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Dear Associates and Friends,

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“[Israel and Judah: 38. Hezekiah’s Reign Ends](#)” is this month’s article, following the events of YHWH’s miraculous destruction of a large Assyrian army of King Sennacherib surrounding the capital city of Jerusalem. King Hezekiah of Judah, the prophet Isaiah, the nobles, and the people of Jerusalem were saved. Hezekiah restores the government over the people of Judah and a few refugees from the Israelite tribes of the destroyed Kingdom of Israel. Then a strange illness, a miraculous life extension, prosperity in the kingdom, and a major mistake by Hezekiah, all lead to Hezekiah’s death.

Cast of Characters:

The cast is reduced considerably in this installment:

YHWH. Creator and controller of all in heaven and earth. YHWH influences individuals, kingdoms, countries, and peoples to work “**all things after the counsel of his own will**” (Ephesians 1:11). Despite the idolatry of the people of Judah, God again intervenes to rescue His chosen people. Will they change their ways? Do not disparage God. If you do, things will not end well. In this episode of “Israel and Judah” the King of Judah receives close attention from God who put him on the throne.

Hezekiah. Hezekiah is the King of Judah and a heroic reformer, a believer in YHWH’s defense of His people, and a great builder. He was one of the “good” kings of Judah in its long history of mostly bad kings since King David began his dynasty. Hezekiah means “Strong is YHWH” or “YHWH is my strength.” Sometime after God saves Jerusalem from the Assyrian threat, YHWH tests Hezekiah with a threat of death. Why God does this, we are not told. Perhaps Hezekiah had an attitude problem toward YHWH and an unreasonable and arrogant expectation that YHWH helped him more than others because he was a “good” king. Whatever the reason, God severely tested Hezekiah.

Isaiah. This important prophet to Judah, and before to Israel, has a major role in this month’s article. He is not teaching, preaching, or prophesying to the people of Judah in this historical episode. He interacts exclusively with King Hezekiah even though everything he does eventually is told to the people through Isaiah’s writings. He also has a role as a reporter of events regarding God telling Hezekiah he was to die soon. I think it is interesting that nowhere are Isaiah’s feelings about these events ever mentioned in the Book of Isaiah.

Envoys from Babylon. These unnamed men were sent from Babylon both to honor Hezekiah over his “defeat” of the Assyrians, and also to learn directly from the King of Judah how that victory happened to the Assyrian army outside the walls of Jerusalem. Did Hezekiah have some weapon, or a special relationship with a god to bring about the victory. Who knows what the King of Babylon was told by caravan merchants traveling through Judea to Babylon? The Assyrian defeat was big news all over the Near East.

Hezekiah, YHWH, Isaiah, and the envoys are the only characters in this edition of “Israel and Judah.”

Olivia de Havilland Has Died at Age 104

Two weeks ago in my July 15, 2020 Commentary “[Every Person in the Bible Is Dead ... Except Christ](#)”

I wrote that the actress Olivia de Havilland, the last living star from the 1939 movie *Gone With the Wind*, was still alive. I set her as an example of a person living decades beyond the current lifespan norm given in Psalm 90:10 of **“threescore and ten”** years.¹

News has come that Ms. De Havilland died from natural causes on Sunday, July 26, 2020 at her residence in Paris, France. For details see the *Variety* article, [“Olivia de Havilland, ‘Gone With the Wind’ Star, Dies at 104.”](#) She has gone, as 1 Kings 2:2 says, **“the way of all the earth.”** These words by King David seem to reflect Job 34:15: **“All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.”**

In this month’s article, Hezekiah faced the prospect of his own certain death announced to him by Isaiah from God Himself. That must have been a sobering discussion.

We have been given Hezekiah’s very thoughts on the subject in a prayer he composed after he repented (of unspecified sins) and was given an extension of fifteen years to his life. Hezekiah’s thoughts were put into writing and preserved by Isaiah. We have the privilege to read them across thousands of years and miles (time and space) — Hezekiah’s own thoughts from his mind to our mind.

This is what the Scriptures do for us, as I have written before. When you read the Scriptures, you are reading God’s thoughts through various human intermediaries, just as you are reading a novelist’s thoughts transmitted through time and space from letters on a page into your mind. Some of the thoughts and ideas are wonderful; some are disturbing. Olivia de Havilland’s life work is contained in sound and visuals of many films. Perhaps our lives will be read about or seen for playback. After all, we do not really know what God means by **“the book of life”** (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27) do we?

The Portland, Oregon “Disruptions”

Several of you have asked about our safety here in Portland, so let me tell you about our situation. Ramona Martin, my wife Robin, and I are all fine here in the greater Portland area. Ramona is over 6 miles away from the “upsets” at Pioneer Square in downtown Portland, Oregon. My wife and I are over 11 miles away.

As of today, the protests (and riots) have been going on every night for the past 60 days straight!

The suburb where we live in is a large spread-out city and no problems thus far have come in our direction. We have no federal government facilities, but our area has two large companies among countless smaller ones. One is the world headquarters of Nike (the shoemaker). The other major employer is the world headquarters of Intel (the chip maker). Intel is a major infrastructure company for the computer industry, a vital national security and military industrial asset. So, despite how things look on television, we have had no effect of the disturbances in our vicinity.

Thank You

We at ASK do our part (even frugally) but ASK is worthy of your support. As you know, we try to personally thank all of you faithful contributors. I appreciate your continued contributions to the work we do. We trust that you will continue to be behind our efforts to teach the Gospel of Christ to the world. I presume none of you are freeloaders, but that most of you genuinely want to help us in a worthy cause for you and for mankind. Thank you again, and God bless you.

Thank you all for the support you continue to provide for ASK. While we trust in God, you are the means through which He acts to continue our operations. We pray that God will bless you for doing so. May God watch over us all and keep us all safe in these “interesting times.”

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¹ Psalm 90:10:

“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”