe us a thing. We owe God! May it never be said that we would ever entertain an entitlement attitude with God (which is often expressed in complaining)!

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don