



LESSONS

FROM THE KINGS

A BIBLE STUDY
ON THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

PART 4 - TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM



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KING JOTHAM



Around the first thirteen years of Jotham's reign were during the life of his father. Recall how Jotham's father, King Uzziah, had served the Lord faithfully until he entered the temple to offer sacrifice and became afflicted with leprosy.

He carried out projects successfully such as rebuilding a temple gate, building up the city walls, and building towns and towers throughout Judah. Like his father he enjoyed military success and received great amounts of tribute from his enemies.

"Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God." (2 Chronicles 27:6) Compare his success with what happened with his father, Uzziah. "(Uzziah) did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success." (2 Ch 26:4-5)

To read about Jotham: 2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27

SERVING THE LORD BRINGS HIS BLESSING.

Examine Exodus 19:3-6 to see the special arrangement given to the people of Israel. God's blessings for those who served him were a reminder of his covenant. We can expect God to bring blessings to those who serve him. However, why must we be careful not to equate our country or our household with the successful kings of Judah?

Jotham followed a godly father. But his father's pride went to his head and caused him great trouble. Consider what impact it made on him seeing his sick father for the first ten years of his reign. What reminders of sin can help curb one generation from repeating the mistakes of their fathers?

Jotham lived as a testimony to the goodness of God. He enjoyed great success in Judah as he served the Lord. This happened during one of the most tumultuous and godless times in the northern kingdom which was about to fall into ruin. You are the salt and light in this world as you follow Christ your King. What contrasts do you see between the lives of believers and unbelievers?

Reexamine what should have motivated the people of Israel to serve their Lord according to Exodus 19:4. What motivates us to serve the Lord?

KING AHAZ

Although he had a godly grandfather and father who enjoyed success, Ahaz turned to idolatry and ended up losing much of what had been gained for Judah.

He faced great military threat from the Arameans, the Israelites, the Edomites, the Philistines, and Assyria. He endured crushing blows of defeat and loss. Despite all this the Lord showed him mercy and gave him opportunities to repent. The prophets Isaiah and Micah were active during his time.

Nonetheless, he stubbornly remained loyal to Baal and imported the gods of Damascus to Judah. He sacrificed his sons in the fire and even defiled the temple.

Read about King Ahaz: 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 7:1 - 8:4

SO CLOSE TO LOSING SO MUCH.

What is the greatest sudden loss you have ever experienced? How would you respond if God suddenly intervened and caused that loss to turn around? Read 2 Chronicles 28:1-15. Describe the loss for the people of Judah. What caused the great turn of events to restore the people?

God sent this loss in order to humble Ahaz who had turned to idolatry. How might God use a sudden loss in someone's life to cause them to realize their spiritual danger?

Things were not going well in Israel during this time. Why do you suppose they might have relished their victory over Judah so much? Why does the world relish it when the Church is guilty and must suffer for it?

People listened to the prophet Obed! It just took a handful of God-fearing leaders to change the situation. Can you describe a time when someone responded rightly to a powerful preaching against their guilt?

What does this account teach us about the heart of God when the guilty suffer because of their sins?

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

When a child falls and gets hurt, where do they most often run? In contrast, when a gangster gets hurt, where does he turn? Read 2 Chronicles 28:16-27 to see how Ahaz displays just the opposite of childlike faith in his Savior God. List the sources of help he turned to in trouble.

“In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 28:22) God often sends trouble to cause us to repent or bring us to rely more on him. He did that for Ahaz and the people of Israel. Explain why the opposite results will often occur.

“He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, ‘Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.’” (2 Ch 28:23) What apparent sources of strength in this world can become false idols for us?

Ahaz was left as a vassal of Assyria. Explain different ways that the expression is true, “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”(John 8:34)

Read Isaiah 7:3-14 for God’s promise of peace to Ahaz and his people during times of trouble and fear. List all the enemies our King has defeated that we might trust in him forever.

KING HEZEKIAH



Hezekiah was able to recall the kingdom of his grandfather from when he was young. Under Jotham and his father, Uzziah, the kingdom had reached a height of glory unlike any other since the time of David and Solomon. But he witnessed the ruin of it all by his father, Ahaz. Under Ahaz Judah became a vassal to Assyria and the temple doors were closed.

With a determination to restore Judah he instituted a revival unlike any other in the face of some of the greatest challenges. The people responded by destroying all the shrines to idols and with great dedication to the Lord. His revival and invitation to Israel to celebrate the Passover was enthusiastically accepted.

He made two attempts to regain independence from Assyria. The first failed. The second succeeded when the Lord destroyed the army of King Sennacherib which was besieging Jerusalem. During this siege the people of Jerusalem displayed great loyalty. The prophet Isaiah assured them of the Lord's promises.

*note, there is difficulty in the timeline for Hezekiah due to 2 Kings 18. It mentions the fall of Israel as taking place in Hezekiah's sixth year (722). But the siege by Sennacherib is listed as taking place during his 14th year. (702). One of the best solutions is to keep all the historical dates in place but understand that Hezekiah had a coregency with his father. His official full reign begins when his father dies in 715. (Recall that Hezekiah's grandfather, Jotham had a coregency due to Uzziah's illness. This practice evidently continued as pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian factions struggled for a claim over the rule of Judah.) Sometimes a king was dated according to events in the north. This appears to be the case in 2 Kings 18 even though he remained a co-regent. (for further study see <http://wartburgproject.org/?mdocs-file=1596>)

Read about Hezekiah: 2 Kings 18 - 20; 2 Chronicles 29 - 32; Isaiah 36 – 39

RETURN TO THE REMNANT

Describe a time you were eager to carry out a plan but had to wait until you could enact it. How did you feel when you finally got to act on your plans? There is a sense of urgency in Hezekiah's reform efforts. Hezekiah's father died in 715, making his son the sole ruler of Judah. (Before this time, it appears he was a co-regent, see timeline note above regarding 2 Kings 18.) After the death of Hezekiah's godless father, he immediately began to reform the worship life of the people. Read 2 Chronicles 29:3-11.

List some reasons why the people of Judah and the priests would have been so eager to join Hezekiah.

Israel fell to Shalmaneser king of Assyria in 722 BC at the destruction of Samaria. Many were deported, but many also remained behind. Hezekiah did not forget his Israelite brothers in his reform efforts. He invited the now decimated people of the north to reunite with him as a godly king. Read 2 Chronicles 30:1-11. How did the people in the north respond?

How does the response of the northern Israelites reflect what the Church still sees happening today?

While it is easy to focus on the great number of people who disregard the call for spiritual revival, what should we be focusing on as we call others to join us in true worship?

TRUE WORSHIP OF THE LORD

Worship life can be complicated. There are certain customs, important Scriptural principles, and there is a good amount of freedom to navigate. It involves teachers, preachers, and musicians. It calls for participation from all. Read 2 Chronicles 30:12 to 31:21 and identify some good principles for us to follow in our worship together:

Three things credited with fostering worship (30:12)

How to treat new converts/the weak in faith (30:18-20)

How to use God's gifts in worship (30:21-22a)

View of time which gives the most honor to God (30:23)

What heartfelt worship brings to all (30:26)

Who hears worshippers of the Lord (30:27)

The proper response after worship is done (31:1)

Stewardship and the use of God's gifts (31:3-10)

Church finances and money management (31:11-15)

Supporting ministers of the Lord (31:16-18)

YOU CAN'T PAY OFF THE DEVIL

The people of Judah had seen the Assyrian army destroy Samaria just two decades earlier. They witness the Assyrian strategy which was to surround a city and slowly strangle it by capturing the weaker towns around and laying siege to the capital. Samaria fell after a three-year struggle.

Hezekiah witnessed the Assyrians slowly decimating Judah and preparing for their siege of Jerusalem. So, in desperation he made his own preparations for the siege. (A tunnel recorded in 2 Kings 20:20 was discovered in 1837 with an inscription by Hezekiah's workers.) Read 2 Kings 18:13-16. How far was Hezekiah willing to go to get the Assyrians to leave? Evaluate his approach.

The ploy of Hezekiah to get the Assyrians to leave did not work. They did not keep their end of the bargain. Instead, they moved to destroy Jerusalem. Where should we draw the line when it comes to appeasing those who are in opposition to the Church?

We deserved far worse than an attacking army. Because of our sins we deserved death and hell. What was our King Jesus willing to give up to redeem us from death and hell?

TRUE WORSHIPPERS ARE TAUNTED

Taunting on the sports field can give you an edge as you psyche out your opponent. Taunting on the battlefield can give you a faster victory as your opponent gives up. What about taunting over spiritual matters? Read the taunt of King Sennacherib of Assyria against Hezekiah and the people in 2 Kings 18:17-37. Who is the taunting really directed at?

Describe the types of attacks which God's people will receive from their spiritual enemies at various stages in life.

How does the devil present the same type of bargaining to people today which was made in 2 Kings 18:31-32?

The people did not respond because Hezekiah commanded "Do not answer him." How is that good advice when dealing with taunts?

How did our King respond to those who taunted him? What gave him the strength to endure it?

GOD ALWAYS GETS THE FIRST & LAST WORD

Just before the people escaped from the armies of Egypt Moses told the people, “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Ex 14:14) Similarly, just before the people escaped from Sennacherib’s army Isaiah told the king, “This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard.” (2 Kings 19:6) God had a plan to deal with the enemy which would surprise everyone.

Read 2 Kings 1:14-27 to see Hezekiah’s response to that letter and the Lord’s response.

Isaiah’s prophecy shares the irony of Sennacherib claiming power over the Lord. What had God already foretold would happen long before Sennacherib’s time? (Consult Micah 1:6-7)

How does Hezekiah’s response serve as a powerful reminder for God’s people?

How does the Lord’s response serve as a powerful reminder for God’s people?

POWER OF PRAYER

Have you ever felt something was so certain it wasn't worth bringing to God in prayer? Recall how Hezekiah prayed even while the city was surrounded and seemed doomed. Now it is equally personal and seemingly hopeless. Hezekiah, though faithful in service to the Lord was told his life was about to end in illness. He did not yet even have an heir for the throne. He no doubt felt the real danger for Judah during this uncertain time. Read 2 Kings 20:1-11 What do we learn about the power of prayer in this section?

God answered his prayer "for my sake." He always acts in such a way to display his grace and the glory of his name. Why is that important to remember in our prayers?

Examine Hezekiah's Psalm in Isaiah 38:10-20. What does he say about the reason for suffering, the problem of sin, and the result of his suffering?

Both Hezekiah and Jesus prayed when they knew their life was near its end. Explain why our King Jesus did not pray for his life to be extended and to be spared from his suffering and death.

THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF PRIDE

When God healed Hezekiah, he had given him a sign that he would live which involved the shadow of the sun going backwards ten steps on his stairway. Word of his healing, the miraculous sign, and no doubt the defeat of Sennacherib's army reached the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 32:31). Read Isaiah 39.

What should have been the first thing Hezekiah shared with the envoy from Babylon? Why do you suppose he wanted to show off his great wealth?

What is the first thing that you like to show people when they come to your house? What are some ways that you can reflect thanks to God and glorify him when people are interested in learning more?

Even the best of the kings of Jerusalem had faults that are recorded for us. What does that impress on us?

No other King has more recorded on their life in Scripture than Jesus. Why is it so important that Scripture emphasizes his faultless character for us?

-Part 4 of “Lessons from the Kings”
resumes after Lent and Easter 2021-



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