

# HEZEKIAH: RESTORER OF ISRAEL'S FAITH



# KEY SCRIPTURES: 2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chronicles 28:19–25; 29:1–10

- “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.” Isaiah’s words fell like drops of rain on a slab of granite, unable to penetrate the hardness of the king’s heart. Now Ahaz, the twelfth king of Judah, lay cold as stone on his grave.

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah and Ahaz had made an ungodly alliance with the King of Assyria.

- Ahaz reliance on Assyria and its pantheon of gods had not brought him the help he sought, but the trouble he feared.
- In his effort to curry favor, Ahaz had shut the doors of the temple and set up altars on every street corner in Jerusalem. He had built up high places throughout Judah, shrines where the gods of other nations could be conveniently worshiped.
- This had reduced Israel to a puppet state of the Assyrians. They became one of many nations forced to pay an annual tribute of silver and gold to Assyria.

- After Ahaz's death, his son Hezekiah mourned not for his father but for his father's appalling unfaithfulness to the Lord. He began his reign, not by building up the walls of Jerusalem, but by ridding the city of its idolatrous practices.
- In the first month of his reign, he reopened the temple in Jerusalem and then quickly restored its worship. After that he pulled down the high places, inviting the people of both Judah and Israel to worship the Lord at the temple.



- Then, in preparation for an Assyrian assault, he built up the city walls and began stockpiling weapons and shields. In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, attacked and captured all the fortified cities of Judah. Though fear was rampant, Hezekiah urged his people: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles."

- Sometime later Sennacherib, who was camped several miles southwest of Jerusalem, sent his officers and an army ahead of him with a message calculated to terrify Hezekiah and his people.
- In a meeting with the Assyrian officials, Hezekiah and his leadership heard the field commander of the Assyrians boast: “This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says:

- ‘What are you basing your confidence on? You say you have strategy and military strength—but your words are empty. Who are you depending on, that you rebel against me? Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man’s hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. And if you say to me, “We are depending on the LORD our God”—isn’t he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, “You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem”? Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria.’



- The men of Hezekiah told the official should speak to them in Hebrew so they could fully understand what he was saying.
- But instead of complying, the man kept hammering them in the Assyrian tongue:  
“Why should the men sitting on the wall not hear my words? They will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine just like you if we place Jerusalem under a siege.”



- Then he called out loudly in Hebrew: “This is what the king of Assyria says: ‘Don’t let Hezekiah deceive you. He can’t possibly deliver you from my hand. Don’t let him persuade you to trust in the LORD. Make peace and surrender. Come out from behind your walls. Then you and your families will eat from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own well until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain, new wine, bread and honey.’”

- Choose life and not death! Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the king of Assyria? How then can your god deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”
- Hezekiah shook when he heard of Sennacherib’s boast. It wasn’t from fear—not of men anyway—but from his certainty that the man had crossed a line no man should ever cross, not even a king.

- Then Hezekiah tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. Entering the temple he fell on his face and prayed:  
“O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has spoken to insult the living God.

- “You know, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have crushed many nations, destroying their gods. But these were not gods at all, only pieces of wood and stone fashioned by men’s hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God.”

- By your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord. And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains...’ “But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.” (2 Kings 19:20–23, 27–28)

- That night, as Hezekiah lay sleeping on his bed safe behind Jerusalem's high walls, 185,000 men perished suddenly and mysteriously in the Assyrian camp. Finding his army decimated, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh. Many years later, the king of Assyria went into the temple in Nineveh to worship his god, Nisroch. As he bowed down, two of his sons slaughtered him. The great Sennacherib, the king who had boasted of his invincible power, lay still as a stone in the temple of his god.





СОДАНТ АЛЕХУ ТЕРСОН

- Hezekiah's character stands in sharp contrast to the character of the other two kings who appear in the story. His father, Ahaz, trusted not in the God of Israel, but in the gods of other nations, particularly Assyria, believing them to be the source of its great power. By currying favor with idols, he must have hoped to increase his own power. But the reverse happened, and Judah grew weaker, not stronger.

- Sennacherib was like him, trusting the power of his empire and then attempting to undermine Judah's trust in God. Three times his spokesman advised the people, "Don't trust Hezekiah when he tells you your god will save you. It's a fantasy! Your god is no different than the gods of all the other nations, none of whom have been able to resist us." Then, to entice them further, he promised to take them to a land of ease, a place with olive trees and honey, admonishing them to "choose life and not death."

- It's no accident that Sennacherib's words directly contradict the counsel of Moses just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, a land filled with milk and honey.
- Moses knew that there would be temptation to take the easy way out. He knew that there would be times that the people would be confronted with the choices that we all face...God's way or the world's way. Listen to Moses' words.

- “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

- By attempting to persuade the people of Judah that everything good in life comes from trusting in the power of human beings, Sennacherib urged them toward the path of least resistance. Fortunately for Judah, Hezekiah recognized the lie and continued to trust in the Lord, thus inviting God's help and assuring Judah's survival.

- Though the details of our stories differ vastly from the story of this ancient king, the principles are identical. We are still assailed by voices assuring us that the good life consists of amassing wealth, accumulating personal power, achieving success, and forging the kind of relationships we desire.

- But to mistake earthly blessings for the life that only God can give is to place our future in jeopardy. The choice is ours to make—today, tomorrow, and the day after that. The joy we seek lies in loving the Lord our God, listening to his voice, and holding fast to him.
- Remember when we destroy the idols in our lives (even the ones established by our ancestors) we will have more freedom than we ever knew possible. God will give us everything that we need...everything!!