

## 2 Kings 18-20 • Chapter Study

As we come to our text tonight, the Northern Kingdom of Israel has been hauled off into captivity by Assyria.

That was a practice of the ancient Assyrians as a measure to secure their realm.

It takes a standing force to rule conquered people.

But the Assyrians were ambitious to conquer more territory and needed their army at full strength.

So they shifted defeated populations around, literally uprooting and transplanting them to new realms far from their homeland.

These displaced populations were then so busy settling in to their new lands, all their strength as needed just to survive.

They had nothing left with which to rebel.

So the Assyrians only had to leave a shadow presence there.

So the northern 10 tribes were transplanted far away, while other peoples were shifted into the territory Israel had occupied.

Now the scene shifts to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and we go back a bit to just before Assyria conquered the North.

Ch18

<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, *that* Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

Hezekiah's reign began 3 yrs prior to the Assyrian siege of Samaria.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> year, Israel fell. So these were desperate, difficult times.

<sup>2</sup> He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Abi the daughter of Zechariah. <sup>3</sup> And he did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.

With some of the good kings, it simply says they did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

With Hezekiah, it adds he did as his great & godly ancestor David had done.

These 2 shared the same dedication to God.

<sup>4</sup> 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 [**the bronze thing**].

Hezekiah did what no other king dared do; he prohibited the use of high places in worship.

You may remember I mentioned a cpl wks ago *only 1 king* removed the high places; **Josiah**, who comes later.

Yet here it says **Hezekiah** removed them.

He did, *some* of them. But not all. And the problem is, after he removed them, they were rebuilt.

So his policy regarding the high places wasn't consistent // All this becomes clear later.

There was another troubling matter Hezekiah attended to.

800 yrs before during the Exodus, the Israelites complained so loudly against God He sent poisonous serpents among them // Their bite was fatal after a time of lingering agony.

At God's direction, Moses made a bronze likeness of one of the serpents & lifted it on a wooden pole in the center of the camp.

All anyone who was bitten had to do to find relief was to look at the image.

It was a test to sort out the rebels who simply wouldn't look because they rejected God's provision.

It was all meant to be a picture of Christ Who was lifted up on the cross to die in our place.

Salvation comes from simply looking to & trusting in Him.

Jesus made reference to this in John 3:14

But by Hezekiah's time, the bronze serpent had become an object of veneration. People **worshipped** it.

Though a good thing at one time, it'd become a distraction, so Hezekiah got rid of it.

A gutsy move on his part because it was something the great Moses himself had made.

It was a treasured part of Israel's history.

But the danger it presented outweighed any benefit in keeping it.

This reminds us of the caution we need when it comes to investing **things** with spiritual power.

During the Middle Ages, the Church made the **veneration of relics** a major part of the Faith. Cathedrals & shrines were the goal of millions of pilgrimages as people travelled hundreds of miles just to be near the reliquary that held a body-part or piece of clothing of some saint.

Of course, most of these were bogus.

There were enough so-called pieces of the Cross to have made an entire house.

In modern times, there's been a controversy over the **Shroud of Turin**.

Could it be the burial cloth of Jesus? Maybe, maybe not.

The **real** question is; What **difference** does it make?

The moment it becomes anything other than a piece of ancient cloth, it's a distraction.

As Evangelicals, we don't truck with religious relics or icons.

But the danger of venerating some created thing is no less real.

What **we** tend to venerate are **people** used by God in a powerful way.

We give them a status beyond what's appropriate, rendering them an honor unfitting a mortal.

Then, if & when they mess up, our faith comes tumbling down with them.

It's good to honor the work of God in and through His servants.

But remember; they're human & prone to the same temptations as all.

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. <sup>7</sup> The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

Hezekiah took Judah out from under Assyrian domination. This was one gutsy move!

Assyria was THE BIG BOY BULLY on the block and not at all hesitant to throw its weight around.

Yet Hezekiah threw off the Assyrian yoke, knowing it was not of God.

He trusted that having done the right thing **politically**, God would take care of them **militarily & economically**. As indeed He did.

<sup>8</sup> He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

Judah's weakness during the previous kings allowed a remnant of Philistines along the coast to assert their independence. // Hezekiah put them back under vassalage.

Because of the impact it had on Hezekiah's reign, vs9-12 repeat the story of Assyria's conquest of Israel.

<sup>13</sup> And in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

The Assyrians couldn't let a vassal state rebel as Hezekiah had. So here they come.

They conquer all Judah except the capital of Jerusalem.

This moved Hezekiah to doubt whether or not it was right to throw off the Assyrian yoke.

Maybe being a vassal was God's will & His judgment for Judah's past sins.

Being a man of faith as David was doesn't mean he was perfect // Even David had moments of doubt.

<sup>14</sup> 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 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.

This was **back pay** for the time Judah had **failed** to send it.

What's interesting is the reference in v14 to **Lachish**.

Lachish was a major fortification 30 miles SW, guarding the approach to Jerusalem.

With its fall, the fall of Jerusalem was virtually guaranteed.

That's why Hezekiah sends this message of capitulation.

He's not **surrendering**; merely offering a **return to vassalage**.

In the ruins of the Assyrian capital at Nineveh archaeologists found a massive wall relief of the battle at Lachish.

*From* that mural, now in the British Museum in London, we know all about how the Assyrians made war & why they were so successful.

The Assyrian account of the conquest of Lachish is considered one of the most important ancient artifacts in the study of ancient warfare.

<sup>17</sup> Then the king of Assyria sent *the Tartan [field-marshal], the Rabsaris [chief eunuch], and the Rabshakeh [royal chief of staff]* 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.

With Sennacherib stashed safely at Lachish, he sent his most powerful officers to lay in the siege of Jrz. No city has withstood the Assyrian juggernaut thus far.

They're dominant across the ME. // What will be Jrz's fate?

Once the siege was set, the commanders start a propaganda ploy to get the people of Jrz to surrender.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

If Sennacherib wasn't going to show, neither was Hezekiah // He sent *his* officials to meet the Assyrian officials.

<sup>19</sup> 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? <sup>20</sup> 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? <sup>21</sup> 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.

Hezekiah had **NOT** made an alliance with the Egyptians who were right then gearing up for war with the Assyrians.

Hezekiah trusted solely in the Lord, not some foreign alliance.

The Assyrians couldn't believe Judah would try to go it alone without aligning itself with one of the other major players.

So in a wild guess, this guy **bluffed** he was informed of Hezekiah's plans, as though they had a spy.

But this mention of Egypt really only proved the Assyrians were clueless.

Covering **all** his bases, the Rabshakeh went on -

<sup>22</sup> 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, **[the high places]** and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'?"

Again, he **thinks** he's undercutting Hezekiah's support by saying he'd desecrated Yahweh's worship centers.

The people **knew** better.

As residents of Jrz, they knew the **temple** was to only place they were to worship.

So this attack on Hezekiah's credibility only **strengthened** him as it reminded them of His devotion to God.

The Assyrians simply **overplayed** their hand here & revealed the weakness of their position.

The enemy often does that. He's clever & subtle, but cannot read our minds.

He can make a good **guess** what we are thinking because he **tempts** us, **suggesting** a line of thought.

But he can't read our minds and know with certainty what we're thinking He isn't omniscient.

So sometimes, he suggests something that's **way** beyond the pale.

You say, "Wait a minute! That's absurd. That's so blatant, I KNOW the origin of THAT!"

I find those times the devil overplays his hand gratifying because it reminds me he's not **SO** good at what he does he can't be defeated.

Even after all the yrs of tempting humans, He still messes up; a LOT!

<sup>23</sup> Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you 2000 horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them! <sup>24</sup> How then will you repel 1 captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen?

More propaganda! "We'll arm what's left of your army. Then send them out and let's get this over with."

The Assyrians didn't want to get bogged down in a protracted siege at Jrz.

The **Egyptians** were a threat and Sennacherib wanted his entire force with him to face them.

Not half the army off laying siege to Jrz.

This was an attempt to goad Hezekiah into giving up because he **didn't have** 2000 men left.

Satan does the same thing.

He doesn't want to enter into real battle with us because he's already lost when we look to the Lord and stay safe in Him as our refuge.

So he lies & cajoles, trying to get us to give up out of fear & discouragement.

Then the official plays his trump card -

<sup>25</sup> 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.' ”

“Yahweh's *against* you! He *doesn't* love you. He's *abandoned* you.

How could the things that have happened do so unless God willed & wanted it?”

Once again we see how the enemy lies about God, a tactic he employed all the way back in Eden.

Christian, when your circumstances suggest questioning the goodness & love of God, remember this – You're in the *middle*, not the *end* of the story.

Every good story has pages where the main character goes thru hardship & trial.

It's the *challenge & difficulty* that make the victory that much sweeter & the lesson more powerful.

A mighty, powerful, mind-blowing end awaits *this* story.

Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem would have missed it if they'd caved here.

A mighty, powerful, mind-blowing end awaits *YOUR* story too.

Don't cave to fear & discouragement.

<sup>26</sup> Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, 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.”

The Assyrians had been speaking in Hebrew to foment rebellion among the ranks of the common people listening along the top of the wall.

So the Jewish officials ask them to speak in Aramaic.

<sup>27</sup> 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?”

Because a protracted siege will see famine take them.

<sup>28</sup> 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! <sup>29</sup> Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; <sup>30</sup> 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.”’ <sup>31</sup> 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 1 of you eat from his own vine and every 1 from his own fig tree, and every 1 of you drink the waters of his own cistern; <sup>32</sup> 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.”’

It was precisely these words that sealed, not Jrz's fate, but the Assyrians.

God isn't going to sit idly by while a blasphemer mocks the call to trust Him. // The Chief of Staff goes on

...

<sup>33</sup> Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Uh, no. Because they weren't gods. But Yahweh IS.

<sup>34</sup> 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? <sup>35</sup> Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their

countries from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?” <sup>36</sup> But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, “Do not answer him.”

Hezekiah & his entire court no doubt held their breath to see if the people of Jerusalem would rise against them and rush to open the city gates to the Assyrians.

Fortunately, there was no such move.

<sup>37</sup> Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, 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.

<sup>1</sup> And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> Then he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup> And they said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah: ‘This day *is* a day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but *there is* no strength to bring them forth.

An idiom of speech meaning distress with no apparent resolution nor end.

<sup>4</sup> It may be that the Lord your God will hear all the words of *the* Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your* prayer for the remnant that is left.” <sup>5</sup> So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. <sup>6</sup> And Isaiah said to them, “Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.

That word “**servants**” is humorous. = It’s literally, “**lads**” // But the connotation is “**punks**.”

<sup>7</sup> Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.””

Isaiah foretells that the siege of Jerusalem will be thwarted.

Sennacherib would hear of troubles at home he needed to return to deal with.

<sup>8</sup> Then *the* Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish.

Having conquered Lachish, Sennacherib laid siege to the nearby city of Libnah where some of Judah’s army was stationed.

He couldn’t have them cutting off his supply trains headed up to Jrz. // But while he was there

<sup>9</sup> And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, “Look, he has come out to make war with you.” ... At this time in history, **Ethiopians** controlled Egypt.

When word reached Sennacherib that they were now on their way, he knew he needed to secure Jrz’s surrender ASAP.

So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: ‘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.” <sup>11</sup> Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? <sup>12</sup> Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who *were* in Telassar? <sup>13</sup> Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?’ ”

Same ole / Same ole. = Another of the enemy’s tactics = He tries to wear us down.

Our response is the same = **Trust God.**

<sup>14</sup> And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. <sup>15</sup> Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said: “O Lord God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup> Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. <sup>17</sup> Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, <sup>18</sup> and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods, but the work of men’s hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. <sup>19</sup> Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.”

Hezekiah brings a great perspective to Judah’s **distress**.

That their **deliverance from it** would resound to God’s glory among the nations.

<sup>20</sup> Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.’ <sup>21</sup> This *is* the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him: ‘The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn; The daughter of

Jerusalem has shaken *her* head behind your back!

Such a great picture.

Here's mighty Sennacherib, a pompous official making grandiose claims.

Behind him is a powerless little girl, laughing her head off because she sees him for what he is = A Loser.

It's the ultimate humiliation; mocked by a child & not able to do anything about it.

<sup>22</sup> 'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised *your* voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. <sup>23</sup> By your messengers you have reproached the Lord, and said:

"By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars *and* its choice cypress trees; I will enter the extremity of its borders, *to* its fruitful forest.

<sup>24</sup> I have dug and drunk strange water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense." <sup>25</sup>

'Did you not hear long ago *how* I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities *into* heaps of ruins. <sup>26</sup> Therefore their inhabitants had little power; They were dismayed and confounded; They were *as* the grass of the field and the green herb, *as* the grass on the

housetops and *grain* blighted before it is grown. <sup>27</sup> 'But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me. <sup>28</sup> Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came.

An poignant image because this is exactly what the Assyrians did to captured royalty to humiliate them.

In the stela of the Assyrian king **Esarhaddon**, there's a picture of a long line of royal captives with a hook in their noses, on a long string.

Now God speaks *to Hezekiah* -

<sup>29</sup> 'This *shall be* a sign to you: You shall eat this year such as grows of itself, and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> yr what springs from the same; Also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> yr sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.

The Assyrian invasion meant people weren't able to sow their fields but had to live off what grew of its own accord for 2 yrs. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> yr, they enemy would be gone.

<sup>30</sup> And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. <sup>31</sup> For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.'

IOW – God will for sure do this.

<sup>32</sup> "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it. <sup>33</sup> By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city,' says the Lord. <sup>34</sup> 'For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"

Not only would the siege be lifted, it would never even be set in all the way.

There'd be no battles, nor siege works brought to its walls.

<sup>35</sup> And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.

In an event similar to the 10<sup>th</sup> plague of Egypt, in a single night the Assyrian force laying siege to Jrz was wiped out.

The unstoppable Assyrian war machine **was**; stopped that is.

Now, is this a myth? Skeptics say it has to be.

But the Herodotus, known as the Father of Historians, recorded something strange happened to the Assyrian army requiring them to end this campaign in Israel and return home.

<sup>36</sup> So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh. <sup>37</sup> Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

Along with the wall bas-relief documenting Sennacherib's conquest of Lachish was a monument known as the **Taylor Prism** now in the British Museum.

It contains Sennacherib's arrogant boast

I attacked Hezekiah of Judah who had not subjected himself to me, and took 46 fortresses, forts and small cities. I carried away captive 200,150 people, big and small, both male and female, a multitude of horses, young bulls, asses, camels, and oxen. Hezekiah himself I locked up in Jerusalem like a bird in its cage."

What's interesting is that while it's a boast, he admits that he failed to conquer Jerz.

All he did was "lock Hezekiah in Jerz."

In reality, his campaign **failed** because he wasn't able to finish the conquest of Judah.

History tells us the loss of so much of his force created unrest at home he had to return to quell.

He then died in an attempted coup by his own sons.

Ch20

The account backtracks a bit now, telling us about something that had happened while the Assyrians were rampaging across Judah.

<sup>1</sup> In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.'" <sup>2</sup> Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what was* good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. <sup>4</sup> And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And I will add to your days 15 years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.'""

Isaiah's message was distressing because it came at a time of great national crisis, when the Assyrians were bearing down on Judah.

Hezekiah was concerned over who would lead the realm at such a desperate hour.

He knew they needed someone sold out to God.

Before Isaiah exited the palace grounds, God told him to go back & tell the king he'd live another 15 years.

<sup>7</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Take a lump [**poultice**] of figs." So they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered. Along with the prophetic word, Isaiah was given a treatment to effect Hezekiah's recovery; a poultice to draw out the infection killing him.

<sup>8</sup> And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What *is* the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the 3<sup>rd</sup> day?"

This isn't unbelief on Hezekiah's part. He asks for a way to be sure Isaiah's word is from God, so worthy of trust.

<sup>9</sup> Then Isaiah said, "This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which He has spoken: *shall* the shadow go forward 10 degrees or go backward 10 degrees?" <sup>10</sup> And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down 10 degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward 10 degrees."

The prophet asked if the sundial's shadow should move forward more rapidly than usual or reverse its course.

Hezekiah said it would be a clearer sign if the shadow went backward.

Numerous suggestions are made to account for this.

45 yrs ago, a guy named Harold Hill said that he had worked for NASA.

He claimed when they planned the Apollo Program they had to plot the location of the planets because of the gravitational forces acting on the capsule.

The computers, he said, ran the location of the planets backward first so they could more accurately predict their location during the launches.

But the computers came up 1 day and several minutes short.

One of the NASA scientists remembered the story from Joshua about the sun standing still for an entire day & this story about the sun reversing its course 10 ticks of the sundial. It fit perfectly with NASA computations.

It's not true! It was all made up to sell books.

It doesn't say the sun went backward in its course; it says the shadow on the sundial went backward a short way.

You don't have to reverse the rotation of the Earth to make this happen.

An atmospheric disturbance could have caused sunlight to be **refracted** so the sun *seemed* to go backward a short way.

This would have no effect at all on time, but coming as it did at the specific request of the king, it would certainly be the sign he asked for.

<sup>11</sup> So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord, and He brought the shadow 10 degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.

There's a reason why this sign provide to be so potent.

Most of the ancient world worshipped the sun as one of their main deities.

For the shadow of the sun to reverse course at the request of a king would be huge in the eyes of those who worshipped the sun.

It would seem like **this** king had a special relationship with god.

<sup>12</sup> At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

The Babylonians were one of the many realms under the Assyrian yoke.

But they'd become increasingly powerful & independence-minded.

They were making moves to throw off their Assyrian masters & what better nation to make an alliance with than the one that had just humbled the Assyrians so badly?

Also, the Babylonians worshipped the sun.

The miracle of the sundial indicated their god showed special honor to the King of Judah.

So in typical Babylonian fashion, they sent an embassy & gift to Jrz.

<sup>13</sup> And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

2 Chr 32 tells us following his healing, Hezekiah went thru a short season of pride that clouded his vision.

Hearing he had 15 mores yrs made him feel invincible, so losing the sense of his own mortality he grew haughty.

That accounts for why he showed the Babylonians his wealth.

He wanted to impress them. All it did was incite their greed.

The envoys returned to Babylon & told their king what they'd seen.

A later king named Nebuchadnezzar will rise to lead Babylon in victory over the Assyrians.

Then, moved by the story of Jrz's treasures, he came & took them back to Babylon.

Hezekiah fell to a trap, all too common when we slip from an abiding trust in the Lord; the temptation to **impress others**.

<sup>14</sup> Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country, from Babylon." <sup>15</sup> And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that *is* in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

Behold Hezekiah's pride! He **BRAGS** of how he'd impressed the Babylonians.

How shameful to the repentant are the things once boasted of while walking in the flesh.

<sup>16</sup> Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord: <sup>17</sup> 'Behold, the days are coming when all that *is* in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. <sup>18</sup> 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" <sup>19</sup> So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken *is* good!" For he said, "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" That's evidence Hezekiah's not in a good place.

He says, "It's fine judgment's coming; just so long as it doesn't come in my lifetime.

I don't care if my descendants pay, as long as it's not me, it's all good."

Listen: When merely **delayed** judgment moves us to say no more than, "Whew! Ducked that bullet." We totally miss the heart of God.

The Gospel is a message, not of **DELAYED** judgment, but of **satisfied** judgment.

When we think of the Reformation, we usually think of John Calvin in Geneva & Martin Luther in Germany.



Standing toe to toe with them was John Knox in Scotland.

Knox was deeply distressed over the corruption he saw in the Roman Church.

He knew as the Church went, so went the culture.

Judgment could not be far off, so he worked feverishly for reform & prayed constantly for revival.

His agony on behalf of change was so intense he cried, “O great God, give me Scotland or I die!”

That’s the kind of prayer that births revival, as it indeed did, in Scotland.

Hezekiah ought to have understood.

His experience of God’s mercy ought to have moved him to plead for revival.

<sup>20</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—*are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? <sup>21</sup> So Hezekiah rested with his fathers. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

The evidences of Hezekiah’s preparation for the Assyrian siege abound in Jerusalem to this day.

We’ll look more closely at them when in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles.