

Hezekiah: The Challenge from Assyria

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

2 Kings 18:5, 6

Bible Marking

Hezekiah - 2 Kings 18

2 Kings 18:1 - "**Hezekiah**" - Means "strengthened of Yahweh". It was only through Yahweh's strength that the reformation was accomplished, that Hezekiah was healed, and that Assyria was defeated. So great was Hezekiah, that we are given 3 records of his life (Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah).

"**Ahaz**" - Means "possessor", ie. a selfish man, who was Judah's worst king

2 Kings 18:2 - "**Abi**" - The margin has - 'Abijah, 2 Chron 29:1'. "**Abijah**" means "Yah is Father". She appears to be the inspiration for Hezekiah to devote his life to the service of Yahweh. See Prov 22:6.

"**Zachariah**" - Means "Yahweh hath remembered" The three names Zachariah, Abijah and Hezekiah (Grandfather, mother, son) when put together make the following sentence: "Yahweh hath remembered for he is a Father and will provide strength".

2 Kings 18:3 - "**David his father**" - See 2 Chron 34:2 - similar said of Josiah. David and Yahweh (see meaning of Abijah) provided Hezekiah's strength, direction and education. Ahaz is ignored and excluded.

2 Kings 18:4 - First Step: Removal of Corrupting Influences - or Separation.

"**images**" - a column, an idol. Roth. - "pillars".

"**groves**" - Heb 'asherah' - was one of the pagan fertility gods. Such 'worship' strongly appeals to the baser instincts of the flesh and is never far removed from apostasy.

"**the brasen serpent**" - See Num. 21:8-9 (cp. Jn 3:14-15). The brazen serpent was a symbol of the flesh of Christ crucified. There is no reference here to the "pole" on which it was suspended as recorded in Numbers. Hence this is symbolic of the flesh uncrucified. This was truly Judah's spiritual state under Ahaz. The serpent of brass possessed no intrinsic power in itself, but Judah now worshipped it as an idol—not for its past connotations so much as its visible presence. The principle here is expressed by Paul who had "determined not to know anything....save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor.1:2).

A Reformation on Divine Principles

Mark above & below 2 Kg 18

Ahaz had given himself over to idolatry, following the examples of those who had left the truth (2 Chron 28:1-2), and of the world in general (2 Kg 16:3, 10-11). He therefore made Judah "naked" in the sight of Yahweh, and "transgressed sore against Yahweh" (2 Chron 28:19). Now Hezekiah brought about a reformation upon Divine principles. He turned the people back to Yahweh and His Word and to the Pioneers of the truth (David, Asaph and Gad and Nathan etc). He understood and lived the principle Proverbs 25:2 which literally reads: "It is the glory of Mighty Ones (Elohim) to conceal a word, but the glory of kings is to search out the Word". He had indeed searched out the Word before he was a king, so as soon as he came to the throne, he knew what was required to begin a reformation in the nation (2 Chron 29:3). He repaired and cleansed the Temple (2 Chron 29:3). Sanctified the priests and Levites, revived the ordinances of the Law (29:4-16) including the daily offerings (31:3), revived the feast of Passover (2 Chron 30), cleansed the land of idolatry (30:14; 31:1), re-established the Priests and Levites in their courses (31:2), and reinstated tithing, appointing officers to administer and distribute the tithes (31:5-19).

Using a green, colour the references to Hezekiah following the example of David, of the prophets and of the Word of God: **2 Kg 18:3** (according to all that David his father did), **6** (kept his commandments, which the LORD); **2 Chron 29:2** (according to all that David his father had done), **15** (by the words of the LORD), **25** (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), **27** (with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel), **30** (with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer); **30:12** (by the word of the LORD).

“Nehushtan” – i.e. something made of copper. Roth. in his margin says, “a bronze thing”. The idea being that it was powerless to save, just like the flesh it symbolised.

2 Kings 18:5-6 - Second Step: Dedication to Yahweh.

2 Kings 18:5 - “**trusted**” - Means “to make haste for refuge”, hence to trust. This is highlighted as being the outstanding quality of Hezekiah’s character. See Psa 125:1. Colour this word in yellow (2 Kg 18:5,19,20,21(2x),22,24,30; 19:10; 2 Chron 32:10).

“**among all the kings of Judah**” - i.e. from Rehoboam down. Compare Josiah who was similarly unique, but in the way he turned to Yahweh with his whole heart (2 Kings 23:25). Hezekiah had no peer when it came to implicit child-like faith in God.

2 Kings 18:6 - “**clave**”- Means “to impinge”, i.e. cling or adhere, bond irreversibly. RSV has, “held fast”. Used of marriage in Gen 2:24.

Colouring Exercise:

Highlight with a Blue Border the divine assessments of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:3-6; and 2 Chronicles 29:2; 31:20-21.

Bible Marking

Judah’s Response to the Assyrian Invasion - Isaiah 22

Isaiah 22 - An Indictment on the People Because of Faithlessness in the Face of Invasion

vv1-3 - Consternation at the Advance of Sennacherib (cp 2 Kg 18:13; 2 Chron 32).

Isaiah 22:1 - “**the valley of vision**” - ie. Jerusalem - though elevated it is overshadowed by other mountains, and is encompassed by valleys. Jerusalem means “Vision of Peace”, yet it’s people had no vision of such. see Prov 29:18. “**What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?**” - Housetops were to be for prayer and mediation (Acts 10:9), instead they had become places where the people’s anxiety was expressed in varying ways (See Lk 18:1-8).

Isaiah 22:2 - A confusion - On one hand - enjoyment to excess aimed at drowning out any thoughts of the enemy just outside the wall. On the other hand - men’s hearts failing them for fear.

“**stirs**” - from root = devastation or ruin.

“**tumultuous**” - a strong word emphasising unrest, commotion, strong feeling or noise.

“**joyous**” - an emotion of joy which finds expression in singing and shouting

Isaiah 22:3 - “**All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together**” - Jerusalem Bible has: “Your rulers have all fled away and been captured before bending their bows. The bravest among you have been taken prisoner...”

“**which have fled from far.**” - NIV has: “having fled while the enemy was still far away”. See John 10:11-13.

vv4-8 - Isaiah’s Distress.

Isaiah 22:8 - “**thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest**” - The ‘house of the forest’ = the royal building of Solomon (1Kg 7:2). Had 500 gold shields (1Kg 10:17) - 300 large and 200 small. Being shields of gold they represented the shield of faith, they were meant to remind Israel to put their trust in Yahweh. In 1 Kg 14:26-28 Rehoboam was forced to replace them with shields. The shields of faith became shields of flesh. This is the core of Israel’s problem - they were relying on a fleshly defence.

vv9-11 - Preparations for Defence (Works without faith). While some enjoyed life (v2), others did what they could to improve the cities defences, but the spiritual walls were not built up.

Vv12-14 - Spiritual Apostasy of the People.

Isaiah 22:13 - “let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die” - see margin (1 Cor 15:32) - Quoted by Paul to show the attitude of those who do not believe in the resurrection.

vv15-25 - The Parable of Shebna and Eliakim

Isa 22:15 - “**Shebna which is over the house**” - His name sig “To lead captive”. He represents Israel resting in the flesh. He was deposed in favour of Eliakim (see Isa 37:2,2 Kg 18:18,26,37 - where Eliakim has his title, and Shebna is but a scribe).

“**hewed him out a sepulture on high**” - He boasted that he would never leave Jerusalem, and his descendants would see his glory for years to come - cp v18-19.

Isaiah 22:20 - “**Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah**” - Eliakim means - “Ail will Set Up”. Hilkiyah mean - “Yahweh is a Protection”. He was of the class that trusted in Yahweh, like Hezekiah (see 2 Kg 18:5)

“**my servant**” - ie. Served Yahweh even in a time of crisis.