

The Reign of Good King Hezekiah of Judah

2 Kings 18

2 Kings 18:1-12 - *"Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.*

He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

Now it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them."

Background Notes

This chapter is a record the reign of good King Hezekiah, and describes the threat against Judah by Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Hezekiah was one of the eight good kings of Judah. One of the first things that Hezekiah did when he became king was to repair and re-open the doors of the Temple that wicked King Ahaz had closed to the priests. As a result of Hezekiah's trust and faithfulness, a great revival started, and spread even into northern Israel. You can read more about this great revival in 2 Chronicles 29-31.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord will prosper committed believers.

"The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went" (v7). Good King Hezekiah was certainly a committed believer. He removed the idolatrous shrines, and he destroyed the high places where sacrifices to the Lord were wrongly being made. Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria. This was a good rebellion, because wicked King Ahaz, Hezekiah's

father, had wrongly submitted to the pagan Assyrians. And Hezekiah totally defeated the Philistines, the perennial enemy of Israel. He made a clean sweep - from rural areas to urban areas (v8).

As a result of Hezekiah's trust and commitment to the Lord, he prospered greatly. 2 Chronicles 32 tells us how God prospered Hezekiah.

The Lord will prosper committed believers today. Psalm 1:3 says that whatever the righteous person does will prosper. Now this biblical truth does not guarantee financial success and material prosperity to the committed Christian, but it does guarantee spiritual blessings and prosperity in whatever the Lord calls you to do. And the righteous and godly believer will surely be doing what God calls him or her to do! The Lord will prosper committed believers.

2 Kings 13-37 - *“And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, ‘I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.’ And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king’s house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.*

Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which was on the highway to the Fuller’s Field. And when they had called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. 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? You speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? Now 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. 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 in Jerusalem?’” Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them! 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 place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’”

Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” But the Rabshakeh said to them, “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?”

Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" Do not listen to Hezekiah; for the king of Assyria says: '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, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, "The Lord will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad, of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." 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."

2. The enemy will threaten committed believers.

As we know from our previous studies, the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722BC. King Hezekiah knew that it wouldn't be long before the Assyrians invaded Judah, with the hope of capturing Jerusalem. Sure enough, in 701BC, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, the successor of Sargon II, made his move on Judah. He attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and took them (v13).

At first Hezekiah tried to appease Sennacherib, and tried to buy freedom from attack by giving him an enormous amount of silver and gold, but it wasn't long before Sennacherib sent three officials to tell Hezekiah to surrender.

Notice the tactics the enemy used here. **These tactics are typical of the tactics that Satan uses against the believers today.**

a. First, there are the **scare tactics**. In essence the enemy was saying, "You've had it. All hope is gone (v19)! No one can help you. All potential help is like a crushed reed (v21). You are doomed to eat and drink your own waste (v27)."

Scare tactics.

b. Next, there are the **tactics of maligning and questioning God** and God's leader. "Do you think that God is going to help you?" (v22). The enemy said, "Why, your own King Hezekiah destroyed the high places where your God was being worshiped. If anything, your God is now angry with you."

c. And there are the **bargaining tactics**. "Surrender and we'll give you 2000 horses. We have plenty to spare - if you can manage to round up enough capable riders. You'd better make a deal with us because you're so weak. Bargain, or be destroyed!"

d. Finally, there is **“the Lord told me” tactic**. “*The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it’ (v25)*. This is the *enemy* speaking! This was a lie. Assyria was not about to conquer Jerusalem, as we’ll see.

At this point, Hezekiah’s representative tried to get the Assyrian representative to speak in Aramaic, not Hebrew, so that the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall would not understand his threats. Well, the enemy’s response was to threaten them all the louder.

Do you see the spiritual lesson here? **All of these enemy tactics in Hezekiah’s day are tactics of the enemy in spiritual warfare today**. As Hezekiah did not capitulate and did not surrender to the enemy then, so we should not be deceived by the enemy or give in to Satan today. You can be sure that the enemy will threaten committed believers.

Practical Application

Get rid of relics!

“Relics” are objects that are venerated because of their association with some past religious person or event. Verse 4 says that Hezekiah smashed the bronze serpent that the Lord had directed Moses to make in the wilderness, hundreds of years before this time. Hezekiah broke it into pieces! Why? The people of Israel were burning incense to it! They were actually worshiping the bronze serpent!

Moses had made the ancient bronze serpent when the people were dying from the bites of fiery serpents in the wilderness. The lord had healed any Israeli who would look in faith at the bronze serpent. But Hezekiah destroyed it, because the bronze serpent had become a relic - an object of worship. And God blessed Hezekiah for doing this.

Would we have destroyed the bronze serpent? I hope so! I hope we, like Hezekiah, would have destroyed anything that had become an object of improper worship.

But what about relics today? It would bring glory to God if any object that is a relic, an object of worship, were properly destroyed. Are there any relics in your life? Any objects that are diverting your worship away from the Lord Himself? Get rid of relics!