Lessons from the Life of Hezekiah, King of Judah

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December 2006

Magnolia, Ohio
What follows are a series of lessons that were preached throughout 2006. The lessons concern the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah, and various lessons that one may glean from his life. All scripture quoted in this work are from the Authorised Version, unless otherwise specified. International usage of English has been utilised in this work, rather than that of American English.

Acknowledgments and Intellectual Ownership

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my God who has given me grace from eternity past and has caused me to know Him, and who has been ever faithful in teaching me His holy word. I would also like to thank my wife Jennifer for her continual support of me and my endeavours.

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About the Author

Lee Carl Finley was raised in East Sparta, Ohio, USA. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Ohio University (March 1984) with a Bachelor’s of Science Degree, specialising in Cartography. He graduated Cum Laude from Northwest Baptist Seminary (May 1990) with a Master of Divinity Degree. From 1994-1999, he laboured in a (now failed, as of 10/99) church-planting work in Waynesburg, OH. He subsequently earned his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Aramaic in Scripture from Reformation International Theological Seminary in 2012. Lee is presently the Director of Environmental Health for a small city health department in East-Central Ohio.

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“What any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of the scriptures”
--the primary rule of the Westminster Divines
Lessons from the Life of Hezekiah, King of Judah

The Family and Background of the Life of Hezekiah

II Kings 15.36--16.20/II Chron. 27.1--28.27

I. Introduction

This evening, I would like to begin a series entitled "Lessons from the Life of Hezekiah". Two weeks ago, we had a lesson concerning the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament believer. In that lesson we observed that much of the Old Testament was given for our instruction. As Paul states in I Cor. 10.1-3, much that is found in the Old Testament was recorded for our instruction.

As such, then, I would like to begin this evening studying the life of one of the godly kings of Judah--Hezekiah; and in so studying his life learn from his example and the example of those around him.

Through the course of this study, we are going to make use of as much of the biblical data as possible that we can concerning Hezekiah. Thus, we will be examining both the book of II Kings and II Chronicles, as well as the prophecy of Isaiah.

II. Background

In beginning this series, I would be at fault in beginning with the biblical narrative of Hezekiah itself. The scriptures begin our introduction to Hezekiah by noting that he was 25 when he became king and that he became king when his father, Ahaz, died (cf. II Kings 18.1-2; II Chron. 29.1-2). Prior to this event, we find no mention of the name Hezekiah.

Yet, there is much to be learned from the scriptures concerning the background to the life of Hezekiah and of the family of which Hezekiah was a part. And thus, this evening, I would like to examine some of the relevant background information related to the life of Hezekiah. And thus, we shall begin.

From the biblical text mentioned above, we can see that Hezekiah was 25 when he began to reign. From this information and the additional information given immediately preceding the reign of Hezekiah we can learn some of the facts concerning the life of Hezekiah. In that he was 25 when he began to reign, we can go back in the biblical texts and examine the lives of those kings that immediately preceded Hezekiah and thus learn of some of the experiences that were in his life and to which he was witness prior to his becoming king. Thus, this evening, I would like to examine the biblical records concerning the father of Hezekiah, Ahaz, and the grandfather of Hezekiah, Jotham. Please turn with me to II Chronicles 27 and 28.

From the biblical data given, as we shall see, it is clear that Hezekiah knew and observed the lives of both his father and grandfather.
Jotham--the grandfather of Hezekiah--II Chronicles 27

1 ¶ Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

3 He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much.

4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

5 He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.

6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

7 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

8 He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

9 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

--II Chron. 27.1-9

Hezekiah was born in the reign of his grandfather Jotham, and was nine years old at the time of the death of his grandfather. And in that time, although being very young, he was still old enough at the time of Jotham’s death to have an understanding of what type of works his grandfather had done. Hezekiah was born of royal lineage, of the line of David, the great King of Israel. Undoubtedly, he had been told of the deeds of this great man, and of the deeds of the kings that followed. He apparently was schooled in the Hebrew scriptures and was aware of his position as it related to the throne.

Under Jotham, Hezekiah grew and was able to observe the building and construction that his grandfather was doing. In II Chron. 27.4, we find that Jotham built both fortifications for the people of Judah as well as building the upper gate for the house of the Lord. Thus, Hezekiah would have been made aware of both Jotham’s concern for and devotion to his God and for the safety of God’s people.

Jotham also fought wars against the enemies of the people of God. Through this Hezekiah would have been made aware that there were enemies of the people of God, and that through God victory was won. Undoubtedly, Hezekiah was aware, even if it were in a child’s understanding, that his grandfather was one that “ordered his ways” before the LORD.

And lastly, Hezekiah knew the pain of loss, with the death of his grandfather when he was just nine years old. He also saw the reverence that the people of Judah showed his grandfather in his death, burying Jotham with his fathers, the kings of Israel and Judah.

Ahaz--the father of Hezekiah--II Chronicles 28

1 ¶ Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:

2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.
For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.

And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?

Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

--II Chron 28.1-27

At this young age, Hezekiah saw his father, Ahaz, become king. And even for a youth, Hezekiah would have seen the change in direction that Ahaz brought to the land of Judah. In II Chron. 28.2, one of the
first items mentioned in the biblical record concerning Ahaz is his fashioning of molten images. This is something that Hezekiah would not have seen under Jotham his grandfather. Although young, Hezekiah would have noticed this drastic change.

There was also a change in worship itself. Jotham his grandfather was a worshiper of the LORD, the God of Israel and Judah. Now, under Ahaz, there were "new" gods. In II Chron. 28.2f we find mention of the fact that Ahaz was now worshiping other gods—Ba'al. In v. 3, it would seem as if Ahaz was now also worshiping Molech. This was the god to whom many offered children. And in v. 4, it seems as if he was also worshiping the goddess Asherah (this goddess was often worshiped under trees, or had worship poles made from wood).

As regards worship, Hezekiah also saw the institution of temple worship, that was originally set up through Moses and confirmed through David and Solomon desecrated. For not only were there new gods within the land, now Ahaz was making new places for worship. II Kings 16.4 and II Chron. 28.24 note that not only was Ahaz burning incense on the high places, but now was worshipping on the hills and under "every green tree". Thus, Ahaz was doing his best to replace the worship of God with the worship of idols.

Further, II Kings 16 records for us the building of a new and "better" altar for the daily sacrifices.

10 ¶ And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.
11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.
12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.
13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.
14 And he brought also the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.
15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by.
16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.
17 ¶ And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.
18 And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

--II Kings 16.10-18

In v. 10 of II Kings 16 we find record of this altar. After the king of Syria was defeated by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, Ahaz goes to Damascus, the capital of the defeated Syrians. In that city Ahaz sees a large altar. He sends a sketch to the high priest in Jerusalem and commands that a new altar be built. In v. 15, we find the command that Ahaz gave regarding this new altar—that all sacrifices of the people were to be presented on this altar, and not on the altar of the LORD. In fact, this altar was actually set aside and moved from a position of prominence to a secondary position, next to the new altar. Ahaz also began to dismantle other parts of the temple worship as well, removing the sea from its base. And lastly, Ahaz began removing some of the superstructure that had been built up around the temple itself (v. 18). And Hezekiah was witness to this desecration of the worship of God and His temple.

Not only this, Hezekiah became more deeply acquainted with grief in this time. In both the Kings and the Chronicles narratives, we find that Ahaz sacrificed his own children, Hezekiah's brothers and/or
sisters to these false gods. Hezekiah could not have been untouched by these cruel deeds of his father.

We also find Hezekiah being acquainted with grief through defeat of the nation of Judah. In II Chron. 28.7 we find that a fellow Israelite slew his brother, Ma’asiah. Also, one of the rulers of the house of the king and a servant of the king were killed by this same man.

Hezekiah also became acquainted with grief and sorrow in the many defeats of the army of Judah. In one day, 120,000 men fell in battle and 200,000 women and children were taken captive and delivered into the hands of the king of Israel.

And throughout this time, Hezekiah saw his father go from bad to worse. Ahaz began by building molten images, and multiplying the sinful places of worship. He continued by desecrating the temple itself and removing items from the temple for profane use. He orders the construction of a “new and better” altar. He causes his own children to be burnt as an offering for idols. Lastly, we find the record in II Chron. 28 of Ahaz shutting the doors of the temple, cutting up its utensils and building even more places for idolatrous worship.

Hezekiah was also most likely aware of the divine pronouncement against Judah through the prophet Oded, found in II Chron. 28.9. He, as well as the other godly remnant, knew of the wrath of God that was against Judah, against the deeds of Ahaz and those that followed his sin.

And lastly, Hezekiah saw the death of his father, Ahaz. And in an activity that had seldom taken place since the time of David, Hezekiah was witness to the burial of his father, a burial that was not with the kings of Judah. Ahaz was buried in the city, but not with his fathers. Thus, Hezekiah witnessed final dishonour of his father, even by those that may have worshiped as Ahaz had. Even they knew that he was not like his fathers. Thus, Hezekiah saw both the sin and the results of the sin of his father.

This then is the background of the life of Hezekiah, gleaned from the lives of Jotham his grandfather and Ahaz his father.

But before we leave this study concerning the early years of the life of Hezekiah, one final question ought to be asked: from whence came Hezekiah’s knowledge of the LORD? As we shall see in the coming lessons, Hezekiah was a righteous king, walking in the ways of the LORD. But it is clear from the texts that we have examined that Hezekiah clearly did not learn of the LORD from his father. From whom did Hezekiah learn of God?

The most likely answer is his mother, or some other relative. And since there is no mention that Hezekiah was raised by someone other than his mother, it is logical to assume that Hezekiah gained his knowledge of the LORD from his mother. One may ask, how could one so holy be married to one so sinful? In that day, arranged marriages and marriages for the sake of alliances were not uncommon. We do not know of the particular circumstances regarding the marriage of Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah to Ahaz. But it is possible in that day and age for such a marriage to occur and for the two of them to differ as they apparently did as regards their worship.

Further, in that Hezekiah’s grandfather and great-grandfather were godly men, it is also reasonable to assume that there were still servants within the palace that were faithful to the legacy of these godly men, and that they may have, in part, provided for and protected the young Hezekiah. In any event, we can see from this that God does have his servants for their proper time and purpose.

This then is the introduction for the life of Hezekiah.
III. Observations

1. Even the best parents can have a horrible child
Cf. II Chron. 28.2-4. Again, this is true from the life of Ahaz. Ahaz had a godly father, who walked in the law of God. As did his grandfather. Yet this one was thoroughly sinful and wicked.

2. Wicked men can be very sincere and devout
Cf. II Chron. 28.3-4. Clearly, Ahaz had “religion”. And from the text before us, it seems that he was both sincere and devout. It was not that he was a wicked man in sexual sins, or in stealing, or in other matters. But what we see is one that seemed to be thoroughly committed to these idols. He was a religious man, a devout man. However, he was a wicked and sinful “devout” man.

3. Behold the starkness of election
Illustrated here in the life of Hezekiah is the truth of election. Hezekiah was the son of a very sinful man. This man Ahaz sacrificed some of his children to the fire. And yet Hezekiah was spared. An Israelite kills another son of Ahaz. And yet Hezekiah is spared. This is not a coincidence. This is not “dumb luck”. No, this is divine providence. This is election. Note Jeremiah 15:

2 And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.

--Jer. 15.2

God has ordained all our days. And this by His good pleasure.

4. A leader does set the tone for a people
Cf. v. 6, 19

5. The righteous are not immune to sorrow and grief.
Cf. the early life of Hezekiah

6. Behold the blessing of godly parents/relatives
Cf. the mother/relatives of Hezekiah
Hezekiah Begins to Reign

II Kings 18.1-8

I. Introduction/Background

Two weeks ago, we began a study of the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. It was our intention to examine the life of this king and to learn from the example of his life and from the lives of those that were around him. We began this lesson concerning Hezekiah by examining the lives of those that were before him, those that would have been examples unto the young king, in civil, in royal and in spiritual matters—his father and grandfather. We began by examining the life of his grandfather, Jotham. Hezekiah was born during the reign of his grandfather. And although being young, Hezekiah undoubtedly saw (or at least was aware of) the fortifications that his grandfather was building and most likely had seen the improvements and repairs that Jotham made to the Temple of the LORD.

Likewise, Hezekiah saw the drastic changes that were implemented during the reign of his father, Ahaz. Although he was still young when his father began to reign, Hezekiah saw the changes that his father made throughout the land of Judah. Under his reign, Ahaz effectively changed the religion of Judah, from the worship of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to the worship of countless idols and deities. From the text, we saw that Ahaz worshiped the Ba’als, set up countless altars throughout the land and in Jerusalem, and even sacrificed his own children to the fire.

And during this time, Hezekiah learned many things. We saw in that lesson that Hezekiah became acquainted with grief. First, he tasted of grief in the death of his grandfather. After this, Hezekiah learned grief in the sin of his father. He undoubtedly knew the siblings that were sacrificed to the fire. He saw much sorrow and grief in the many losses that Judah experienced under the rule of his father, Ahaz, even hearing of the loss of 120,000 men in one day to the enemies of Judah. During this time, another brother was killed, as well as two of the leading servants of the house of his father.

During the reign of Ahaz, Hezekiah learned that the people of the LORD do have enemies. He saw victories under his grandfather and defeats under his father. Hezekiah also learned of the sin of idolatry from his father as well. As we shall see this evening, Hezekiah grew up with an understanding that the worship of his father was sinful and hurtful to the people of God.

And lastly in our previous lesson, we saw that Hezekiah benefited greatly from the godliness of some unnamed person or persons. Clearly, when Hezekiah began to reign, he was a godly man. And also clearly, Hezekiah did not learn the ways of God from his father. Either his mother, servants faithful to the legacy of Jotham, or some other godly relative was faithful in instructing young Hezekiah in the things of God.

This, then, was the life of Hezekiah prior to his ascending to the throne of his father, Ahaz. This evening we will continue to examine the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah, by examining the acts and deeds when he began to reign, that are recorded for us in the word of God.

I. Exposition of the Text

The texts that we before us are very informative as to the nature and character of Hezekiah. I would like to begin by examining II Kings 18.1-8.

1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.
2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine
years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.

3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

6 For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

7 And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

8 He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

--II Kings 18.18

From this passage we can see that Hezekiah was very active in the beginning of his reign. From v. 3, we find the typical summary statement of his life: that he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD. Further, we find him being compared to the standard of biblical righteousness of kings--David. Thus, we find that Hezekiah walked in a manner that was pleasing to the LORD.

Before leaving this statement, a word needs to be said concerning the standard against which Hezekiah and his deeds were measured. At this point in the history of Judah, the word of God was still being written. Much of the Bible had not yet been written. Thus, when it is said that Hezekiah “did right” in the eyes of the LORD, this has reference to the law of God, as given by Moses. He walked, as David his father before him, in the law of the LORD. The law of God was his delight, as it was David’s. Thus, law-keeping was a part of a pleasing walk in the eyes of the LORD.

We find from the text that we have just read, that Hezekiah’s delight in the law of the LORD had specific outworkings. Thus, we find Hezekiah not tolerating false worship within Judah. In v. 4 we find that Hezekiah tore down the high places that his father Ahaz had erected. Further, he cut down the Asherah, the wooden poles whereby the goddess Asherah was worshiped. We also find that he destroyed a piece of biblical history--the bronze serpent that Moses was commanded to make by the word of the LORD (cf. Num. 21.8-9). It appears from the text at hand that it had become an object of worship, even an idol, within the midst of Judah. Thus, in the mind of King Hezekiah it had to be destroyed.

In v. 5, we find the assessment of King Hezekiah--that there was none like him in all the kings of Judah. We need to note: this is a profound statement. Thus, we see that Hezekiah was obedient and pleasing in the eyes of the LORD. And as we observed above already, Hezekiah was one that was obedient to the word of God. His love for God was manifested in his keeping of the commands of God. And again we find an example in the life of Hezekiah of the teaching of Christ:

15 ¶ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

--Jn. 14.15, 21, 24

This teaching can also be found in the epistle of I John:

3 ¶ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

-10-
6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. --I Jn. 2.3-6

This was the type of life that Hezekiah lived. Hezekiah is an Old Testament illustration of this teaching of Christ.

Lastly, we find that the LORD prospered Hezekiah in all that he did (cf. II Kings 18.7-8). We find in this section that Hezekiah prospered spiritually, in cleansing the land. Now we see Hezekiah prospering politically, in winning battles and in rebelling against godless kings.

God-willing, next week we will continue to examine the initial works of King Hezekiah when he began to reign as recorded in II Chronicles 29.1-36. In that section, we find much more detail as to the re-establishment of the worship of God. And God-willing, this will be our topic of study next week.

III. Observations

1. No item is so sacred that it cannot be destroyed
Cf. II Kings 18.4.
In v. 4 of II Kings 18, we find the record of the destruction of a piece of biblical history--the bronze serpent. Many today would appreciate having such a piece of biblical history. Many may even go so far as to state that Hezekiah erred in destroying this piece of biblical history. "Could not he have removed or hidden the serpent and kept it in tact?" Yet Hezekiah understood that such an item was a snare and had to be destroyed. And in his example, we find a picture of the words of our Lord, who said:

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
--Matt. 5.29-30

Nothing can become so precious if it causes one to stumble or sin. Sin must be dealt with in the most severe manner.

2. False religion can make use of the most godly items
Again, the reference is to the bronze serpent. This serpent was made at the command of the LORD Himself. God commanded it to be made for a specific purpose. Yet the Israelites in Judah had turned this holy and godly item, an item that should have been a reminder of the goodness and the severity of the LORD, into an item of false worship.

3. False worship cannot be tolerated within the people of God
This also is a lesson from the life of Hezekiah. Today the god of "tolerance" is held up as the god that all must serve. If one is not tolerant of diversity and difference, then he is an unloving bastard, unworthy of any respect. Yet, Hezekiah was not tolerant of diverging and opposing views.

Today, the god of tolerance is supreme. All diversity and defences must be tolerated. Such a teaching has the appearance of wisdom and love. Yet, this is a philosophy that is errant and wrong. Behind such views are the ideas that all religion has some truth, and that no one religion has all truth. As such, all such divergent views ought to be tolerated.

However, this is not the biblical view. Opposing views of religion are sin in the eyes of God. Hezekiah understood and knew this. As such, he cared not if he offended in removing opposing places of worship. It was not a matter of toleration, but of truth and righteousness.
4. A life that loves God is keeping His commands.
This truth is abundantly illustrated in the life of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was one that loved God. And one could see his love for God in his actions. He tore down idols. He destroyed false places of worship. He destroyed that which was a snare and an offence to His God, even if it was a "sacred" item. Nothing was going to come in the way of his God. No sin would be tolerated. As we have already noted, the life of Hezekiah was one that was an Old Testament illustration of the words of Christ.

5. Obedience may involve conflict
Hezekiah knew that obedience to the commands of God involved conflict. Although not directly stated, it is clear that many within Judah were not happy with the changes of the king. Clearly, there were people that followed the religions of Hezekiah's father Ahaz within Judah. Thus, when Hezekiah became king, not only did he tear down sinful altars, he most likely angered the ones who had worshiped under the reign of his father. Thus, Hezekiah was probably not the most popular king at the beginning of his reign with at least a segment of his population. Yet this did not stop Hezekiah from doing that which was right.

There may have even been conflict within the palace of Hezekiah and within the priesthood. Under Ahaz his father, a priest made and fashioned a "new altar" for the king. And as such, there may have been hard feelings or ill will within a segment of the priesthood. Yet Hezekiah gave no thought to opposing views. Clearly this altar was an affront to the LORD God of Israel. And it too had to go.

Obedience may involve conflict. But the child of God obeys regardless of the consequences.
II Chronicles 29.1-19

I. Introduction/Background

Four weeks ago, we began a study of the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. It was our intention to examine the life of this king and to learn from the example of his life and from the lives of those that were around him. We began this lesson concerning Hezekiah by examining the lives of those that were before him, those that would have been examples unto the young king, in civil, in royal and in spiritual matters--his father and grandfather.

We also examined those events and circumstances that occurred within the life of Hezekiah in the time prior to his reigning as king--the fortifications for defence built by his grandfather Jotham, as well as Jotham’s devotion to the house of the LORD. We examined the reign of his father, Ahaz, and the sin that was promulgated during this time, of how Ahaz built many new alters to idols and how he even sacrificed his children to false gods.

And lastly in our first lesson, we saw that Hezekiah benefited greatly from the godliness of some unnamed person or persons. Clearly, when Hezekiah began to reign, he was a godly man. And also clearly, Hezekiah did not learn the ways of God from his father. Either his mother, servants faithful to the legacy of Jotham, or some other godly relative was faithful in instructing young Hezekiah in the things of God.

Two weeks ago, we began examining the reign of Hezekiah, taken from II Kings 18. In that lesson, we observed Hezekiah walking according the law of God, as his father David had done. Throughout the reign of his father, Ahaz was building new altars and places of worship for false gods--Ba’al, the Asherim, and possibly even Molech. And in the first year of the reign, Hezekiah tore down all that his father had built.

We even observed the destruction of a piece of biblical history--the bronze serpent that was made by Moses at the command of the LORD. Hezekiah had destroyed this serpent because of the sin of Judah. The people of Judah were using it in worship. The text does not tell us whether they were worshiping the true God or were worshiping false gods through this snake. Nevertheless, incense was being burnt before this image in worship, in violation of the word of God. Thus, Hezekiah destroyed it.

From this serpent, we observed that false religion can make use of the most godly items. This was most obviously true as regards the serpent. Made at the very command of God by Moses. Now, a stumbling block. And this was due, not to any fault or defect within the serpent, nor with the command of God. But the fault was in man--sinful man. False religion can take the most holy item and turn it into a means of sin. A modern day example is the practice of kissing the Bible, as if it is holy in and of itself. The word of God is holy, but it is holy because the Lord is holy.

We also observed that false worship cannot be tolerated within the people of God. Thus we saw Hezekiah destroying that which was the means of sin within the people of God. Sin must be dealt with most severely. And such it ought to be today.

This, then, was our lesson from II Kings 18. And thus, from that passage, we began to see the zeal that Hezekiah had for the LORD his God.
I. Exposition of the Text

This evening, I would like to continue examining the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, by examining the II Chronicles account of this period of time. And thus, we shall begin:

1 ¶ Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.
2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.
3 He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.
4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,
5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.
6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.
7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.
8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.
9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.
10 Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.
11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and burn incense.

--II Chron. 29.1-11

From the text above, we can gain a clearer picture of the devotion and zeal that Hezekiah had for the LORD. The text is very clear in giving us the time frame in which this work was done: (Hezekiah) in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. It seems that this was the first order of business for the new king. As soon as he became king, he began to restore the house of his God. Thus, the author of Chronicles is right in comparing Hezekiah to David. Hezekiah, like David, appears to have had a great love for the house of God, the place where God met with His people.

Verse 3 is the summary verse for the following passage. In this verse we have a statement of what he did--cleanse the temple. What follows, in vv. 4ff, is the account of how he did so--through the Levites. In vv. 4ff we have the record of the words of Hezekiah to the Levites in charging them to do this work. They were to sanctify themselves. They were to cleanse the temple. They were to do this by removing all the filth and defilement by which his father had corrupted the temple of the LORD.

In v. 6, we find a statement of blame, even of confession. Hezekiah knew who had done this to the temple of the LORD--Ahaz his father, and those within his palace that agreed with Ahaz. And Hezekiah is not afraid nor ashamed to affix blame where it belonged. Nor was he afraid to confess this sin either. It was his father, his very father, that had been responsible for defiling the temple. Here, in v. 6, he confesses that this sin was the sin of his father: ...our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

In v. 7, we find the statement of how far their neglect of the temple worship had gone: ...they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Hezekiah knew that the complete, wholesale
abandonment of the true worship of God had come through his father. And thus he states.

In vv. 8-9 we find the divine consequences for this sin--wrath. The wrath of God was directed against the people of Judah. Men had fallen in battle. Women and children had been captured and taken away in captivity. Yes, the wrath of God was against the people of God.

In v. 10, we find the intent of Hezekiah to rectify this situation. Hezekiah states that it is his desire to make a covenant, that is a promise, to the LORD concerning this situation. Although the contents of this promise are not listed, it is clear from the text that it must concern the re-establishment of the temple worship, for this is the content of his commands to the Levites.

In v. 11, we find the charge and reminder to the Levites, that the tribe of Levi was chosen to minister before the LORD in his temple. They were to ...stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense. This they were to do. There seems to be the implication here that this was not at present being done. And most likely it was not being done under the reign of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. Ahaz had shut the doors of the temple:

24  And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

--II Chron. 28.24

Thus, the Levites were most likely prevented from worshiping the LORD as the law of God had commanded.

In vv. 12ff we find the record of the Levitical cleansing of the temple. Those who did this work are so listed. And in v. 15ff we find what they did:

15  And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.
16  And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron.
17  Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.
18  Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.
19  Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

--II Chron. 29.15-19

Here we find the Levites carrying out the command of the king. In v. 15, they sanctified themselves. Further, they came to the house of the LORD, to cleanse it. In v. 16 we find what they did with the waste--they brought it to the brook Kidron and disposed of it, presumably by burning as was the habit of the day.

They began on the first day of the first month to sanctify. There was so much waste that it took them eight days to even get to the porch of the temple. It presumably took them another eight days to cleanse the temple itself as well. Thus the work was completed in 16 days. They had also prepared the vessels that Ahaz had defiled and the Levites had sanctified these as well (v. 19).

Thus, was the temple cleansed. God-willing, we will continue to examine this chapter next week.
III. Observations

1. A godly man does not wait to act
   Cf. v. 3.
   Hezekiah

2. Through the sins of one, others, who did not sin, may suffer
   Cf. vv. 8-9

3. Not all service is pleasant
   Cf. v. 5, 16-17. The text does not record for us what was brought out of the temple of the LORD. But suffice it to say, there could have been defilements of all types within the temple because of the sin of Ahaz. Nevertheless, the Levites did not balk at removing this sin from the temple. In spite of what abominations they saw, they cleansed the temple.

4. Often, service to God is seen through service to His house
   This was true in the lives of Hezekiah and the lives of the Levites. The Levites were serving God, not just the king, in their cleansing of the temple. And their devotion to God was seen in their thoroughness of their service to the house of God.

5. Blessed are the people that have a godly leader
Hezekiah Begins to Reign--His First month (part II)

II Chronicles 29.20-36

I. Introduction

For some time now, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. It has been our intention to examine the life of this king and to learn from the example of his life and from the lives of those that were around him. Several weeks ago, we began our series by examining the lives of those that were before him, namely Jotham his grandfather, and Ahaz his father.

After this, we began examining the reign of Hezekiah, taken from II Kings 18. In that lesson, we observed Hezekiah walking according the law of God, as his father David had done. And as we have seen, in the first year of the reign, Hezekiah tore down all of the altars and false places of worship that his father Ahaz had built. Hezekiah even destroyed the bronze serpent that was made by Moses, for the Israelites were burning incense to it. And from his actions, we saw the zeal that Hezekiah had for the LORD his God.

Last week, we examined a passage from II Chronicles, chapter 29. In this chapter we find the record of what appears to be the first days of the reign of Hezekiah. In that passage we saw Hezekiah assembling the priests and commanding them to cleanse the temple. Apparently under the reign of his father Ahaz, the temple was sorely abused. The temple was abused so much so that it took these priests 16 days to remove the debris that Ahaz had stored in the temple and to cleanse the temple from being thusly defiled.

In this passage we find Hezekiah instructing the priests as to their duty—to cleanse the temple. We also find Hezekiah affixing blame, for the sin and the ill that had come upon the people—on his father. We also found Hezekiah mentioning the divine posture concerning sin—wrath. Men had fallen in battle. Women and children captured and carried off into exile.

Lastly, we find Hezekiah reinstituting the temple worship. In that passage, we found Hezekiah instructing the priests to...stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense. We concluded our study by observing the priests being obedient to the command of the King, in cleansing the temple. As mentioned before, it took them 16 days of work to remove the debris and to cleanse the temple for use.

In concluding, we observed, from the life of Hezekiah, that a godly man does not wait to act. As soon as he was able to wield power, he moved to restore the worship of God. Even perhaps in spite of opposition and disfavour from the people. But Hezekiah was not deterred. When he became king, he acted.

We also observed from this lesson that through the sin of one, others may suffer. Ahaz filled the land with sin. Idols and altars were everywhere. And because of the sin in the land, the people suffered. Even those that had not partaken of the sin of Ahaz. Hezekiah was an example of one that suffered along with his people at the wrath of God. Hezekiah lost two brothers in this time. Countless people and subjects of God’s people lost their lives in this time. Hezekiah was not unaffected. He most certainly felt the loss of these people, especially those that were lost of the king’s house. And even though Hezekiah did not share in the worship of his father, he did suffer the effects of the sin of his father.

We also observed that service to God is manifest through service to His house. This was evident in both the lives of Ahaz (in a negative fashion) and of Hezekiah (in a positive fashion). The devotion of both men to the true God was manifested in their service to the house of God. And this is true today,
as it was then.

This, then was our lesson.

I. Exposition of the Text

This evening, I would like to continue to examining the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, by continuing to examine the II Chronicles account of this period of time. And thus, we shall begin:

20 ¶ Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.
21 And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the LORD.
22 So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.
23 And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them:
24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.
25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.
26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.
27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.
28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.
29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.
30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.
31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.
32 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD.
33 And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.
34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.
35 And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.
36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

--II Chron. 29.20-36

What we find in v. 20ff is the continuation of that which was begun in vv. 1-19. In v. 20f we find the
king and the officials of Judah arising early to worship in the newly-cleansed temple, the temple being declared clean just the day before. And in coming to the temple they began by bringing a sin offering (v. 20). Clearly this seems fitting at this point. For years the temple had been neglected and abused by Ahaz. Now, in the first official act by Hezekiah and the other officials of Judah, we find a sin offering, for all that has previously transpired. Thus was offered the sin offering.

What appears to be happening here in II Chron. 29 is the implementation of the law of God that is found in Lev. 4. Please note the following:

13 ¶ And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty;
14 When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.
15 And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the LORD: and the bullock shall be killed before the LORD.
16 And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation:
17 And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, even before the vail.
18 And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar which is before the LORD, that is in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
19 And he shall take all his fat from him, and burn it upon the altar.
20 And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.
21 And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it is a sin offering for the congregation.
22 ¶ When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty;
23 Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:
24 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD: it is a sin offering.
25 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering.
26 And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.

--Lev. 4.13-26

It appears that this is the ceremony that is taking place in II Chronicles. First we find the sacrifice of the bulls, as in Leviticus. Then, the male goat, also as in Leviticus. Thus, here we can see illustrated Hezekiah’s devotion to the word of God, for in II Chron. 29.21, we find that these sacrifices were by command of the king himself. Hezekiah knew the law. He knew that Judah had sinned in the sight of God. And he knew what the word of God commanded in this situation—sacrifice. And thus, Hezekiah commands it to be done. And thus, sacrifice was made for the sin of Judah.

In v. 25ff we find record of the reinstitution of the worship of God. And again we find Hezekiah following the commands of those that went before him. That which was commanded was what Hezekiah commanded to be done. We find Hezekiah commanding that the word of God be followed in worship, in vv. 25, 27, 30, 31. Thus, in this passage we find that Hezekiah ordered that sin offerings be made (v. 21), that sacrifices be made (v. 27), that the Levites be stationed in the house of God (v. 25), that praise according to the words of David be given (v. 30), and that sacrifices and thank offerings be made to the LORD (v. 31). Thus, it seems that Hezekiah was instrumental in re-establishing the worship and the service of the temple.

The chapter concludes with the record of those burnt offerings that were made and of their sacrifice to
the LORD. It appears that a number of the priests were disobedient to the command of the king. Verse 34 records for us the testimony that the priests were too few in number for the sacrifices made because they did not purify themselves in sufficient number to carry out the work. The verse ends with a word about the Levites. They had obeyed the command of the king. As such, they were able to serve their brethren the priests until enough of the priests had purified themselves.

Verse 35 states that the service of the temple had been restored. Thus, we find the first commands of Hezekiah completed.

Verse 36 concludes this section with a brief statement of rejoicing: And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly. What we have here is the statement of the divine cause of these events. Yes, it was through the commands of Hezekiah. Yes it was through the obedience of the Levites and the Priests. But what we have here is a statement that God was the one who caused these things to be worked out as they were. The people rejoiced over what God had done. Hezekiah and the assembly rightly recognised that it was the LORD that brought all these things about. God gave the abundance for the sacrifices. God gave the willingness for the service. God gave the success. And in so recognising, Hezekiah was again like David his father, who similarly recognised that willingness in worship comes from God:

10 ¶ Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.
11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.
12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.
13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.
14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.
15 For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.
16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.
17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

--I Chron. 29.10-17

These, then, are the verses before us.

III. Observations

1. Behold the delight of Hezekiah in the word of the LORD
Cf. the

2. Worship is a divinely commanded institution.
Cf. v. 29.25

3. Only divinely inspired texts are to be used for the worship of God
Cf. v. 29.30

4. Religious men can sin
Cf. v. 34

5. The godly take true comfort and joy in the sovereignty of God.
Cf. v. 36
The Celebration of the Passover

II Chronicles 30.1-27

I. Introduction

In our last lesson concerning Hezekiah, we examined the deeds related to the beginning of his reign. In II Chronicles, chapter 29 we find the record of what appears to be the first days of the reign of Hezekiah. In that passage we saw Hezekiah assembling the priests and commanding them to cleanse the temple. It appears from the biblical texts that, under the reign of his father Ahaz, the temple was severely abused. We also found Hezekiah instructing the priests as to their duty--to cleanse the temple. Thirdly, we find Hezekiah reinstituting the temple worship.

Beginning in v. 20, we found Hezekiah worshiping in the temple. In v. 18-19, we have the record of the Priests that the temple was cleansed. From the text, it seems that on the very next day, that Hezekiah came to begin worshiping at this "newly-cleansed" temple. And he came with sacrifices. We observed at that time that Hezekiah came with what appeared to be the sacrifices that were prescribed in Leviticus 4.13-26. In that passage, we have instruction as to the type of sacrifice that was to be presented when the king sinned and when the people sinned. And this is what is brought in II Chron. 29. And so Hezekiah and the leaders of the city present their offerings. We also observed Hezekiah restoring the worship of the LORD that was prescribed by David. Hezekiah reinstates the singing of the Psalms and the Levitical accompaniment.

This, then, was our lesson.

Before we proceed with our lesson this evening, a word must be said as to the spiritual instruction of Hezekiah. In the last three lessons, we have seen Hezekiah in his first days as king. In this very short time, we have seen Hezekiah destroy idolatrous altars, destroy Asherism used in false worship, destroy the bronze serpent, order the cleansing of the temple, re-institute the worship of the LORD God of Israel, present sin offerings for his and the people's sin, and order the re-establishment of the praises of David. From these items (surely there were more that were not recorded) we can see that Hezekiah appears to have been thoroughly instructed in the word of God in general and the proper worship of God, as detailed in His word, in particular.

And what makes this even more amazing is Hezekiah's father. Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, was a reprobate. He was a religious man, yes. But his religion was that of the world. From the biblical text, we find that Ahaz was zealous in his religion, building countless places of worship to these false gods. Yet whence comes Hezekiah? I do not think that it is too far out of line to assume that Ahaz, in his zeal for these false gods, was also involved in promoting the false worship of these false gods, even within his home. And yet we find such a one as Ahaz, who promoted the worship of Ba'al, of Asherah, and even of Molech, having such a godly son.

And thus, we can learn devotion to the LORD through both the lives of Hezekiah and those that were over him, instructing him in the LORD.
I. Exposition of the Text

This evening, I would like to continue to examining the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, by continuing to examine the II Chronicles account of this period of time. And thus, we shall continue:

1 ¶ And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.
2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.
3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.
4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.
5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.
6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.
7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.
8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.
9 For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.
10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.
11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.
12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.
13 ¶ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.
14 And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.
15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD.
16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites.
17 For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD.
18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one
19 That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.
20 And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.
21 ¶ And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD.
22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the
LORD: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making
confession to the LORD God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven
days with gladness.

24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven
thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten
thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

25 And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation
that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt
in Judah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of
Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and
their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

--II Chron. 30.1-27

The passage that we have before us is a lengthy one. Yet, I hope to look at this passage as a whole.

What we find in chapter 30 of I Chronicles is the re-institution of the holy celebrations of the L ORD. As
we have noted before, the temple and its worship were severely neglected under the reign of Ahaz.
From this passage, it would seem that the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread had not been
celebrated for some time. In v. 3 we find that one reason that the feast was not celebrated as
appointed was due to the fact that the people were not gathered to Jerusalem.

And from what we have seen thus far of Ahaz, we can see why. He shut the doors of the temple. He
removed the altar from use by the common man, and he installed an idolatrous altar for all sacrifices.
Thus, there was no place where proper sacrifice could be made. So thus, we find Hezekiah instituting
the feast in the second month, rather than the first. In v. 2 we find that this came about after
Hezekiah and the princes and the whole assembly had counselled together concerning this idea. In v.
3, we find the reason for their failure to celebrate the Feast at the appointed time--sin on the part of
the Priests, and the failure of the people to gather as prescribed. In v. 4, we find that the idea, to
celebrate the Feast in the second month, was favourable to all.

Thus, in v.5f we have a proclamation being sent throughout all of Israel and Judah. At this time, the
Northern Kingdom of Israel was under the control of an ungodly king. Yet, the messengers do carry
the message to all Israel. In v.6ff, we find the content of the message from King Hezekiah--a message
of repentance. And again we find Hezekiah referring back to the law of Moses in this letter. The words
of Hezekiah here concern the restoration of the exiled people of God. And that which he states in this
passage is very similar to the instruction that the L ORD gave through Moses in the book of
Deuteronomy:

1 ¶ And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the
curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations,
whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

2 And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I
command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will
return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

4 If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy
God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt
possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

--Deut. 30.1-5

Thus, the letter is one of restoration--restoration of the exiled and captives of Israel and Judah.

In v. 10 we find that the couriers (lit--runners) carried the letter throughout the land of the Northern
Kingdom of Israel. The results were less than encouraging. They were scorned and mocked. And in the
Hebrew at this point, the original refers to the fact this was something that was happening repeatedly.
There were being scorned and were being mocked. This was not an easy assignment. Yet there was some fruit. In v. 11, we find that individuals did come from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun to celebrate the feast.

In v. 12, we find that God was the One that moved these things to come to pass. The L ORD gave them one heart to celebrate this Feast. Thus, they celebrated the Feast (v. 13). The people also went though Jerusalem and destroyed the altars, the places of false worship.

In vv. 15ff, we find that they celebrated the Feast. The King and the princes provided some animals for the Feast. In vv. 18-20, we find record that some of the people from the Northern Kingdom had not properly prepared for the Feast. Yet Hezekiah prays for them and they are healed. The celebration goes so well that an additional seven days are decreed for celebration (v. 23).

The passage concluded with a word of approval from God: So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven (vv. 26-27).

And thus, we have the re-institution of the ceremonial Feasts by Hezekiah. And this is the passage before us.

III. Observations

1. In spite of a parents failings, God can teach/instruct a child
Ahaz was, from a biblical standpoint, a horrible father. A father may be loving, a good provider, caring and protective, even religious (as was Ahaz). But if one is not faithful to the L ORD, all other qualities and characteristics are nothing. The word of God is our standard, not psychology, nor pop culture. The father that fails to instruct his child in the ways of the L ORD is a failure as a father, and disobedient to the word of God.

2. Sometimes faithful servants are not recognised in this life
As we observed above, Hezekiah had one or more faithful servants of the L ORD in his life, from whom he learned the ways of the L ORD. Yet not one of them is named. The same has been true throughout the word of God and still holds true today. And what matters is not that we are known by men, but that we are known of our Master and Lord. And He does know His servants.

3. Sometimes, due to the sinfulness of leaders, the corporate worship of God is completely halted
This appears to have been the case under Ahaz, at least under the latter part of his reign. The Passover was one of the three great feasts of Israel. Yet, in v. 30.3, we find that the people had discontinued gathering to celebrate this feast. And why? It seems that this was due, at least in part, to the sinfulness of Ahaz. He shut the doors to the temple, he discontinued the use of the altar for the sacrifices of the common man, and he installed an idolatrous altar for all other sacrifices. Thus, there was no place where God’s people could gather to present their sacrifices. True corporate worship can be stifled for a time. But God will restore such worship, in due time, for His glory.

4. It is not wrong to worship God in addition to that which He has prescribed. Yet one has no liberty to change that worship that God has ordained
I am referring to the celebration of the feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread in the second month, rather than the first. We must be careful in drawing conclusions from this passage, for one could come to some widely divergent conclusions without careful study.

From the text that we have studied, we can see that this Feast was found to be pleasing to the L ORD, although it was not held when prescribed. Note vv. 12 and 27. God was pleased with this celebration. Further, during the reign of Hezekiah, the king had several prophets with whom he could have consulted (eg--Isaiah, Micah, Hosea). And not one of them raised an objection to this plan. It may also
be that the remedy for the sin of the priests was based upon the instruction given in Numbers 9. In that chapter, provision is made for the celebration for those who were ceremonially unclean and could not celebrate the Passover. Provision is also made for the one that could not attend due to travelling. The case here in II Chronicles is not the same, in the strictest sense. However, application could be drawn for this second month celebration that Hezekiah commanded. In any event, the fact of their celebrating the Passover in the second month does not negate the fact that the celebration was not held in the first month, as commanded.

How, then, ought we think of the actions of Hezekiah? Please note: it very well may have been sin for Judah to not celebrate the Feast as prescribed. The people were to celebrate this Feast as God had commanded in the law of Moses. The priests had not sanctified themselves as commanded. Nowhere in the passage above is the idea given that it was not important when the Feast was celebrated. But due to the sin of the priests and the sin of Ahaz (in rendering the temple un-usable) the Feast could not be celebrated.

All indications from this passage and the character of Hezekiah are that if able, he would have presided over the Passover celebration in the first month as commanded. In the word of God, we are commanded to worship him as He has commanded (ie--the regulative principle). Yet we are not forbidden to worship God in addition to that which He has prescribed. We must worship as He has prescribed and when. And here in II Chronicles, we find that, provided that God is worshiped as He has dictated (eg--through Psalms, with scripture, with prayer, etc), we can worship in addition to that which He has commanded.

5. Godly people may live in the midst of an ungodly setting
Cf. the men and women that came from Israel to celebrate the Passover from the Northern Kingdom.

6. Not all assignments or ministry is easy
Cf. the duty of the runners with the letter, entering into “hostile” territory with the command of the king.

7. There is great joy in the corporate celebration of the Lord

8. The word of God does figure prominently in the celebration of God
The Reforms Continue

II Chronicles 31.1-21

I. Introduction

For some time now, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In the past several lessons, we have been examining the deeds of the first months of his reign. As we have seen, it appears from the biblical texts, that Hezekiah was extremely active in restoring the worship of the LORD God within the land of Judah. In just two months, Hezekiah has done the following:

--removed false places of worship from Judah (II Kings 18.4)
--destroyed the images related to these false religions (II Kings 18.4)
--destroyed the bronze serpent of Moses (II Kings 18.4)
--ordered the repair and restoration of the temple of the LORD (II Chron. 29.3ff)
--begins to worship again in the restored temple (II Chron. 29.20ff), offering the Levitical sacrifices prescribed in the law of the LORD (cf. Lev. 4.13-26)
--re-established the Levitical service of worship within the house of the LORD (II Chron. 29.25)
--re-introduced the psalmody to the people of Judah (II Chron. 29.30)
--re-established the commanded feasts (II Chron 30.1ff). The people rejoiced to the point of celebrating an additional seven days.

When examined closely, what we find here in these biblical texts is a record of reformation, And it was a drastic reformation at that. Within the span of two months, one manner of worship was removed and another was established (or, better yet, re-established). This is very rare in the history of mankind. And yet this is what we are privileged to witness through these biblical records that the LORD has providentially preserved for our benefit. And from the texts, it appears that Hezekiah was a key person through whom the LORD brought about this reformation.

This evening, we continue examining this reformation with Hezekiah re-establishing the portion or supply for the Levites and the Priests.

I. Exposition of the Text

In II Chron. 31 we find record of the next steps that Hezekiah took in re-introducing true religion in Judah and Israel.

1 ¶ Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

2 And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD.

3 He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD.

4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.
And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly.

And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps.

In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month.

And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel.

Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.

Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them,

And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next.

And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Elieel, and Ishmachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, was over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things.

Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, even unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses;

Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;

And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:

Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, which were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites.

And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God.

And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

What we have here is an amazing record. Verse one is really the continuation to the last chapter. After celebrating the Passover feast for 14 days, those that were at the feast went throughout all Judah and even into Israel and removed high places, altars and Asherim. This tells us a lot concerning the character and devotion of those that had come (cf. II Chron 30.14) to the Feast in Jerusalem.

But this verse does not tell us the whole story; it only hints at what happened. In Judah, just two months ago, there were numerous altars throughout the land. With the ascension of Hezekiah to the throne, many of these were removed. Needless to say, some of these worshipers were, most likely, angered and enraged at the removal of their sacred place of worship (cf. Judges 6.25-), where the worshipers of Ba’al came out against Gideon after he pulled down their altar). At this, however, the text is silent. Yet it must be noted that the worshipers of Ba’al, the Asherim, etc, were not happy with the destruction of these altars.

Moreover, the same was true for Israel. Many of the worshipers that had come to Jerusalem were from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Note again II Chron. 30.11, 18. Again, the same zeal for the LORD was
shown by those worshipers. They, like their Judean brethren, went into the land and tore down the places of worship. However, in this case, the circumstances may have been different. Note again II Chron. 30. 10. When Hezekiah sent messengers into Israel to announce the feast, the messengers were mocked and scorned. Also, at this time, Israel was not governed by a godly king like Hezekiah; they were governed by Hoshea. In II Kings 17.2 the scriptures make the following statement concerning the character of this king:

1 ¶ In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.
2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

--II Kings 17.1-2

Needless to say, the activities of those from the Passover feast in Jerusalem were most unwelcome. It is not unreasonable to see possible outbreaks of violence, or, at least, the threats of violence, at this unwelcome destruction of these altars. But again, the text is silent. Yet, we again need to note that these worshipers of Ba'al, the Asherim, etc, were not happy with the destruction of these altars.

The text also does not directly mention the place of Hezekiah in these deeds. Clearly, from the texts that we have already examined, we can see that Hezekiah would have heartily approved of the destruction of these altars. II Kings 18.4 states that Hezekiah did tear down altars and destroy the groves (ie--the places of the Asherim). What we find here in II Chron. 31 may be the means, at least in part, whereby Hezekiah accomplished this destruction. This, in turn, may account for the lack of recorded opposition to the destruction of countless places of worship--the destruction had the approval of the king of Judah. In any case, we can see from v. 1 that with true reformation came the removal of that which was offensive to the LORD, regardless of the risk. This is a hallmark of repentance. This is a hallmark of true, biblical reformation. If there is no fruit, there is no repentance (cf. Mt. 7.15ff).

Verse 1 of II Chron 30 ends with the statement that, after these things (namely--the destruction of these altars) that all the people went back to their cities.

In v. 2ff, we find Hezekiah continuing to order the Priests and the Levites, along with their duties. In v. 2, we find the king ordering the Priests and the Levites as regards the daily sacrifices. These sacrifices are noted in Numbers 28 and 28. And again we find Hezekiah restoring the worship of the one true God in Judah. In v. 3, we find the king making provision for these sacrifices out of his own supply. The king was not afraid to give to the LORD out of his own.

In v. 4ff, we find Hezekiah commanding the people of Jerusalem to provide for the Priests and the Levites. Again, Hezekiah is re-establishing that which was taught within the law of God. The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to perform the service of the tabernacle (and later the temple) on behalf of the people of God. As such, their provision was to come out of the sacrifices and offerings that were presented by God’s people. In Numbers 18.8ff we find record of the law for this provision. And it appears that Hezekiah was again re-establishing this provision for the tribe of Levi.

The command concerning the tithes and offerings was implemented in the third month (cf. v. 7). And the people brought their tithe, their sacrifices and offerings. And by the seventh month, there were heaps of goods. In vv. 9ff we find the explanation of these heaps:

9 Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.
10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.

Verses 11-19 are the record of the royal command to disperse this provision throughout the land to the Levites and the Priests to whom were entitled. We find Hezekiah appointing leaders to carry out this work (v. 13). We find in v. 19, that even those that were "in the field" were to receive a provision.

In vv. 20 and 21 we find a summary statement of these things:
20 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the LORD his God.

21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart, and prospered.

Hezekiah was a righteous man. This was seen in his words, and manifested in his numerous deeds. Hezekiah was one that was consumed with the glory of his God, and in returning true worship to the people and land of Judah.

Further, we find in v. 21 that Hezekiah was one that sought God with all his heart. His life was (and is) an illustration of how one lives Deut. 6.4ff:

4 ¶ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD:
5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.
9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

--Deut. 6.4-9

Hezekiah loved God through his life. And this love was manifested in obedience to and reverence for the commands and word of God. One can see from the life of Hezekiah that he had a special reverence for the law of God (please note previous lessons). We have seen repeatedly in our lessons how Hezekiah’s devotion to the LORD was manifested in his re-establishing some provision of the law of God within the land of Judah. Thus, it can be said, that, unless one loves God’s commands, he does not love God. The same sentiment is found in the New Testament:

15 ¶ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?
23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.
24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

--Jn. 14.14,21-24

3 ¶ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

--I Jn. 2.3-6

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

--I Jn. 5.3

This is the example that Hezekiah has left unto us.
III. Observations

1. The Child of God may face risk in being pleasing to God
Cf. the destruction of the altars in Ephraim and Manasseh. As we mentioned above, there most likely
was risk in destroying the altars of the Ba'al worshipers. Yet we find no mention that this was a
concern. Sin is sin. And sin is that with which one must deal most severely. We find in II Chron. 31.1
that the people went out and destroyed the altars and false places of worship “...until they had
destroyed them all.” This was risky, especially within the borders of the Northern Kingdom. Yet sin, in
any of its manifestations, had to be dealt with. And this is exactly that which the worshipers of God
did. They destroyed the false places of worship. They rid the land of that which would give offence to
the LORD. And thus, they have left us an example to follow, in our dealing with sin, both within our own
personal lives and within the “Israel of God,” the church.

2. Behold the powerful lesson concerning giving that is before us
From these verses we find a powerful lesson on giving. Thus, it could truly be said that God has given
that we may give to His house. Note again the words of the Azariah the priest:

10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the
people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat,
and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great
store.

Some today state that they cannot afford to give the tithe. What would Azariah the priest say to such
a one?

3. The one who loves God loves His word, even to the point of practicing it
This is one of the great lessons of the life of Hezekiah. We know that Hezekiah loved God because of
how that love was manifested--through obedience to the word of God. Yet countless professing
Christians confidently assert today that they can love God and not have to worry about obeying His
commands. This is foolishness, and not worthy of the name Christian. We have already seen the words
of Christ and the apostle John as regards this matter. The life of Hezekiah illustrates for us that the
one who loves God loves His word, even to the point of practicing it.
The Exile of Israel

II Kings 17

I. Introduction

As you are well aware, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In the past several lessons, we have been examining the deeds of the first months of his reign. In previous lessons, we have examined the first two months of his reign. In that time Hezekiah was extremely active in restoring the worship of the LORD God within the land of Judah:

--removed false places of worship from Judah (II Kings 18.4)
--destroyed the images related to these false religions (II Kings 18.4)
--destroyed the bronze serpent of Moses (II Kings 18.4)
--ordered the repair and restoration of the temple of the LORD (II Chron. 29.3ff)
--begins to worship again in the restored temple (II Chron. 29.20ff), offering the Levitical sacrifices prescribed in the law of the LORD (cf. Lev. 4.13-26)
--re-established the Levitical service of worship within the house of the LORD (II Chron. 29.25)
--re-introduced the psalmody to the people of Judah (II Chron. 29.30)
--re-established the commanded feasts (II Chron 30.1ff). The people rejoiced to the point of celebrating an additional seven days.

Two weeks ago, we examined the third to the seventh month of the first year of his reign. In that lesson, we saw Hezekiah re-establishing the biblical support for the Priests and the Levites. Apparently, during the reign of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, the portion for the tribe of Levi was discontinued. The text does not tell us whether this was done by decree or neglect. Nevertheless, the Priests and the Levites were not receiving the support that was prescribed in the Law of Moses. Now, under Hezekiah, the king commands that this portion, the tithes and offerings, are to be brought to the temple (II Chron. 31.5). And so the giving begins.

In the course of four months, the gifts were so numerous, that the Priests and the Levites had received their portions, and still there was plenty left over (II Chron. 31.9-10). This abundance was then placed in the temple for storage and provision was made that this abundance was to be distributed throughout the land of Judah (II Chron. 31.15,19). And thus, did Hezekiah restore the Levitical portion to the Priests and Levites.

The next major event in the life of Hezekiah concerns the coming of Sennacherib up into the land against the city of Jerusalem. This record is found in II Kings 18.13-19; II Chronicles 32.1-23 and in the prophet Isaiah, chapters 36.1-37.38. And this we will study in due course, God-willing.

Yet this is not the next event in the life of Hezekiah. Chronologically, the next recorded event that took place in the reign of King Hezekiah is the exile of the nation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the re-settlement of the land by the Assyrians with other exiles. II Kings 18.9-12 state the following:

9 ¶ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.
10 And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.
11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by
the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

--II Kings 18.9-12

And the detailed record of these events is found in II Kings 17. From this record, there is no mention that Hezekiah was directly involved in these events. However, in that their brother and sister Israelites were under attack and were being exiled, these events most assuredly did affect both Hezekiah and the people of Judah.

Thus, please turn with me to II Kings 17.

II. Exposition of the Text

1 ¶ In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 ¶ For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.
19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.
20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.
21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.
22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;
23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

24 ¶ And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

25 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

26 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

27 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

28 And howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

29 And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

30 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

31 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

32 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

33 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

34 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

35 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear; and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

36 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.

37 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

38 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

39 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

40 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

---II Kings 17.1-41

In II Kings 17. 1 we find that in the 12th year of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, that Hoshea became king in Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And, as verse 1 states, "...he did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him."

From II Kings 16, we find that Ahaz ruled 16 years in Judah. Thus, when the events concerning the fall of Samaria occur in II Kings 17.5-6. Hezekiah was now king. In fact, the events that we have studies thus far had taken place approx 2 years prior to verse 5 of II Kings 17. Thus, Hezekiah was witness of
the siege, fall and exile of the people of Israel. Further, he was witness of the re-population of the land with new exiles, provided by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17.24ff). Thus, this is the topic for our consideration this evening.

The fall of Israel

Verses 1-24 recount for us the details of the fall of Israel. In vv. 1–6, we find the record of the fall itself. Hoshea, King of Israel, in the sixth year of his reign, was besieged by the King of Assyria (v. 3). As a result of this assault, Israel became a vassal state of the Kingdom of Assyria, now having to pay a yearly tribute to the King of Assyria. In v. 4, we find the record of Hoshea’s rebellion. Sometime prior to the sixth year of his reign, Hoshea sends to So, the king of Egypt, requesting aid against the Assyrians. Further, he appears to have discontinued to pay the required tribute (v. 4). Thus, the Assyrians invade the land of Israel and lay siege to the city of Samaria (v. 5). In v. 6, we find the record of their downfall and their exile in the land of the Medes.

In vv. 7ff, we have the divine record of the sin of Israel and the punishment of God. Simply put: their sin was idolatry. Their sin was worshiping other gods. And this sin was manifest in two ways: positively and negatively. Positively, they worshiped other gods. Negatively, they did not obey the LORD, His command or statutes (vv. 15-16). In v. 18, we find the summary of the matter:

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

And thus the passage closes:

23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

The re-settlement of the land

In vv. 24ff we have the record of the re-population of the land of Israel. As was the policy of the Assyrians, they exiled other peoples into the land of Israel. Men from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim. And thus, they dwelt in the promised land of Israel.

We find record in v. 25 that when these came to the land, they did not know of the LORD. And thus, the LORD sent lions amongst the peoples to kill the peoples. After this, a complaint is made to the king of Assyria. The remedy: to bring one of the exiled priests back and have him teach the new inhabitants concerning the LORD. And thus, this is done (v. 28). However, the peoples continue to worship their gods (vv. 29-31).

What follows is an interesting contrast: in v. 33 the text says that they feared the LORD. In v. 34, the text tells us that they did not fear the LORD. How, then do we understand this? What we have here is the view from two perspectives. The new inhabitants were now aware that the God of this land was the LORD. And apparently, they were paying some type of homage to Him. Yet, they continued to worship their old gods. The peoples of the day were polytheists, worshiping more than one god. So, to them, the LORD was one of many. And apparently, they were sacrificing to Him. And thus the text states that they feared the LORD.

But they were not really fearing the LORD. For if they had, they would have turned from their gods to the living and true God, as did the Thessalonians centuries later (cf. I Thess. 1.8-10). No, these did not fear the LORD. Even though they were now aware that there was a God in Israel, they were not true worshipers. They did not obey the instruction of the word of God (cf. II Kings 17.34-39).

This, then is the passage before us. Before leaving this passage, a word needs to be said as to how these events affected the land of Judah and King Hezekiah. First, the fact that Hoshea did not walk as the kings that were before him may account for the relative ease with which Hezekiah had in removing the high places from the land of Israel. Apparently, there was little recorded resistance from the
Israelites.

Second, there may have been an influx of refugees to Judah, both of God-fearing Israelites that were now worshiping in Jerusalem, and of idol-worshippers fleeing from before the advancing Assyrian army. This may later explain as to how Judah quickly returned to idol worship after the death of Hezekiah.

Third, Hezekiah and the people of Judah had a vivid and strong reminder of the wrath of God upon sin. Note again v. 18—the L ORD was angry with Israel. And in this passage the anger was directed against idolatry.

Thus, Hezekiah and the people of Judah may have been affected by the fall of Israel. These are the verses before us.

III. Observations

1. The L ORD is just
Cf. v. 2. In v. 2, we read concerning Hoshea:

  2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the L ORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

Thus, we see something of the character of the person of Hoshea. But from the narrative we have no record as to why this statement was made. In some measure, he did not sin as grievously as the kings that were before him. Yet, upon him comes the cumulative wrath of the L ORD God against the nation of Israel. In some manner and fashion, this does not seem fair. Clearly, by the L ORD’s own assessment, this one was not like his predecessors. Yet, he was the one that experienced the exile of his people.

But one must remember, that the L ORD is just in all his ways, and holy in all his deeds (cf. Ps. 145.17). Thus, we have an illustration of this very fact. God is righteous. Sin is to be punished, no matter how small. And thus, Hoshea is considered as one who walked in an evil manner and as one upon whom the wrath of God came. The L ORD is just.

2. Those who are “lesser sinners” will suffer the same punishment as those who are “greater sinners”.
In a very real sense, this distinction cannot be made. There is really no difference between a greater or a lesser sinner. Yet, as seen from our perspective, some men do sin more than others. Yet this is of no benefit to them. They do not merit lesser punishment through their lesser sin. Scripture shows repeatedly that the one who sins suffers punishment, regardless of the number or severity. Consider Adam, who was cast out of the Garden of Eden through one sin. And the lake of fire will not be any less hot for Hoshea, even though he did not sin as the kings that were before him. Sin will be punished, regardless of its degree.


4. Behold those who worship two gods
Cf. v. 33
I. Introduction

For some time, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In our last lesson, we examined an event that indirectly rather than directly affected Hezekiah and the people of Judah—the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the introduction to this lesson, I mentioned the fact that the next major event in the life of Hezekiah was the invasion of Judah by Assyria. In preparation for this lesson, I found that this was only partially true.

The invasion of the land by Assyria is the next major event in the life of Hezekiah. However, I did neglect two minor events preceding this invasion. And these two events will be the topic of our lesson this evening.

As we have seen over the past several weeks, Hezekiah has re-implemented several of the Mosaic practices that were neglected/forsaken during the reign of his father Ahaz. Hezekiah did much to restore true religion within the land of Judah:

- removed false places of worship from Judah (II Kings 18.4)
- destroyed the images related to these false religions (II Kings 18.4)
- destroyed the bronze serpent of Moses (II Kings 18.4)
- ordered the repair and restoration of the temple of the Lord (II Chron. 29.3ff)
- begins to worship again in the restored temple (II Chron. 29.20ff), offering the Levitical sacrifices prescribed in the law of the Lord (cf. Lev. 4.13-26)
- re-established the Levitical service of worship within the house of the Lord (II Chron. 29.25)
- re-introduced the psalmody to the people of Judah (II Chron. 29.30)
- re-established the commanded feasts (II Chron 30.1ff). The people rejoiced to the point of celebrating an additional seven days.
- re-established the biblical support for the Priests and the Levites.

These, then, were the deeds of Hezekiah King of Judah in restoring true religion and the service of the Lord to the land of Judah.

II. Exposition of the Text

Early Battles

As we saw in our last lesson, Hezekiah was witness to the invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, I neglected one verse that appears to have occurred prior to this: II Kings 18.8.

7 And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.
8 He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

--II Kings 18.7-8

After the reforms that we have just reviewed, the author of II Kings makes the following statement: ...
the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth:...
Here we find that the L ORD was prospering the works of Hezekiah. The reason that Hezekiah was having success was that the L ORD was prospering him. God was blessing his goings forth and comings in.

After this, the author of II Kings mentions a few examples of how Hezekiah was prospering: ...and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. The examples that the author gives are those of battle, battle against those that were oppressing the children of Israel. And in so doing, Hezekiah is cast in the same mold as the judges of Israel, whom the L ORD raised up to deliver His children from their oppressors.

First, we find that Hezekiah had victory over the Philistines. The Philistines were enemies against the people of God from before the time of David, back to the time of Samson and the judges of Israel. Countless times the people of God had warred against these idol-worshiping peoples. Five cities along the coast, that had afflicted the people of God for hundreds of years. And even in the time of his father, Ahaz, the Philistines had attacked the people of God and had taken their land:

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

--II Chron. 28.18

And now, in the reign of Hezekiah, the L ORD was giving Hezekiah success against the enemies of the people of God. Apparently, under Hezekiah, the King of Judah recaptured the land from the Philistines, even pushing them back to their cities (cf. II Kings 18.8). And thus was God prospering Hezekiah.

Further, we find that Hezekiah was having success against the King of Assyria: ...and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. From the time of Ahaz his father, it would seem that Assyria had an interest in this land. In II Chron. 28 we find that Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah has actually asked the Assyrians for help against Aram and the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But Assyria turned against King Ahaz and Judah. In II Chron 28.16 and 20, we find that, after asking for help against the foes of Judah, Tiglath-pilneser came and afflicted Ahaz instead of helping him. And it may have been at this time that Judah was made a vassal state of the Assyrian empire.

And now, in stating that Hezekiah was prospering, the author of II Kings illustrates this by stating that Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria. God’s people are not to be slaves to another. No, God’s people are free; they belong to Him. They serve the God of the heavens. They belong to Him. And thus, Hezekiah is said to prosper when he rebels against the King of Assyria.

We are not told as to when Hezekiah rebelled. It may have been as early as the first year of his reign. It could have been as late as the thirteenth year of his reign, for it was in his fourteenth year that the land was invaded by the Assyrians. I tend to think that it was much earlier than this, in that the author of II Kings mentions this prior to the fall of the Northern Kingdom. However, we are left with the unanswered question as to why the King of Assyria did not invade Judah when he invaded Israel for their rebellion. Ultimately, we have no answer. Nevertheless, we see that the L ORD prospered Hezekiah in his actions where Hoshea king of Israel was taken away captive for his conspiracy against Assyria (cf. II Kings 17.4).

The L ORD was prospering his servant Hezekiah.

The coming of Assyria

The next minor event in the life of Hezekiah concerns the coming of the Assyrian invasion.

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against
all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house.

16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off 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.

--II Kings 18.7-8; 13-16

1 ¶ After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,

3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him.

4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?

5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,

7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:

8 With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

--II Chron 32.1-8

We have before us two passages that speak of relatively the same time frame. In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib came against the land of Judah. From the II Kings passage, it appears that Hezekiah tried to “buy Sennacherib off” by paying some type of ransom for the land of Judah. From the passage at hand, we find that Hezekiah confesses that he sinned in rebelling against the King of Assyria (v. 14). Then we find him stating that he would pay Sennacherib whatever he sees fit. The King of Assyria then lays on him a duty of 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. And thus we find removing both gold and silver from the house of the LORD and his own treasury to pay this ransom to the King of Assyria. In v. 16, we find that, not only did Hezekiah remove silver from the treasury of the house of the LORD, but that he also cut material off the doors and the pillars of the temple itself, to gain enough gold and silver for the ransom.

From all that we have seen thus far in the life of Hezekiah King of Judah, this passage, in my mind, shows a weakness in the character of Hezekiah. Here I think we have record of one of the sins of Hezekiah, a moment where he acted instinctively, and without consulting the LORD. For here we find Hezekiah confessing that he sinned against the King of Assyria, an act which the author of II Kings had written was an example of the LORD prospering Hezekiah (cf. II Kings 18.7). Hezekiah was wrong in this assessment. He may have angered the King of Assyria, but is was no sin. He was to rebel. The Lord’s people were not to be slaves. And was this not the judgment that had come upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, that they were now slaves and servants of another, of the King of Assyria? No, Hezekiah was wrong in paying this ransom to the King of Assyria. And I think that Hezekiah knew that it was of little benefit, by his actions taken in the weeks and months to follow, as seen by the II Chronicles passage (note also the example that Hezekiah had in his father paying tribute to the Assyrians in II Chron 28.21).

In that passage, we find Hezekiah understanding the true nature of the threat against Judah. He knew that, in spite of the ransom paid, that Sennacherib was still going to come to Jerusalem (cf. II Chron. 32.2). Once Hezekiah understood the threat against him and the people of God, he acted. We find that he cuts off the water from the land. And in this time, Hezekiah actually cut a path through the rock
under Jerusalem and rerouted a spring to bring water into the city. Water, Hezekiah knew, was essential to an advancing army. Thus, he and the people of the land did what they could to prevent they Assyrians from finding water in the land.

We find that in this short space of time that Hezekiah rebuilt and fortified the cities. Further, that he made both weapons and shields.

Lastly, we find that Hezekiah was again speaking as the Hezekiah that had instituted the reforms in Judah years before:

7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:
8 With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Here we find that Hezekiah was trusting in the LORD, not in the strength of men. Hezekiah knew that Sennacherib had numerous men. Yet, he knew also that, with God, numbers do not matter. What mattered was that they were God's people and that God was the one that was fighting for them.

These, then, are the verses before us.

III. Observations

1. Through God victory is given
This we can see from II Kings 18.8. God was the cause of Hezekiah’s prospering. Hezekiah had victory in battle. But it was the LORD’s doing. He prospered the hands of Hezekiah. And likewise, God will prosper his children today, through their hands and deeds.

2. Even the best of men sin
And this we see in Hezekiah. For a brief moment, it appears as if Hezekiah looked at the circumstances around him, and tried to correct it himself. But in so doing, he defiled the temple and called the prosperity of God in releasing him from the Assyrians sin. And this was wrong. Even the best of men can and do sin.

3. God is the one who fights the battles of the child of God
This is one of the truths that we find in this passage. No matter what the odds against the child of God, God is the one who delivers His child. And this does not mean that the child of God does not prepare for battle. As we can see from this passage, Hezekiah prepared for battle. Yet his trust was not in his preparations, but he knew that God was the one that would give the victory, whether through shield and sword, or though some other means. But the victory was of the LORD.
I. Introduction

For some time, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. Last week, we observed some of the early battles that faced Hezekiah. Upon becoming king, it appears that Hezekiah went on the offensive, battling the Philistines and re-taking the land that the Philistines had previously conquered. Also, the text mentions that, in these early days, that Hezekiah rebelled against the King of Assyria.

In the fourteenth year of his reign, Hezekiah is faced with the coming of the Assyrians. Just ten years earlier Hezekiah saw the Assyrians come against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. At that time, Samaria was besieged for three years. At the end of this three years, Samaria fell, the King of Israel, Hoshea, was cast into prison and the people of Israel were exiled far from the promised land. And now, the Assyrians were coming into the land of Judah.

From the texts that we examined, it appears that Hezekiah falters and tried to “buy off” the Assyrians, by confessing that he sinned in rebelling against the King of Assyria, and by paying whatever they demand. As we observed last week, this was something that Hezekiah should have known that would not work. His father had tried this unsuccessfully years before. And now, Hezekiah does the same thing. And in so doing, Hezekiah essentially calls the work of God in removing the influence of Assyria from Judah a sin, and he seemingly defiles the temple by removing the very gold that was part of the repairs of the temple, repairs that he himself had ordered.

Clearly, Hezekiah understood from the actions of the Assyrians, that they were still coming. Thus, Hezekiah prepares for battle (cf. II Chron. 32.2-6). He makes numerous preparations for battle, ordering weapons and shields to be made. Further, Hezekiah and the leaders of the people stop up the springs in and around Jerusalem. They knew that an army needed water. Thus, Hezekiah set out to make it hard for the Assyrians to attack Jerusalem. And it is reasonable to assume that it was at this same time that Hezekiah ordered the making of the conduit, re-routing the water into the city (II Kings 20.20).

These, then, were the preparations made by Hezekiah. This evening, we will begin to examine the invasion of the Assyrians into the land.

II. Exposition of the Text

As we noted previously, much of the life of Hezekiah is found in three places. For some time now, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah from II Kings and from II Chronicles. This evening, I would like to examine the events of this invasion from the book of Isaiah. Please turn with me to chapter 36 of Isaiah.

The majority of the material detaining the events of this invasion can be found in II Kings 18-19, and in Isa. 36-37. Although the passages are almost identical, I would like to examine the Isaiah passage, in that Isaiah adds a few items that present a fuller picture of the events of this invasion.

1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a
great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

5 I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

11 ¶ Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20 Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

---Isa. 36.1-22---

In Isaiah 36, we find the record of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, King of Assyria. In v. 2 we see that the King himself was in Lachish, to the SW of Jerusalem. The King of Assyria had come against various cities of the land. And while he himself was overseeing the conquest of Lachish, he sends his servants and an army to Jerusalem. It appears that the King of Assyria was fighting against the city of Jerusalem as he did against Samaria, by encircling it and closing the inhabitants in, until they run out of food and/or water.

Having surrounded Jerusalem, we see that Hezekiah send three of his officials, Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, out to speak with the leader of the Assyrians. In the text, this leader is called Rab-shakeh. There is some debate as to whether this is a proper name or a title. It may refer to some type of title, in that it is used in II Kings 18.17 along with two other terms, that also seem to be titles as well. In any event, Rab-shakeh speaks with the officials of Judah.

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In vv. 4-10 we find the contents of the message of Rab-shakeh. Rab-shakeh begins by questioning the source of Hezekiah’s confidence (v. 4). In v. 5, Rab-shakeh challenges Hezekiah by stating that Hezekiah’s words were empty words. Literally, this translates to *words of lips*. By so stating, Rab-shakeh was saying that Hezekiah’s words were just that: words, with the implication that they were nothing more than that.

He then goes on to denigrate Pharaoh before the messengers of Hezekiah.

In v. 7, we find Rab-shakeh stating that it was because of a message from God that Sennacherib had come against this land. He attacks the very truth of the word of God. What we find here is interesting in that, from the words of Rab-shakeh, it would seem that the Assyrians somehow had an intimate knowledge into what was being said behind the walls of Jerusalem. He attacks those that say they are trusting in God. Somehow, the Assyrians knew of the righteous deeds of Hezekiah in removing the high places and places of worship from within the land of Judah. Further, they knew of the command that all were to worship in Jerusalem. And it is these facts that Rab-shakeh tries to use against Hezekiah, to confuse and demoralise the people of Jerusalem.

In v. 8, we find Rab-shakeh basically mocking the people of God, that they were not fit to fight such a great army. He states that he will give 2000 horses if the Judeans can place riders on them. And in v. 9, he states, how could any of you repulse or turn back the least of the Assyrians? Basically, he says that they are nothing and useless for battle.

In v. 10, we find Rab-shakeh claiming that is was through the command of the LORD Himself that he had come against this land. He states that “…The LORD has said to me, ‘Go up against this land and destroy it.’” Thus does the king of Assyria claim to have heard from God. And in so doing, he is claiming a divine right in doing that which was doing. “I am doing this because God told me to do this.”

This, then, is the first message that Rab-shakeh brings to Hezekiah and the leaders of Judah. God-willing, we will continue to examine this scene next week.

**III. Observations**

From the lesson above, it seems that many of the observations that we can see concern themselves with how the child of God is attacked by the world. And thus, please observe:

1. **Behold how the world blasphemes the work of God.**
   Cf. v. 5. As we saw last week, Hezekiah’s rebelling against the King of Assyria was a sign of how God was prospering Hezekiah. And yet here, when Hezekiah said that he had confidence that the city would not be taken, Rab-shakeh calls this confidence "words of lips", empty words (cf. II Chron 32.7ff). In reality, Rab-shakeh was impugning the God behind Hezekiah.

Rab-shakeh does this elsewhere throughout the passage.

2. **Behold how the enemies of God can take the very acts of the righteous and use them against them**
   Cf. v. 7. Rab-shakeh knew of the reforms of Hezekiah. And it was these very reforms that he was now using against Hezekiah, trying to trick the people into thinking that the very good that Hezekiah had done was actually sin against God Himself. And is this not just like sin? This is how Satan and those that walk in his steps operate. Satan himself took the words of God and twisted them against Eve and then Adam. And in the New Testament, Paul states that those that come as false prophets will come as angels of light, that is, as those claiming to know the truth of God and his word. And is this not what Rab-shakeh does? He claims to know what God has done and how Hezekiah has sinned against the
Yet he only represents part of the facts. He was right that Hezekiah tore down the false places of worship. But he was wrong that they were legitimate places of worship of the Lord God. They were not. And Hezekiah was righteous in destroying them and removing them from the land.

3. Behold how evil may attack others to get to you
Is this not what Rab-shakeh was trying to do, to get to Hezekiah and undermine his authority? And this is true today. Teachers trying to undermine the authority of parents. The government trying to undermine the authority of the church.

4. Behold how sin exalts its own sufficiency against the truth
Again, we find example of how the enemies of God attack the people of God. Here we see that evil will exalt itself and will make light of that which God has provided. "Who among you can defeat the least of my master’s servants?" Their least is better than that which God has provided is, in essence, the message of Rab-shakeh.

5. Not all who claim to have heard from God truly have
Cf. v. 10. Sennacherib claims to have heard from God. And he does so to justify his sin, sin against the people of God. And this is true today as well.

Cf also Mt. 7.15-23; II Thess 2. We also have the Spirit’s admonition as well, in I Jn. 4.1-6.
The Battles of Hezekiah: The Coming of the Assyrians--Part II

I. Introduction

For some time, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In our last lesson, we began examining the coming of the Assyrians and their invasion of Judah. As we have seen, Hezekiah was acquainted with battle prior to this invasion. Upon becoming king, it appears that Hezekiah went on the offensive, battling the Philistines and re-taking the land that the Philistines had previously conquered. Also, the text mentions that, in these early days, that Hezekiah rebelled against the King of Assyria.

And in the fourteenth year of his reign, Hezekiah was faced with the coming of the Assyrians. From the texts that we examined previously, it appears that Hezekiah falters concerning the Assyrians, by confessing that he sinned in rebelling against the King of Assyria, and by paying whatever they demand. As we observed, in so doing, Hezekiah essentially called the work of God (in removing the influence of Assyria from Judah) a sin.

As we observed, Hezekiah understood from the actions of the Assyrians, that they were still coming. Thus, Hezekiah prepared for battle (cf. II Chron. 32.2-6). He made numerous preparations for battle, ordering weapons and shields to be made. Further, Hezekiah and the leaders of the people stopped up the springs in and around Jerusalem. They knew that an army needed water. Thus, Hezekiah set out to make it hard for the Assyrians to attack Jerusalem. And it is reasonable to assume that it was at this same time that Hezekiah ordered the making of the conduit, re-routing the water into the city (II Kings 20.20).

These, then, were the preparations made by Hezekiah. In our last lesson, we began to examine the interaction between the Assyrians and the servants of King Hezekiah, and of his arrogant, slanderous and deceitful manner of speech. The servant of Sennacherib, Rab-shakeh, was very arrogant as regards his master and the Assyrian army. Further, he made claims concerning both Hezekiah and the LORD himself that were deceitful and misleading, all with the intent of demoralising the people of God.

Last time, we examined vv. 1-10 of Isa. 36. This evening, we will continue to examine the interaction between Rab-shakeh and the servants of Hezekiah, and the invasion by the Assyrians of the land of Judah.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 36:

1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.
2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.
3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah’s son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph’s son, the recorder.
4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?
5 I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?
6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into
his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.  
7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?  
8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.  
9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?  
10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.  
11 ¶ Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.  
12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?  
13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.  
14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.  
15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.  
16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;  
17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.  
18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?  
19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?  
20 Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?  
21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.  
22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.  

--Isa. 36.1-22

As we saw in our last lesson, Isaiah 36 has the record of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, King of Assyria. In v. 2 we saw that the King himself was in Lachish, to the SW of Jerusalem. The King of Assyria had come against various cities of the land. And while he himself was overseeing the conquest of Lachish, he sent his servants and an army to Jerusalem.

Having surrounded Jerusalem, we see that Hezekiah sent three of his officials, Eliakim, Shebna and Joah (cf. v. 3), out to speak with the leader of the Assyrians: Rab-shakeh. As we saw last time, Rab-shakeh speaks out against the reforms of Hezekiah. As we noted, it appears that Rab-shakeh had some very intimate knowledge of what had occurred within the land of Judah (cf. v. 7). And, even now, Rab-shakeh seemed to be aware of what was happening within the walls of Jerusalem since the Assyrians had encircled the walls of Jerusalem. He continues by mocking the people of God and their adequacy for battle (cf. vv. 8-9). Lastly, Rab-shakeh speaks for God, stating that it was by the command of God that the Assyrians had come against Hezekiah.

In v. 11, we find the continuation of this interaction. In this verse we find the servants of Hezekiah requesting that Rab-shakeh speak to them in Aramaic and not in their native tongue, Hebrew (lit--Judean). They tell Rab-shakeh that they understand Aramaic and that he can speak to them in this language, so that the people on the wall will not hear. In v. 12, we find just how cunning the Assyrians were. Rab-shakeh purposely was speaking to the people in Hebrew, presumably to demoralise the people under the command of Hezekiah. And in defiance of their request Rab-shakeh stands before
the wall "and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language..." (v. 13). Rab-shakeh had no intention of negotiating with Hezekiah or his servants. And in v. 14 the speech of Rab-shakeh continues.

In v. 14, we find Rab-shakeh again speaking against Hezekiah. But here in v. 14, we find Rab-shakeh undermining the ability of Hezekiah to lead and defend his people: *Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.* Here, the words of Hezekiah are called deceptive words. Rab-shakeh is trying to undermine Hezekiah's credibility. Here, he states that Hezekiah is deceiving the people of God.

In v. 15, Rab-shakeh continues to speak against Hezekiah. He does so by declaring that the very words of hope spoken by Hezekiah to his people in this situation are wrong. Look at what is at issue: Hezekiah was reminding the people that God was their strength and hope. And this Rab-shakeh states. Note what he states that Hezekiah is saying: *The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.* And it was these words that Rab-shakeh said were deceitful (cf. v. 14). He was taking the very words of Hezekiah and using them against them.

In v. 16, Rab-shakeh contrasts the words of Hezekiah against the promise of hope with the King of Assyria. Against Hezekiah's deceit, the King of Assyria is held up as one that has the best interest of the Judean people in mind. In fact, the invasion is really couched as the King being benevolent. In v. 17, the King of Assyria is doing this to take them to a land that has all kinds of wonderful things.

In v. 18, we again have Rab-shakeh maligning Hezekiah. Further, we see the true nature of Rab-shakeh's views concerning the LORD: The LORD is no different than any of the other numerous gods that were worshiped in that day. Here, all the while claiming to come at the command of God and to now speak for God, Rab-shakeh declares that the LORD is no different than the gods of the nations that they have already conquered. And as an added proof of this, he includes the conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (v. 19). Were not these inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel God's people as well? And where was their God then? The implication is clear--the LORD, the God of Judah, was no different than the gods of the nations. In v. 20, Rab-shakeh sums up his argument.

In v. 21 we find the response of the people of Judah. Wisely, Hezekiah had commanded the people not to speak, nor to give answer to the lies and deceit of Rab-shakeh.

Finally, we find the response of the servants of Hezekiah--a response of utter grief. They knew of the deceit of Rab-shakeh. They knew of his blasphemies. They knew of his declaring these truths in Judean to all the people of God. And thus, there was grief and anguish.

These, then, are the verses before us.

### III. Observations

1. **Behold how the wicked attack the people of God, by trying to produce doubt**
   
   Cf. v. 14. Here we find that the way of attack was by attacking the credibility of the leader, by attacking Hezekiah. Rab-shakeh states that Hezekiah was deceiving the people. Yet Hezekiah was obeying the LORD in his admonitions to the people of God. And this is how deceivers attack God's people today. This is what Satan did in the garden, questioning God's intentions. And this is what the enemies of God will do today, in getting the people to question the intent of their leaders.

2. **Behold how the wicked view the words of hope of the people of God**
   
   Cf. v. 15.

3. **Two opposing views cannot speak for God**
   
   Cf. v. 15. Again, this is how the enemies of God attack the people of God, by stating that the very words of God are against the purpose of God. Note how Rab-shakeh states that he is from God and that he is the one speaking for God. Thus, Hezekiah must be a deceiver. Rab-shakeh states that he
comes by command of God. But yet both cannot be right. So, Rab-shakeh declares that Hezekiah is a
deceiver, all the while it is he that is the deceiver.

4. Behold how one can claim to speak for God and know nothing of him
Again, this is a powerful lesson from this text. Throughout the text, Rab-shakeh claims to speak for
God. And yet, it was Hezekiah that knew the mind of God in this matter, not Rab-shakeh. And today,
many will claim to come from God, to have commands from God, to do many things because of the
commands of God. Yet these, like Rab-shakeh, know nothing of the God that they claim to serve. They
are enemies of the truth and of the people of God. As such, they need to be revealed as deceivers.

Some may say that calling one a deceiver is being judgmental. But would it have been judgmental for
Hezekiah to call Rab-shakeh a liar and one that was not of God? And if it was not wrong for Hezekiah
to call this one a deceiver, why is it wrong for us today to call those that oppose the work of God
deceivers?

5. Beware those that promise good in moving against or away from God’s word
Cf. v. 17. Note that the King of Assyria was promising the Judean people all types of good things. Yet
these good things came once they were removed from the promised land, the land that God swore to
give to their ancestors. Things may sound good apart from God’s word, but God’s word knows best.
Today, there are numerous witnesses that divorce is ok, and that it even has a place within the church
of God. Others claim that women pastors (or homosexuals) have a legitimate place within the people
of God. But God’s word will have none of it. The word of God is very clear. Beware those that promise
good all the while moving away from God’s word.

6. Behold, the world sees our God as no different than the gods of the nations
Cf. v. 18-20

7. At times, it is wise not to even engage in dialogue with those that oppose.
Cf. v. 21. There are those that think that they ought to engage all who disagree. Yet here we find an
example of those that were commanded not to do so. And in this command is wisdom. At times, there
are those that have no interest in what is true, or what is right when it comes to spiritual matters.
With such it is better to not engage such in dialogue. Paul knew such wisdom. In the New Testament
he commands both Titus and Timothy to not engage those that wanted to argue or be divisive.

Yet this takes discernment. We are not to cast our pearls before swine. Yet we are to be ready to give
an answer. And thus, we have need of wisdom and prayer.
The Battles of Hezekiah: The Coming of the Assyrians--Part III

Isa. 37.1-7

I. Introduction

For some time, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. Providentially, we have been away from this study for some time. In May, we reviewed our last lesson of this series. In that lesson, we found the city of Jerusalem being besieged by the King of Assyria, under the command of Rab-shakeh.

In Isa. 36, we find the record of this first encounter with the Assyrians. In that chapter we found Rab-shakeh coming and speaking with the Judeans. King Hezekiah sends out three of his servants to speak with Rab-shakeh. And in that encounter, we find Rab-shakeh speaking ill of Hezekiah and his motives for protecting the city (cf. Isa. 36. 7). Rab-shakeh also speaks of coming against Jerusalem at the express command of God (cf. Isa. 36.10).

During this first encounter with the Assyrians, the servants of Hezekiah ask Rab-shakeh to speak in Aramaic; but Rab-shakeh refuses. He then continues his discussion, in Hebrew (ie--Judean), and shouts so that all may hear. He continues to call into question the motives of Hezekiah. He portrays Hezekiah as one who does not have the best interest of the Judean people in mind, whereas the Assyrians, namely the King of Assyria, are the ones that care and are concerned for the welfare of the Judean people (cf. Isa. 36.16). Rab-shakeh continues in slandering King Hezekiah as well, stating that Hezekiah is the one who is lying to the people of God (cf. Isa. 36. 14,18). Lastly, we see the true opinion of Jehovah, the God of Judah, as stated by the Assyrians. In vvs. 18-20 of chapter 36, we find Rab-shakeh comparing the God of the Jews with the other parochial gods of neighbouring lands. Jehovah, the God of Judah was, to the Assyrians, no different than the gods of all the other lands that they had conquered.

In this chapter, we find a study in the enemies of God and in the tactics these enemies use in confronting the people of God. First, we find them trying to discredit the God-appointed leadership of the people of God. Time and time again, Rab-shakeh rails against Hezekiah. Hezekiah is seen as one who is lying to the people of God and one who is deceitful. Second, we find the enemies of God stating that they come in the name of God, all the while they are servants of Satan and self. Third, we see the Assyrians as the ones who are concerned for the welfare of the Judeans, not the king (nor God). The King of Assyria is the one who desires good for the people of God, not Hezekiah. Lastly, we find improper views of the one true God. “God is just like all the other gods”. Or today, this is understood as “there are many ways to God”. And today, we find the same scenarios acted out in the modern-day church. The packaging may be different, but the content is the same.

This, then was our previous lesson.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 37 as we continue our discussion of the Assyrian invasion of the land of Judah:

1 ¶ And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.
2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.
3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.
4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.
5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.
6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.
7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.
8 ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.
9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?
12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?
13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?
14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

In these verses, we find the response of Hezekiah to the words of the King of Assyria, by the hand of Rab-shakeh. In v. 1, we find that, upon hearing these words, Hezekiah tore his clothes. As we have discussed before, this was a middle-eastern manner of expressing extreme grief and sorrow. No doubt the clothes worn by Hezekiah were the finest of the day. And now, in an expression of grief and sadness, he tears his clothes, effectively rendering them useless. Torn clothes in that day were a sign of poverty. Further, these clothes were not easily repaired. More than likely, the garments worn by Hezekiah were un-mendable, in that it was not seemly that a king wear mended clothes.

We also see mention made of Hezekiah placing sackcloth on his person. This was a type of material that was of poor or corse quality and one which came to be associated with grief. It has been likened to burlap, the burlap from which sacks are made. Needless to say, such material was not designed for comfort. Sackcloth was also a sign of humility. Often, those that would wear sackcloth were doing so in humility, either from sin or from sorrow. The latter seems to be the case here.

Lastly, we find that Hezekiah went into the house of the L ORD. Hezekiah, as we have seen repeatedly in this study, was a man of godly character. And thus we we find him now. When faced with grievous trouble, Hezekiah sought the L ORD. And he did so humbly, as seen by his attire--sackcloth.

Thus, we find, in v. 1, that Hezekiah was deeply moved and saddened by the words of the King of Assyria.

In v. 2-4, we find Hezekiah’s response to this grief and sorrow. He sends his servants to inquire of the L ORD as regards the situation through the prophet Isaiah (v. 2). They too were grieved and saddened as evidenced by their attire as well--sackcloth. In v.3, we find the words of Hezekiah, that this was a day of "trouble, rebuke and blasphemy" (KJV). Rightly did Hezekiah note that this was a day of trouble. The people of God were under attack by a godless foe, by one who cared nothing for the people of God. Hezekiah was right that the King of Assyria sent his servants to blaspheme and defile the living God, for that is exactly what Rab-shakeh was doing with the words of the King.

What is interesting is that Hezekiah prays nothing for his own glory in this matter. Throughout the reproaches of the King of Assyria, Hezekiah is maligned and reproached, is said to be lying and deceiving the people of God. Yet not once is any of this mentioned by Hezekiah. Hezekiah’s only concern was for the glory of God and the honour of His name. This is the same attitude that we find throughout the pages of the word of God that is characteristic of godly men. Such was John the
Baptist whose only concern was that Christ increase. Even though his ministry was vitally important, John cared only that Christ be exalted. And this is the attitude that we find in Hezekiah here in these vs.

In v. 4, we also find a confession of Hezekiah as to the deliverance for which he prayed. He states that “perhaps the L ORD will hear...”. Hezekiah was not one who assumed to know the character of God. He was familiar enough with the texts of the Old Testament to know that the L ORD may have many reasons for bringing such tragedy upon the people of God. Thus, he did not presume to expect deliverance. He was not owed deliverance. The people did not deserve deliverance. Yet, Hezekiah knew that God was a merciful God and that God was one who was zealous of His name. Thus, he prays “perhaps the L ORD will hear...”. We, as God’s people, are owed nothing by God. And this Hezekiah knew.

And thus, the servants go to Isaiah (v. 5).

In v. 6-7, we find the response of the L ORD through the prophet Isaiah. "Do not be afraid...". Here we find the L ORD comforting Hezekiah as regards the message of Rab-shakeh. Further, we find that Hezekiah did rightly state that this was a day of blasphemy. Rab-shakeh was blaspheming God with the words of the King of Assyria. He blasphemed God’s character, making him as nothing more than one of many gods. Further, he even accused God of trying to deceive the people (cf. 37.10) a few vs below.

In v. 7, we find the remedy of the L ORD as to the Assyrians: the king was to hear a report and return his own land, where God would strike him down. Further, we need to note that this is the working of the L ORD. Note He says, “I will put...”. God is the one who would fight for His people. He was the one who would cause the King of Assyria to fall by the sword. The L ORD was the efficient cause of this fall. He ordained and caused it to happen, just as He declared to Hezekiah. The L ORD Himself would fight for His people. And He would do so personally.

III. Observations

1. God’s name and glory are of highest importance
Hezekiah understood this. Even though he was slandered by the Assyrians, Hezekiah prays that the glory of God’s name be vindicated. He prays nothing over his own name. Hezekiah understood that God’s name was of utmost importance.

2. We are owed nothing by God
the people of God are owed nothing from the L ORD. The L ORD has no debt to any man. Hezekiah did not expect deliverance. He knew that he was unworthy of the grace and deliverance of God. If it so pleased God, he and the people of God would be delivered. But it was at His pleasure, not something that was owed by the L ORD to the people of Judah.

3. The people of God can know fear
Cf. v. 6.
The Battles of Hezekiah: The Coming of the Assyrians--Part IV

Isa. 37.8-20

I. Introduction

For some time, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. For most of April we were away from this study. And in May and June, we only returned to it briefly. Over this time, we have been examining the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian and the taunts of the Assyrian messenger, Rab-shakeh.

In our last lesson from Isa. 37.1-7, we found the city of Jerusalem being besieged by the King of Assyria, under the command of Rab-shakeh, the servant of Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Rab-shakeh had previously blasphemed against God and slandered King Hezekiah. In vv. 1-7 we find the response of King Hezekiah to the words of Rab-shakeh. Hezekiah was deeply moved by the heinous words, as evidenced by the rending of his garments.

Further, the King of Judah sends selected servants to inquire of the LORD through the prophet Isaiah. We also noted Hezekiah's confession regarding deliverance. Hezekiah knew that the LORD was the only source for deliverance. But he was also wise enough to see that deliverance was not the right of the people of God. Rather, it was a grace bestowed upon sinful and unworthy men. In vv. 6-7 we find the response of the LORD to the inquiry of King Hezekiah. The LORD would deliver His people by causing the Assyrians to return to their own land. And, as seen in v. 8, this is what transpires.

We observed from this lesson that the people of God are owed nothing from the LORD. The LORD has no debt to any man. We also noted from the text that God's name and His glory are of highest importance. Hezekiah understood this. Even though he was slandered by the Assyrians, Hezekiah prays that the glory of God’s name be vindicated. He prays nothing over his own name. Hezekiah understood that God’s name was of utmost importance.

This, then was our previous lesson.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 37 as we continue our discussion of the Assyrian invasion of the land of Judah:

8 ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.
9 And he heard say concerning Tirahkah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?
12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?
13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?
14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.
15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,
16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.
17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.
18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,
19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.
20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

--Isa 37.8-20

In verses 1-7 of chapter 37 we found the response of Hezekiah to the actions and deeds of the King of Assyria through his servant Rab-shakeh and of the LORD’s word to Hezekiah upon his prayer.

In v. 8ff, we find further taunts on the part of the Assyrians. In v. 8, Rab-shakeh returns and finds that the King of Assyria has left Lachish and has moved to Libnah. The reason for this is found in v. 9: And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. Thus, the King of Assyria moves his army for this coming threat. The Assyrians, understanding that the removal of their troops from Jerusalem could signify the retreat (and defeat) of the Assyrians, send yet another set of messages concerning their intentions for Jerusalem. Thus, in v. 9 they send messengers to “set Hezekiah straight” as regards their intentions. In v. 10-13 we find the content of this latest message.

In v. 10, we find remarkable words. Earlier in chapter 36 we saw that Rab-shakeh claimed to come against Jerusalem by the word of the LORD (cf. v. 36.10). But now, these messengers claim to Hezekiah that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is a deceitful God. Here, in v. 10, we find that the Assyrians claim that any message from God that He would deliver them from the hands of the Assyrians, was deceitful. As we noted in a previous lesson, the Assyrians saw that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was nothing more than a parochial god, just like the gods of all the other nations. A minor deity, at best. And here, we see their view of their gods was that gods were like men, and would, if the need suited him, deceive men. This is how they saw Jehovah, the God of the Jews. He was no different than any of the other gods against whom the Assyrians had fought.

And in vv. 11-13, we find the record of those against whom the Assyrians had been victorious: Gozan, Haran, and so forth. The reason that the Assyrians mention these nations is not just to instil fear in the Jews. This is one reason. But a larger reason is to have the Jews question Hezekiah and even more so, to question Jehovah. This is the thrust of the end of v. 11: …and shalt thou be delivered? In the Hebrew here, it is a very simple construction. And the translation of the KJV is plausible at this point. But the words could also be taken as a taunt.

Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and you shall be delivered.

Note the subtle emphasis. “You have heard all that we, the Assyrians, have done. And you shall be delivered.” I can almost hear the Assyrians laughing at this point. “And you shall be delivered”. Thus, we see in these words the utter contempt that the Assyrians had for the God of the Jews, even the God of Hezekiah.

In vv. 14ff we find Hezekiah responding to these new words of threats and taunting against the God of Judah. Again we find Hezekiah seeking the LORD in this matter. He goes to the temple of the LORD and spreads the letter from the Assyrians out before the LORD and then he prays.

In v. 16 we have the beginning of the prayer of Hezekiah. And in biblical form, we find Hezekiah beginning with praise and adulation to the God of heaven. In opposition to the gods of the nations, Jehovah was the LORD, the one who sat in the heavens between the cherubim. Jehovah was not as the other gods. He was not the god of rain, or of plenty, or of fertility. No, Jehovah was the God of all creation. He was the Creator, the Creator of all. This was the God that Hezekiah worshiped. And this is how Hezekiah begins his prayer—with praise to this ultimate and almighty God.
In v. 17 we find Hezekiah asking God to give heed to the deceitful and blasphemous words that Sennacherib had sent to Hezekiah. And blasphemous words they were. They were a reproach to the living God. In v. 18, we find an acknowledgement of the accomplishments of the Assyrians. They did conquer as they stated. Hezekiah was not blinded from the truth. He knew that the Assyrians had conquered and subdued many nations. And they did cast their gods into the fire (cf. v. 19). But they did so because they were no gods at all—they were the work of men's hands—wood and stone. So, thus, it did not matter whom the Assyrians had conquered, for those were worshiping images of false gods—the mere works of the hands of men.

But now, they were reproaching and blaspheming the one true, living God, the Creator of all things. And this is the point that Hezekiah makes here. And in so confessing, Hezekiah also confesses that in God and God alone is true deliverance. It mattered not how strong the enemy was. Hezekiah confesses and agreed with the Assyrian messengers that they had conquered other nations. But Hezekiah knew that his God, Jehovah, was the living God, that He was the Creator of all. And Hezekiah knew that this God could, if it pleased him, deliver the land of Judah from this great foe (cf. v. 20).

Hezekiah ends his prayer in v. 20 with the phrase: ...*that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the L ORD, even thou only*. This is a common theme in the word of God. This phrase is used of David in the Psalms:

13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.  --Ps. 59.13

13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O L ORD. 17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: 18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.  --Ps. 83.18

In both of these cases, the context is one of vengeance. The same sentiment can be found throughout the book of Ezekiel. Thus, we see that Hezekiah’s prayer is that God be seem by all men as the Lord of all the earth. But we can also see from the context that the is not necessarily salvific in nature. Rather, the focus of such entreaties is centred in the glory of God. David, Ezekiel and Hezekiah are praying in this manner, that God’s name be glorified. And God is glorified when false gods are exposed and brought low, and He is exalted. And thus, Hezekiah prays.

These are the verses before us. God-willing, we will examine the response of Isaiah from God to Hezekiah next week.

III. Observations

1. *Not all who claim to be from God are*  
2. *Not all who claim to honour God do.*  
3. *We ought not be surprised if the world treats us as the Assyrians treated Hezekiah*  
   In one sense, the biblical account of Hezekiah is a  
4. *Biblical prayer seeks God’s glory first*  
   Cf. v. 16.
The Battles of Hezekiah: The Coming of the Assyrians--Part V

Isa. 37.21-38

I. Introduction

Over the past several months, we have been examining the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. Last week, we were in the midst of Isaiah 37, where we found the city of Jerusalem being besieged by the Assyrians. In Isa. 36, we found the record of this conflict with the Assyrians. In that chapter we found Rab-shakeh, the servant of the King of Assyria, coming and speaking with the Judeans. In this encounter, Rab-shakeh calls into question the motives of Hezekiah and, more importantly, he defiles the name of the God of Judah.

In our last lesson, we found that the Assyrians actually remove from Jerusalem. But in leaving, the King of Assyria still sends message to the Judeans (cf. Isa. 37.8-13). At this point, their true view of the God of the Jews is revealed: Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee,... The Assyrians saw gods, even the God of the Judeans, as nothing more than "deified men", as something akin to the gods of the Greeks or Romans. Just as those gods would lie and be deceptive to serve their own purpose, so would the God of the Judeans. And now, according to the Assyrians, this God was trying to deceive the Judean people against the gods of the Assyrians.

As proof of this deception, the Assyrians present their recent conquests and victories. All of these lands listed in vv. 11-13 were defeated. Their gods were destroyed and thrown into the fire. And now, the Jews think that they will be spared (cf. v. 11). This was the passage that we examined in our last meeting.

We observed from this lesson that not all who claim to be from God are. The Assyrians came claiming to be from God (cf. Isa. 36.10). They claimed to have the best interests of the Judeans in view (cf. Isa. 36.16-17), whereas the King of Judah, King Hezekiah, was the one that was deceiving the people, and the one that was not able to deliver them (cf. Isa. 36.18). Yet in all of the benevolence of the Assyrians, in all their claims to be caring for the people of Judah was the truth, that they saw the God of Judah as a deceitful God, as one who was like all the other gods against whom they had fought. Even though they claimed to be from God, they were not.

We also observed that we ought not be surprised if the world treats us as the Assyrians treated Hezekiah. The Assyrians saw Hezekiah as one who was deceived. They saw them as weak and as a people that was weak because of their confidence in God (cf. Isa. 36.14, 37.10).

Lastly, we saw that biblical prayer seeks God and His glory first. In spite of all the attacks by the Assyrians and their shutting up of the city and all of the hardship that this act brought to the people of God, Hezekiah prays for God and His glory first. Note how he begins his prayer, in v. 16. And was not this the pattern given us by our Lord in the sermon on the mount? God’s concerns and His glory come first. This is the mark of biblical prayer. This is the mark of prayer pleasing to God.

This, then was our previous lesson.

This evening we will continue with Isa. 37 and the response of the LORD to the blasphemous words of the Assyrians.
II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 37 as we continue our discussion of this passage:

21 ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:
22 This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.
23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.
24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel.
25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.
26 Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.
27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.
28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.
29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.
30 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.
31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:
32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.
33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.
34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.
35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.
36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.
37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia:
39 and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

--Isa. 37.20-38

In these verses we find Hezekiah receiving the response of the LORD to the blasphemies of the Assyrians. In v. 21 we see the LORD sending word through Isaiah the prophet to Hezekiah. The body of this message is found in vv. 22ff.

In v. 22-29 we find the LORD speaking out against the Assyrians. Here, in these verses, we find the true assessment of the words of the Assyrians, of all that they have spoken in the last two chapters. And in these two chapters the Assyrians have done two things with their words: they have despised (v. 22) the people of God (ie--the virgin daughter of Zion) and have reproached and blasphemed the LORD, the God of heaven, the holy one of Israel (v. 23). And the latter of these two charges was the worst. For, in speaking against the people of God, the Assyrians were speaking against the LORD, the God of these people. Note how even in promising the Judeans a better land, that even this was a
blasphemy against the Holy One of Israel. For where were the Israelites living? In the promised land, a land given to them by the LORD Himself. And yet the Assyrians had better plans for the Jewish people.

In vv. 24 and 25 we find the source of this boasting, of these blasphemies against the LORD of Israel. It was in their strength, and in what they had done with their strength. Note that in these verses, the emphasis is upon what they had accomplished, of how they have been victorious in their battles.

In v. 26, we find the effective cause of the Assyrian victories: the LORD Himself. God does not dispute that the Assyrians were not victorious. No. But what we do find here are some of the most important words found in the word of God concerning the true, biblical understanding of the absolute sovereignty of God. The reason that the Assyrians were so successful was the ordination of the LORD from the foundation of the world. And we need to note, it is the LORD who takes credit for these acts and deeds of the Assyrians. The verbs are very clear as to who was acting--the LORD.

The LORD states that He planned it "long ago", that is, before any of this had happened. It was not that he knew of it. No, "long ago" and "from the ancient times" He planned it. Literally, the Hebrew states that he "formed" it. This is a word that speaks of the active forming on the part of God over, in and through of the actions and deeds of the Assyrians. This word is used elsewhere to speak of the LORD forming or creating. Thus, in this context, it speaks of the LORD's activity in creating these deeds beforehand, before the fact. Thus, the NASB translates this as planned. The LORD formed this plan beforehand. And now, as the verse states, He was bringing His plan to pass.

In v. 27, we find the LORD relating His ordination of the Assyrian conquests with the fruition of these conquests. The inhabitants were weak because the LORD had ordained that they be weak. And thus, the Assyrians were strong, because the LORD ordained that they be strong.

And even in this, the Assyrians were sinful. Verses 28-29 speak of the sinfulness of the Assyrians in these deeds. God knew of their activities, of their goings out and comings in. The LORD knew of their rage against the very God that had given them success. And verse 29 concludes with a prophecy against the Assyrians, that the LORD would turn them back.

At this point, some may wish to object concerning the view of sovereignty that I have presented above. But we need to note, that the scriptures themselves have no problem with stating that the LORD ordained the success of the Assyrians and then will punish them for their arrogance displayed in these very conquests. Paul speaks of this very issue in Romans 9:

14 ¶ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.
17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.
18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.
19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?
20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?
21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

--Rom. 9.14-21

Just as the LORD had raised up Pharaoh for His own purposes, so He has done with the Assyrians.

In vv. 30-35, we find prophecy related specifically to the circumstances of the people of Jerusalem and a sign of the veracity of the word of the LORD in this matter. In v. 35 we find mention of the food for Jerusalem. In the next two years, they would eat of that which grew of itself. This may allude to the fact that staying outside the walls of Jerusalem in this period for any length of time may be dangerous. But in the third year, they would be able to sow fields with grain and harvest that which they have sown.
In v. 31 we find mention of the surviving remnant of the house of Judah. Again, the Lord would establish this house, or tribe, in the land. And for the next several generations, this is what the Lord did. In v. 32 is a statement that “survivors” shall go out of Jerusalem and Mount Zion. In Hezekiah’s day, those that survived did go out and come in, as the Lord said. But further, these words seem to also point to the remnant of the Lord going out of Mount Zion—namely, the remnant that would eventually form the seed of the church. This prophecy then seems to have its fullest expression in the establishment of the church as the true people of God and of the church being the true heir of the promises (cf. Eph. 2.11-20). The verse concludes with a statement that the zeal of the Lord would accomplish this work.

In vv. 33-35, we find prophecy concerning the King of Assyria. He was not to return to the land. Not even an arrow would be shot there in that place. In v. 35, we find that the Lord states that He is the one who would fight for His people.

In vv. 36-38, we find the narrative of the fulfilment of these words. In v. 36 we see the angel of the Lord fighting for the Lord, slaying 185,000 of the camp of the Assyrians. In v. 37 is a simple statement that Sennacherib returned to his own land and dwelt in Nineveh. In v. 38, we find the historical account of the death of Sennacherib. He was killed by his own sins while worshiping in the temple of his gods. There is something ironic in the death of Sennacherib. He spoke as if his gods were almighty and unbeatable. Yet, he had returned to Assyria defeated. And now, in a further display of the ineffectiveness of his gods, he was killed by members of his own family in their own temple, the sacred place of these gods. They could not even protect their servant in their own temple, from members of his own family. They were truly ineffectual gods.

These, then, are the verses before us.

III. Observations

1. To speak against the people of God is to speak against the God of those people.
Cf. v. 22-23. Here this would seem to be a lesson. The Assyrians came speaking against the people of God and of God. But even in their slanderous accusations concerning King Hezekiah and against the people of God (cf. v. 36.8-9) were in reality a slander against the God of those people. And this is the way that these words were understood by the Lord, as seen here.

2. The Lord, the Holy one of Israel, is sovereign in all things.
Cf. v. 26-27

3. God is sovereign in all things, not just those things that pertain to the people of God
Cf. v. 26-27. Note how the Lord states that He had ordained all that the Assyrians had done, not just that which pertained to the people of Judah. He had ordained that the Assyrians be victorious in Eden and Gozan and Haran. These conquests had little, if any immediate effect upon the people of God in Judah. And the conquest of the land could have just as easily taken place without these victories. Yet, the Lord had ordained this as well. From this, we can see that the Lord is concerned about all of His creation, not just that which concerns His elect.

4. The Lord will defend the glory of His name.
Cf. v. 29. The Lord will punish those that blaspheme His name. The third command states that the Lord will not hold him guiltless who take His name in vain. And this is what we find here. The Assyrians blasphemed the name of the Lord again and again. As such, the Lord speaks against such actions. And at last we see the Lord taking vengeance upon those that had blasphemed His holy name. The Lord will defend His name against all slander.
The Illness of Hezekiah

II Kings 20.1-11

I. Introduction

Over the past weeks, we have been examining the attack of the Assyrians upon the land of Judah, and their siege of Jerusalem. In that siege, they not only physically attack that city, but they attempt to call into question the motives of Hezekiah and, more importantly, they defile the name of the God of Judah.

In our last lesson, we briefly examined the response of the LORD to the Assyrians attack, and their blasphemous claims against the Holy One of Israel. In this passage, we found the LORD assessing the actions and motives of the Assyrians in coming against the land of Judah. The Assyrians, in coming against the land of Judah were, in fact, coming against the LORD Himself. They came because they thought that the LORD was just as all the other gods of the nations that they had conquered (cf. II Chron 32.19). They came boasting in their own strength and ability (cf. Isa. 37.24-25). But, as we saw from our passage last week, it was the LORD who was the effective cause of their victories. It was the LORD that gave them strength. It was the LORD who gave them victories with this strength. And it was the LORD who had ordained that they would succeed. The LORD planned it (lit--formed it) from long ago. Those whom the Assyrians attacked were weak because of the LORD’s ordination. And thusly were the Assyrians strong.

In vv. 28f the LORD speaks of the sinful arrogance of the Assyrians in their conquests. We briefly examined Rom. 9.14ff in this connection. The scriptures have no problem mentioning the sovereign ordination of the LORD and of His punishment of sin. He is the potter; we are the clay. And whatever the LORD does is right.

The passage concluded with the LORD stating that He Himself would defend and fight for Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 37.33-35). And fight he does. In vv. 36ff, we found the LORD going into the camp of the Assyrians and slaughtering 185,000 of the Assyrian warriors. The chapter concluded with the narrative of the death of Sennacherib by the hands of two of his own sons in the temple of his god. Not even his own god, in his own temple, could protect him.

We observed from that lesson the LORD is sovereign in all things. Thus spoke the LORD Himself to these issues. And not only was He sovereign in all things concerning the Israelites, He was sovereign over issues that did not directly (or even indirectly) affect the people of God. He was sovereign the demise of numerous nations by the hands of the Assyrians. And the LORD says as much in this passage.

Lastly, we saw that the LORD will defend the glory of His name. This was abundantly clear from this passage. He fought for and defended the glory of His name. For when the Assyrians came against the land they did so in blasphemying the God of this land. And in so doing, they made the conquest of the land a patently spiritual issue. And the LORD defended His name against those that came against Him.

This, then was our previous lesson.

This evening we will examine II Kings 20.1-11. In this passage we find Hezekiah dealing with a mortal illness, that is, an illness unto death.
II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to II Kings 20:

1 ¶ In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.
2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,
3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.
4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,
5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.
6 And 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 for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.
7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.
8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?
9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?
10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.
11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

--II Kings 20.1-11

In this passage we find some remarkable issues. First, we find the fact that the LORD sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to inform him of his impending death. Second, we find a very intimate portrait of the response of Hezekiah to this information. And third, we find the LORD answering the prayer of Hezekiah almost as soon as he had besought the LORD. Thus, we shall examine these issues.

In v. 1 we find that Hezekiah was sick “in those days”. From the context, it would seem that this sickness was at or near the time of the Assyrian invasion. Note v. 6. The words of the LORD are very similar to those spoken by Isaiah in the last message to King Hezekiah concerning the invasion of the Assyrians (cf. II Kings 19.34). So, it seem that somewhere near the time of this invasion Hezekiah was struck with this illness.

We also find here the prophet Isaiah coming by the command of the LORD to Hezekiah to inform him that he was not going to recover from this affliction. From v. 7, it would seem that this illness, in part, consisted of some type of boil. The exact nature of this affliction is unknown. In any event, it was a serious illness, even to the point of death.

In vv. 2f, we find Hezekiah weeping and praying to the LORD. In v. 3 we find the content of his prayer: I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. From Isa. 38.10 we see that Hezekiah thought that this illness was “cutting him down” in the prime of his life. And thus, we find the scriptures stating that he wept bitterly (lit--a great weeping).

In v. 4, we find record of Isaiah receiving the word of the LORD even before he had left the premise of the king. He was to return to Hezekiah and tell him that the LORD was going to add 15 years to his life. He was to be healed in three days, healed enough that he could enter the house of the LORD. He was to have a full recovery. The LORD concludes by stating that He will deliver the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judah from the hand of the King of Assyria for the sake of His name and the sake of His servant David. In v. 7, we find the remedy of the LORD for this ailment--a poultice of figs. They were to
take a cake of figs and lay it upon the boil. They did so and he recovered.

In vv. 8-11 we find the continuation of the word of the LORD unto Hezekiah concerning his recovery. Hezekiah asks the prophet as to a sign that this word will come to pass. The sign was to be in the form of a shadow. The shadow itself was not the miracle. Clearly, this shadow was seen every day proceeding down the steps of the ascent of Ahaz. What was a miracle was the LORD made this shadow ascend from whence it had descended. And this is exactly what occurred, the shadow went back ten steps on the stairway.

III. Observations

1. God is a God who answers prayer
   One lesson that we see from this passage is the truth that the LORD is One who answers prayer. What is astounding here is the immediacy of the answer. Before Isaiah had left the premise of the king, the answer came. But the truth here is not to be found in the immediacy of the answer, but in the fact of the answer. The LORD is true to His word. He does hear the cry of his people. And whether he answers immediately, as He did here, or in 21 days, as in the case of Daniel (cf. Dan. 10.12-13), or 25 years, as in the case of Abraham and Sarah, the LORD does answer prayer and He is faithful to His word.

2. God is concerned with the glory of His name.
   As we observed last week, the LORD is concerned for the glory of His name. And here we find a positive statement to that effect: ...I will defend this city for mine own sake,... . Often we fail to recognise that the LORD does that which He does for the sake of His great and holy name. The Assyrians, in coming against Jerusalem, were coming against the LORD. As such, the LORD was defending His name and its glory in His subsequent actions against the Assyrians. God is concerned with the glory of His name. And the godly are concerned with the glory of His name also, as it was Hezekiah's in his prayer, that we studied a few lessons back. God is concerned with the glory of his name. And His glory is the concern of His people as well.

3. The LORD is Lord of all of creation, even the laws of physics
   Cf. v. 11. Clearly some type of miracle took place as regards this shadow. The sun does not move in an opposite direction. The LORD has made creation to move and work in an organised manner. Some, in seeing these words deny their veracity. “This never really happened” is their answer. But this would do violation to the text and to the very words of the LORD. “But how can you explain what took place?” I cannot. The word of God does not give us every detail as to how this miracle took place. But that, in and of itself, does not mean that it could not have happened. Once all the facts are known, we will understand how the LORD did this miracle, whether it was by a suspension of the natural laws of physics, or whether it was through some other means. What is important is the fact that the word of God states that the LORD did move the shadow back. And thus, for the child of God this is enough.

4. The LORD is sovereign over the day of one’s death
   We can see from this passage that the LORD is the one who is in control of one’s day of death. If it please Him, we shall die tomorrow. If it please Him, we shall die in 15 years. If it please Him, we shall not know of the day of our death. But in any event, the LORD is the lord of death, as He is of life.

5. Behold the blessing (and possible curse) of knowing one’s day of death
   There was truly a blessing in the fact that Hezekiah was made to know his day of death. To know this would be to make one ever cognisant of the limited time one has to serve the LORD. But in this blessing could be the undoing of many men, who could become consumed with focusing upon this unavoidable event. Such a focus is sinful at best. We are to serve God daily as it is our last (cf. Col. 3.23). This is the posture of the child of God. And thus, such knowledge of our death can be a blessing. But apart from grace it could be a curse.
I. Introduction

For the past several months we have been examining lessons from the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In our last lesson we were examining the illness of Hezekiah. From that study, we observed that either during or at the end of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians that Hezekiah became mortally ill, that is, ill to the point of death.

And in this illness we noted the following: First, we find the fact that the LORD sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to inform him of his impending death. This is highly unusual, although not without precedent in the word of God. Second, we find a very intimate portrait of the response of Hezekiah to this information. In our passage we see the Hezekiah in a very human, possibly even very weak state—weeping and praying before the LORD. And third, we find the LORD answering the prayer of Hezekiah almost as soon as he had besought the LORD. The response of the LORD may be one of the most expedited responses in the whole of the word of God. From the text we find that the LORD sends the prophet Isaiah back to Hezekiah to speak to him, to tell him that the LORD was adding 15 years to his life. Again, this was highly unusual as well, that a person would know by divine appointment the time (even relatively so) of his own death, and that so far in the future. And thus we examined these issues.

This, then, was our previous lesson.

This evening we will examine Isa 38.9-20, where we find Hezekiah’s own record of his prayer after he was healed from this most serious illness. In this passage we find Hezekiah dealing with a mortal illness, that is, an illness unto death.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 38, where we find record of this prayer of Hezekiah.

9 ¶ The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:
10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.
11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.
12 Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
13 I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
14 Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.
15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.
16 O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.
17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit
cannot hope for thy truth.

19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20 The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

--Isa. 38.9-20

In this passage we find a record of the words of Hezekiah that he wrote after this episode of the illness of Hezekiah. And from v. 9, it would seem that the words that are recorded here are from the lips and pen of Hezekiah.

From the text we can also see that the editors/translators saw this passage as one of Hebrew poetry. As such, the word order may reflect more of a poetic construction. In Hebrew poetry it was common for the one writing the poetry to rhyme, not words and sounds, but thoughts and ideas. He may do this either by repetition, by comparison or contrast, or by epexegetically expanding the thought over the course of the phrase or though the course of many verses. Thus, we would do well in our examination of this passage to keep these things in mind when we read the words of Hezekiah.

In v. 10-12 we find record of the emotional mindset of Hezekiah in the midst of his illness. He saw himself as one that was young, one that was in the midst or middle of his life. Clearly from these words, Hezekiah did not see himself as one that was “ready” or “near” to death. He saw that he was one that was to be deprived of “the rest of his years”. From II Kings 18.1 and II Chron. 29.1 we can ascertain the age of Hezekiah when he became ill. Hezekiah was 25 yrs old when he began to reign and the texts tell us that he reigned for 29 years. Subtracting 15 years from this we can see that Hezekiah was 39 years old when he was afflicted with this ailment. And thus we see that he was right, that Hezekiah was in the middle of his life when he was afflicted.

In v. 11, we find a rather unique phrase, where Hezekiah states that he would not see the LORD in the land of the living. What exactly does Hezekiah mean when he states this? Clearly, as we have seen, Hezekiah seemed to be well-versed in the scriptures of the law. Surely he was familiar with the concept that no man can see the LORD and live. Surely he was familiar with the record of the life of Moses, who was the one who came the closest to seeing God. Did Hezekiah actually assume that he was going to see God in his lifetime?

I do not think that this is the meaning that Hezekiah meant to convey. There is a sense that we can see God by that which He does. This is akin of that which Jesus speaks to Nicodemus concerning the Spirit. The wind is seen by that which it does. And so is the Spirit. And thus, Hezekiah would no longer be able to see the LORD in that which He was doing in the world, both in the world in general and in the lives of the people of God in particular. And once Hezekiah was dead, he would no longer be seeing the faithful acts of the LORD and thus not seeing the LORD Himself.

In v. 12, Hezekiah uses metaphors to convey the ending of his life. He compares his life to that of a tent that is pulled up. Just as a shepherd moves on to greener pastures when the grass is exhausted in one place, so is Hezekiah’s life. His life is like this tent--rolled up and packed away until the next pasture is reached. Hezekiah also likens his life to a piece of cloth produced by a weaver. Once the weaver is done, he rolls up that which he has produced and cuts the material from the loom. He concludes the verse in comparing his life to the length of a day. Night has come. His life is over.

In v. 13 Hezekiah states that he has composed his soul. Here we find Hezekiah stating that he feels as if he is broken--broken by the LORD. And again, he likens his life to a day.

In v. 14, we find Hezekiah again using images from nature to convey his feelings. The crane and the dove, creatures seen as mournful at times, are used to convey the sorrow of Hezekiah. In the latter half of the verse we find Hezekiah looking to God for deliverance. He looks to the heights, that is to God Himself, for his security. Hezekiah knows that it is God and God alone that is the one that can deliver him from this state.

In v. 15, Hezekiah acknowledges that these things have come upon him from the LORD. Hezekiah knew that it was God that had given him these circumstances. And here we find, not anger, not blame, but
acknowledgment and confession of the truth of God’s sovereignty in his life. Job voiced a similar sentiment when, after being sorely afflicted, he rebuked his wife:

10  But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

--Job 2.10

And we need to note, that Job, in thus speaking, was sinless in his words and sentiment. God is sovereign. And this sovereignty may entail the LORD afflicting the child of God even has Job was afflicted. And this Hezekiah knew. And this is a lesson that far too many that claim to be followers of the one true God have no understanding of whatsoever. Go dis sovereign, even in affliction.

In v. 16, Hezekiah states that it is by the LORD and His workings that men live. Again, we see in Hezekiah the understanding that God is the sustainer of all life. God is the one that gives life to the spirit. And thus, Hezekiah beseeches life and deliverance from this illness from the LORD.

In v. 17 Hezekiah states that, although he has had bitterness in his life, it is God that has kept his soul from the pit of corruption or destruction. He also states that he knows that God has cast all his sins behind His back. Here we find a brief yet telling glimpse of Hezekiah’s understanding of his own standing before God and the source of his righteousness. Hezekiah’s righteousness was due, not in part to anything that he had done, or based upon his keeping of the law or the sacrifices. No. Hezekiah knew, that even though he had kept the law and even though he had obeyed and restored true worship in Israel (as we saw when we began this study) that he was still a sinner. Thus, Hezekiah states that he had sins and was a sinner before God. But we also find Hezekiah stating that it was God who had taken away His sins. It was God that cast these sins behind His own back. God is the one who must remedy the issue of sin. And this Hezekiah knew. God was the one that could and would remove sins. It was not by his own works, for the scriptures themselves declare that Hezekiah was one of the best kings, if not the best king that Judah ever had. And yet, he was a sinner and he saw himself this way. God, not man, was the one that had to remove sin. And this Hezekiah knew.

In v. 18, Hezekiah speaks of the finality of death. Those that have died cannot praise God. Their lifeless bodies cannot praise God. Nor can their corpses hope for any respite from this judgment. With this the author of Hebrew concurs:

27  And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

--Heb. 9.27

Death is the curse of the law. Death is also the sign that all have sinned before God. Thus, death cannot praise God. And it is only those that have had the curse of death lifted that bring praise to God because of His mercy.

It is the living that praise God, those that have had their sins removed far from them (v. 19). It is the father that tells his son of the faithfulness of the LORD. And it was the faithfulness of the LORD that did save Hezekiah from his “sickness unto death”. And this Hezekiah knew. And so Hezekiah states that it was God that would deliver him (v. 20). And all the days of his life, he would praise the LORD.

This is the prayer of Hezekiah when he was sick unto the point of death.

These, then, are the verses before us.

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III. Observations

1. God is sovereign over all and in all that comes into our lives.
Cf. v. 13, 15. The verses above do show us that Hezekiah understood that God was the giver of all within his life. As such, God was to be praised. Further, He was the one that was to be sought when affliction came, for He was the one that may remove it, if it please Him.

2. We are owed nothing because of our obedience or our faithfulness.
If anyone was righteous in his life, in his actions and deeds, it was Hezekiah. Even the scriptures tell us that he was a righteous king. Yet even he saw himself as a sinner before God. How then can we see ourselves as anything else? Many think that they are owed heaven or some other reward because of their faithfulness before God. If anyone could have thought so, it was Hezekiah. Yet he saw himself as one that was a sinner. And he saw that God was the One that was the Remover of these sins. He was not owed anything by God.

3. The one that has been delivered by the Lord praises the Lord.
Cf. v. 20
The Coming of the Babylonian Envoys

Isa. 39.1-8

I. Introduction

For the past several months we have been examining lessons from the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. In September, we studied Ch 38.9-20, where we find record of the words of Hezekiah upon the restoration of his health. In the first part of the chapter we noted that Hezekiah had been struck down with an illness of some undetermined nature (ie—something related to some type of boil) and that the illness was very serious—he was "sick unto death". Through the mercy of God Hezekiah received healing for this illness. After his healing, Hezekiah penned the words found in this chapter.

We concluded with three observations:

1. God is sovereign over all and in all that comes into our lives.
2. We are owed nothing because of our obedience or our faithfulness.
3. The one that has been delivered by the LORD praises the LORD

This, then, was our previous lesson.

This evening we will examine Isa 39.1-8, where we find record of some of the last deeds of King Hezekiah. Both II Kings and Isaiah end the narrative of Hezekiah with this section. II Chronicles does seem to sum up these events in a bit different manner. As to that narrative, we will examine it in due course, God willing.

As to these words that are found in Isa. 39, there is inherent difficulty. The difficulty, however, is not in relation to the words themselves. One can easily read and understand the events recorded in this chapter. The difficulty arises in understanding properly the import of the words, that is, for what reasons were these words recorded and what lessons are we to learn from these verses. In any event, we will discuss these as they arise.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to Isaiah 39, where we find record of the deeds of Hezekiah and the Babylonian envoys:

1 ¶ At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.
2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.
3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country even from Babylon.
4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.
5 ¶ Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:
6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.
7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.
8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.
In these verses we find the record of some events that took place subsequent to the illness and the miraculous healing of King Hezekiah. In v. 1 we note that the King of Babylon sent messengers “at that time”. Clearly, this was at the time of the events just mentioned—ie, the sickness and healing mentioned in chapter 38. Thus, it would seem reasonable to see this taking place, most likely, within the same year of these events.

The King of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan, sends letters and a gift to King Hezekiah. At first, one may not even notice that such a gesture may seem suspicious. To this point, we are told nothing of the relationship between Babylon and Judah. To date, as far as we know, Hezekiah has had no dealings with the Babylonians. In fact, this would help explain as to why Hezekiah took such pains to show them all that was in his kingdom. It also seems suspicious as to how fast these envoys of the king arrive after the healing of Hezekiah.

We need to note carefully the events of the previous chapters. Not only was Hezekiah struck with sickness and healed, but at around the same time, the Assyrians had come unto Jerusalem, blasphemed God, and were struck down in a huge slaughter (185,000 men slain by the angel of the Lord). At least to this author, it could be that there were ulterior motives for the kindness of the Babylonians.

Babylon, at this time, was a rising world power. It would not be too much longer before Babylon would supplant Assyria as the main world power in that region. Thus, it is not hard for me to see the Babylonians sending envoys to learn of this “power in the west”, of Judah. If the account of the sickness and healing had made its way to Babylon so quickly, is it not likely that the record of the events of this defeat of Assyria would not have also made their way to the ears of the King of Babylon? Thus, I see that the King of Babylon may have had other reasons for sending the envoys than just a “goodwill” gesture on the part of a neighbouring king.

In v. 2, we find record of a puzzling deed of Hezekiah—the showing of all he had to the Babylonians. The text tells us that Hezekiah showed the Babylonians all his treasures—silver, gold, spices, precious ointments, his armoury, even all that was found in his treasuries. In fact, the text states that there was nothing in his house or all his realm that he did not show to them. This is an amazing statement. Even more so, it is amazing that Hezekiah did such a thing.

The text at this point is silent as to why Hezekiah would do thus. Up to this point, we have not seen any gross sin in the life of Hezekiah. But this action on Hezekiah’s part could seem to be self-serving or prideful. Hezekiah may have been trying to influence the Babylonians to be allies with him against the Assyrians. Or, this could have been an act of a prideful man, showing all that he had amassed and all that he had. And II Chronicles 32 does mention that Hezekiah had a problem with pride at one point in his reign. However, there are some chronological problems with linking this event with that spoken of in II Chronicles. God-willing, we will speak of this in a future lesson.

Thus, we are not told as to why Hezekiah did what he did.

In v. 3, we find the prophet Isaiah coming to Hezekiah, to question him as to the Babylonians and to what they were doing in the kingdom of Judah. It would seem from the text that at the time of the coming of Isaiah, that the Babylonians have left and returned to Babylon. Isaiah asks who were these men and from where did they come. Hezekiah answers and tells them that they were from “a far country, from Babylon”.

In v. 4, Isaiah asks what they saw. And Hezekiah answers and says that they saw all that was in his realm. In fact, he asserts that there was not one thing that they did not see in his kingdom. From his answer, it seems clear that Hezekiah did not see any problem with his showing these Babylonians all that he had.

In v. 5ff, we find the record of the word of the Lord regarding this incident. In v. 6, we have a prophecy concerning all the possessions that were in the house of Hezekiah—they would be taken into
the land of Babylon. Nothing would remain states Isaiah. The land of Judah had been invaded before. Tribute had been required. Even the temple of Solomon had been sacked in the past. But this time, all would be taken. Nothing, literally, “not a thing” would be left, says the LORD.

In v. 7, we find a continuation of the declaration of the LORD: some of the descendants of Hezekiah would be taken captive and made to serve the king of Babylon. This then is the word of the LORD concerning Judah.

We need to note one thing regarding the words of the LORD at this point. Nowhere in this prophecy does it state that this is a judgment of God upon the people of Judah. In many other instances the LORD states the reason for His bringing such events upon the people of God. Yet in this case we have no statement. But Hezekiah must have known from the Mosaic law that removal from the land was a sign of judgment. Hezekiah, as we have seen before, was very educated and schooled in the law of God. Clearly, Hezekiah would also have been aware of the blessing and the curses of the book of Deuteronomy (eg--ch 28), where captivity was a judgment upon the people of Israel (cf. Deut 28.32-33,64-66). Thus, even though no judgment is pronounced by Isaiah, from the word of God, that which Isaiah was describing was the judgment of God upon the people of Judah.

In v. 8, we find yet another puzzling aspect of Hezekiah--the answer to the prophecy. In v. 8 we find the record of the words of Hezekiah concerning this pronouncement of judgment upon the people of God: “Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days”. The words of Hezekiah are not hard to understand in and of themselves. Verse 8 is a statement of Hezekiah agreeing with the righteous judgment of God. This is to be expected by a godly man upon hearing the words of the righteous God. Yet in this context, they appear odd. Hezekiah was just told that all he had was going to go off to another kingdom. Even more so, he was told that some of his descendants were going into captivity. And there is no mention of remorse or sadness; only a statement of the goodness of the word of the LORD.

Further, this is followed up with the words, that there would be peace in his days. Again, at first glance, these words seem selfish and self-serving. Yet again, we have no judgment here recorded against the words or attitude of Hezekiah by the LORD or Isaiah. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain the intent of the words of Hezekiah. Maybe it was that Hezekiah knew the heart of the people over whom he served. It did not take them long to abandon all that he had set into place once Hezekiah died. Maybe Hezekiah was fully aware of the sinfulness of the people over whom he ruled. And thus the words of Hezekiah are truly an acknowledgement of the righteous judgment of God against this people. The text does not say. All we know is that Hezekiah agreed with the words of the prophet and saw the good in them. If nothing else, this is a good example for the people of God to follow, even in the midst of the manifold trials and temptations that occur in our lives.

These, then, are the verses before us.

III. Observations

1. Even the most godly men can do stupid or sinful deeds.
Cf. v. 2. Clearly, it does not appear that Hezekiah was smart in his showing of all he had to complete strangers. He may have even sinned. Yet the text does not record this. But clearly, we ought to be wise in our stewardship over our possessions and not be pridefully displaying them for all to see. (note however: the scriptures do not declare Hezekiah sinful at this point--he may or may not have been. We are not told).

2. Even the godliest of men can fail to recognise danger or a threat.
Cf. v. 6. Hezekiah had no clue as to what danger awaited the people of Judah. Clearly, from the words of Isaiah, Babylon was going to be a threat to Judah. The treasuries would be emptied. Descendants of Hezekiah would be eunuchs for the king of Babylon. Yet Hezekiah failed to see the coming danger.

3. Hezekiah was an example of one who was thankful at all times.
A Summary of the Life of Hezekiah

II Chron. 32.24-33

I. Introduction

This evening, we examine the last narrative found in the word of God concerning the life of Hezekiah. In December of 2005 we began studying the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. For several months we have been examining lessons from the life of Hezekiah. Over the course of this last year we have seen Hezekiah ascend to the throne, rule as a godly king, restore the temple worship and the sacrifices required under the law, cleanse the land of false worship and places for worship, defend the land against the advances of the Assyrians, endure a siege of the city of Jerusalem, heard countless lies against himself and blasphemies against the LORD, watch as the LORD destroyed the Assyrians, became ill to the point of death, witnessed one of the quickest answers to prayer recorded in the word of God when the LORD heals Hezekiah, studied the words of Hezekiah upon the restoration of his health, and watched Hezekiah welcome the Babylonian envoys and show them all that was in his kingdom. All in all, there is much written concerning the life of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was a remarkable king. In fact, II Kings 20 states the following concerning King Hezekiah:

3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.
4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.
5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

--II Kings 18. 3-5

Scripture itself bears witness that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah. And in the whole of the narrative material concerning the life of Hezekiah there is no record of outward sin mentioned against the life of Hezekiah, apart from the passage that we are going to examine this evening--II Chronicles 32.24-33. Hezekiah, as we shall see, was afflicted with pride. And the LORD does deal with the sin of Hezekiah.

In our last three lessons we noted that sometime around the siege of Jerusalem, Hezekiah was afflicted with some type of illness (related to some type of boil). Hezekiah cries out to the LORD and is healed by the LORD and the healing is accompanied with a sign. After this, envoys from the country of Babylon come to learn of the sign and Hezekiah shows them the entirety of his kingdom. After they depart, Hezekiah is met by Isaiah the prophet who states that all that he showed the Babylonians will be carried into exile and that some of his descendants will also serve in the court of the house of the king of Babylon (cf. Isa. 38-39).

These, then, were our previous lessons.

This evening we will examine II Chronicles 32.24-33, which is really a summation of these events that I have just mentioned above. Not much new is added that is significant to the life of Hezekiah except that this passage mentions sin in the life of Hezekiah, sin that was somewhere in the midst of the events mentioned above.
II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to II Chron. 32.24-33:

24 ¶ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign.
25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.
26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.
27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;
28 Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.
29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.
30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.
31 Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.
32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.
33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

---II Chron. 32.24-33

Verse 24 begins mentioning the illness of Hezekiah. "In those days Hezekiah was sick to the point of death,..." As we saw in a previous lesson, Hezekiah was struck down by some sort of illness related to some type of boil. Isaiah the prophet comes to him and tells the king that he is going to die. Upon hearing these words, Hezekiah prays to the LORD for healing and life. And the LORD answers him, sending Isaiah back to Hezekiah before he had left. In Isa. 38 we read the narrative of this account.

Further, our verse states that Hezekiah was given a sign. And this we discussed as well.

In v. 25, we find the mention of the sin of Hezekiah--pride. It appears from the text before us that Hezekiah was lifted up before the LORD and did not thank the LORD for His work in his life and the life of the people of Judah. Thus the passage states that there was wrath upon the king and the people--both Jerusalem and Judah.

As I stated in our last lesson, the difficulty in this passage is knowing over what Hezekiah was proud, why he was "lifted up", he and the people of Judah. Often it is assumed that that issue of pride here is related to what follows: the riches and the possessions of Hezekiah that he showed to the Babylonian envoys. Keil and Delitzsch, in their Commentary on the Old Testament, see this as the expression of the sin of Hezekiah. And this is one possibility of the sin of Hezekiah. This may be the sin to which the writer of II Chronicles refers; yet scenario does have some exegetical problems.

To state that the sin of Hezekiah was manifested in his showing all that he had to the Babylonians is to state that both the II Kings narrative and the Isaiah narrative end the life of Hezekiah, one of the greatest kings of Judah, with sin. Further, neither of these narratives states that Hezekiah's actions were sin before the LORD. In fact, when Isaiah comes to speak to Hezekiah regarding these issues, he is not confronted with any sin on his part. We also do not have any record of the repentance of Hezekiah or of the people for their sin.

There are other possibilities for the occasion for the sin of Hezekiah. The first is the invasion of the land of Judah. Often in the word of God, God's judgment and displeasure are expressed through the use of an invading army (cf the book of Judges). Yet v. 26 states that the wrath did not come upon

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them in the days of Hezekiah.

Another possibility concerns the results of the invasion. We need to note carefully v. 23 of II Chron. 32. in this context:

21 And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.
22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.
23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

--II Chron. 32.21-23

It is possible that the sin, that is, the pride, of Hezekiah was manifested in that which took place immediately after the defeat of the Assyrians by the LORD. Note v. 23. After this defeat many brought gifts, both to the LORD and to Hezekiah. It is relatively easy to see that Hezekiah could have become proud after this victory, with person after person bringing him gifts. It is at this point that I think that Hezekiah became prideful and did not render unto God that which was God’s--the credit for the victory. And it was at this time that Hezekiah was struck down in his illness to the point of death.

"But what about v. 25? Does not v. 25 follow v. 24 and Hezekiah being prideful after being sick?" Not necessarily. In the Hebrew, the small conjunction waw is used to connect the phrases. Normally it is translated as “and” or “but”. But it can also be used to represent a host of other minor connections between words. Thus, it is possible that the waw can be translated as “for”, explaining why the events of v. 24 took place.

The last possibility of the occasion of the sin of Hezekiah is one that concerns some sin that is heretofore not mentioned. In all of the above scenarios, the sin of the people was not mentioned. Yet, in v. 25, the writer states that it was not only the king that sinned, but also the people of Jerusalem and of Judah. In the matter of the sin of Hezekiah, there is also the sin of the people. And in v. 26, the people of Judah and Jerusalem are also said to have humbled themselves before the LORD. But of this humbling, there is no record, either in II Kings or in the writings of Isaiah the prophet.

Thus, I think that this may be the best way to view the sin mentioned in this passage. It is enough to know that Hezekiah and the people sinned. We do not always need to know all the details of the sin committed. Thus, somewhere in the life of the king, we see that he and his people sinned, being prideful over some issue. And we also do not have the record of the LORD dealing with this sin. Is it not enough for us to know that the LORD does deal with sin in the lives of his people?

Moving on, then, we come to verse 26. As we have already mentioned, the text states that both Hezekiah and the people of the land did come to repentance, being humbled before the LORD. And “…the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”

In v. 27-29, we find a record of the possessions of the king of Judah. As we see from this record, Hezekiah was a very rich man. The LORD had made Hezekiah numerous earthly possessions--gold, silver, precious jewels, large amounts of cattle (cf. v. 29b). We also see that Hezekiah was a good steward of that which the LORD gave him, making storehouses for the grains and shelters for the cattle.

We also find Hezekiah making wise use of his riches in providing for the fortifications of his people. In v. 30, we find Hezekiah diverting the water of the spring Gihon into the city of David. He did this by cutting a conduit in the rock under the city. Archaeologists have since found this conduit in Jerusalem.

In v. 31, we find mention that the LORD tested Hezekiah to “…know that which was in his heart”, that is, that the true intentions of the heart of Hezekiah may be made manifest. Again, as we have mentioned before, we do not have record of Hezekiah sinning at this point. All we know is that the LORD tested Hezekiah.
In vv. 32-33 we find mention of the record of the life of Hezekiah. As was with all kings, there was record made of their actions and deeds. And thus it was with Hezekiah. The records were found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah. Verse 33 is the record of his death. He was buried with the other kings of Judah and great honour was made for him. The verse concludes with a statement regarding his son—Manassah. He ruled in the stead of his father.

And of him, God-willing, we will speak in our next lesson.

III. Observations

1. Even the finest of God’s servants can and do sin.
   This is one of the lessons that this passage teaches us. Even though Hezekiah was a very godly man, he was overcome with pride at some point in his life. This does not mean that he was not godly. This does not mean that he was a bad example. But in this one area, Hezekiah did sin against the God that he loved and served. Even the finest of the servants of God can and do sin against God.

2. The children of God, when they do sin, are worthy of punishment
   Some may think that the sin of such men, such as Hezekiah, can or should be overlooked because of the overall good character of their lives. Yet here in v. 25, we see that God did not overlook the sin of Hezekiah. No, this one sin is enough to anger the LORD of all heaven. Often we fail to see the seriousness of a single sin within our own lives. Yet this passage teaches us that the LORD will punish even one sin in the lives of His people, even His most godly servants.

And is this not a comfort to us, knowing that the LORD, our Father, will correct even one fault? God is concerned for our holiness, not our happiness. And God is concerned for His holiness as well, as we ought to be. And thus, His zeal for His holy name will chastise and correct the sin that is in our own lives.

3. The LORD can test His people in a variety of ways
   Cf. v. 31. Often times, we associate difficulties and trials as times when the LORD is testing us. Yet in the life of Hezekiah, we find that the LORD was testing him in a time of relative ease. The Assyrians had been vanquished. His illness (to the point of death) had been removed. He had been given 15 more years of life. And now the text states that Hezekiah was tested. Not all tests come as gut-wrenching physical or emotional trials. Here Hezekiah was tested in a time of ease and prosperity. Thus the child of God understands that the whole of life is important, that he can be tested in both difficulty and ease.
I. Introduction

This evening, we will examine the next chapter in the life of Hezekiah, that of his son. In some sense, it is incorrect to state that this is a chapter in the life of Hezekiah, in that we do not see the character of Manasseh until after the death of Hezekiah. But both of these individuals did interact. Manasseh was raised by this most godly king, and was trained under the instruction of the servants of Hezekiah. The acquaintances that Hezekiah had, Manasseh also had. Thus we should consider Manasseh the closing chapter of the life of Hezekiah.

As we noted in our last lesson, for the past year, we have been studying the life of Hezekiah. In December of 2005 we began studying the life of Hezekiah, King of Judah. We have examined Hezekiah’s ascent to the throne, his rule as a godly king and his restoration of the temple worship and the sacrifices required under the law. We have seen him and the people of Judah endure the siege of Jerusalem. And we have seen Hezekiah in illness and prosperity. And finally, in our last lesson, we examined the sin of Hezekiah, his pride. Overall, however, Hezekiah was a godly king who sought to please the LORD at all times. Scripture itself bears witness that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah.

These, then, were our previous lessons over the course of this last year.

This evening, as mentioned above, we shall examine, in brief form, the life of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah. In one sense, Manasseh is an enigma, in that he was such a wicked king, who was the son of such a godly king. But yet, we can learn, not only about the life of Hezekiah, but also greater lessons concerning how the LORD does deal with such as Manasseh.

And thus, we shall begin.

II. Exposition of the Text

This evening, we will be examining two passages in the course of our study. They are II Kings 21 and II Chronicles 33. Both of these passages present us with the life of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah. And unlike our habit of examining a passage in an exegetical fashion, verse by verse, this evening we will be looking at the life of Manasseh in a more brief fashion, gleaning basic lessons from the two passages before us.

1 ¶ Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Hephzibah.
2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.
3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.
5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD,
to provoke him to anger.
7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:
8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.
9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.
10 ¶ And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,
11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:
12 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.
13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.
14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;
15 Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.
16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.
17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?
18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.
19 ¶ Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.
20 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did.
21 And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:
22 And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD.
23 And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house.
24 And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.
25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?
26 And he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

--II Kings 21.1-26

1 ¶ Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem:
2 But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.
3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.
5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.
7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

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8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.
9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.
10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.
11 ¶ Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.
12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,
13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.
14 Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.
15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.
16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.
17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.
18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.
19 His prayer also, and how God was intreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.
20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.
21 ¶ Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.
22 But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;
23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.
24 And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.
25 But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

--II Chron. 33.1-25

From these narratives much could be gleaned concerning the life of Manasseh. However, I wish this evening to look briefly at these narratives and to make some observations from the texts at hand.

Both of these narratives are similar in nature. Both portray for us the grievous sin of Manasseh. He appears to be as zealous in his devotion to the false gods as his father Hezekiah was to the God of Judah. We see Manasseh spending countless amounts of money in the building of numerous altars and places of worship to these false gods. Further, he seems to be one of their strongest advocates, in promoting false worship. It appears from the text that any and all worship was promoted, except for the true worship of God (and that is a lesson in and of itself).

Further, he was not only promoting these false gods, but was promoting other false practices--spiritists, mediums and the like. And lastly, he was actually promoting child sacrifices--of his own children.

II Kings also states that he was involved with the “shedding of innocent blood”. As such, he was involved with murder. We are not told over what these were killed. And in one sense it matters not. Manasseh was a murderer.
Both of these passages record for us the fact that God did send messengers to Manasseh and warn him of his sin. He may have even known the prophets that came to him, from their dealings with his father. In fact, tradition has it that Manasseh killed the prophet Isaiah, by sawing him in two (cf. Heb. 11:37).

II Chronicles does record for us the imprisonment of Manasseh and of his repentance. It also records for us some of the deeds of repentance in his trying to undo his work of the years prior.

And lastly, both narratives record for us the death of Manasseh, and his burial in the garden of Uzzah. Both records also record for us the short reign of his son, Amon, his murder at the hands of his servants, and the ascension of Josiah the grandson of Manasseh and great-grandson of Hezekiah to the throne.

This, then, is the life of Manasseh.

III. Observations

In closing, I would like to examine some of the lessons that we can learn from this son of Hezekiah.

1. The LORD may not immediately remove godless leadership
   This is the case with Manasseh. He rules for 55 years. And it seems, for most of that time, that he ruled in a godless manner. For weeks, for months, for years, even decades Manasseh ruled, building altars to the ba’als, to the asherim, to the host of heaven. He even burnt some of his children in the fire. And yet the LORD did not see fit to quickly remove this man from his reign. The LORD may not remove the godless in a time frame that would please us.

2. Depravity is more powerful than external godly influences
   One powerful lesson from the life of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, is that godly influences are not enough without regeneration. Mankind is depraved. Mankind is totally or thoroughly depraved. That is, sin has affected mankind in each and every facet of his existence. He may not be as bad as he could be, but he is wicked in each and every area of his life. There is no corner that has not been affected by sin. And this can be seen in the life of Manasseh.

   Further, Manasseh had some of the godliest of influences that have ever existed in his life. His father was a very godly and righteous king. Hezekiah undoubtedly had godly counsellors and righteous men in key areas of his kingdom. Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea, all prophets of God, had the ear of the king of Judah. And yet, none of these godly influences "rubbed off" onto Manasseh. It seemed as if from the start, Manasseh was bent on restoring the sins of his grandfather Ahaz in the land. Godly influence, as good and as important as it is in the lives of God’s children, cannot save, in an of itself.

3. A godly lineage counts for little
   This is another lesson that can be gleaned from the life of Manasseh, that is related to the last. Many seem to think that their lineage, either physical or spiritual, will count for something. But Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, should dispel any thoughts along these lines. Manasseh was in one of the most godliest of lines that this would had ever known. A son of Hezekiah, one of the godliest of kings ever to have lived. Descendant of Solomon, the wisest king that ever lived. Descendant of David, the man who had a heart after God's own heart. A descendant and a son of Abraham, the friend of God. Yet this man, Manasseh, was one of the ungodliest men that have ever lived. His parentage was of no value to him.

Many may think that this argument is purely a Jewish one, concerned with Jewish issues. Yet, the Reformed church today does have segments that have perpetuated a kind of mindset akin to that which was mentioned above. How so? Covenant children. Many within the Presbyterian community have the teaching or idea that their children are covenant children, baptised into the covenant
community and are partakers of this same covenant. Just as Manasseh’s parentage did not benefit him, so the parentage of the covenant child does not benefit him. Yes, the covenant child may be raised in a godly home, and spared many of the sins that afflict mankind. Yes, they are taught the ways and word of God. But unless God gives grace and repentance to each of these “covenant children” they too will die outside of Christ, having never been a participant of the eternal covenant with Christ. Their “covenant standing”, in and of itself, profits them nothing. In fact, it is only a means of further judgment for those who were so familiar with the things of God, and yet despised them, either secretly or openly.

4. **Even the most sinful may find favour in the eyes of the Lord.**

This is one of the most powerful lessons from the life of the son of Hezekiah. Manasseh, the son of one of the most righteous kings, was an evil and wicked man. He was a blatant idolater. Further, he was the catalyst for the sin of the people. Through Manasseh, the people were enabled and encouraged to sin. He was a murderer. II Kings 21.16 tells us that Manasseh shed much innocent blood. Countless individuals were killed under his reign. Even more, Manasseh sacrificed some of his offspring as human sacrifices. Yet, even in all this, we see that Manasseh found favour in the eyes of the Lord and was granted repentance and was converted by the Lord. Even the most sinful of men can be saved. No one is beyond the grace of God.

5. **There are earthly consequences to sin.**

Even though Manasseh found favour in the eyes of the Lord and he was repentance in his life, he still was not buried in the tombs of the kings. We do not know the exact time of the conversion of Manasseh within his 55 yr reign, but from all accounts it would seem to be fairly late in his life. Thus, we see that even though there was repentance in his life, and he was known for trying to undo some of the deeds of his earlier life, he was still known and characterised by the basic tenor of his life by the people of Judah—wickedness (note that II Kings does not even mention his repentance). Some sins will colour the whole of one’s life, even in spite of whatever good one may do in the end. And we find this truth in the life of Manasseh.
Hezekiah and the Prophets of the Lord

Jer. 26.12-19

I. Introduction

Last week, we concluded the narrative portion of our study concerning the life of Hezekiah, with a brief look at the son of Hezekiah--Manasseh. Manasseh became king at a young age, when he was 12 yrs old. And Manasseh ruled for a long time--55 yrs. Manasseh was a study in both similarities and contrasts when compared with his father. Hezekiah, as we have seen, was a godly king, possibly the godliest after David. Manasseh, the son of this godly king, was the most wicked king to reign over Judah. Manasseh worshiped at altars to Ba‘al, to Asherah, and to the host of heaven. Manasseh was an idolater. The text last week told us that Manasseh filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, that is, he was responsible for the deaths of innocent men. Thus, he was a murderer. And he sought the spiritists and mediums of the day.

Both men, however, were similar in at least one aspect--their zeal for their religion. Hezekiah was a godly king who sought to please the Lord at all times. Scripture itself bears witness that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah. And even though we only had one chapter that detailed the deeds of Manasseh, it is clear that Manasseh was zealous for his religion as well. Manasseh was zealous in promoting all kinds of religion--all kinds except for the worship of the Lord God of Israel. We noted from the text last week that Manasseh was in the process of building altars in the courts of the Lord and that there were altars on every corner of the city. Thus, it seems that Manasseh was very zealous in his devotion to these gods, even as his father was to the Lord.

From the life of Manasseh, we made the following observations:

---The Lord may not immediately remove godless leadership
---Depravity is more powerful than external godly influences
---A godly lineage counts for little
---Even the most sinful may find favour in the eyes of the Lord.
---There are earthly consequences to sin.

This evening, I would like to examine the relationship of Hezekiah and the prophets of the Lord. As we have seen in the course of our study, Hezekiah did have a relationship with the prophet Isaiah. Although not numerous, we do find mention of the name of Hezekiah in three other prophetic books--Hosea, Micah and Jeremiah. And thus, this evening, I want to examine these brief references and see what we can glean from these passages.

And thus, we shall begin.

II. Exposition of the Text

I would like to begin by examining the first verse of each of the prophecies of Hosea and Micah.

1 ¶ The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

---Hosea 1.1

1 ¶ The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and
Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

--Micah 1.1

From these passages we learn precious little concerning the life or the person of Hezekiah. And in reading the prophecies that these two prophets penned, one may have the impression that the bulk or majority of the admonitions that are mentioned in these pages have to do with ungodliness that was in the land, primarily in the time of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, for we know that as soon as Hezekiah became king, he began to restore the worship of the LORD and reform the worship of the land. In both of these prophecies there seems to be no direct reference as to what section(s) may or may not refer to the time of the reign of Hezekiah.

We also have the name of Hezekiah mentioned in a third location--in the book of Jeremiah. Unlike the prophets Hosea and Micah, Jeremiah never met Hezekiah. In fact, in the passage that mentions the name of King Hezekiah, it is not even Jeremiah that mentions the King's name:

8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.
9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.
10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house.
11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.
12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.
13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.
14 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.
15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.
16 ¶ Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.
17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,
18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.
19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

--Jer. 26.8-19

What we have here is Jeremiah being threatened with death because of his preaching the word of the LORD in the courtyard of the temple. Those that heard him speaking against the temple and Jerusalem wanted to put him to death. But we need to note the words of the elders of the people, in v. 17-18. Micah of Moresheth prophesied against the temple and the city of the LORD in the days of Hezekiah. But Hezekiah did not try to kill Micah. No. He feared the LORD and considered that Micah’s words were truthful. And he sought the LORD in this matter.

The elders here are using Hezekiah as an example of godly behaviour. And this was how Hezekiah was seen among the people of Israel and Judah. The elders were trying to show the priests and the prophets in the days of Jeremiah how a godly king responded to the words of the LORD and that the present king, Jehoiakim, was acting in a godless manner, when compared to Hezekiah.

One other item ought to be mentioned in connection to this incident mentioned in Jer. 26. The
encounter mentioned here in Jer. 26 is nowhere else mentioned in the word of God. It is not mentioned in the narrative sections of II Kings and II Chronicles. Nor is it mentioned in the prophecy of Micah. Even from reading Micah 3, we cannot readily see that this section is spoken of Hezekiah King of Judah. Yet we are told of this encounter here. And we are told that at least Micah 3.12 was spoken in relation to some unknown incident within the life of Hezekiah. It may be that Micah was prophesying against the pride of Hezekiah, which we have already studied. It may refer to some other sin. In any case, we can see from the words of Micah, that it appears that there was still sin within the land during the reign of Hezekiah. All one has to do is to read Micah 3 to see that there was still wickedness in the land, both in the population as a whole, and in some facet of the leadership of Judah in particular. And we can also see that these prophets, even in this time of relative spiritual bliss, were needed to call out against sin and rebellion among the people.

Summary

In sum, what can we learn of Hezekiah in the midst of these three brief passages (ie--Hos. 1.1; Mic. 1.1; Jer. 26.17-19)? In the first place, we can see that Hezekiah was most likely familiar with and had some type of relationship with each of these godly men of God. We know from the book of Isaiah that Hezekiah had dealings with Isaiah, and that Isaiah was able to meet with the king personally. This may have been the case with these other prophets as well. In any case, Hezekiah had opportunity to meet with and to seek godly counsel from these men of God.

Second, most likely during the reign of Hezekiah these men were able to minister unhindered and without fear of retribution, as did Jeremiah and Urijah (mentioned later in Jer. 26). Thus, the godly leadership of Hezekiah made opportunity for the word of the LORD to be proclaimed. Even though the word of God does not tell us much concerning Micah and Hosea, we can see that they had a vital part in the spiritual life of both King Hezekiah in particular and among the people in general.

And third, we can see that Hezekiah was known for his righteousness, even after his death. This can be seen in the elders’ use of Hezekiah as an example over against the present deeds of King Jehoiakim.

This, then is our lesson this evening.

III. Observations

1. The godly take the word of God seriously
This is one lesson that we can learn from the life and actions of Hezekiah. When Hezekiah heard the words of Micah, the elders here state that he feared the LORD and besought the LORD. Hezekiah took the words of the prophet seriously. And we know this through the actions displayed by the King. And Hezekiah is an example for us of how the godly deem the word of God. The godly man sees the promises and the threats of the word of God as one and the same--they are the words of the living God, not to be lightly considered. The godly knows that what God says, He does. And one does not put the LORD his God to the test. And in Hezekiah we see this quality, as displayed by these words.

2. The LORD has a witness in all ages
This, too, is a lesson that we can glean from these brief mentions of the name of Hezekiah. Whether it be in the days of wicked Ahaz, who was worshiping the Ba’alim and the Asheroth, or whether it be in the days of godly Hezekiah, who tried to undo all that his father had done. In either case, God has a witness. In those days, it was Isaiah, Micah and Hosea. Today, the LORD has his faithful servants as well. They may not be numerous, as in the days of Ahaz or Manasseh, but God does have his witnesses. Just as the LORD reminded Elijah of this very fact, today the LORD has his “seven thousand” that have not bowed the knee to Catholicism, or to Arminianism. The LORD will have His witnesses in all ages.

3. Even though there may be godly leadership, this does not ensure that the people are godly
Often times, we assume that since Hezekiah was king, the people were fully supportive of him and his
reforms and the restoration of true worship. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that both prior to his ascending to the throne and after his death, that there were people among the Israelites that worshiped the Baals and Asherah. In fact, it doesn’t seem to take very long for the people to go along with the change of religion brought about by Manasseh. And in both II Kings and II Chronicles, we have no record of opposition to Manasseh’s acts or deeds. Thus, this may indicate that the people, or at least a large portion of those among the people did not support the religion of Hezekiah, although they were wise enough not to voice their opposition openly. Again, all one has to do to see more of the spiritual condition of the day is to read Mic. 3, which was written and preached by Micah in the days of Hezekiah.

And today, even within the most Reformed congregation, there may be individuals that do not fully support either the ministry or the doctrines of the church. Only the LORD knows exactly why they are there. Possibly for judgment, or for testing, or for some other reason. In any case, even the godliest of churches may have less than godly members. Even our Lord spoke of wolves in sheep’s clothing. And thus, it may be today.

4. One may have a godly influence long after he is gone
This is another lesson of the lasting endurance of a godly life. By this point in the life of the people of Judah, Hezekiah had been dead for at least 84 yrs (55 yrs of the reign of Mannaseh and 29 yrs of the reign of Josiah). And yet, Hezekiah is being used by the godly of the day as an example of godly character.

Thus, we see that godly character can far outlive one’s life.
I. Introduction

For the past 12 months, we have been studying lessons from the life of Hezekiah. On December 4, 2005 we began this study with an introduction to the life of Hezekiah. This evening, God willing, we shall finish this study. Over the past year we have seen and examined many facets of the life of Hezekiah. This evening, we conclude by examining a little known aspect of the life of Hezekiah—that of his relationship to the Proverbs of Solomon.

The proverbs of Solomon are a collected work of various proverbs that were composed by Solomon, the son of David, the King of Israel. Solomon is recorded in the word of God to be the wisest man that has lived. And the source of this wisdom was the L ORD. The L ORD gave Solomon many things—great wisdom and honour and wealth. But it was for his wisdom that Solomon was known. Note the following passage from the book of I Kings:

29 ¶ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.
30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.
31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.
32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.
33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.
34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

--I Kings 4.29-34

And again:

1 ¶ And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.
2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.
3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.
4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,
5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.
6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.
7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.
8 Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.
9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and
As we can see from these two passages, Solomon was a great man. But he was especially known for his great wisdom.

This evening, I would like to examine the relationship of Hezekiah and the proverbs of Solomon. And thus, we shall begin.

II. Exposition of the Text

Please turn with me to the book of Proverbs. As stated in v. 1, the book of Proverbs are primarily a collection of the proverbs of King Solomon. And as one would browse through the pages of this book, one would note that it is filled with small pithy sayings. A proverb is a short saying with a profound meaning. Upon closer examination, one would find that there are in our present collection of proverbs at least four sub-collections. Please note the following:

--Chapters 1-9
--Chapters 10-24
--Chapters 25-29
--Chapters 30-31

The first three divisions of these proverbs seem to be representing possibly three separate collections or sources of the proverbs. For some reason, the one who compiled these proverbs noted in three separate places that what followed was a collection of the proverbs of King Solomon. And it is this third section with which we are concerned this evening. Please note v. 1 of chapter 25:

1 ¶ These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.  

--Prov. 25.1

Here we find the above words. And from these words I would like to note the following:

--First, that these proverbs were transcribed by the men of Hezekiah. This is where Hezekiah interacts with the proverbs of Solomon. Clearly, Hezekiah ordered that this work be done. It seems that there was some collection of the writings of Solomon that were not as of yet included in the word of God, or at least in the presently existing collection of Proverbs. Thus, it seems, that Hezekiah gave the order for men under his authority, scribes, to copy this collection of proverbs. The word copy does not give the full meaning of that which these men did. The word in the Hebrew has the idea of to move, or to move something from its place. Thus, the men of Hezekiah were moving the proverbs of Solomon that were in this collection from one location to another. They were transcribing the material to a new location--to the Proverbs of Solomon that had already been collected.

--Second, we need to note the small words "these also...". There is a statement here that what follows is also attributed to Solomon. We are not told as why such a statement is made. It may be because the previous collection did not have these words. Whatever the reason, they point to the adding of the additional proverbs by the men of Hezekiah.
Third, we need to note that this section of the proverbs is well known to the writers of the New Testament. As we will shortly see, many of these proverbs, that are found in chapters 25-29, are either quoted in the New Testament, or they are allusions to some of the phraseology or to the concept at hand by the writers of the New Testament.

It was through King Hezekiah that these proverbs were placed into the canon of the Old Testament and made available for the edification of future generations of children of God. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in Hezekiah these proverbs were made accessible to the writers of the New Testament. And it was through Hezekiah that we have these proverbs today.

In the remainder of the time that we have this evening, I would like to examine several of the proverbs from these five chapters and compare them with their New Testament usage.

**Jesus and the Proverbs**

*Prov. 25.6-7 and Luke 14.7-11*

6 ¶ Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: 7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

—Prov. 25.6-7

7 ¶ And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

—Lk. 14.7-11

*Prov. 25.8-10 and Mt. 5.25*

8 ¶ Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. 9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: 10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

—Prov. 25.8-10

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

—Mt. 5.25

*Jude*

*Prov. 25.14 and Jude 12*
14 ¶ Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain. --Prov. 25.14

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; --Jude 12

*Paul*

Prov. 25.21-22 and Rom. 12.20-21

21 ¶ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee. --Prov. 25.21-22

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. --Rom. 12.18-21

*Peter*

Prov. 26.11 and II Pet. 2.22

11 ¶ As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. --Prov. 26.11

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. --II Pet. 2.22

*James*

Prov. 27.1 and Jas. 4.13-14

1 ¶ Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. --Prov. 27.1

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:
14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.
16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. --Jas. 4.13-16

*Jesus/John*

Prov. 29.27 and Jn. 15.18, 17.14; I Jn. 3.10-13
27 ¶ An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

--Prov. 29.27

18 ¶ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

--Jn. 15.18

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

--Jn. 17.14

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 ¶ For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

--I Jn. 3.10-13

III. Observations

1. One may never know the lasting work of the Holy Spirit through his life
Cf. Hezekiah and the inclusion of these proverbs in the book of Proverbs. Hezekiah probably never understood the lasting consequences of his actions in ordering those men to transcribe those proverbs into the word of God. For even today we benefit from his legacy and the work of the Holy Spirit through him.

2. All of the word of God is important.
This was a lesson that Hezekiah knew and understood. For not only did he obey the word of the LORD when he became king, not only did he restore the worship of the LORD in Judah, not only did he reinstitute the worship of God in the temple, he also saw to it that these words of Solomon's were added to the canon of the word of God. Hezekiah saw and knew that they were important. And thus he commanded his men to transcribe them into the Proverbs of Solomon.