

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 12A

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

The Judeans should be grateful to the LORD God for giving to them a godly king like Hezekiah. His father Ahaz had led the country into the depths of spiritual apostasy and wickedness. Hezekiah did not follow the ways of his father. Instead, he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of King David. It is therefore amazing that a wicked and apostate king like Ahaz could have a son who was God-fearing and had the courage to carry out religious reforms on a scale which was diametrically opposite to his father.

In this chapter, two miracles are recorded and both feature Hezekiah's exemplary trust in God for His grace and mercy. At the same time, the writer also shows that though Hezekiah was a good king, he showed signs of weakness after he had been greatly blessed by God. This goes to show that even godly people are far from perfect for they sometimes do foolish things and hurt themselves and

others. Hezekiah reigned for twenty-nine years before he died (18:2).

God's dealing with Hezekiah reveals some truths about God and also a few precious lessons that can be learned about sin and self.

OUTLINE

1. The divine healing of Hezekiah's illness (vv.1-11);
2. Hezekiah's foolishness in the visit of the Babylonians (vv.12-19);
3. Hezekiah's famous accomplishment and his successor (vv.20-21).

COMMENTARY

**Hezekiah's Illness unto Death
– 20:1-11**

Chapter 20 opens with Hezekiah's illness. Isaiah the prophet diagnosed his illness as terminal. It is written that his illness happened *in those days* which should be understood as occurring around the time of the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib. He contracted this illness in the 14th year of his reign and that was about the middle of his rule (compare v.6 and 18:2). The nature of the illness is not specified except that it was a "boil" (v,7). Nevertheless it was serious enough to bring a prognosis of death.

Hezekiah after hearing Isaiah's diagnosis *turned his face to the wall* and began to pray. Some believe that Hezekiah was sulking because he

turned to face the wall. Others, who perceive him to be a godly man, said that he did not want to be distracted by anything or anyone when he prayed to the LORD for healing, and that was why he turned his face to the wall. Naturally, there were his servants and officials around him and they could distract him. It is difficult to be dogmatic on this point but the latter interpretation seems more probable in that his prayer was answered by God with an extension of life. If he had been sulking instead of praying, the LORD would not have heard and answered his faithless prayer.

Hezekiah was an ardent believer in praying to the LORD. In his prayer for divine healing, he reasoned that he had walked with God. He described that his walk with God was faithful and true. There was no deceit. His relationship with God was genuinely sincere. He added that he served God with his whole heart and had done what was good. Comparing this with what he prayed in chapter 19:15-19, this prayer is self-centred. Some describe his prayer as being spiritually arrogant because of the boasting of his goodness before God. Some said that he was reasoning with God rather than being arrogant or irreverent. Hezekiah did not want to die. He made it known frankly to God. He wept bitterly while praying to God. The Assyrian threat was imminent and Hezekiah believed that he could do more for his people by saving them. So, he prayerfully and passionately reasoned with God.

In the OT times the king was blessed according to his obedience to God's Word. It was on this basis that, Hezekiah prayed. Israel was a national witness married to the Land of Promise. The safety of the Land was directly related to the obedience of the people and in the time of the monarchy, the king. Hezekiah was basically appealing to the covenantal guidelines when he made his prayer the way he did. It was therefore not a matter of arrogance but covenantal appeal for mercy and blessing.

God's answer was almost immediate. That God answered Hezekiah and granted him an extension of his life demonstrates God's approval of Hezekiah's prayer.

Before Isaiah could leave the palace court, the word of the LORD came to Isaiah. The LORD told Isaiah to go back to Hezekiah with the answer that He had heard his prayer; He had seen his tears; and that He would heal him. On the third day he would be cleansed and he could enter into the house of the LORD. God would extend his life for another fifteen years. God also promised that He would deliver him and Jerusalem from the attack of the King of Assyria. God would defend the city for His own sake and for the sake of David His servant (20:5-6). Isaiah then told him to take a *lump of figs* and plaster it on the *boil* and he would completely recover. God could heal Hezekiah directly if He willed. But in Hezekiah's case God used a secondary means to do so. Human responsibility does not negate the fact that the healing actually comes

from the LORD. Divine healing is of the LORD.

The healing would take three days after which he could go to the Temple. Hezekiah asked for a sign that he would be completely healed on the third day as Isaiah had said to him. Isaiah gave Hezekiah a choice. It relates to the movement of a shadow *in the dial of Ahaz* (literally, 'the step of Ahaz'; some steps associated with Ahaz) being cast ten degrees forward or ten degrees backwards. Hezekiah remarked that it was easy for the shadow to go ten degrees forward rather than backwards. Isaiah then cried to the LORD and the shadow went ten degrees backwards. Here is another miracle, a phenomenon which was out of the ordinary. It was supernatural to men but to God nothing is impossible.

Visit of the Babylonians – 20:12-19

At the time when Hezekiah was healed from his illness, the King of Babylon, Berodach-baladan sent letters and a present to King Hezekiah to congratulate him for the miraculous recovery of his illness. Josephus, the Jewish historian commented that the visit of Berodach-baladan was to secure the friendship of Judah as an ally in his war against the Assyrians. However, the visit of the Babylonians was not at all innocent for Isaiah predicted that it would eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem. Hezekiah was impressed that the Babylonian emissaries sent by their king came from a distant land to pay "him" a visit expressing their friendliness and bringing gifts to him.

His heart was naturally lifted up by this ostentatious flattery. Hezekiah felt great and he showed them all the riches of his palace. Even though his treasures had recently been greatly depleted by his ransom tribute to the King of Assyria, he had accumulated much during the interim period to replenish his wealth.¹ He showed them his silver and gold, the different spices and precious perfumes and jewellery, and his military weaponry. In fact, he showed them everything! Hezekiah made a show of his own greatness and wealth, which God had blessed him with.

When the Babylonians left, Isaiah the prophet came to Hezekiah. Isaiah's probing questions implied something sinister and dangerous about the visit of the Babylonians. The LORD spoke to Hezekiah through Isaiah who predicted that the Babylonians would return to Jerusalem. In this second visit, they would not be so friendly and cordial. They would take away all his riches including those that his father had accumulated. They would leave nothing behind. They would take the Judeans captive and to Babylon. Hezekiah's own descendants would serve in the palace of the King of Babylon as eunuchs. Hezekiah

¹ 2 Chronicles 32:27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; 28 Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. 29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.

responded to Isaiah's words (20:19): *Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. . . . Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?* He expressed a strange attitude to the bad news. Some think that he was so concerned for his own comfort that he did not care for the future of the kingdom. But Hezekiah might be submissively accepting God's word. The postponement of God's judgement on the kingdom at least ensured peace and security for him and the people during his reign.

Summary of Hezekiah's Accomplishments – 20:20-21

The divine writer singles out one particular accomplishment which Hezekiah made. He built a pool and a tunnel, which channeled water into Jerusalem so that when the city was being besieged, the city would have a supply of water. Today, this tunnel is well-known to visitors to Jerusalem and is named Hezekiah's Tunnel. Hezekiah died a natural death and he was succeeded by his son, Manasseh.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Hezekiah sought God in prayer when he needed help. He was stricken with a terminal illness and he prayed to God. His belief and trust in God for His mercy and power serve as an example for us to follow. His action of taking full advantage of the means by which God had ordained that His children can use to call upon Him and seek His grace and help is instructional. We should always pray as the Lord Jesus Christ had taught

His disciples (Luke 18:1). How incomprehensible and sad to see many Christians not praying enough both individually and corporately. Could it be that they do not trust and believe that God is able, or that they think God is reluctant to answer their prayers, or that God will bother to hear only prayers on big issues and problems. These are far from the truth. God says we should pray for everything whether big or small (Philippians 4:6).

The use of "the lump of figs" to apply to Hezekiah's fatal wound shows that God sometimes uses secondary means to achieve an end. God could just cure him simply by His word or command. Thus, one should not refrain from the application of modern medical aids and medicines to effect relief or cure for any ailments. The truth of the matter is that all healing comes from God. A careful study of the life of Christ shows that He used various ways in healing the sick.

Hezekiah's readiness to receive the Babylonian emissaries with open arms and showing off his wealth and power should teach us a wise principle to live by. There are people who are genuinely sincere, honest, and friendly. But there are those who hide their sinister intents behind pleasant façade of cordiality and friendliness, and some even offer gifts. Such men are like the Babylonian visitors. We later find that the Babylonians returned to Judah and in their second visit there were no more pleasantries and gifts but plunder and destruction of the nation. The enemy does not show his

true colour and like Satan would appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Of course, we should not go overboard and become paranoid in suspecting everyone. Ask God for wisdom and discernment for He gives liberally to His children (James 1:5).

Hezekiah was a good king who walked in the ways of God. God blessed him abundantly. The blessings that we receive from God can become a snare or a blessing. It is determined by our attitude towards the material and temporal benefits that God has given to us. God blesses His children because they trust and obey Him. But there is a danger that people become overconfident and proud when they are so blessed like Hezekiah who was showing off his wealth and power. We cannot know a person well enough to say that he is a good man even until the day he dies. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 2 Kings 20:1-11; 1 John 3:21-22; Isaiah 55:8.

TUESDAY: 2 Kings 20:12-21; Proverbs 29:5, 23; 2 Corinthians 11:14.

WEDNESDAY: 2 Kings 20:1-21.

THURSDAY: 2 Kings 20:1-21.

FRIDAY: 2 Kings 20:1-21.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did "Hezekiah wept sore" (20:1-3)?

2. Can we pray today the way Hezekiah prayed by listing out all that we have done for Christ so that we can have an extended life or to ask for anything from the LORD?

3. Some "Christian" groups believe that after praying for healing by faith it is an act of faithlessness if the sick were to see a doctor. How do you counter this line of reasoning?

4. Why did Hezekiah show off his treasures and wealth? Have you committed such a rash act as Hezekiah before? Please share why and what happened.

5. What was King Hezekiah's reaction to the Word of the LORD delivered by Isaiah the prophet in 2 Kings 20:19?

6. What have you learned most about God from this chapter?