

# **CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## **DHW BIBLE CLASS**

### **LESSON 11A**

## **THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS**

### **CHAPTER 18**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is the beginning of a major division in 2 Kings. Most Bible students divide 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings into three major divisions: First division: From the Last Days of David to the Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 1:1-11:43); Second division: From the Divided Kingdom to the Fall of Samaria (1 Kings 12:1 to 2 Kings 17:41--bringing in the Single Kingdom period) and Third division: From the Fall of Samaria to the Fall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:1-25:30).

King Ahaz's religious and political policies had brought Judah to the brink of bankruptcy and destruction. He had closed the Temple in Jerusalem, and in its place promoted the worship of Baal by erecting a pagan altar where he commanded the priests to offer burnt sacrifices and incense. He had followed the ways of the kings in Israel, whose last king was King Hoshea before the Assyrians invaded and destroyed the kingdom. Hezekiah who succeeded his idolatrous and compromising father as King of Judah

reversed the policies of his father. Although Hezekiah was not perfect, he exemplified himself as a good and godly king who was determined to please God even in a difficult situation. He is a noble example of a godly leader.

The inspired writer had written much about his reign. He gives three chapters in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings to describe him and his reign (chapters 18-20); Ezra devotes four chapters in 2 Chronicles (chapters 29-32); and the prophet Isaiah apportions four chapters in his book (Isaiah 36-39). It will give us a more complete understanding and appreciation of Hezekiah and the works that he had done by reading all the above-mentioned passages. This present study will focus primarily on the record of Hezekiah's life in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings and make occasional references to the other parallel passages to highlight certain significant aspects of his life and ministry. Here is a king who was "strong and of a good courage" to do what is "right in the sight of the LORD." There are many valuable lessons to be learned concerning God and man.

#### **OUTLINE**

1. Hezekiah Reformed Judah (vv.1-12);
2. Sennacherib Besieged Jerusalem (vv.18:13).

## COMMENTARY

### Hezekiah Reformed Judah –18:1-12

After the death of his father, King Ahaz, Hezekiah ascended the throne of Judah. He was twenty-five when he began his rule over Judah. He ruled Judah for a total of 29 years. It was in the third year of Hoshea's reign in Israel. It was a time when Israel was in its final years of its existence. Therefore, he witnessed the invasion and destruction of Samaria by Sargon II King of Assyria. The divine writer gave him full marks for his reign in Judah. Hezekiah *did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did* (v.3). He was not like his father, King Ahaz. In fact, Hezekiah was the exact opposite. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, unlike his father who did that which was evil. He followed the example of King David, a man after God's own heart. He was one of the very best kings in the history of Judah from the perspective of his trust in God and his faithfulness to His commandments. This commendation was given only to three other kings, namely, Asa (1 Kings 15:11), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:3), and later Josiah (2 Kings 22:2).

Hezekiah, whose name means "JEHOVAH strengthens", realised that his father had led Judah in the same path of apostasy and disobedience as rulers of Israel had their kingdom which eventually brought about its downfall. Determined to live up to his name, he started straightaway by removing the "high places" which his predecessors did not do. He also

ordered the destruction of images, idols and pillars which were used in these places for the worship of the LORD. In addition to removing all the "high places", he ordered the destruction of the "brazen serpent" which Moses had made in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9). It was made as a symbol to remind the people that they were to put their trust in God. Preserved in Jerusalem, it became a divine relic in the minds of the people who had also made it an object of their worship. The "children of Israel" were burning incense to it (observe that the divine writer uses the ancient name "Israel" to describe Judah as Israel, the Northern Kingdom was no more). It was so popular that they named it "Nehushtan" which simply means "the Bronze Thing." The symbol had become the object of praise and worship. This is not pleasing in the eyes of God. It had to be removed.

By removing the "Nehushtan", Hezekiah trusted the LORD wholeheartedly. This trust is described as "he clave to the LORD" (v.6). The word "clave" (Hebrew, *dabaq*) means to lean completely and totally on another. Ezra in the book of Chronicles gives some details on the religious reforms which he carried out. He told the priests to sanctify themselves so that they would be ceremonially clean in order to cleanse and reopen the Temple and do the sacrifices as commanded by the LORD. The priests then cleansed the Temple (2 Chronicles 29:5-19). Then Hezekiah resumed the observance of all the burnt offerings as required by the

Mosaic Law (2 Chronicles 29:20-36). He also revived the observance of the Passover feast and sent letters to all Judah and the Northern Kingdom to gather in Jerusalem to observe the Passover feast as commanded by the LORD (2 Chronicles 30:1-27).

Hezekiah's actions resulted in "the LORD was with him just like He was with Joseph (Genesis 39:3, 21, 23). Hezekiah prospered wherever he went. He was freed from serving the Assyrian king, and he won a victorious battle against the Philistines from "the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city". The latter phrase is a metaphor depicting the king's in every military action he took (v.8). At this juncture, the divine writer inserted the summary account of the downfall of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, repeating the same thing which he had earlier recorded.

Apparently, the mention of the Northern Kingdom is to contrast the consequences of the kings' actions. Israel's downfall was caused by their continued rejection and disobedience to the LORD, whereas Hezekiah enjoyed success because he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.

### **Sennacherib Besieged Jerusalem – 18:13**

Hezekiah had ruled for fourteen years and there was relative peace in the Kingdom that allowed him to carry out his many religious reforms. He was also able to resist and totally subdue the Philistines. At this time, Sennacherib was the King of Assyria, having acceded to the throne after the death of his father, Sargon II, who had

enslaved Israel before he died. He continued the military exploits of his father. In his royal annals, he had recorded eight military expeditions including the one against Judah. He claimed that he had captured forty-six major cities and an unspecified number of villages of Judah (v.13).<sup>1</sup>The current attack was apparently provoked by Hezekiah's refusal to continue to pay tribute to Assyria. Sennacherib reacted very quickly and threatened to invade Judah. Hezekiah quickly sent a letter of apology to Sennacherib who was in Lachish, a major city of Judah but currently in the hands of the Assyrians. Hezekiah paid a very heavy price for the peace of his Kingdom. He took his own royal treasures and also those from the house of the LORD to pay the tribute. He should have acted like David who would not succumb to such threats but go to war against the aggressor by trusting the LORD for deliverance and victory. Hezekiah was hoping Sennacherib would leave Judah alone after he had paid the tribute money.

Sennacherib was not satisfied. He sent a delegation of three, namely, Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh from Lachish where the Assyrians camped with a large contingent of soldiers to Jerusalem. They arrived in Jerusalem and wanted to speak to King Hezekiah, who instead sent three of his officials to meet the Assyrian party. The three Judean officials were Eliakim the chief royal house administrator, and Shebna, the scribe, and Joah, the recorder (v.18).

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<sup>1</sup> *1 & 2 Kings* by Russell Dilday, p.431.

Through Rabshakeh, Sennacherib opened his address by boasting of himself as “a great king” (v.19). The gist of the mission was to get Hezekiah to surrender and be a subject of Assyria. Sennacherib told Hezekiah that he had no one to trust to save him. Egypt could not be trusted for anyone who did so would in the end hurt himself. Sennacherib then remarked that Hezekiah might not get help from the LORD his God whom he trusted because he had just removed all the high places devoted to His worship (18:22). Sennacherib was ignorant of the ways of the LORD. Sennacherib urged Hezekiah to trust him for he was able to supply two thousand horses if Hezekiah had riders for them (18:23). Sennacherib had the audacity to presume that he might have been sent by the LORD to destroy Jerusalem (18:25).

Now Eliakim, Shebna and Joah requested Rabshakeh to speak to them in the Syrian language for they could understand it, and not to speak in Hebrew for the people on the wall of Jerusalem could hear the words that he had spoken. Eliakim’s intention for the request is quite obvious, for he did not want the people to be discouraged by his words of taunt. But Rabshakeh resumed his address by speaking even louder and in the Hebrew language. He continued by telling the people not to be deceived by Hezekiah for he could not save them nor should they listen to him by calling the people to trust in the LORD. On the other hand, Sennacherib promised the people food and safety. Sennacherib then boasted that no gods of the

nations whom he had conquered were able to deliver them, and neither could the LORD deliver Jerusalem from his hand (vv. 34-35). But the people held their peace and answered Rabshakeh not a word. They kept silent. They obeyed King Hezekiah who had told them not to say anything to the Assyrians. Eliakim and his delegation returned to the royal palace to report to Hezekiah all that Rabshakeh had said. They tore their clothes as the custom was, to express their distress and remorse.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

God blessed Judah with a good king in the person of Hezekiah. He set a pattern of life in which we should emulate. His devotion and faithfulness to God are qualities that each of us should acquire. Judah was in a state of spiritual decay when Hezekiah ascended the throne. The first job that he did was the destruction of the idols in the high places and also the brazen serpent which Moses made; those very things that incurred the wrath and displeasure of God. By his brave act he led the nation back to God. If we want to live a godly life, we must deal first with the idols in our life, like Hezekiah did. Idolatry today can be in various forms and we need to examine ourselves to remove them from our life.

Hezekiah was strong in the area of spiritual house cleaning but he has much to learn regarding courage and turning to God alone for help. His attempt to placate the wrath of the wicked King of Assyria was pitiful. He

was the king of the people of God. Sheepishly he went to the king of Assyria with his tail between his legs. It was most shameful for a leader of God's people to behave in such a cowardly way. It could be likened to a pastor succumbing to the threats of evil men that if he and his congregation would not toe the doctrinal line of compromise they would be evicted or taken to court! Such threats are common today as common as what the king of Assyria did in his days when he would punish and destroy anyone who would not bow down to him. These are evil men employing evil tactics to fight spiritual battles. God's servants must have the backbone not to flinch or give an inch of their doctrine of faith. To give an inch would make them demand a mile the way Sennacherib did to Hezekiah. Remaining steadfast on God's perfect truth is the only way to stand up against such evil men and their tactics. AMEN.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** 2 Kings 18:1-12; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Proverbs 3:5-6.

**TUESDAY:** 2 Kings 18:13-37; Isaiah 31:1; John 14:1; Philippians 4:6-7.

**WEDNESDAY:** 2 Kings 18:1-37.

**THURSDAY:** 2 Kings 18:1-37.

**FRIDAY:** 2 Kings 18:1-37.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What four points about Hezekiah's attitude and conduct with regard to God are mentioned in chapter 18:1-8? How did Hezekiah manifest his faith in action? What evidence did he have of God's favour and blessing?

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2. God commanded Moses to make the Nehustan so that those who were bitten by the poisonous snakes could be saved by looking toward it. How could something commanded by God that was meant for man's good become something sinful? Are there similar NT examples that could be turned into wrongful worship?

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3. What was wrong with Hezekiah’s words, “I have offended; return from me: that which thou putteth on me will I bear”?

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4. Why was not the king of Assyria satisfied with Hezekiah’s gift of all the silver and gold that he wanted the kingdom as well? Is this the general characteristic of Satan and his followers?

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6. What, recorded in this chapter, teaches us that faith in God makes a difference in our personal life and that of the church?

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5. Which was easier to do: to dishearten the king or the people? What would have happened if the people were persuaded by the arguments of the envoy of the king of Assyria? Can you find any parallel in today’s churches?