

The Life and Times of Hezekiah the Great, King Of Judah



**Teenager Workbook
Manitoulin Kid's Camp
2012**

Dear Teen Young Person,

I am glad that you are interested in coming to the Manitoulin Youth Camp this summer, God willing. We are very pleased to have Uncle Con Mitsos from Australia as our main Teen teacher.

Uncle Con's subject is "The Life and Times of Hezekiah the Great, King of Judah."

This workbook is part of your pre-camp assignment. There are two components:

The first is a special project which you can work on individually or in pairs. This is work which you can hopefully share with the other class members during the camp week.

The second part is a series of questions based on the life and times of Hezekiah. By completing the questions ahead of time you will have a good background for our studies during the week.

I would make the following suggestions to help you prepare for our week of studies around our theme "The Life and Times of Hezekiah the Great, King of Judah:"

1. Plan to READ the appropriate chapters and verses regularly to get familiar with them.
2. Work through the question section of the workbook, setting goals to finish on time. For example, 10-15 questions per week.

Don't get frustrated; just give it your best shot. Some of these are 'thinking' questions so don't be afraid to ask someone else for help!

3. Work on your special project, again setting goals to ensure it is completed before camp starts.

Remember, the more you personally put into this study, the more you will get out of it!

May God bless you as you labour in His Word, that together at Youth Camp we might all be able to share what we have learned and be prepared for the return of Christ.

See you in July, God Willing,

Uncle Chris.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Type 1: Oral Presentation, Essay or Seminar

The following suggested topics would be suitable for a 5 to 10 minute presentation or seminar to the rest of the class, or an essay of about 3 typed pages.

If you choose a presentation please try to make use of maps and diagrams to enhance it. You can also make use of a computer and LCD projector if you like! Also make a one page summary of your presentation and make 40 copies of this for the other class members.

If you do an essay, please make 1 copy of it for me to keep, and 40 copies of a one page summary to give to the other class members.

Some suggested topics (in no particular order):

1. A character study of one of the characters from the life of King Hezekiah (e.g. Hezekiah, Isaiah, Eliakim, Shebna, the Rabshakeh)
2. Draw Hezekiah's "Family Tree"
3. A study of the prophecies surrounding Hezekiah's birth and the birth of the Lord Jesus.
4. Draw a map of the geography showing where key events occurred for this time period.
5. The Rise and Fall of the Assyrian Empire
6. Who has been the greatest influence in *your* life?
7. How can we use music in worship?
8. The Songs of Degrees (Psalms) how are these applicable to Hezekiah?
9. Your choice. Contact me if you have another idea you would like to present.

Type 2: Creative Projects

Some of you may not want to do a talk or an essay and would rather let your creative energy be channelled in another direction.

There are many very dramatic scenes in this story.

Be sure you know the Biblical account very well and bring out the details and lessons. You will need to do just as much research and study for a creative project as for a talk or an essay.

Here are some ideas:

1. Dramatization. Write a short skit or play based on one section or event from the life of Hezekiah. The skit may be historical or a modern-day setting based on the principles from these chapters. If possible, find a couple of friends to help you enact your play for all of us to enjoy.
2. Draw a picture or make a model from one of the incidents in Hezekiah's life (e.g. a model of the city of Jerusalem showing key locations like the Gihon Spring and the Fuller's Field).
3. Write a short story in a modern setting based on the events in the life of Hezekiah.
4. Make a crossword puzzle based on the life of King Hezekiah.
5. Create a board game or maze based on the life of King Hezekiah.
6. Write a song or poem about an incident in the life of King Hezekiah.
7. Your idea. Contact me if you have a project in mind and we will discuss its suitability.

Uncle Mark Carr will be leading the special 'third class' where you will have the opportunity to present your "Special Project", ask questions, and hopefully have some "Special Guests" - I wonder if we can convince Rabshekah to visit the camp??!!

Introduction

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah during the reign of his father, Ahaz. He grew up in a time of great immorality, idol worship and heathen practices. He developed into a godly young man, became one of the greatest kings that Judah had ever known, delivered his people from the threat of Assyrian subservience and rid the land of idolatry, uniting Judah and Israel in worship of the one true God. His spiritual reformation so inspired the people that they were emboldened to follow their king's faithful example, rebel against the fearful Assyrians, and place all their trust in the Lord. The glories of his reign, his personal deliverance from death as well as the deliverance of his people typified the Messiah to come.

The records of Hezekiah's life are contained in the Scriptural records of 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; and Isaiah 36-39. But there are many other passages which allude to the influence which he had. Look up Hezekiah in a concordance and notice how many references there are to him. Why so many records and so much space devoted to one king? It has been suggested that Kings provides the factual record and Chronicles the inspirational one. Were these records later used for different purposes? What do you think these purposes might have been?

How did Hezekiah develop into such a godly young person? Was it the influence of his mother, Abijah, whose father Zechariah, had such a good influence on Uzziah's early life (2 Chron. 26:5)? Or was it from the prophet Isaiah? Hezekiah's own counsellors in the royal court seemed to be the root cause of trusting in Egypt (Isa. 20:5; 30:1-5). Another influence on Hezekiah might have been the prophet Micah (see Jer. 26:18). Following up this reference and others in Micah's prophecy might be a good idea for a project! Who is the greatest influence in *your* life? How do *your* parents and grandparents influence you?

There are many exciting points for teenagers to consider in the story of Hezekiah. There is Hezekiah's example of commitment as a young man in his thorough approach to service and worship (2 Chron. 29). Hezekiah demonstrates how to live by the power of good example – King David was the model for Hezekiah and the measure to which he is compared. Along with the examples of Christ and the apostles for us, Hezekiah's life can provide inspiration for us to emulate. Living the Truth with joyful enthusiasm was ably exemplified in Hezekiah's life when the people even celebrated a double Passover – imagine deciding at the end of a Bible School that everyone would stay for an extra week! The use of music in worship is demonstrated by Hezekiah in 2 Chron.30. Hezekiah paid attention to detail and did everything "decently and in order," he had great organisational skills which showed in his provision for the priests and Levites. He showed faithfulness in every little detail, "that which is least" (compare Jesus' words in Luke 16:10). He experienced the great power of prayer- healing and deliverance recorded in 2 Kings 19; 2 Chron.32; and Isaiah 36-38. Sadly, Hezekiah also shows us the danger of pride in trusting his own judgment and not giving God the glory (2 Kings 20; 2 Chron.32; Isaiah 39). The life of Hezekiah also provides powerful lessons about who you trust and who you choose to listen to. The book of Proverbs has quite a lot to say about this! Interestingly, Jewish tradition suggests that Hezekiah actually compiled this book along with Psalms, and Ecclesiastes (see Prov. 25:1).

Let the words of Hezekiah, "may the good Lord pardon everyone who sets his heart on seeking God" (2 Chron. 30:19) echo in our hearts so that we can copy the great example which he set us by trusting in the LORD, the God of Israel, and holding fast to His Word of truth.

Complete the chart of the Kings of Judah

King of JUDAH	Bible ref	Meaning of name	Yrs. of reign	God's Assessment	Prophet	King in ISRAEL	Enemies of Judah
Rehoboam	2 Chron. 10-12						
Abijah	13						
Asa	14						
Jehoshaphat	17-20						
Jehoram	21						
Ahaziah	22						
Athaliah	23						
Joash	24						
Amaziah	25						
Uzziah/Azariah	26						
Jotham	27						
Ahaz	28						
Hezekiah	29-32						

Manasseh	33:1-20						
Amon	33:21-25						
Josiah	34-35						
Jehoahaz	36:1-3						
Jehoiakim	36:4-8						
Jehoiachin	36:9-10						
Zedekiah	36:11-21						

The primary accounts of Hezekiah's life are found in 2 Kings 16:20 and chapters 18 to 21:3 along with 2 Chronicles 28:27-33:3 and Isaiah 36-39. If you look in a concordance you will find several other references to King Hezekiah. List these references below and note any information given you by these verses. The Bible books are listed to help you.

1. 1 Chronicles _____
2. 1 Chronicles _____
3. Proverbs _____
4. Isaiah _____
5. Jeremiah _____
6. Jeremiah _____
7. Hosea _____
8. Micah _____

What other information about Hezekiah did you find from these verses?

What is the meaning of Hezekiah's name?

The following chart will help you to put together the Bible records of Hezekiah's life found in Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah. Notice how some sections of the Kings account are repeated word for word in the book of Isaiah. It is a mark of how important King Hezekiah was in the history of the kings of Judah and what a powerful example he provides for us that so much of Scripture is devoted to the story of his life. Try to read these sections of the Bible over several times before coming to Camp. If you read the verses in the order given below, it will help you to get an overall

picture of the sequence of events in King Hezekiah's life, the intrigues taking place in the king's court and the gathering storm clouds of the Assyrian invasion. In the midst of all of this action, Hezekiah himself was struck down by a deadly disease! Use your imagination to help you think what it might have been like to live through those days. How do you think you would have reacted?

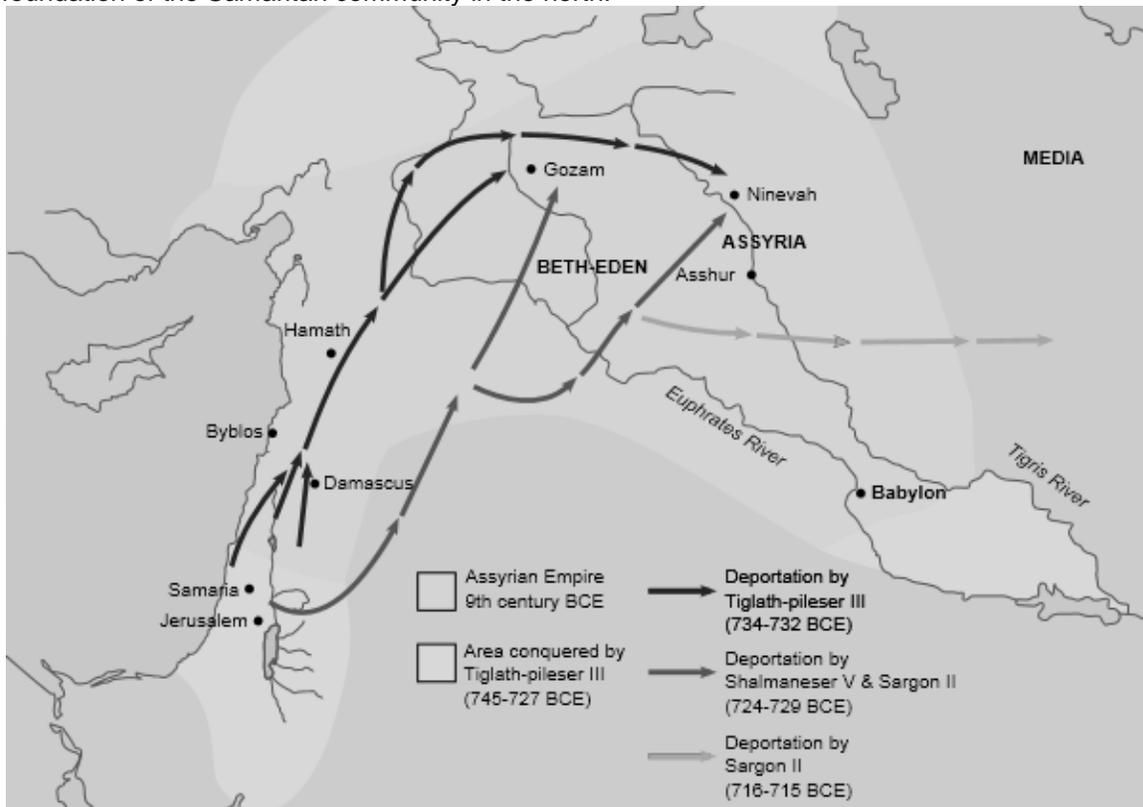
Harmony of the Records of King Hezekiah's Life

Event	2 Kings	2 Chronicles	Isaiah
Hezekiah succeeds his father, Ahaz	16:20		
Begins reign at age 25	18:1-3	29:1, 2	
1st year, 1st month: repairs/cleanses temple, restores worship/singing, makes sin offering, offerings brought to temple, too many for the few priests, more priests sanctified		29:3-11	
Levites cleanse themselves first		29:12-15	
Temple cleansed in 16 days		29:16-19	
Seven-fold sacrifices offered		29:20-30	
People make personal offerings		29:31-36	
Hezekiah invites all Israel to Passover		30:1-12	
Passover celebrated in 2nd month of 1st year		30:13-27	
Land cleansed of idolatry	18:4	31:1	
Establishes courses of priesthood		31:2-4	
People bring tithes		31:5-10	
Officers to dispose of tithes		31:11-19	
God pleased with Hezekiah	18:5,6	31:20-21	
Hezekiah rebels against Assyria	18:7		
Hezekiah attacks Philistia	18:8		14:28-32
4th year Shalmaneser besieged Samaria	18:9		
6th year Sargon takes Samaria	18:10-12		
Assyria threatens Judah			10:27-34
Assyrian invasion of Ashdod and Philistia			20:1
Judah suggests turning to Egypt			20:2-6, 30
Isaiah rebukes them for lack of faith			22:1-7
Some rested in their own strength			22:8-14
Some were self-righteous like Shebna			22:15-18
Some were faithful like Eliakim			22:20-25
14th year 46 cities of Judah fall to Sennacherib	18:13		36:1
Hezekiah agrees to pay tribute	18:14		
He strips gold from the Temple	18:15,16		
He prepares to defend Jerusalem		32:1	
He strengthens the defences of the city		32:2-8	
Sennacherib sends the Rabshakeh	18:17-18	32:9	36:2
The Rabshakeh's blasphemous speech	18:19-25	32:10-16	36:3-22
Hezekiah approaches God	19:1		37:1
He sends messengers to Isaiah	19:2-5		37:2-5
God's comforting reply	19:6-7		37:6,7
Rabshakeh returns to Lachish	19:8		37:8
Rumour concerning Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia	19:9		37:9
Second message to Hezekiah	19:10-13	32:17-19	37:10-13
Hezekiah prays for deliverance	19:14-19	32:20	37:14-20
Isaiah's comforting reply	19:20-24		37:21-35
14th year Hezekiah becomes sick coincides with Assyrian invasion	20:1	32:24	38:1
He prays to be healed	20:2,3	32:24	38:2,3
15 year extension of life granted	20:4-11	32:24	38:4-8
Hezekiah's recovery and psalm of praise			38:9-22
Merodach Baladan's ambassadors	20:12-18	32:25-31	39:1-7
Peace and truth in Hezekiah's days	20:19		39:8
Sennacherib and his army slain	19:35-37	32:21-23	37:36-38

International Events

During the reign of Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, Syria and Israel to the north had formed an alliance against Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria. As a result, the two countries tried to "persuade" Ahaz to support them against the growing Assyrian power in the north east (notice the methods of persuasion that these two kings chose to use – a combined army came to fight against Judah, Isa. 7:1-2!) Ahaz instead relied on the king of Assyria to move against Syria and Israel. He sent off a present comprising treasure from the temple and the royal palace to Nineveh and asked Tiglath-Pileser for help. Tiglath-Pileser accepted the gift and agreed to "help" Ahaz in his problems to the north, since he had already decided to move against Syria and Israel! Ahaz became a tributary (paid taxes) to the Assyrians and ended up with a copy of an Assyrian altar installed in the temple courts instead of the altar of burnt offering (2 Kings 16:10-18). The Assyrians also had a garrison in the Temple (2 Chron. 28:21; 2 Kings 16:8,18) and took hostages from leading families away to Nineveh to guarantee Ahaz's good behaviour (2 Chron. 29:9). Unfortunately, Tiglath-pileser did not prove to help Ahaz as he had thought, instead Ahaz became subject to the Assyrians as the Bible records: he strengthened him NOT (2 Chron.28:21)!

In addition, the Philistines had invaded the west of Judah and the Edomites the east, taking many captives (2 Chron. 28:17-18). Before their conquest and deaths at the hand of the king of Assyria, the kings of Israel and Syria had invaded the north of Judah and taken many captives from Judah (2 Chron. 28:5-6). Shalmaneser V and Sargon II of Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and took its people into captivity (2 Kings 17:6; 18:10). Many people were deported from Israel and other captives from Assyria and Babylonia brought in their place thus forming the foundation of the Samaritan community in the north.



Deportations of Jews by Assyrians

Egypt was a rising power, but was no match for the ruthless might of Assyria. The march of the Assyrians westward is memorialized in bas-reliefs (carvings) showing their contempt for their captives and the amassing of much wealth from their subjects. The invasion of the Assyrians, and subsequent destruction at the hand of the angel of the Lord, is also memorialized in a poem by Byron:

The Destruction of Sennacherib, by Charles Byron, first published in 1815

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Years ago recitations of poetry were quite popular in elementary school. Your grandparents and great-grandparents might have memorized this poem in school!

King Ahaz of Judah

According to Assyrian inscriptions, his real name was Jehoahaz meaning “Yahweh has sustained,” but in the Bible he is spoken of as Ahaz – “He has sustained” – perhaps a hint as to how God viewed him! He stands out as one of the most wicked and shallow people ever to occupy the throne of Judah, and as a result was delivered into the hands of Israel and Syria to be punished (2 Chron. 28:5). When the Israel/Syrian coalition threatened Judah and Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah offered him the sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7) which he rejected, and instead turned to Assyria (2 Chron. 28:16). Tiglath Pileser came to his aid and attacked Philistia, over-ran Samaria, took Damascus and slew Rezin (2 Kings 16:7-9). Ahaz went to Damascus to pay homage and while there saw a heathen altar which he admired and had a replica made in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:10-16). He died at the age of 36 and was succeeded by his son,

Hezekiah, who probably reigned alongside his father for a few years before his father's death. The prophets Hosea, Micah and Isaiah prophesied during the reign of Ahaz.

Pekah, son of Remaliah, King of Israel

Pekah ascended the throne of Israel in the final year of Azariah (Uzziah) the leper-king of Judah. He came to the throne by murdering his predecessor, Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:23-25), but was finally murdered himself by his successor, Hoshea (v.30) after ruling for a period of 20 years (v.27). Pekah was therefore contemporary with Jotham for the 16 years of his reign and the first four years of Ahaz (2 Kings 15:27, 32-33). Isaiah frequently speaks of Pekah as simply the "son of Remaliah," as though with a mark of contempt (compare Isaiah 7:5 and 8:6). Pekah means "open-eyed" and Remaliah means "Whom Yahweh adorned."

Rezin, the King of Syria

He was contemporary with Pekah (Israel) and Jotham and Ahaz (Judah). He formed an alliance with Pekah against Judah and attacked Jotham during the latter part of his reign (2 Kings 15:37). His chief war was with Ahaz soon after Ahaz came to the throne. With Pekah he laid siege to Jerusalem but could not prevail against it (2 Kings 16:5; Isa. 7:1). However, he recovered Elath for Syria (2 Kings 16:6). Soon after this he was attacked by Tiglath-Pileser (upon the request of Ahaz, but which Tiglath-Pileser probably intended to do anyway!) and his army was defeated, his people taken into captivity and he himself slain (2 Kings 16:9). His name means "firm" or "stable" (or possibly 'a prince'). It is an Arabic name (Gesenius).

Sennacherib, king of Assyria



Bas-relief (carving) showing King Sennacherib in his chariot

"Sennacherib was the eldest son of Sargon, and succeeded his father in the summer of BC 705. Born in the purple, and bred up as crown prince, his primary characteristic was an overweening pride and arrogance which shows itself in all his inscriptions. He calls himself 'the great king, the

powerful king, the king of the Assyrians, of the nations, of the four regions, the diligent ruler, the favourite of the great gods, the observer of sworn faith, the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men.”

Notice how the prophet Micah, writing around the same time as Sennacherib, describes the man whom God desires: “To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.” Sennacherib expected everyone to look at *him* and to tremble at *his* word regarding *him* as a god. The Assyrian certainly did not “love mercy!” They were known for the most brutal tortures inflicted on their captives. No wonder God punished him with the destruction of his army and assassination by his sons in the temple of his idol.

“He was mighty both in war and in peace. His warlike glories are attested by Herodotus, by other historians, and by his own annals. His peaceful triumphs are witnessed to by the great palace which he erected at Nineveh, and the magnificent series of sculptured slabs with which he adorned it, by his canals and aqueducts, his gate-towers and embankments, his Bavian sculpture and his stele at the Nahr-el-keleb. He was a worthy successor of his father, Sargon, and of the second Tiglath-Pileser, active in his military enterprises, indefatigable, persevering, full of resource. No more energetic soldier ever found himself at the head of a huge army eager for battle, no more vigorous administrator ever commanded the resources of a vast empire.”

This quote has been attributed to Rawlinson's *Historical Evidences*.

Sennacherib's death is recorded on Babylonian inscriptions as follows:

On the 20th of the month Tebet, his son killed Sennacherib, king of Assyria during a rebellion. The rebellion continued from the 20th Tebet to the 2nd month of Adar. On the 18th month of Adar, Esarhaddon, his son, sat on the throne in Assyria”

Compare the Bible record in 2 Kings 19:36-37 which states that Sennacherib's two sons killed him and that he was succeeded by Esarhaddon.

Prophets during the time of Hezekiah

“It was in the days of Jotham [Hezekiah's grandfather] that two more prophets began their work, Micah and Isaiah. Which of these two were the earlier, it is not possible to say with certainty. There could not be a greater contrast between the two men. Micah was a countryman, living in the low hills adjoining the land of the Philistines; Isaiah, possibly a priest, or even of royal blood, from Jerusalem. Micah was a wild peasant, with a fiery message of judgment directed principally to the aristocracy and its oppressive ways, while Isaiah was a man of the court, a trusted and respected councillor of the king, with a house in Jerusalem and a following of disciples. The message of Micah, delivered with frenzied zeal, with wails and howls and stripping off of garments (1:8), was first directed against his neighbouring villages and towns. One by one they were warned of their coming fate, with a play upon their names which would make his message easy to remember. With vivid imagery he castigates both rulers and priests and exposes their corruption and greed. He speaks of them as cannibals, flaying and chopping the bodies of the people as for the pot (3:1-3). The bribery and corruption rife in the ruling classes is described with trenchant language. There were prophets who were willing to prophesy peace, provided they were paid; there were judges who adjudicated for reward; the priests taught for hire, and the prophets prophesied for money.” (Hinde, p.66).

Archaeological evidence from the time of Hezekiah

Hezekiah's Conduit



The Siloam Inscription now in the Istanbul Museum

Hezekiah's conduit or aqueduct is one of the archeological mysteries of the city of Jerusalem. The conduit was dug out of rock and follows an "S" shape for 1700 feet (533 metres) linking the Pool of Siloam (2 Chron. 32:3-4) which was then surrounded by a wall closing it off from the outside (Isa. 22:9-11 – the word 'ditch' signifies 'reservoir'). The water was brought from the Gihon Spring to a new pool (above the 'old pool' of Isa. 22:11) that Hezekiah had made for this purpose (2 Kings 20:20). This pool became known as the "King's Pool" (Neh. 2:14). It is not known why the tunnel followed this "S" shape as it would have saved 700 ft of digging if it had gone in a straight line. The record says that "many people were gathered together" for the purpose of digging (2 Chron. 32:4). The construction of the aqueduct was originally planned when the Assyrians marched south and fear dominated Jerusalem (Isa. 22:9-11), perhaps during the time of Ahaz, but only constructed or completed when it was obvious that Sennacherib was going to attack (2 Chron. 32:1). The aqueduct stopped the water from flowing into the Kidron Valley and therefore being available for the invading enemy. The Siloam inscription, which was discovered in 1880, on a stone on the right wall of the tunnel about 20 feet from its exit into the Pool of Siloam, is now exhibited in the Istanbul Museum:

The boring through is completed. And this is the story of the boring: while they yet plied the pick, each towards his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling to the other that there was a hole in the rock on the right hand and on the left hand. And on the day of the boring through the workers in the tunnel struck each to meet his fellow, pick upon pick. Then the water poured from the source to the pool 1200 cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the workers in the tunnel.

The Sennacherib Prisms

To celebrate and memorialize his victories, Sennacherib had inscribed accounts preserved on clay prisms. The inscriptions are in Akkadian cuneiform. Three complete hexagonal prisms, 38 cm. high by 14 cm. wide, made of red baked clay exist along with many fragments of similar prisms. The Taylor Prism was discovered in 1830 and is now on display in the British Museum. The Sennacherib Prism, obtained in 1919, is in the Oriental Institute in Chicago, and the third prism, published in 1990, is in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



The Taylor Prism

The Taylor Prism, now exhibited in the British Museum, records Sennacherib's campaigns as follows:

In my third campaign I marched against Hatti. The awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed Luli, king of Sidon, and he fled far off over the sea and died (an infamous death). The fearsome nature of the weapon of the god Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed Great Sidon, Little Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Zariptu, Mahilliba, Ushu, Akzib (and) Akku, his strong walled cities, places where there were food and drinking facilities for his garrisons, and they bowed in submission at my feet. Tuba'alu (Ethba'al) I set on the throne to be king and imposed on him tribute, due to my lordship, (to be rendered) annually without ceasing.

As for Menahem of Samsimurana, Tuba'alu of Sidon, Abdili'ti of Arvad, Urumilki of Gebal (Byblos), Mitinti of Ashdod, Buduili of Beth-Ammon, Kammusunadbi of Moab (and) Aiarummu of Edom, all of them kings of Amurru; they brought valuable gifts – heavy submission gifts – before me for the fourth time and kissed my feet. But as for Sidqa, king of Ashkelon, who did not bow in submission to my yoke, I deported and sent away to Assyria his ancestral gods, himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, and the descendants of his ancestors. I set Sharruludari, son of Rubiktu, their former king, over the people of Ashkelon and imposed on him the rendering of tribute, *katre*-presents for (to acknowledge) my lordship, so that he now drags at the (yoke) ropes!

In the course of my campaign, I surrounded, captured and carried off the spoil of Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banaiabarqa, Azuru, cities belonging to Sidqa, who did not bow in submission at my feet quickly. The officials, nobles and peoples of Ekron, who had thrown Padi, their king, into iron fetters as one loyal to the treaty and obligations of (imposed on him by) Assyria, had given him up to Hezekiah the Jew as an enemy. On account of the offence they had committed their heart took fright and they implored (help from) the kings of Egypt [see Isaiah 30:2] (and) bowmen chariots of the kings of Ethiopia (Meluhha), an innumerable host, and, indeed, they came to help them. In the plain of Eltekeh, their battle array being drawn up over against me, they prepared their weapons. On (the oracular promise of) the help of Ashur, my lord, [the god of Assyria, compare Isa, 37:11-13] I clashed and effected their defeat. Amid the battle, my own hands captured alive the Egyptian charioteers and princes, together with charioteers belonging to the Ethiopian king [Isaiah 37:9]. I besieged and captured the towns of Eltekeh and Timnah and carried off spoil from them. I drew near to Ekron and slew the officials and nobles who had committed the crime and hung their bodies on posts around the city. I counted as prisoners of war the citizens who had done hostile and abusive things. I ordered the release of the rest of them, who were not convicted of any crime or misbehaviour, against who there was no charge: I caused Padi, their king, to come out of Jerusalem and set him on the throne as lord over them, fixing upon him (the payment) of tribute to my lordship.

But as for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not bow in submission to my yoke, forty-six of his strong walled towns and innumerable smaller villages in their neighbourhood I besieged and conquered by stamping down earth-ramps and then bringing up battering rams, by the assault of foot-soldiers, by breaches, by tunnelling and sapper operations. I made to come out from them 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, innumerable horses, mules, donkeys, camels, large and small cattle, and counted them as the spoils of war. He himself I shut up like a caged bird within Jerusalem, his royal city. I put watch-posts strictly around it and turned back to his disaster any who went out of its city gate. His towns which I had despoiled I cut off from his land, giving them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza, and so reduced his land. Moreover, I fixed upon him an increase in the amount to be given as *katre*-presents for my lordship, in addition to the former tribute, to be given annually. As for Hezekiah, the awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed him, and the irregular and regular troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, and had obtained for his protection, together with 30 talents of gold, 300 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, large blocks of red stone, ivory (inlaid) couches, ivory arm-chairs, elephant hide, elephant tusks, ebony-wood, box-wood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters (?), concubines, male and female musicians he sent me later to Nineveh, my lordly city. He sent a personal messenger to deliver the tribute and make slavish obeisance.

Notice the boastful language of Sennacherib, “the fearsome nature of the weapon of the god Ashur” and “the awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed him.” Notice too how Sennacherib uses derogatory language to refer to King Hezekiah as “Hezekiah the Jew.”

The Seal of Hezekiah

In 1974 a brown clay seal impression was obtained from the vicinity of Hebron. Transcribed it read, in English:

Concerning Yehozarah
Son (of) Hilkiah
Servant of Hezekiah

Yehozarah, although not mentioned in the Bible, is here listed as a son of Hilkiah, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 18:18, among other places. In that passage and in Isaiah 36:3, Hilkiah is stated to be the father of Eliakim. So, if the seal impression is authentic (as it appears to be) Eliakim was the brother of Yehozarah. Of course, Eliakim was the servant of Hezekiah; this fits in well with Yehozarah being a servant in the same royal court.

Function of Seal Bullae

A bulla is a clay impression of a seal; the seal is often made of fired clay, or metal. Wax seal impressions are often used in royal correspondence by European royalty and also in some political communications. The same custom prevailed in ancient Israel; but clay was frequently employed instead of wax. Bullae were attached to letters signed by royal stewards when on official business, and by the king on any business. . . Yehozarah is, as stated, a name not occurring in the Bible. Yet it rings true as a Biblical Hebrew name of Hezekiah's time because its two components are to be found in the Bible: **Yhw** is an abbreviation of Yahweh, **zarah** is a verb meaning "rising," and was at least in metaphorical usage during Hezekiah's reign (compare Isaiah 60:3). Indeed, the two components occur as a name (Zerahiah) the other way round in 1 Chronicles 6:6. . . It is worth noticing that the orthodox picture of some Biblical texts as an unreal mixture of mythology and theology used to describe an "unhistorical" Old Testament "history," is quite opposite to the type of information that emerges from the above mentioned bulla: a realistic court life with correspondence, officers and servants who are real enough to have fingerprints. This is the picture of everyday life remarkably like that of our own contemporary society in some respects . . .

Arthur Gibson, "The First Known Seal from Hezekiah's Court," *The Testimony*, Vol. 46, 1976, pp.155-157.

About 50 of these bullae (lumps of clay with an inscribed seal) from 19 different cities in Judah) have been found dating from the time of Hezekiah. The seals are inscribed with "for the king" and presumably were sent with the taxes imposed by Hezekiah.

The Broad Wall



The Broad Wall

In the 1970's, Israeli archaeologist Nahman Avigad excavated a section of wall 65 metres long, 3.3 metres high and 7 metres thick in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. This is the Broad Wall referred to in Nehemiah 3:8 and Isaiah 22:10. You can go to Jerusalem today and see this section of wall.

Other archaeological evidence

There is much other evidence dating from the 8th century BC, the time of Hezekiah. Leen Ritmeyer, a Christadelphian expert on Biblical archaeology, has found masonry dating to the time of Hezekiah and his expansion of the Temple Mount (check out his website at www.ritmeyer.com for all kinds of interesting evidence for Biblical events). There is also evidence of the dismantling of cult temples and their replacement by other structures during this same time period. About 150 years ago, many events recorded in the Bible were regarded as largely fictional and mythological. When archaeology actually began to prove the Bible true, many people were very surprised. Now the reverse is true, the Bible is used as a guidebook for archaeologists. If the Bible states that king David had a palace in a certain place, archaeologists will now go to that place to dig!

In order to make it easier for you to compare the Bible records, the relevant passages in Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah have been included in the notes below. The chapters have been placed in chronological order (according to the time when the events happened). You will have to look up the other references in the questions. The translation used in the text (in text boxes) is that of the New King James Version.

2 Kings 18:1-3 18 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. ³ And he did *what* was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

The Dating of the Kings

The authors of the Nelson Book of Bible Charts and Maps made the following comment:

Three factors make the dating of the Kings material extremely difficult: (1) the coregency system, particularly in the southern kingdom, whereby a son officially began his reign during the lifetime of his father, with both father and son receiving credit for the years of coregency; (2) the use of both the "accession-year" system (whereby the year in which a king came to the throne was not counted as his first year) and the "non-accession-year" system (whereby the remainder of the year in which the king was crowned was reckoned as his first year); and (3) the use of both the sacred-year (beginning with Nisan, the first month) and the civil-year (beginning with Tishri, the seventh month) methods of dating. Because of the complexity of the problems involved in the harmonization of the chronology of the Hebrew kings, many have concluded that the biblical dates are obviously contradictory and hopelessly beyond solution. Today, however, the chronological problems are basically solved, and the biblical dating has been demonstrated to be trustworthy and accurate. (p.137)

For further reading on the dating of the kings see Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, New York: Macmillan, 1951.

2 Chronicles 29:1-19 Hezekiah Reigns in Judah

29 Hezekiah became king *when he was* twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. ² And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

Hezekiah Cleanses the Temple

³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. ⁴ Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, ⁵ and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy *place*. ⁶ For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned *their backs on Him*. ⁷ They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy *place* to the God of Israel. ⁸ Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. ⁹ For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives *are* in captivity.

¹⁰ "Now *it is* in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. ¹¹ My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense."

¹² Then these Levites arose: Mahath the son of Amasai and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah and Eden the son of Joah; ¹³ of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; ¹⁴ of the sons of Heman, Jehiel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. ¹⁵ And they gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went according to the commandment of the king, at the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. ¹⁶ Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse *it*, and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took *it* out and carried *it* to the Brook Kidron.

¹⁷ Now they began to sanctify on the first *day* of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. So they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. ¹⁸ Then they went in to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offerings with all its articles, and the table of the showbread with all its articles. ¹⁹ Moreover all the articles which King Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in his transgression we have prepared and sanctified; and there they *are*, before the altar of the LORD."

2 Chronicles 29:20-36 Hezekiah Restores Temple Worship

²⁰ Then King Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Then he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD. ²² So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled *it* on the altar. Likewise they killed the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar. They also killed the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar. ²³ Then they brought out the male goats *for* the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them. ²⁴ And the priests killed them; and they presented their blood on the altar as a sin offering to make an atonement for all Israel, for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and the sin offering *be made* for all Israel. ²⁵ And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus *was* the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded *them* to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD *also* began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. ²⁸ So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all *this continued* until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. ³⁰ Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

³¹ Then Hezekiah answered and said, "Now *that* you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD." So the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a willing heart *brought* burnt offerings. ³² And the number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs; all these *were* for a burnt offering to the LORD. ³³ The consecrated things *were* six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. ³⁴ But the priests were too few, so that they could not skin all the burnt offerings; therefore their brethren the Levites helped them until the work was ended and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves, for the Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests. ³⁵ Also the burnt offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings and *with* the drink offerings for *every* burnt offering.

So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. ³⁶ Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.

Hezekiah came to the throne in approx 726 BC upon the death of his father, Ahaz (v.1-2) and immediately set about cleansing the Temple (v.3-11). During the reign of Ahaz the abominable worship and practices of Canaanite religion had been set up in the precincts of the Temple and the priesthood itself had become polluted. Hence the Levites set about to cleanse themselves first (v.12-15). In two periods of eight days they cleansed the two courts of the Temple (v.16-19) and then Hezekiah led the people in worship and sacrifice. This consisted of sin offerings for national atonement (v.20-24), hymn singing by the singers (v.25-26) and burnt offerings – a symbol of national dedication to the Lord (v.27-30). This was followed by individual and personal offerings (v.31-36)

1. Why do you think Hezekiah's mother was mentioned by name?

2. Are there any other examples of the mothers of kings being mentioned in Kings and Chronicles? What might be the significance to this?

3. Hezekiah's father was Ahaz (2 Chron. 28) what kind of a king was he? What was the divine assessment of his reign?

4. Why do you think Ahaz was not buried in the tombs of the kings of Israel in Jerusalem?

5. It is stated in Chronicles that Hezekiah specifically corrected some of the things that his father, Ahaz, had done wrong. Hint: compare 2 Kings 16:17-18 and 2 Chron. 28:24 with 2 Chron. 29:7-8. Can you list these things?

6. The king Abijah (2 Chron. 13:11) had boasted about the faithfulness of the southern kingdom of Judah compared to the northern kingdom of Israel. What did he refer to in particular? _____

7. Whose pattern did Hezekiah follow when reinstating the arrangements in the temple? Hint: look at 2 Chron. 2:4 and 5:1 _____

8. The Kohathites, Merarites and Gershonites are referred to in 29:12. What famous tribe did these three families belong to? _____

9. Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun were the founders of what specific customs? See 1 Chron. 6:31-48 and 25:1-31. _____

10. What was the purpose of the sin offering in 29:21? See Lev. 4:1–5:13 compare 29:24.

Good Habits for Bible Reading

1. Know what you want to change. What does sound daily Bible reading look like to you?
2. Make a list of the benefits of daily Bible reading. How do you expect this to transform you?
3. Commit to what you believe is an appropriate level of Bible reading. What are you going to change?
4. Beyond your daily readings, make a list of other works you plan to read over time.
5. Plan for regular reading time. Start slowly. Once you've established the habit, you can increase time or scope of reading.
6. Go for consistency rather than performance. Focus initially on reading regularly and progressively focus on quality over time.
7. Make use of fellowship in reading. Read with others. Create questions about the readings to discuss with others. Discuss together your successes and failures with this new habit.
8. Once the habit of regular reading is established, commit to this being a lifelong behavior that will define you.
9. Use Sunday (minimally) to examine how you have nurtured this habit during the past week.

Good Habits for Prayer Life

1. Know what you want to change. What does a healthy prayer life look like to you?
2. Make a list of the benefits of strong prayer life. How do you expect this to transform you?
3. Commit to what you believe is an appropriate prayer life. What are you going to change?
4. Make lists of the things you want to pray for regularly.
5. Plan for regular prayer time, but start slowly. Once you've established the habit, you can increase time or scope of prayer.
6. Go for consistency rather than performance. Focus on praying, not on how well you pray.
7. Make use of fellowship in prayer. Pray with others. Create prayer lists together. Discuss together your successes and failures with this new habit.
8. Once the habit of regular prayer is established, commit to this being a lifelong behavior that will define you.
9. Use Sunday (minimally) to examine how you have nurtured this habit during the past week.

2 Chronicles 30: Hezekiah Keeps the Passover

30 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel. ² For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. ³ For they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁴ And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly. ⁵ So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done *it* for a long *time* in the *prescribed* manner. ⁶ Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: “Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see. ⁸ Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. ⁹ For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children *will be treated* with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn *His* face from you if you return to Him.”

¹⁰ So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. ¹¹ Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. ¹² Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD. ¹³ Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. ¹⁴ They arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast *them* into the Brook Kidron. ¹⁵ Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD. ¹⁶ They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood *received* from the hand of the Levites. ¹⁷ For *there were* many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover *lambs* for everyone *who was* not clean, to sanctify *them* to the LORD. ¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone ¹⁹ *who* prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he is* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.” ²⁰ And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.

²¹ So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments. ²² And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they ate throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. ²³ Then the whole assembly agreed to keep *the feast* another seven days, and they kept it *another* seven days with gladness. ²⁴ For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep, and the leaders gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. ²⁵ The whole assembly of Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the assembly that came from Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt in Judah. ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, *there had* been nothing like this in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer *came up* to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.

Hezekiah's great Passover was not only a great revival in Judah, but it united the Northern Kingdom to the extent that some from the north responded to Hezekiah's invitation (v.1-12). Because everything was done suddenly (29:36) there was not time for the Passover to be kept at the normal time, so arrangements were made for it to be kept in the second month (v.13-16). The Law actually provided for this second Passover in Num. 9:10-14. Hezekiah offered a prayer to God asking for His blessing on the feast (v.18-19) and then the feast was celebrated with great rejoicing for fourteen days instead of seven (v.23) and peace offerings were offered by the people as a token of fellowship with God (v.22). This second Passover was the greatest since the time of Solomon and was followed by eradication of idolatry throughout the land of Judah.

11. After the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, had put off the celebration of the feasts by one month (1 Kings 12:32). What effect do you think that it would have on people in the north when Hezekiah delayed the date of the Passover celebration? _____

12. How did Hezekiah make the Passover feast known to the northern tribes?

13. How did the people in the north respond to Hezekiah's invitation? Note: by this time the Assyrians had invaded Israel and taken many of the people captive. _____

14. What changes did Hezekiah make to the prescribed way in which the Passover was to be celebrated? Hint: Look up Exodus 12 and Deut. 16:1-8

15. For what purpose was the Kidron Valley used in 30:14? Compare 15:16 and 29:16. Extra credit: What similarity can you find between the use of the Kidron Valley and the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (Ge-henna) in the New Testament?

16. Can you imagine the scene in 29:27 when as the first offerings were sacrificed on the altar the singing began accompanied by trumpets and other musical instruments? Everyone bowed in worship and the music continued until the burnt offering was completed. Have you ever felt moved by a musical performance?
17. In 30:17 the Levites killed the Passover lambs. Who should have performed this task? See Exodus 12:6 and Deut. 16:6. _____
18. What lesson can we learn from Hezekiah's inclusion of people who were not ritually clean and his prayer for God to pardon them (30:18-20)? Hint: Compare what Jesus teaches in Mark 7:21-23 and John 9:14-16. What is most important to God?

19. What other Old Testament celebration was extended by seven days? (2 Chron. 7:8-9)?

20. To which other great king is Hezekiah compared in this chapter? _____

2 Kings 18:4 ⁴ He removed the high places and broke the *sacred* pillars, cut down the wooden image [Asherah] 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 [Bronze Thing]

21. What were these high places that Hezekiah removed?

22. What connection did they have with ungodly worship? Compare Numbers 22:41, 33:51-53 and Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

23. Why do you think the Israelites were worshipping God on the high places in the time of Solomon?

24. What had God commanded regarding where He should be worshipped? See Deuteronomy 12:5-11

25. Which king reintroduced heathen high places into Israel? _____

26. Which king was the first to remove them? _____

27. Who was the last to do so? _____

28. What does this tell us about the people's attitude?

29. Does it matter where we worship? Can you support your answer from Scripture?

30. What are the present-day equivalents of the high places? How can we 'remove' them from our lives?

Asherah

“She was the wife of El in Ugaritic mythology, and is the goddess who is also called Athirau-Yammi: "She Who Walks on (or in) the Sea". She was the chief goddess of Tyre in the 15th century BC, and bore the appellation qudshu, "holiness." In the OT Asherah appears as a goddess by the side of Baal, whose consort she evidently became, at least among the Canaanites of the south. However, most biblical references to the name point obviously to some cult object of wood, which might be cut down and burned, possibly the goddesses' image (1 Kings 15:13, 2 Kings 21:7). Her prophets are mentioned (1 Kings 18:19), and the vessels used in her service referred to (2 Kings 23:4). The existence of numerous symbols, in each of which the goddess was believed to be immanent, led to the creation of numerous forms of her person, which were described as Asherim. The cult object itself, whatever it was, was utterly detestable to faithful worshipers of Yahweh (1 Kings 15:13), and was set up on the high places beside the "altars of incense" (hammanim) and the "stone pillars" (masseboth). The translation of asherah by "grove" in some translations follows a singular tradition preserved in the LXX and the Vulgate which apparently connects the goddess' image with the usual place of its adoration.”

There is archeological evidence that some of the Israelites worshipped Yahweh and Asherah at the same time, possibly seeing in them a husband/wife relationship. This denied the special relationship that God had with His people, which was a spiritual one.

31. Which of the ten commandments had Ahaz and the people broken?

32. In what sense is God jealous?

33. What sort of image ought we to have of God?

34. Believers are called the bride of Christ. On what basis? See Ephesians 5:22-33.

35. Solomon was led astray by the idols of his wives. What idols in our lives can lead us astray?

The bronze serpent (Nehushtan)

“The word occurs but once, namely, in 2 Kings 18:4. In the account there given of the reforms carried out by Hezekiah, it is said that "he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan." According to the Revised Version margin the word means "a piece of brass." If this be correct, the sense of the passage is that Hezekiah not only breaks the brazen serpent in pieces but, suiting the word to the act, scornfully calls it "a (mere) piece of brass." Hezekiah thus takes his place as a true reformer, and as a champion of the purification of the religion of Israel. This is the traditional interpretation of the passage, and fairly represents the Hebrew text as it now stands.”

We can understand Hezekiah's abhorrence of the high places and Asherah poles but he went further by destroying the bronze serpent, which the Israelites had been worshipping for 700 years. No other king had apparently put a stop to this superstition.

36. Why had the bronze serpent been made?

37. What was its value to the Israelites?

38. What was wrong with burning incense to it?

39. Jesus referred to it in John 3:14. What does he mean by being lifted up?

40. Are you superstitious? Do you wear amulets or armbands or lucky charms?

2 Chronicles 31: The Reforms of Hezekiah

Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the *sacred* pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession.

² And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites according to their divisions, each man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to serve, to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD. ³ The king also *appointed* a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as *it is* written in the Law of the LORD. ⁴ Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

⁵ As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithes of everything. ⁶ And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithes of oxen and sheep; also the tithes of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps.

⁷ In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. ⁸ And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel. ⁹ Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. ¹⁰ And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, “Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left *is* this great abundance.” ¹¹ Now Hezekiah commanded *them* to prepare rooms in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them. ¹² Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother *was* the next. ¹³ Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. ¹⁴ Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the East Gate, *was* over the freewill offerings to God, to distribute the offerings of the LORD and the most holy things. ¹⁵ And under him *were* Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, *his* faithful assistants in the cities of the priests, to distribute allotments to their brethren by divisions, to the great as well as the small.

¹⁶ Besides those males from three years old and up who were written in the genealogy, they distributed to everyone who entered the house of the LORD his daily portion for the work of his service, by his division, ¹⁷ and to the priests who were written in the genealogy according to their father's house, and to the Levites from twenty years old and up according to their work, by their divisions, ¹⁸ and to all who were written in the genealogy—their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them—for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness. ¹⁹ Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, *who were* in the fields of the common-lands of their cities, in every single city, *there were* men who were designated by name to distribute portions to all the males among the priests and to all who were listed by genealogies among the Levites. ²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what *was* good and right and true before the LORD his God. ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart. So he prospered.

Chapter 31

Hezekiah's great reformation beginning with the Passover in ch.30 then stimulated all of the people to renewed activity in God's service. They cleansed the land of Judah (and a portion of Israel) of idolatry (31:1). When Hezekiah ordered the courses of the priests and Levites (v.2-4) the people willingly contributed their offerings and tithes (v. 5-10). The rest of the chapter deals with the methodical arrangements which Hezekiah made in appointing officers to dispose of the tithes (v. 11-19) and concludes with a summary of his work and the Divine assessment of his character (v.20-21).

41. Notice what King Hezekiah contributed in verse 3. What does this tell us about our service to our God?

42. What practical reasons might be behind the instructions for only those living in Jerusalem to bring the portions for the priests and Levites?

43. How were the priests and Levites usually supported? Hint: see Deut. 14:28-29.

44. There were so many tithes brought that it took four months to stockpile all of the contributions. Who was going to benefit from this collection of food? (Verses 15-19)

45. If the Levites and priests had all of their needs provided for by the contributions of the king and people, what would they then be able to do with their time? How would this benefit the rest of the people in turn?

The great test of Hezekiah's faith came in his 14th year when Sennacherib, king of Assyria came down from the north and captured 46 cities of Judah. Hezekiah reversed his previous policy towards Assyria and attempted to appease Sennacherib with treasures from the palace and temple. 2 Kings 18:9 records the invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. This had taken place after Hezekiah's reforms and the celebration of the great Passover. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, was under siege for three years and finally fell to Sargon. A few years later, Sennacherib came against the fortified cities of Judah and succeeded in taking forty-six of them. Hezekiah sent a message north to Lachish to implore the Assyrians to withdraw their forces and only impose a tribute on Judah. The Assyrian king demanded 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold (2 Kings 18:14) which Hezekiah took from the temple and the royal treasuries. The Assyrian records agree with the Biblical record on the 30 talents of gold, but state that Sennacherib received 800 talents of silver from Hezekiah (This seems like an extremely large amount of silver. Perhaps it was another of Sennacherib's exaggerated boasts. Even the amount given in Kings of 300 talents would be about 10,500 kg or 23,100 pounds of silver according to the NIV Study Bible!)

2 Kings 18:5-13 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. 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*.

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.

46. What is the reason given for the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel?

47. How do you think the people of Judah, in the south, would have reacted to the news of Samaria being taken and the people of Israel going into captivity in Assyria?

48. The passage on the next page from Isaiah 14:24-27 was a prophecy given by Isaiah probably during the reign of king Ahaz, Hezekiah's father (Isa. 14:28 states that the following prophecy against the Philistines was given in the year that Ahaz died). How do you think that faithful Israelites would have felt when they heard this prophecy against the Assyrians? Do you think that the fall of the northern kingdom would have made a difference to them?

Isaiah 14:24-27 Assyria Destroyed

²⁴ The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying,
“Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass,
And as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

²⁵ That I will break the Assyrian in My land,
And on My mountains tread him underfoot.

Then his yoke shall be removed from them,
And his burden removed from their shoulders.

²⁶ This *is* the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth,
And this *is* the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

²⁷ For the LORD of hosts has purposed,

And who will annul *it*?
His hand *is* stretched out,
And who will turn it back?”

Isaiah 10:5-34

⁵ “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger

And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.

⁶ I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath

I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, [Isaiah's son, Mahershalalhashbaz, whose name means ‘Speed the spoil, take the prey’]

And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

⁷ Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But *it is* in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.

⁸ For he says, ‘Are not my princes altogether kings?

⁹ Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus?

¹⁰ As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols,

Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

¹¹ As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?”

¹² Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *that He will say*, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.” ¹³ For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasuries; so I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man*.¹⁴ My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, And as one gathers eggs *that are left*, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved *his wing*,

²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: “O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner of Egypt. ²⁵ For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction.” ²⁶ And the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.

²⁷ It shall come to pass in that day *that* his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.

²⁸ He has come to Aiath, he has passed Migron; at Michmash he has attended to his equipment. ²⁹ They have gone along the ridge, they have taken up lodging at Geba. Ramah is afraid, Gibeah of Saul has fled. ³⁰ Lift up your voice, O daughter of Gallim! Cause it to be heard as far as Laish— O poor Anathoth! ³¹ Madmenah has fled, The inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge. ³² As yet he will remain at Nob that day; He will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, The hill of Jerusalem.

³³ Behold, the Lord, The LORD of hosts, Will lop off the bough with terror; Those of high stature *will be hewn down*, And the haughty will be humbled. ³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

49. Isaiah 10:5-34 records another prophecy of Isaiah against the Assyrians. The invasion of Judah is described (vv.28-32) but the Assyrian only shakes his fist at the city of Jerusalem on Mount Zion. What is the purpose given for the Assyrian invasion in verse 6 above?

50. Why does God say that He is going to punish the Assyrians?

51. What verses would give you hope if you were living in Jerusalem in the time of King Hezekiah?

Isaiah 20:1-6 The Sign Against Egypt and Ethiopia

20 In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it, ² at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

³ Then the LORD said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia, ⁴ so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. ⁵ Then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation and Egypt their glory. ⁶ And the inhabitant of this territory will say in that day, 'Surely such *is* our expectation, wherever we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and how shall we escape?'"

52. God gave the people a sign in Isaiah's unusual behaviour. This demonstrated to the people of Judah that it was foolish to trust in Egypt and Ethiopia to save them. What did Isaiah do, and how did this relate to the Egyptians and Ethiopians? What would be the effect of Isaiah's behaviour on the people of Judah?

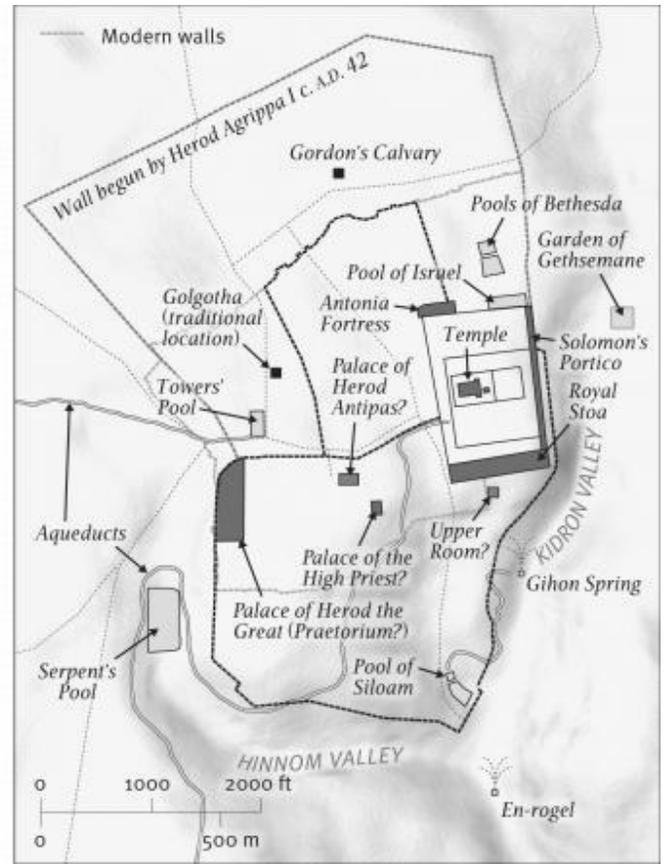
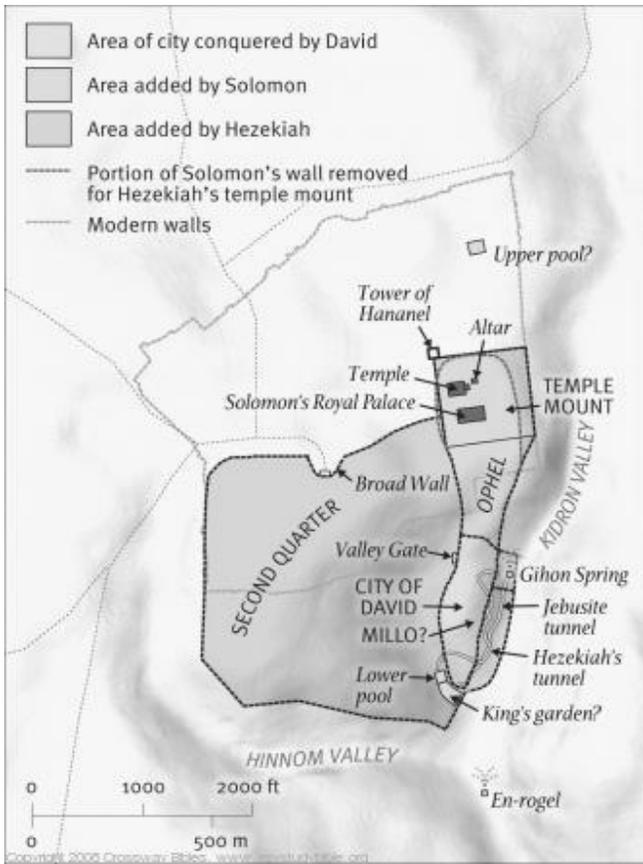
53. It seems as if there were many in the court of King Hezekiah who urged him to make an alliance with Egypt. In Isaiah 30:2 God says that His people were like obstinate children who went down to Egypt for help and protection without consulting Him. He rebuked them for going down to Egypt for help and for trusting in Egyptian horses and chariots instead of the LORD their God (Isaiah 31:1-3). What does God say that He intends to do in this chapter (especially 31:4-5 and v.8)?

54. Make a list of the preparations which Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem made for the siege in Isaiah 22:8-11. Compare 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chron. 32:5. There is archaeological evidence for most of these preparations, check the earlier notes on Hezekiah's conduit and the Broad Wall. The map on the left below shows the extension of the city in the time of Hezekiah.

55. What did the people fail to do in the midst of these preparations for war (Isaiah 22:11)?

56. Isaiah 22:15-19 describes one of Hezekiah's chief officials, Shebna, who was in charge of the palace and probably second only to the king. It seems as if Shebna had some really big ideas about himself and had even had a special grave carved out on a high rock near Jerusalem. What does God say will happen to Shebna in Isaiah 22:19? Look at 2 Kings 18:18 and Isa. 36:3, what is Shebna's position at this point?

57. Eliakim is described as God's servant in Isaiah 22:20-22. Whose job is he going to take? Where else in the Bible is this verse about "the key to the house of David" and "what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open" quoted? Who do you think this might also be referring to?



The King of Assyria sent his commander-in-chief (the Tartan), his chief officer (the Rabsaris) and his chief of staff (the Rabshakeh) along with a great army against Jerusalem. This event is recorded almost identically in 2 Kings 18:17 to 20:19 and Isaiah 36:2-37:38. It is also mentioned in 2 Chron. 32:9-23. The record in Kings seems to be the most extensive so this is the one we have reproduced here. Anything that the other records add has been included in square brackets.

57. Why do you think that the King of Assyria sent such important people to speak with Hezekiah?

58. Why do you think that so much space is devoted to the record of the Assyrian invasion?

59. Notice where the Assyrians meet with King Hezekiah's advisors "by the aqueduct from the Upper Pool which was by the highway to the Fuller's Field." Why is this location significant?

2 Kings 18:17-36

Sennacherib Boasts Against the LORD

¹⁷ Then the king of Assyria sent *the* Tartan [commander-in-chief] *the* Rabсарis [chief officer], *and the* Rabshakeh [chief of staff] from Lachish [2 Chron. 32:9, 'he and all the forces that were with him laid siege against 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? 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."

60. What happened previously in this location?

61. Who came out from the king to meet the Rabshakeh, commander-in-chief?

62. The Rabshakeh uses clever arguments and propaganda against King Hezekiah and the people of Judah. Can you summarize his arguments from verses 19 to 25? What is his concluding argument (verse 25)?

63. Why did Hezekiah's men, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, request that the Rabshakeh speak Aramaic (v. 26) rather than Hebrew?

64. The Rabshakeh replies in very disparaging terms (actually, quite rude language), letting the men know the true intent of the Assyrians. What does his reply mean?

65. Instead of replying in Aramaic the Rabshakeh calls out loudly in Hebrew. He tries a different tack in his next speech. Of what does this language remind you – you shall “eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree”? (Hint: look at Micah 4:4). What was the Rabshakeh promising the people of Jerusalem?

66. The Rabshakeh taunts the people with the words, “Have any of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 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? Who among all the gods have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?” What does this statement tell you about who the people of Samaria were worshipping? What does it say about how the Rabshakeh regarded the God of Hezekiah?

67. King Hezekiah had commanded the people not to answer the Rabshakeh with even a word. This must have been very difficult for the people. Have you ever encountered a situation like this where it is really hard to NOT say something? The Lord Jesus Christ did. At his trial he did not reply to the taunts and false charges brought against him. The prophet Isaiah describes him as

being “oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). It was really hard NOT to say something when

68. Eliakim, Shebna and Joah tore their clothes in despair and went and told Hezekiah. What else did the king do besides tearing his clothes and covering himself in sackcloth (signs of mourning – Gen. 37:34)?

69. What did Hezekiah send his men to ask the prophet Isaiah to do for the people? Notice how Hezekiah describes the people in 19:4.

70. How does Hezekiah describe the Rabshakeh's mission (19:4)?

71. Isaiah replies with a short but pithy message for Hezekiah (19:6-7). What is the important word here?

72. Sennacherib heard rumours that the king of Egypt was coming to war against him. So he sends the Rabshakeh again in a last-ditch effort to get Hezekiah to capitulate. Verses 10 to 13 of chapter 19 record his taunts in a letter using similar language as before but with another list of nations destroyed by the king of Assyria and the failure of their idols to save them. What same mistake is Sennacherib making when he lists all of the idols that have failed to save the people who worship them?

73. What does Hezekiah do with the letter from the Assyrian king?

74. Hezekiah's prayer shows that he realized exactly what the boasts and slander of the Assyrians meant. Who else had their God compared to idols without any power to save? (Hint: Look at Exodus 7:11; 1 Kings 20:28; Luke 11:15). Can you think of any other direct competitions recorded in the Bible between the true God and false “gods/idols?”

Hezekiah's Political Crisis from "Story of the Bible" by H.P. Mansfield

The political crisis which now disturbed the reign of Hezekiah demands the closest attention of every keen student of the Bible. There is, perhaps, no more dramatic incident in Scripture than the record of the triumphal descent of the mighty Assyrian, his boastful assurances that he would reduce Jerusalem to pulp, and his ignominious defeat.

This tremendous crisis and deliverance foreshadows the impending crisis of this age predicted in Ezekiel 38, when the Russian Power will re-enact the same self-confident advance upon Palestine, only to experience the same measure of defeat.

Thus we are living in times similar to those of Hezekiah's day.

In addition, the events of Hezekiah's times form the background of the prophecies of Isaiah and anticipate the future. The people of his day had actually witnessed such a crisis as will usher in the Kingdom of God in the future. They could hardly doubt that what God had accomplished in their day He will repeat in the future.

These incidents must have made a tremendous impression upon the faithful in Judah.

So important are these incidents in the purpose of Yahweh that He has recorded the political and personal crises that disturbed Hezekiah's life no less than three times in His book (2 Kings 17; 2 Chron. 32; Isaiah 36). In Isaiah chapters 36-39, the prophet turns historian because the things he describes in these chapters form the typical foundation for the events he predicts, many of which have yet to be fulfilled. In the embattled city of Jerusalem, a drama was enacted seven hundred years before Christ that foreshadowed the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah. The King was first brought low in sickness, was then made great in victory by the defeat of Sennacherib, was exalted over the surrounding nations, and finally completed the spiritual revival in Judah which he had commenced at the beginning of his reign. Christ too, was brought low in the sickness of mortality 1900 years ago; will be made great in victory in the Age to come; will establish his power; will complete the spiritual revival he commenced at his first advent.

The grand prophecy of Isaiah cannot be properly understood without some conception of Hezekiah's life and times.

2 Kings 19:1-19

Isaiah Assures Deliverance

19 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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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.’”

⁵ So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶ 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 [‘underlings,’ NIV] of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. ⁷ 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.’”

Sennacherib's Threat and Hezekiah's Prayer

⁸ Then *the* Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. ⁹ And the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia [‘the Cushite king of Egypt,’ NIV], “Look, he has come out to make war with you.” So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ “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.” ¹¹ Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered? ¹² 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? ¹³ Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?”

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.”

2 Kings 19:20-34 - The Word of the LORD Concerning Sennacherib

²⁰ 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.' ²¹ 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!

²² '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.

²³ 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 ['its farthest height,' Isa. 36:24], *to* its fruitful forest.

²⁴ I have dug and drunk strange water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up
all the brooks of defense ['the streams of Egypt,' NIV]."

²⁵ '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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 'But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against
Me.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ 'This *shall be* a sign to you: You shall eat this year such as grows of itself,
And in the second year what springs from the same;
Also in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.

³⁰ And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward,
And bear fruit upward.

³¹ 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.'

³² "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.

³³ By the way that he came,
By the same shall he return;
And he shall not come into this city,'
Says the LORD.

³⁴ 'For I will defend this city, to save it
For My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"

Isaiah's message to Hezekiah again identifies the real problem. The blasphemy levelled against the God of Israel had not gone unheard. God replies with a sarcastic depiction of Jerusalem as a girl tossing her head and making faces behind the back of the Assyrians as they run away! The Assyrians boasted in their might and power, but God tells them that this was all part of His plan to punish unfaithful and idolatrous Israel. He asks, "Haven't you heard this?" as if everyone else already knew! Which they would, if they had heard or read Isaiah's prophecy about the Assyrians in Isaiah chapters 10 and 14! The Assyrians were the only ones who didn't know what was going on! God goes on to tell the Assyrians that, by the way, *He* was going to put a hook in the Assyrian nose just like the Assyrians pictured themselves taking captives with ropes attached to rings in their noses and God would turn them back by the same way in which they came. What an end for the boastful Assyrians!

Hezekiah as a Type of the Messiah

1. Isaiah prophesied of the birth of a son (Isa. 7:14)
2. Hezekiah's mother's name, Abijah, means "Yah is my father" (see 2 Sam. 7:14 where it is prophesied of Jesus that God would be his father). Abijah came from a faithful family (2 Chron. 29:1) and was faithful herself as was Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28-30). Both were of the line of David.
3. Hezekiah introduced sweeping reforms in worship at the beginning of his reign as will Jesus when he returns.
4. After Hezekiah's great prosperity, God "left him to try him" (2 Chron. 32:31). Jesus was given the Holy Spirit "without measure" at his baptism. He was then led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.
5. Hezekiah prayed for the people and God forgave them, Jesus died for his people so that they might be forgiven. Hezekiah's prayers when facing death were heard as were the Lord's (Heb. 5:7).
6. Hezekiah was smitten with a leprosy-like disease, typical of mortality, Jesus had the same nature as ourselves (2 Cor. 5:21).
7. Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord after 3 days (2 Kings 20:5-8), after three days in the grave, Jesus rose to be glorified in God's presence (John 20:17).
8. The destruction of Sennacherib's army (2 Kings 19:35-37) parallels the destruction of the northern invader in Ezekiel 39:4.
9. Hezekiah married Hephzibah ('my delight is in her,' 2 Kings 21:1) who is a type of the ecclesia of God in Isa. 62:4.
10. Hezekiah completed the restoration of divine worship (Isa. 38:20; Prov. 25:1) and the remaining peaceful years of his reign (2 Chron. 32:27-33) parallel the coming reign of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

Can you find any other parallels between great King Hezekiah and the Lord Jesus Christ?

Then Isaiah gives a specific sign for Hezekiah himself in verse 29: "This year you will eat what grows of itself." Apparently Sennacherib had destroyed or confiscated the harvest that had been sown the previous fall. The people would only have the second growth that came from seeds dropped in the previous year's harvest. If Sennacherib came to Israel and Judah in March or April (the time of harvest) and left too late in the fall (October) for new crops to be planted, they would then have to eat "in the second year what springs from that." However, by the third year everything would be back to normal and they would be able to "sow and reap" and "plant vineyards and eat their fruit."

75. What does Isaiah say will happen to the remnant of Judah who escaped? Who would get the credit for doing all of this?

76. What were the four things which Isaiah lists that the Assyrian would NOT do against Jerusalem (v.32)?

77. For whose sake was the LORD God going to defend Jerusalem?

78. What did the people of Judah see outside Jerusalem the next morning?

79. This event caused Sennacherib to return to Nineveh and stay there. What happened to him in Nineveh?

The record in Kings and Isaiah ends with the destruction of the Assyrian army – an event not recorded amongst the Assyrian records of their campaigns! Such a huge loss would not look good! The record in Chronicles adds: "Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided him on every side. And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter."

The king of the north had been destroyed by the LORD God of Israel, the rightful king was established in Jerusalem and many gifts were brought to him so that afterwards all nations exalted him – does this remind you of a future time? Look at Psalm 22:27; 72:8-11.

Now let's take a step back and look at what happened inside Jerusalem while all of these international events were taking place with the Assyrian threat outside the walls. In the midst of all of the political intrigue at the court in Jerusalem with pressure from his advisors to go down to Egypt for help, Hezekiah became ill. Isaiah came to him and told him that the illness was terminal – he was going to die.

2 Kings 20:1-11 – Hezekiah's Life Extended

20 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.'"

Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, "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.

And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "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 third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen 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.'"

Then Isaiah said, "Take a lump of figs." So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

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 third day?"

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 ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?"

And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, let the shadow go backward ten degrees."

So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.

80. What does Hezekiah ask the LORD to remember?

81. How far had Isaiah gone before the LORD sends him back to Hezekiah with His reply?

82. How does God describe Hezekiah? Who else is described this way? (Hint: see Isaiah 55:4).

83. For whose sake did God say He would deliver Jerusalem?

84. How many days would it be before Hezekiah could go up to the house of the LORD? Who else was delivered on the third day?

85. What sign did God give to Hezekiah that he would recover?

Hezekiah and the Songs of Degrees, or Ascents

Bible passages: 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38

1. Which Psalms are these? _____
2. Why are there fifteen? _____
3. How many are attributed to David and Solomon? _____
4. Who do you think might have composed the others? _____

The sign given to Hezekiah that his illness would be cured was the shadow on the sundial (Heb. ma'alah) of Ahaz going back ten degrees. Strong's Concordance gives the following meanings for the Hebrew word ma'alah: elevation; a journey to a higher place; a step or grade-mark; a progression leading to a climax; things that come up; degree; deal; go up; stair; step; storey. The same word is translated dial, as in sundial.

It appears that the sundial was a flight of steps (possibly that which led from the king's palace to the Temple, 'the ascent [ma'alah] by which he went up to the house of the Lord,' 2 Chronicles 9:4). A nearby building would cast its shadow across the stairs and the time could be read from the position of that shadow. For the shadow to go backwards was an obvious miracle (the sign) and perhaps can be explained by God's Shekinah glory outshining the sun and creating new shadows at a different angle.

In his Thanksgiving Psalm (Isaiah 38), Hezekiah rejoices at his new lease of life and promises to praise God for the rest of his life.

5. What does the king fear most about dying?

6. Verse 19 implies another reason for fearing an early death – what could that be?

7. Hezekiah talks about *his* songs (verse 20). What do you think he is referring to?

The Songs of Degrees, or Ascents, were sung by pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem at the times of the set feasts. There is a progression from Psalm 120 to 134 but also a pattern; there are five groups of three psalms each. It has been suggested that the first psalm in each group speaks of distress or a problem, the second of prayer/trust, the third of deliverance and peace.

8. Choose one group and see if this sequence applies _____
9. Which of these psalms could have particular reference to Hezekiah's deliverance from death? _____
10. In what sense do we "go up" to the house of the Lord?

Isaiah 39:1-8: The Babylonian Envoys

39 At that time Merodach-Baladan¹ the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.² And Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them 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.

³ 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 to me from a far country, from Babylon.”⁴ 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.”

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:⁶ ‘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.⁷ ‘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.’”

⁸ So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken *is* good!” For he said, “At least there will be peace and truth in my days.”

After Hezekiah's miraculous recovery he was visited by messengers from Merodach-Baladan, the king of Babylon. Merodach-Baladan had briefly re-established Babylonian independence from Assyria until being forced to flee by Sennacherib. It seems as if he was trying to draw Hezekiah into an alliance against Assyria. Hezekiah had previously rebelled against paying tribute to Assyria, but he made a mistake by being overly hospitable to the Babylonian messengers and showing them all of his treasures. As a result, Isaiah prophesied (115 years before it happened!) that Judah would be taken away to Babylon as captives.

86. Who came to see Hezekiah with a get-well card and gifts after his illness?

87. What mistake did Hezekiah make?

88. What consequences did Isaiah predict?

89. How long would it be until this took place?

90. How did Hezekiah respond to this message?

The story of Hezekiah concludes in Isaiah ch. 39. The next chapter (ch. 40) begins with the LORD God speaking to Jerusalem, saying, "Comfort, yes, comfort My people! Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins." The chapter continues with the words: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

91. Where are these words quoted in the New Testament? Who is this talking about and when will it all happen?

Isaiah 39 concluded with Hezekiah's statement that the Word of the LORD spoken by Isaiah was good. There would be peace and security in his lifetime and a message of peace and security for the future spoken of in the following chapters of Isaiah. Jerusalem would not be forgotten; in the future the city would hear the good tidings of the reign of Messiah. The nations around Jerusalem would be as insignificant as a drop of water in a bucket and dust on a measuring scale. The great God of Israel, the Creator of heaven and earth, He who was mightier than the idols of wood and stone, would look after His people like a shepherd, gathering them in His arms and holding them close to His heart, gently leading them through their lives. Not only was this mighty God of King Hezekiah much greater and more powerful than boastful Sennacherib and all of the idols of Assyria, He would never grow tired or weary, He had given strength to the weary King and increased the power of the remnant of Judah. His promise also said that "those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Let's take the lessons we have learned from great King Hezekiah and try to be like him in making changes in our minds and lives. Let's decide to serve God with all our hearts while we are young and get rid of anything in our lives that might take us away from God. Let's be like Hezekiah and read God's Word carefully and regularly to find out what He wants us to do and how He wants us to think. Let's put our trust in God and believe His great promises. Let us choose good advice from people we trust to give us good direction. Let's not be afraid of any adversary for the God we serve is mightier and more powerful! Let's take all our problems to God in prayer. Let's sing with all our hearts of God's deliverance! Let's look forward to meeting Hezekiah in the Kingdom and telling him how we studied his life at Kids' Camp and how we were encouraged by his example!

Hezekiah is resting alongside his fathers on the hill outside Jerusalem where the tombs of King David's descendants are. He had made a great contribution to the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah and "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done" (2 Chron. 29:2). His life is an exciting story of battles, threats, intrigue, illness and personal and national triumph through dependence on the LORD his God. Soon – *very soon* – Hezekiah's descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ, will return to raise Hezekiah and all the faithful from the dead, to deliver Jerusalem from the threat of another Northern invader, and establish an everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness. As Hezekiah himself wrote: "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore" (Psalm 125:1-2, NIV).

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