

## 2 Kings Lesson 18

### 2 Kings Chapter 18

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Memory verses for this week: *2Co 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

**Introduction:** In chapter 17, we studied about the reign of Hoshea in the Northern Kingdom which was known as Samaria. God allowed the Assyrians to come in and take over the land due to the sin in the nation of Israel.

With the demise of the northern kingdom, the focus in chapter 18 shifts to the southern kingdom. Chapter 18 begins a three-chapter chronicle of the reign of Hezekiah. Record is made here of the invasion of Judah by Assyria under the leadership of Sennacherib.

### I. Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah

*2Ki 18:1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.*

*2Ki 18:2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.*

*2Ki 18:3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.*

The focus of the book of II Kings now shifts to Judah, the southern kingdom and to the reign of Hezekiah. The name Hezekiah literally means 'Jehovah is my strength.' Of the numerous kings throughout the history of Judah, Hezekiah surely was one of the great and godly kings thereof. He was 25 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. The life and reign of Hezekiah may be summarized with the brief characterization—he did right. Hezekiah, as all men, was a sinner, but he did many right things. The implication of the text is not that he was sinless. Rather, practical righteousness characterized his person and his reign. The word translated as right in this context (yashar) is the Hebrew word which refers to righteousness in a practical sense. The righteous character of Hezekiah was likened unto that of David, his royal ancestor. Though no passage of Scripture directly summarizes the life of David as doing that which was right, here, that characterization is indirectly ascribed to David.

*2Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.*

Notice that there is something different about this king. Upon assuming the responsibility as King, Hezekiah lost no time in removing the high places of the land, breaking the idolatrous images, and destroying the accompanying groves of trees around the idolatrous high places. Mentioned for the first time in the Old Testament is the fact that Israel had preserved the golden serpent made by Moses in the wilderness.

By the time of Hezekiah, it had become an idol in itself, with backslidden Jews offering incense to it. Hezekiah's characterization of it as Nehushtan literally means 'a thing of brass.' Hezekiah referred to it as such before destroying it. It was only brass, yet, Jews were foolishly worshiping it.

*2Ki 18:5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.*

*2Ki 18:6 For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.*

*2Ki 18:7 And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.*

The godly character of Hezekiah is further noted as one who not only did that which was right before God, he also trusted in Him. That personal trust in Jehovah was unlike any other king of Judah— before or after. He not only was righteous of character, he lived by faith before God altogether. No other king in the history of Judah was so described by God. Not only did he live by faith, but the scripture says he "clave to the LORD." The word translated as clave (qbd dabaq) has the idea of 'clinging.'

This godly king was careful to obey God's Word in every way which he could. His person and reign therefore could be summarized as being righteous, having complete trust in God, walking close to Him and with Him, and as altogether obedient to Him. Because of his righteous, godly character, God blessed Hezekiah and prospered him.

*2Ch 31:20 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God.*

*2Ch 31:21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.*

This evidently contributed in giving him the courage needed to rebel against the oppression of Assyria under which Ahaz, his father, had placed Judah.

*2Ki 18:8 He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.*

*2Ki 18:9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.*

*2Ki 18:10 And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.*

Record is also made of Hezekiah's victory over Philistia. "He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city".

Verse 9 refers to the Northern Kingdom. As we mentioned last week, the name of Samaria refers not only to the city by that name, but also to the entire northern kingdom. Over the years, the name Samaria had come to be a synonym for the northern kingdom of Israel. Record is here reiterated of the defeat of that northern kingdom of Israel.

## **II. King of Assyria Carries Israel Away into Assyria**

*2Ki 18:11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:*

*2Ki 18:12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.*

*2Ki 18:13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.*

The Assyrian captivity of the northern ten tribes of Israel is again recorded. The cause is clear. They were in captivity and defeated for three reasons.

(1) They obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God.

(2) They transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded

(3) They would not hear the laws and commandments, nor do them.

The essence of why Israel was so judged by God is disobedience. They ignored God's Word and His will for them. Though God is longsuffering and was exceedingly forbearing to Israel, they trod upon His mercy for too long. God had had enough. The northern kingdom ceased to exist and the basic reason was flagrant disobedience. Jesus made it clear to his disciples and to us that if we love Him, we need to obey his commandments.

*Joh 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

*Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

*Joh 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*Joh 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

*Joh 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

In verse 13, we find that eight years later, the Assyrians turned their attention against Judah which had rebelled against their authority. Sennacherib seized all the fenced (fortified) cities in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah's reign. The Assyrians bypassed Jerusalem and proceeded to attack and take the more weakly defended cities throughout Judah in preparation for a final siege against Jerusalem.

*2Ki 18:14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.*

*2Ki 18:15 And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.*

*2Ki 18:16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.*

Lachish (pronounced laKEESH) was a fortified city of Judah about twenty-eight miles southwest of Jerusalem in the Shephelah (hill country) of Judah.

Sennacherib apparently was besieging this fortified hilltop city. Hezekiah was discouraged and agreed to submit to Assyria and pay heavy tribute to them. The levy was 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold, which was a significant amount. Though a godly man, it is apparent at this juncture that Hezekiah did not seek God's help in this crisis as Jehoshaphat had done in a similar crisis in II Chronicles 20. Hezekiah, in his fear of Assyria, raided the Temple of its silver and gold to pay off the Assyrians.

### **III. King of Assyria Sends Great Host to Hezekiah**

*2Ki 18:17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field.*

*2Ki 18:18 And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.*

*2Ki 18:19 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?*

*2Ki 18:20 Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for*

*the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?*

The events which are described below closely follow Isaiah 36. Sensing the weakness of Jerusalem, Sennacherib determined to now take it as well. He then would have control of the entire land of Israel. Sennacherib sent armies under the leadership of three of his chief generals named Tartan and Rabsharis and Rabshakeh. It may be that Rabshakeh was the task commander because he was the spokesman of the three. Sennacherib remained at Lachish, still besieging it. Reference is made to what today is called Hezekiah's tunnel, here called the conduit of the upper pool (in Jerusalem). This was a tunnel carved through a hillside of Jerusalem to furnish water during attack against the city.

Though the Assyrian forces positioned themselves at the upper pool, they evidently were unaware of the secret tunnel that channeled water into the city. In surrounding the upper pool, they may have thought that they had seized control of the water supply to Jerusalem. The insolence and audacity of the Assyrian generals is apparent in placing themselves directly outside the wall of Jerusalem and demanding to speak to the king. Rather than face such indignity, Hezekiah sent out officers of his cabinet to the wall of the city to hear the Assyrian demands.

In verse 19, the Assyrian general Rabshakeh clearly sought to intimidate his Jewish foe. He mocked the military strength of Jerusalem.

*2Ki 18:21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.*

*2Ki 18:22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?*

Hezekiah evidently had entered into a military alliance with Egypt for mutual aide. Rabshakeh mocked any help which might come from Egypt. He likened the Egyptians to a broken reed along the Nile River which if one leaned upon would put splinters into his hand. The Assyrian general ridiculed any help which Hezekiah might receive from Egypt. Rabshakeh sought to ridicule any reliance upon Jehovah God. However, he completely misunderstood what Hezekiah had done in removing the high places from Judah. He thought that was an offense to Jehovah when in fact, it was God's will.

Don't be surprised when the people of the world make light of your worship of God. They don't know Him, and have no respect for God's power and what he can do for man.

*2Ki 18:23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.*

*2Ki 18:24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?*

*2Ki 18:25 Am 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.*

Rabshakeh therefore ordered, "Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them". The Assyrian general continued to mock and seek to intimidate Hezekiah. He first sought to receive a pledge from Hezekiah that he would submit himself to Sennacherib.

Then he mockingly offered Hezekiah 2,000 horses to put his forces upon to ride and surrender to the king of Assyria. Moreover, he scoffed that Hezekiah probably did not have that many men who could handle a horse. If Hezekiah was so weak (as Rabshakeh claimed), he asked, "How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen"?

Rabshakeh further mocked Hezekiah by asking how his feeble forces (even with Egyptian intervention) could withstand even one regiment of the mighty Assyrian army. Rabshakeh waxed even bolder in his effort to intimidate Hezekiah. "And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it".

He brazenly claimed to be coming against Judah with the permission and blessing of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Moreover, he lied outright claiming that God had directed the Assyrians to attack and destroy Judah and Jerusalem. It is one thing to seek to intimidate, but it is another to blatantly lie in God's name.

*2Ki 18:26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall.*

*2Ki 18:27 But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?*

Rabshakeh evidently knew Hebrew and made his intimidating, mocking speech therein. The Jewish officials upon the wall (Eliakim and Shebna and Joah) requested that he rather speak to them in the Syrian language. They clearly were concerned about the common people of the city being demoralized by the intimidating threats being made in their own language.

In verse 27, we find Rabshakeh knew what he was doing. He was speaking in Hebrew precisely to attempt to demoralize the city. Rabshakeh became even more intimidating by using the coarse threats of a siege. He intimated that Sennacherib had sent him to not only threaten Hezekiah, but his subordinates as well. He warned that they would soon be eating and drinking their own

excrement as the starvation of a siege overcame them.

*2Ki 18:28 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:*

*2Ki 18:29 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:*

*2Ki 18:30 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.*

*2Ki 18:31 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:*

*2Ki 18:32 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.*

The Assyrian general pompously warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem that their king, Hezekiah, would not be able to deliver them from the Assyrians. The arrogant Assyrians warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem to not trust Jehovah for deliverance. He intimated that even Jehovah could not deliver them from the might of the Assyrian army. In his insolence, Rabshakeh had just sown the seeds of his own destruction. To claim that even Jehovah could not defeat him was a sure fire way to bring the wrath of the Lord down on them. That is exactly what would happen shortly thereafter.

The impudent Assyrian general then made the inhabitants of Jerusalem an offer. No mercy was offered to Hezekiah, but Rabshakeh sought to incite surrender amongst the people of Jerusalem by offering them amnesty if they would capitulate. What he had in mind was to deport them to Assyria even as had been done to the northern ten tribes. He sought to entice their surrender by painting the description of their captivity in glowing terms. If they overthrew Hezekiah, they would be shown mercy by the Assyrians. If not, they would die. Rabshakeh therefore warned them not to listen to Hezekiah when he claimed that Jehovah God would deliver them.

#### **IV. Assyrian General utters Blasphemy**

*2Ki 18:33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?*

*2Ki 18:34 Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?*

*2Ki 18:35 Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?*

The foolish Assyrian general then made another blasphemous blunder. He asked

the people of Jerusalem, “Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria”? This arrogant Assyrian equated the Almighty God of Israel with the pagan deities of the surrounding nations. It was utter blasphemy.

As the Assyrians had crushed neighboring countries, Rabshakeh impudently asked, where were the gods of those places? Could they deliver from the power of the mighty Assyrian army? Well, of course, those pagan idols had no power in any event. But, Rabshakeh had sealed his doom by implying the Jehovah God was no better than them. He asked, if the pagan idols of the various nations which Assyria had conquered could not deliver from the power of Sennacherib, how could Jehovah deliver them?

That was a big mistake to equate the power of Jehovah to the impotent gods of the pagan nations. Rabshakeh had sealed his own fate by challenging Jehovah.

Hezekiah was not confused in what he believed. He knew in whom he believed and was not moved by these Assyrians.

I read a quote this past week by A.W. Tozer that is so true.

Millions call themselves by His name, it is true, and pay some token homage to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who or what is ABOVE, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, between God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. Those other things will be exalted above. However the man may protest, the proof is in the choice he makes day after day throughout his life.

*2Ki 18:36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.*

*2Ki 18:37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.*

Hezekiah had wisely instructed his people to keep their mouths shut. They were not to reply to the taunts from below. They accordingly held their peace. The three officials sent by Hezekiah to listen to the taunts of Rabshakeh returned to their king in despair with their clothes rent. They repeated to the king the ominous threats and derision which Rabshakeh had made. The next chapter will record Hezekiah's response to this grave threat.

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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