

HEZEKIAH

“Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, 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 the Lord and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses. And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook.” (2 Kings 18:5-7)

Obviously we can learn something from Hezekiah!

HEZEKIAH’S REIGN

“In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan) (2 Kings 18:1 – 4)

- Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for 29 years. (Approximately 726 – 697 B.C.)
- His “father” David had been dead for 300 years. His immediate father, as the text indicates, was Ahaz. Ahaz was an ungodly king who began to reign when he was 20. Note: **“Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.” (2 Kings 16:2 – 4).**
- Symbolic of the idolatry rampant under Ahaz was that they even turned the bronze snake of Moses into an idol (2 Kings 18:4).
- Even more egregious was the replica of a pagan altar which he placed in the temple to please the king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:10 – 18).
- Even more egregious was that Ahaz followed the pagan practice of child sacrifice.
- The prophet Isaiah stood firm against such ungodliness and idolatry. It was to this wicked king Ahaz that he made his famous prophecy about the virgin birth of Jesus (Is. 7:14).

HEZEKIAH’S REFORM

Hezekiah’s reform is given in great detail in 2 Chronicles 29. Throughout this brief article only some verses have been selected for the sake of brevity. This in no way indicates that the other verses are not important. May these selected verses whet your appetite to read the whole narrative.

“In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: “Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the

sanctuary. Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling place and turned their backs on him." (2 Chron. 29:3 – 6)

"Now I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense." (2 Chron. 29:10, 11)

"When they had assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the temple of the Lord, as the king had ordered, following the word of the Lord. The priests went into the sanctuary of the Lord to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the Lord. The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley. They began the consecration on the first day of the first month, and by the eighth day of the month they reached the portico of the Lord. For eight more days they consecrated the temple of the Lord itself, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month." (2 Chron. 29:15 – 17).

"Then they went in to King Hezekiah and reported: "We have purified the entire temple of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table for setting out the consecrated bread, with all its articles. We have prepared and consecrated all the articles that King Ahaz removed in his unfaithfulness while he was king. They are now in front of the Lord's altar." (2 Chron. 29:18, 19)

"Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials together and went up to the temple of the Lord. They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary and for Judah. The king commanded the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to offer these on the altar of the Lord." (2 Chron. 29:20, 21)

"Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the Lord began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played and the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed. (2 Chron. 29:27, 28)

"Then Hezekiah said, "You have now dedicated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord." So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings." (2 Chron. 29:31)

"The priests, however, were too few to skin all the burnt offerings; so their relatives the Levites helped them until the task was finished and until other priests had been consecrated, for the Levites had been more conscientious in consecrating themselves than the priests had been. There were burnt offerings in abundance, together with the fat of the fellowship offerings and the drink offerings that accompanied the burnt offerings." (2 Chron. 29:34)

“So the service of the temple of the Lord was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.” (2 Chron. 29:35, 36)

HEZEKIAH’S PASSOVER

Hezekiah observed the Passover in a manner so great that it had not been done that way since the days of King Solomon (2 Chron. 30:26). Yet we are told that they **“ate the Passover contrary to what was written” (2 Chron. 30:18)**. Remarkably, no one was punished for this. In explaining why, the Scriptures note: **“But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God—the Lord, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.” And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.” (2 Chron. 30:18 – 20)**.

On other occasions, as you know, God punished those who disregarded His commandments.

- Nadab and Abihu died for offering unauthorized fire which the Lord had not commanded (Lev. 10:1 – 11).
- Uzzah died for daring to touch the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:6, 7).
- Uzziah was punished with leprosy for daring to disobey God and burn incense (2 Chron. 26:16 – 21).
- Etc.

In the case of Hezekiah, however, he did that which was “contrary to what was written” and God accepted it.

In seeking to understand why God pardoned the people for eating the Passover “contrary to what was written, let us listen to Jesus. When Jesus was criticized for plucking heads of grain and eating them on the Sabbath He challenged His critics by saying: **“Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matt. 12:3 – 8)**.

Without going into detail let us review the three things mentioned by Jesus.

- David entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread which was not lawful for them to do. David and his men were not punished for doing this.
- The priests on the Sabbath “desecrate the Sabbath” and yet are innocent.
- If they had understood the words “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” they would not have condemned the innocent.

Remember! Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). It is possible to do the right thing outwardly, but still be condemned if our heart is corrupt (Is. 66:3). Perhaps the last example given by Jesus about mercy and sacrifice will open our minds to the thoughts

of God. God wants both “mercy” and “sacrifice” but mercy takes priority. All truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important. There is no doubt that mercy is more important to God than sacrifice. Jesus quoted this same verse when He was criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:13).

This quotation, as you know, is found in Hosea 6:6. Against all human wisdom Hosea was commanded by God to “take an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness” (Hos. 1:2). This is shocking for God specifically forbade a priest to marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a prostitute (Lev. 21:13). Hosea, however, was to illustrate to the world what God would Himself do for His adulterous nation.

The focus of “sacrifice” is inward. The man making a sacrifice is concerned about his own salvation. The focus of “mercy” is outward. The man showing mercy is concerned about others more than himself. Jesus gave mercy. He was more concerned about us than He was Himself. He even went so far as to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). It is, no doubt, to emphasize the importance of mercy that Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25 – 37). The priest and the Levite didn’t help the man who fell among thieves because they were focusing on “sacrifice”. The Good Samaritan did help the stranger because he was focused on “mercy”.

Perhaps this truth about mercy and sacrifice will help us understand Hezekiah’s Passover! God is not like a policeman anxiously waiting for us to commit some crime so He can condemn us. He is a loving husband Who is willing to die for his wife. The true nature of God should be clear from the ministry of Jesus. Remember! Jesus is the “Word” of God (Jn. 1:1). Jesus explains to us what God is like (Jn. 1:18). In fact, in Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a body (Col. 2:9). Jesus helps us to understand that God is love. Note: **“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” (1 Jn. 3:16)**

Here are a few things about Hezekiah’s Passover to consider.

- The Passover was supposed to be observed in the first month (Lev. 23:5). Hezekiah, however, observed the Passover in the second month (2 Chron. 30:2). If a man was unclean on the first month, he was permitted to eat the Passover on the second month. If a man was clean, however, and failed to eat the Passover at the appointed time, he was to be cut off from his people (Nu. 9:9 – 14).
- Hezekiah invited “all Israel and Judah” to the Passover even though the nation had been divided for over 200 years. (2 Chron. 30:1). Some from the Northern Kingdom scorned and ridiculed the invitation but others from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:10, 11).
- Since many in the crowd had not consecrated themselves the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for them (2 Chron. 30:17).
- **“Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written.” (2 Chron. 30:18).**
- **“But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone ¹⁹who sets their heart on seeking God—the Lord, the God of their ancestors—**

even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.” And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.” (2 Chron. 30:18– 20).

- Then they did something else that was unprecedented. The Passover was to last 7 days, but they decided to extend the festival and observe the Passover for another 7 days. **“The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully.” (2 Chron. 30:23)**
- **“ Hezekiah king of Judah provided a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly, and the officials provided them with a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. A great number of priests consecrated themselves. The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the foreigners who had come from Israel and also those who resided in Judah. 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. The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.” (2 Chron. 30:24 – 27).**
- Hezekiah did not disrespect the laws of God: **“This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord 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” (2 Chron. 31:21).**

HEZEKIAH’S DELIVERANCE

“In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: “I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me.” The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria.” (2 Ki. 18:13 - 16)

We have already established that Hezekiah was a good man seeking to do the will of God. Now he faced the biggest crisis of his reign. The King of Assyria had already “attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them”. Hezekiah had bankrupted the nation in an effort to save Jerusalem. The King of Assyria, however, was still determined to capture Jerusalem.

- He sent a large army and surrounded Jerusalem (2 Ki. 18:17).
- Hezekiah’s troops were so few that the arrogant Assyrians offered to give him 2,000 horses if he could put soldiers on them to make the battle interesting. (2 Ki. 18:23).
- If Hezekiah did not surrender, he promised them that the men of Jerusalem would be eating their own filth and drinking their own urine (2 Ki. 18:27).
- The Assyrians even sent a letter to Hezekiah reminding him that no gods had delivered anyone from their power and explicitly warning him not to trust in Jehovah (2 Ki. 19:9 – 13).

- Hezekiah took this letter to the temple and spread it out before the Lord. Here is his prayer: **“Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God. “It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God.” (2 Ki. 19:15 – 19).**
- The prophet Isaiah encouraged Hezekiah with these words: **“Tell your master, ‘This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! When he hears a certain report, I will make him want to return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.’” (2 Ki. 19:6, 7)**
- Isaiah further predicted: **“Therefore this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the Lord. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.’” (2 Ki. 19:32 – 34).**
- Then we are told: **“That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.” (2 Ki. 19:35, 36)**
- The chapter closes with the fulfillment of another prediction made by Isaiah that God would have the king of Assyria cut down with the sword in his own country. **“One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.” (2 Ki. 19:37).**

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

It was a common practice for the people of God to memorialize great events by composing songs.

- The Song of Moses was composed after their deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15).
- The women sang a commemorating David’s victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 18:7).
- David’s sang a lament upon the death of Abner (2 Sam. 3:33, 34).

- David also sang a song after his deliverance from Saul (2 Sam. 22:1 – 51)
- Etc.

While it cannot be proven, scholars believe the 46th Psalm was composed to commemorate the great deliverance of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. Note that the word “Selah” occurs three times in the psalm. While the precise meaning of the word is unknown it is thought to come from the Hebrew word “salal” which means to lift up. Here is the entire psalm for your convenience:

**1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.**

**2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,**

**3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging. *Selah***

**4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.**

**5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.**

**6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.**

**7 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

**8 Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.**

**9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields[d] with fire.**

**10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”**

**11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

HEZEKIAH’S HEALING

“In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” (Is. 38:1)

“Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, “Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” (Is. 38:2, 3)

“Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.’” (Is. 38:4, 5)

““This is the Lord’s sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.” So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down.” (Is. 38:7, 8).

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF HEZEKIAH

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

- God can use the story of Hezekiah to “teach” you.
- God can use this story to “rebuke” you.
- God can use this story to “train you in righteousness”.
- God can use this story to “equip you for every good work”.
- Through you may the message of the Lord spread rapidly and be honored (2 Thess. 3:1).

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