

November 5 – 2 Kings 18-21

Deliverance under Hezekiah, Further Decline under Manasseh and Amon

Large Group Teaching Review

The rise of Assyria is a threat not only to the northern kingdom of Israel but to Judah as well. The focus now turns south as King Hezekiah responds to the threat of attack from Assyria under Sennacherib. Judah is delivered from Assyria through Hezekiah's prayer and God's intervention (chs. 18–19), but Hezekiah's courtship of Babylon is an ominous portent (ch. 20). In chapter 21, the long reign of wicked Manasseh reverses the policies of his father, Hezekiah, and God's irreversible judgment on Judah is declared.

God fulfills his promises to his people and brings salvation as they cry out to him in prayer.

Isaiah's message to Hezekiah concerning the Assyrian king's downfall comes in three sections. First, he exposes and condemns Sennacherib's pride (vv. 21–28); second, he promises agricultural provision after the Assyrian withdrawal (vv. 29–31); third, he ensures the protection of Jerusalem from the Assyrian threat, grounded in God's commitment to the Davidic monarchy (vv. 32–34). What does Isaiah's prophecy reveal about God's character and his commitment to his people?

Gospel Glimpses

GOD'S COMMITMENT TO THE DAVIDIC MONARCHY. Several times during Hezekiah's reign, God's deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army is cast in terms of God's faithfulness to the Davidic monarchy. In 2 Kings 19:34 and 20:6, God declares through the prophet Isaiah that he will save Jerusalem "for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." These statements correspond to the hope articulated throughout 1–2 Kings that the Davidic monarchy would be preserved despite God's judgment on his people (1 Kings 11:13, 32–36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19). These statements situate God's salvation of Hezekiah and Jerusalem at this time in history within his larger purpose throughout all of redemptive history: to bring salvation to the entire world through the coming Davidic King, Jesus Christ.

Whole-Bible Connections

THE LORD ALONE IS GOD. When Hezekiah prays for deliverance from the Assyrian army, the stated purpose is not merely for Jerusalem's sake but so that "all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone" (2 Kings 19:19). This request echoes Solomon's request at the climax of his temple dedication prayer "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other" (1 Kings 8:60) and reflects the desire throughout the Bible for the true God to be seen in his unrivaled majesty and power, in contrast to false idols (see Deut. 6:4–5; John 17:3).

Small Groups

Opening Announcements

1. Get-to-know-you question: If you had a time machine, would you go to the past or the future?
2. Don't forget: winter retreat money/apps due 12TH

Prayer

In this passage, we are going to see God being mocked by the Assyrians. Spend time praising Him for who He is and what He has done.

Study Questions

Assyria Attacks Judah (ch. 18)

Hezekiah is described as a righteous king who does what is right in the eyes of the Lord, "according to all that David his father had done" (18:3). In what specific ways in 2 Kings 18:1–6 do you see Hezekiah surpassing even the other good kings of Judah in his obedience to the Lord?

What do you think the words of the Rabshakeh (vv. 19–35) are designed to make the Israelites feel? How does the Rabshakeh imply that trust in the Lord is as futile as trust in the gods of other nations?

The Lord Delivers Judah (ch. 19)

According to 2 Kings 19:1–8, how is God involved in the contest between Assyria and Judah? What attitude toward the God of Israel has been reflected in the words of the Rabshakeh?

When Hezekiah receives the threat from the king of Assyria, he goes to the temple to pray for deliverance (19:14–19). On what theological grounds does Hezekiah make his appeal to the Lord?

The Rest of Hezekiah's Rule (ch. 20)

What do you think is Hezekiah's motive for showing the Babylonian envoys all of his treasure (20:12–13)? What attitude is reflected in his response to Isaiah's prophecy in verses 16–19?

Further Decline under Manasseh and Amon (ch. 21)

In 21:1–9, the sins of Manasseh are recounted. Manasseh is the very worst of the Judean kings, and his 55-year reign leads Judah into greater sin than had been committed by the nations the people of Israel had driven out of the land in the first place. According to verses 7–8, what effect did his rule have on the temple?

In 21:10–15, God declares utter devastation upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin, promising to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. How do the images used in these verses emphasize the horrific nature of this judgment? What do you think it would feel like to receive this prophecy?

Whole-Bible Connections

GOD CANNOT BE MOCKED. Second Kings devotes considerable space throughout chapters 18–19 to describing the taunts of the Rabshakeh. Ultimately, these taunts toward the people of Judah are interpreted as mocking and reviling the Lord himself (2 Kings 19:4, 6, 16, 21–22, 28). Isaiah's oracle, equally lengthy in response, serves to turn these taunts back onto the Assyrians: "She despises you, she scorns you; . . . she wags her head behind you" (19:21). Throughout the Bible, those who mock and oppose God find themselves in return being mocked and opposed by God. As Hannah prays, "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven" (1 Sam. 2:10). As Psalm 2:1 asks, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"

Theological Soundings

IN WHOM DO YOU TRUST? Several times in his speech to the people of Judah, the Rabshakeh appeals to their ultimate sense of allegiance and trust: “On what do you rest this trust of yours? . . . In whom do you now trust?” (18:19–20). He declares that trusting the Lord is as futile as trusting Egypt (18:21–22) or the other pagan deities that have failed to stop the Assyrian conquest throughout the region (18:32–35; 19:11–13). Hezekiah’s prayer reflects his understanding, in contrast to these Assyrian appeals, that the God of Israel is the true and living God: “O Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth” (19:15). Because God alone is the true God, he is worthy of our complete trust and allegiance, even when everything is on the line.

Application

1. God is continually mocked throughout this passage by the Assyrians. How should we react when we hear people mock God? Are there ways in which you are living that could be seen as mocking God?
2. Rabshakeh asks the people of Judah, “In whom do you trust?” How would you answer that question? What does that look like for your life?