

Church of God Sunday School

HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 17:1 – 20:21; 2 Chronicles 29:1 – 32:33; Isaiah 36:1 – 39:8

The people of Israel continued to worship idols. Many worshiped the two golden calves that were set up by Jeroboam in Dan and Bethel. Others worshiped the idol Baal. Finally, God became so angry that He "removed [Israel] out of his sight." He allowed the king of Assyria (one of Israel's enemies) to come and take many of the people of Samaria away to another country. They would never be able to return. The last king of Israel was Hoshea (*hoh-SHEE-uh*).

When God "rejected all the seed of Israel," He left only the tribe (or kingdom) of Judah. Hezekiah was the king of Judah. Hezekiah "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD."

Before Hezekiah became king, the temple in Jerusalem had been shut up, for the people had turned their backs on the true God. Hezekiah opened the temple and called for the Levites to come and cleanse the temple. The Levites did just that! When everything was finished, Hezekiah and the rulers of the city "went up to the house of the LORD" to worship the Lord. The people of the city also came and brought sacrifices. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced!

Hezekiah then sent letters to all of Israel and Judah, inviting them to come to Jerusalem and keep the Feast of the Passover, which had not been kept for a long time. Many people laughed and mocked at this invitation. But in Judah the people had a desire "to do the commandment of the king."

Many people came and kept the Feast of the Passover "with great gladness." There had not been such joy in Jerusalem "since the time of Solomon." After the feast, Hezekiah and the people "went out to the cities of Judah." There they destroyed the idols and tore down the groves, the high places, and the altars to the false gods "until they had utterly destroyed them all." Hezekiah also destroyed the serpent of brass that Moses had made, for it had become an idol as well.

During the years before Hezekiah was king, Judah had come under the power of the king of Assyria. The people had to pay large sums of money to this king. This was called "tribute." Hezekiah refused to pay this anymore. The king of Assyria was not pleased that the tribute money had stopped. Hezekiah strengthened the walls of Jerusalem and the army, for he knew that the Assyrian armies were coming.

As the Assyrian army marched toward Jerusalem, Hezekiah realized that he could not win the fight, for his army was very small. He sent word to the king of Assyria that he would pay. But the king of Assyria demanded even more money than before ("three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold"). "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."

However, the king of Assyria sent King Hezekiah a message, saying that he was going to destroy Jerusalem and take the people and Hezekiah away, just as he had done to Israel. When Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. Then he went into the "house of the LORD."

Hezekiah sent messengers to the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah told them to tell Hezekiah to not be afraid. He said that the king of Assyria would hear a rumor and return to his own land where he would be killed with a sword. Then Hezekiah received a letter from the king of Assyria. He took this letter to the temple and "spread it before the Lord," praying to God for help.

God heard Hezekiah's prayer. He sent word to Hezekiah through the Prophet Isaiah that the king of Assyria would "not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield." God was going to defend the city of Jerusalem!

That very night, the angel of the Lord visited the camp of the Assyrians. When the camp woke up in the



morning, they found 185,000 of their men dead. The king and his army quickly returned to their own land. There, while worshiping his false god, the king of Assyria was killed. His two sons "smote him with the sword." The word of the Lord came true!

Hezekiah had been king for about fourteen years, when he became very sick. God sent the Prophet Isaiah to tell the king, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed earnestly to God. He reminded God how he had lived righteously. "And Hezekiah wept sore."

God heard Hezekiah's prayer. Before Isaiah had left the middle court of the king's palace, God told him to go back and tell Hezekiah, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." God promised that Hezekiah would live for fifteen more years.

Hezekiah asked Isaiah what the sign of his recovery would be, and Isaiah gave him a choice: "Shall the sundial go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?" (A sundial is used to tell what the time is by the position of a shadow cast by the sun. For the shadow to go back "ten degrees" would mean that time actually went backwards.)

Hezekiah said that it would be easy for the shadow to go ahead. So, he asked that it might go backward. Isaiah prayed, and the shadow moved backward ten degrees! Hezekiah promised to walk "softly" (humbly)

all of his remaining years (Isaiah 38:15). But he soon forgot this promise and became proud.

The king of Babylon had heard of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. He sent ambassadors to King Hezekiah with letters and a present. He also wanted to know about the miracle of the sundial. During their visit, Hezekiah showed the ambassadors all the riches of his house: silver, gold, spices, precious ointment, armor, and treasures. "There was nothing in his house . . . that Hezekiah showed them not."

It was very unwise of Hezekiah to do this. When the Prophet Isaiah came and questioned Hezekiah about the ambassadors, Hezekiah replied that he had showed them "All the things that are in mine house." Because of his pride, God said that all of Hezekiah's treasures and even some of his sons would be carried off to Babylon.

Then "Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride in his heart." Because of this, God's punishment did not come until after Hezekiah died.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"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."  
—2 Chronicles 32:24*

**Circle everything  
that Hezekiah  
destroyed**

PALACE CITY HIGHPLACES TEMPLE  
 GROVES SERPENT OF BRASS  
 ALTARS IDOLS