

2 Kings 18 – Thursday, May 12th, 2016

2 Kings 18:1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.

- This would have been a great text for a sermon on the importance of mothers, on the heels of having celebrated Mother's day.
- The reason is because of verse two where we're told Hezekiah's mother's name was Abi and she was Zechariah's daughter.
- In other words, Hezekiah, who was a good king, had a good and godly mother who had a good and godly influence in his life.

3 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

- This is interesting for a couple of reasons, one of which is that Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses had made.
- This is the same bronze serpent we learned about back when we were in our study through the book of Numbers chapter 21.
- It seems that this bronze serpent that Moses had made was preserved for about 800 years before Hezekiah finally destroys it.

- The question is why? Why would he break in pieces something representing God healing the children of Israel from serpents?
- The answer is found at the end of verse four where we're told that he called it Nehushtan because the Israelites worshipped it.
- In other words, they had made an idol out of it, such that, the children of Israel had turned it into an object of idolatrous worship.

- Lest we find ourselves being too hard on the Israelites for doing this, we would do well to consider how we're also prone to this.
- More specifically, that of our propensity in falling prey to the dangers of idolatry by making idols out of people places or things.
- Innate within us is this tendency to turn even the cross of Christ into idolatry, which is what the serpent on the pole symbolized.

Numbers 21:4–10 (NKJV) — 4 Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." 6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. 10 Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth.

THE SNAKE ON THE POLE	THE CHRIST ON THE CROSS
The serpent got Eve to look upon the tree.	Jesus would have us look upon a different tree.
Snakes paint for us a picture of sin.	Jesus died as payment for our sin.
Bronze is the metal of judgment.	Jesus took the judgment instead of us.
The bronze snake is put on the pole.	Jesus was judged for our sin, it put Him on the cross.
The snake was horizontal on a vertical pole.	Jesus a man (horizontal) restores us to God (vertical).
Seemed simply foolish to look at the pole.	Jesus dying on the cross looks foolish to most.
This was the only way to be healed.	Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.
It took faith in that hoped for, not yet seen.	Jesus is our faith, when we keep our eyes on Him.
It was fashioned into a symbol and an idol.	Jesus is made to be fashionable just a symbol.

- By the way, our modern day symbol for medicine actually comes from this passage describing healing from a snake on a pole.
- This because, the medical world sees it as a symbol of healing in the sense of the physical as it relates to illness and disease.
- It's also interesting to note that Jesus referred to this in the context of one of the most well known verses in the Bible John 3:16.

John 3:11–16 -- 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

- There's one more thing I would like to point out here before we move on and it has to do with it taking 800 years to remove this.
- The reason I point this out is because, up to this point, there was not even one king who had the spiritual spine to actually do it.
- For Hezekiah to do this would have required that he stand up to powerful people under the opposition to be politically correct.

Luke 6:26 (NIV) — 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Galatians 1:10 (NIV) — 10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Acts 5:29 (NIV) — 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!

John 12:42–43 (NIV) — 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

- While I'm careful about referring to the secret of success given that the world has sort of hijacked this term this is the case here.
- Clearly, Hezekiah's secret to success was due to trusting in the Lord, holding fast to the Lord and not departing from the Lord.
- As such, we're told in verse seven how that the Lord was always with him, and that the Lord prospered him wherever he went.

9 Now it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. 10 And at the end of three years they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11 Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them.

- I find it interesting that the narrative would turn such an abrupt corner of sorts and provides us with the account of Israel's fall.
- I would suggest we have this account for the purpose of showing us the stark contrast between obedience and disobedience.
- Namely, the contrast between the obedience of Hezekiah as king of Judah, and the disobedience of Hoshea, as king of Israel.

One commentator noted that, “From this time on, the Southern Kingdom would be known not only by the name ‘Judah’ but also by the ancient name ‘Israel.’ ”

13 And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. 14 Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.” And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

- I'm of the belief that was Hezekiah does here was wrong on every level as evidenced by the conspicuous absence of prayer.
- While this will prove to be a very costly mistake to Hezekiah's credit, he does learn a lesson from making this peace agreement.
- This is what I love about how the Lord transacts with us in the sense that He's always faithful in His grace and mercy toward us.

17 Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabсарis, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which was on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 18 And when they had called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. 19 Then the Rabshakeh said to them, “Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: “What confidence is this in which you trust? 20 You speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me?

- This is a textbook case of how a policy of appeasement never works when seeking to enter into a peace deal with the enemy.
- Notice we're told that the king of Assyria, even after taking all the silver and gold from Hezekiah, still comes against Jerusalem.
- Actually, the question that is asked of Hezekiah by the king of Assyria is a valid one that we would do well to ask of ourselves.

- The fact of the matter is Hezekiah had put his trust in his alliance with Egypt instead of putting his trust in God to deliver them.
- It's for this reason that Sennacherib asks this question of Hezekiah as it relates to whom it is that he has actually put his trust in.
- Truth be made known, this is exactly what the enemy does to us in that he often attacks us in this way to drive us to despair.

Of this one commentator wrote, “The Rabshakeh spoke the truth. God wanted Judah to have no confidence in Egypt at all. But the Rabshakeh did not do it to bring Judah to a firm trust in the LORD God, who can and will deliver them from the Assyrians. He did it to completely demoralize Judah and drive them to despair. Satan often attacks us the same way. Often, even when he tells the truth (“You are such a rotten sinner!”), he never does it to lead us to a firm trust in the LORD our God ...Instead, Satan's strategy—even if he tells us the truth—is always to demoralize us and drive us to despair.

21 Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. 22 But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?' ' 23 Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them! 24 How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? 25 Have I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.' " 26 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 27 But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?" 28 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! 29 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; 30 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." ' 31 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; 32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." 33 Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 35 Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?' " 36 But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." 37 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

- I'm hoping you'll indulge me for just a bit before we bring the study to a close, as there are several things we need to see here.
- First, this again is textbook when it comes to how the enemy attacks us, such that he uses threats and fears so we doubt God.
- Notice how repeatedly the Rabshakeh use this psychological warfare against Israel, even in Hebrew to get them to just give up.

- I believe that the enemy, like the Rabshakeh, will opt to use this type of psychological warfare against us instead of fighting us.
- It's important to understand that Sennacherib could have just attacked Israel instead of going about it this way to defeat them.
- So too is this true with Satan's strategy and devices against us. Instead of just attacking us he uses discouragement and doubt.

- The reason being is that often times Satan is more successful in taking us down using this method than he is any other method.
- The truth of the matter is, Satan is very intelligent, so much so that he knows were he to engage in the fight, he may not prevail.
- In other words, he would much rather we just give up and give in to despair because there's a much better chance he will win.

One commentator had some very interesting insight into this as it relates to what Satan tried to do with the Savior Himself. "We see this exact strategy used against Jesus during His temptation in the wilderness. When Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for Jesus' worship, Satan was trying to avoid the fight, and trying to talk Jesus into giving up. It didn't work with Jesus, and it shouldn't work with us."

- Notice also the way they go about trying to get them to give up first by stating that they were to hear the words of the great king.
- Then, to make matters worse they take it further in verse twenty-nine where they tell them, "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you."
- Then, if this weren't bad enough, they go on to say, "Nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord to deliver you from our hand."

- They even go as far as blaspheming God in verse 35 saying, who among all the gods is the Lord that He should deliver you.
- This as we'll soon see will be the final straw as it were, by virtue of the fact that God will have the final word on their accusation.
- Actually, when we get to chapter nineteen next week, we'll see how God does this, which is a great lesson on overcoming trials.