

Bible Stories

HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 18:5-8

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Like Israel, Judah had 20 rulers: 19 kings and 1 queen. 12 were unfaithful - 3 had mixed results – only 5 did right.

We begin today with the death of Ahaziah at the hand of Jehu. Upon his death, his mother, Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, declared herself queen of Judah then proceeded to kill all the royal family remaining in Judah – only one of Ahaziah's sons, Joash, escaped.

Athaliah (q) – reigned 6 years (841-835) = **EVIL**

When Joash was 7 years old, he was declared king and Athaliah was put to death.

Joash (Jehoash) – reigned 40 years (835-796) = **RIGHT/EVIL**

He did right in the eyes of the Lord as long as Jehoiada, the priest, was alive.

His servants conspired to kill him. His son, Amaziah became king.

Amaziah – reigned 29 years (796-767) = **RIGHT/EVIL**

He did right in the eyes of the Lord, but not with his whole heart.

His was murdered at Lachish by his own men and the people made his son, Uzziah, king.

Azariah (Uzziah) – reigned 52 years (792-740) = **RIGHT/EVIL**

He did right in the eyes of the Lord as long as Zechariah, the priest, was alive.

.... *"when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to Yahweh his God, for he entered the temple of Yahweh to burn incense on the altar of incense"* – 2 Chronicles 26:16.

He was struck with leprosy and quarantined for the rest of his life. His son, Jotham, became co-regent at that time.

It was during Uzziah's reign that the prophet Isaiah began his ministry.

Jotham – reigned 16 years (750-732) = **RIGHT**

He was successful and powerful **BECAUSE** he was faithful to God.

Ahaz – reigned 16 years (735-716) = **EVIL**

- He made molten idols.
- He burned incense in the Valley of Hinnom, in the high places and under every tree.
- He sacrificed his own sons in the fire to Molech.

2 Chronicles 28:20-24 - Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. ²¹ Ahaz took some of the things from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace and from the princes and presented them to the king of Assyria, but that did not help him. ²² In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. ²³ He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me." But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel. ²⁴ Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and took them away. He shut the doors of the LORD's temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem.

Which brings us to Hezekiah

Hezekiah – Reigned 29 years (716-687 BC) = **RIGHT**

- **2 Kings 18:5-8** - Hezekiah **trusted** in Yahweh, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He **held fast** to Yahweh and **did not cease** to follow him; he **kept the commands** Yahweh had given Moses. And Yahweh was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory.

In the 1st year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the Temple and invited the whole nation – including Israel – to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Israel's response was lukewarm at best, but the people of Judah responded positively.

- **2 Chronicles 30:26** - There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

Religious zeal spread like wildfire. The high places, altars and pillars were destroyed – including the bronze serpent Moses had made. The Asherim in Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh were cut down.

- **2 Chronicles 31:20-21** - This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before Yahweh his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so, he prospered.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah – also see Isaiah 36-37.

Hezekiah prepared for war and went before the people:

- **2 Chronicles 32:7-8** - Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is *only* an arm of flesh, but with us is Yahweh our God to help us and to fight our battles. And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

While Sennacherib laid siege to Lachish, he sent his **Rabshakeh** (chief of princes) to Jerusalem. As the people gathered along the wall, the Rabshakeh began to speak to them in their own language – He did this in order to frighten and terrify them:

- **2 Chronicles 32:10, 13-15** - This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence.... Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my fathers destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!

But the people were silent and answered him not a word....

Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah and Isaiah responded, *"This is what Yahweh says, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."* – 2 Kings 19:5-7

Sennacherib heard a rumor that the King of Cush was coming out against him, so while he went to deal with the situation, he sent his Rabshakeh back to Jerusalem with another message:

- **2 Kings 19:10-13** - Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, 'Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? Did the gods of those nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them, *even* Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who *were* in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?

Hezekiah took the letter and spread it out before Yahweh and prayed:

- **2 Kings 19:15-19** - O Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Yahweh, and hear; open Your eyes, O Yahweh, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, O Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So, they have destroyed them. And now, O Yahweh our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O Yahweh, are God.

Isiah sent a message to Hezekiah:

- **2 Kings 19:20-34** - ³² This is what Yahweh says concerning the king of Assyria, 'He shall not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; neither shall he come before it with a shield, nor throw up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come to this city. For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'

That night Yahweh's angel struck down 185,000 men in the camp of the Assyrians. Sennacherib went back to Nineveh.

One day, while worshiping his god, Nisroch, 2 of his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, killed him. His son, Esarhaddon, became king.

So, Yahweh saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side – 2 Chronicles 32:22.

Hezekiah's illness – also see Isaiah 38-39.

During this time, Hezekiah became ill – he was near death.

Isaiah dropped over, *“The Lord says that you need to put your house in order because you are going to die.”*

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly: *“Remember O Lord that I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart and I've done what was good in Your sight.”*

After delivering his message, Isaiah was headed home when a word came from the Lord, *“Go back to Hezekiah and tell him that I have heard his prayer and seen his tears. I will heal him and in 3 days he will go up to the temple of Yahweh. I will add fifteen years to his life and I will deliver him and Jerusalem from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.”* - 2 Kings 20:5-6

Isaiah knocked on Hezekiah's door, *“Good news! Yahweh says you will be healed and live 15 more years. YAY!”*

Hezekiah: *I want a sign.*

Isaiah: *Okay..... should the shadow on the sundial move forward 10 degrees or backward 10 degrees?*

Hezekiah: *Backward.*

The shadow moved backward 10 degrees and Hezekiah was healed.

Baladan, king of Babylon heard about Hezekiah's illness and miraculous recovery. He sent his son, and other representatives, with a get-well card and gifts. What a perfect opportunity to acknowledge and praise the God of heaven before these men..... But, instead of giving glory to God, he showed them all the wealth of Judah. He showed them his treasury – the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil and where he stored his armor – he showed them everything. There was nothing that Hezekiah did not show them..... The Babylonians took notes.

Isaiah dropped over, *“What did these men say and where did they come from?”*

Hezekiah: *They came from Babylon.*

Isaiah: *What did you show them?*

Hezekiah: *Everything.*

Isaiah: *Bad move. This is what Yahweh says, 'The days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up shall be carried to Babylon - nothing will be left – and your sons will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'*

Hezekiah: *God is good. At least this won't happen while I'm alive.*

Hezekiah slept with his ancestors, and his 12-year-old son, Manasseh, became king.

What do we do with this story?

Hezekiah was an interesting fellow.

On one hand He was zealous for God and his revivals turned the people – to some degree – back to the worship of God. He was faithful. He was obedient. He held fast to his God. He trusted God and encouraged the people to trust God as well - when Assyria threatened, He brought his concerns before God and trusted that He would deal with the situation.

On the other hand, when given the opportunity to witness before the Babylonian representatives and bring glory to God, he chose instead, to exalt and bring glory himself. Hezekiah repented and was forgiven, but the damage had already been done.

That one choice had far-reaching consequences. 125 years later Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.