

Lesson 102

God Answers Hezekiah

King Hezekiah trusted in the Lord to deliver him
from the Assyrians.

Overview

Lesson Focus

The southern kingdom of Judah was threatened by the mighty Assyrian empire. Trusting in the one true God for protection, good King Hezekiah went directly to the Lord in prayer. God answered Hezekiah in an amazing way.

Key Passages

2 Kings 18:3–5, 18:28–30 and 19 (selected verses)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe Hezekiah's dependence on God.
Describe how God protected Jerusalem.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:4–5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The northern kingdom of Israel turned from God and faced his judgment after he sent many prophets to warn them. Ultimately, the Assyrians conquered them and carried them off to foreign lands. Most of the kings of Judah led the people into idolatry as well, but a few sought to restore true worship of God.

One of these good kings was Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the thirteenth king in Judah and took the throne after his extremely wicked father, Ahaz. Ahaz had continued to worship false gods, even offering his children as sacrifices (2 Kings 16:1–4). He also looked to the king of Assyria for protection from the kings of Syria and Israel, offering him treasures from the house of God rather than looking to God for deliverance (2 Kings 16:5–9). Hezekiah was nothing like his father—he followed the Lord and fought against the idolatry that plagued Judah (2 Kings 18:1–7). In fact, 2 Kings 18:5 tells us that “he trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.”

Here is where we meet the prophet Isaiah for the first time. Most people would recognize Isaiah as an Old Testament prophet, but few

know much about his ministry. Isaiah ministered for over 50 years in Judah over the span of four kings (Isaiah 1:1). He was a contemporary of Hosea and Micah and penned some of the most lamentable judgments against Judah, as well as descriptions of the glories of redemption through the coming Messiah. One of Isaiah's roles during this period of history was to deliver a message of assurance to Hezekiah.

As Hezekiah began his reign in the southern kingdom in 726 BC, the northern kingdom of Israel was about to fall to the captivity of the Assyrians under Tiglath Pileser III (the king Hezekiah's father had made an alliance with) and Shalmaneser V. Next, Sennacherib took power in Assyria and began to expand his kingdom into Judah where Hezekiah had been reigning for 14 years (Isaiah 36:1). After taking several cities, Sennacherib sent to Jerusalem a delegation of officials, including his military commander and the Rabshakeh (likely an ambassador), and a large portion of his army. The delegates delivered a message of boasting from their king to Hezekiah: Whether you seek help from Egypt or God, I will conquer you and your God cannot protect you (Isaiah 36).

When the message was delivered to Hezekiah, he was distraught and sent a message to Isaiah, calling for prayer for deliverance from God (Isaiah 37:1–4). When the messengers delivered the threat to Isaiah, God gave Isaiah a message to deliver to Hezekiah: don't fear Sennacherib;

he will die in his own land (Isaiah 37:5–7). The Assyrian delegation returned to Jerusalem with another threat from Sennacherib and a boast against God (Isaiah 37:8–13). True to his character, Hezekiah cried out to God in a prayer that demonstrated his full reliance upon God, recognizing his sovereignty and mercy, and seeking God’s glory in the matter. Hezekiah knew that God could prevail and that he would be glorified as all the kingdoms of the earth would hear how he had delivered Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:14–20).

God is merciful and gracious. In response to Hezekiah’s humble request, God spoke a message of comfort and security through Isaiah. God would deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians and strike down Sennacherib (Isaiah 37:21–35). God was about to display his sovereignty over the nations in a most dramatic way!

As Sennacherib’s great army, which numbered more than 185,000, camped near Jerusalem, there were surely fear and rumors flashing throughout the city. In 2 Chronicles 32:1–23, we learn that Hezekiah also worked to prepare a defense of the city. He was not trusting in the might of the men of the city for deliverance but called the people to trust in the Lord to fight their battles. As God had promised, the Assyrian army did not even raise a shield or shoot an arrow at Jerusalem.

During the night, the angel of the Lord moved through the camp of the Assyrians. As the camp awoke, they found a frightful scene—185,000 corpses lying in their midst (Isaiah 37:36). Understanding his defeat, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh with his tail between his legs. Just as Isaiah had revealed, Sennacherib's sons killed him as he was worshipping before his god, Nisroch (Isaiah 37:37–38). This was just another display of the absolute power of the one true God over the demons behind the false gods worshipped by the heathen nations.

Historical/Apologetics Background

As you think about the structure of the Old Testament, it might be a little confusing. The account we are looking at in this lesson is actually referenced in at least three different places: Isaiah 36–37; 2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 32:1–23. In each we get a slightly different perspective, but all align and demonstrate the same truths about God's character. Political intrigue surrounded the transitions of the kings during this period. Ahaz had been in league with kings of Assyria, Tiglath Pileser III and Shalmaneser V, and the son of the Assyrian king was now coming against the son of Ahaz. At the same time, Assyria was assaulting the northern kingdom while they were seeking help from other nations rather than God.

Hezekiah was the king reigning in the southern kingdom when the kings his father had

cooperated with were sacking Samaria. Then, Shalmaneser's son Sennacherib moved on to wipe out Babylon and Egypt. So, major portions of North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East were controlled by the Assyrian Empire. It was then that Sennacherib made his fatal mistake—he boasted against the Lord. God had ordained Sennacherib's reign and dominance of the people he and his fathers had conquered (Isaiah 9:11, 10:12–16, 37:26–27; Proverbs 21:1), but his pride brought judgment from God. Among the rise and fall of nations and kings, we see God's amazing sovereignty in the affairs of the world.

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