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2 Kings 19 - 20



2 Kings - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg continues on from his discussion of 2 Kings chapter 18 to explore the events of chapter 19 and 20. He explains how Hezekiah's willingness to listen to the prophet Isaiah led to significant reforms but also details the king's struggle with his own desires and lack of resignation to God's will, which ultimately led to his downfall. Gregg also touches upon a number of prophecies made by Isaiah, including the prediction of Babylon coveting Jerusalem's wealth and the divine sign given to Hezekiah through the shadow of a sundial. Overall, Gregg provides a detailed and insightful analysis of these chapters in the Old Testament.

Transcript

We were looking at 2 Kings chapter 18 yesterday where a story began that continues unbroken in chapter 19. This is the story of when Assyria, several years after conquering the northern kingdom and their capital city of Samaria, also came down to punish Judah because Judah, Hezekiah had stopped paying tribute to Assyria. Therefore, the Assyrians had gotten angry and sent armies down and certainly Jerusalem was no match for Assyria.

So Hezekiah was threatened and the general of the Assyrian army, who is called the Rabshika, came and was making verbal threats to Jerusalem that he was going to destroy them and that they should not think they could resist. He was actually speaking loud enough for all the people on the walls to hear him, even though he was negotiating with three representatives that Hezekiah had sent out to talk with the besieging leader. And he was trying to persuade the people on the wall to rebel against Hezekiah and saying, don't let Hezekiah deceive you into thinking that he or even Yahweh will deliver you from my hand.

Rather, just surrender to me or if you want to fight, I'll send you the horses. I'll give you 2,000 horses. If you can put riders on them, then you can come out and fight me and see how well you do.

Obviously, very self-confident, very brazen. He's saying, you know, I'll even increase

your military might if you want to come out and fight. I'll fight you with one hand tied behind my back, as it were.

So this is how things stood at the end of chapter 18. And the negotiators whom Hezekiah had sent out, who were Eliakim, Shibna, and Asaph, returned into the city from these negotiations with their garments torn because they were grieved that it seemed like they were truly in trouble. And they were.

This story is apparently an extremely important one because it is also given in 2 Chronicles. That's not unusual, of course. Many of the stories in 2 Kings are also found in 2 Chronicles.

But not only does 2 Chronicles tell this story in the corresponding place in the history, but Isaiah, in his book, has four chapters given to cover what we cover here in three chapters. What's in 2 Kings chapters 18, 19, and 20, which basically is the remainder of Hezekiah's story, what's in these three chapters is found in four chapters in Isaiah. It's almost verbatim.

Although Isaiah takes four chapters, that's only because they're shorter chapters. It's almost all the same words. And that's in Isaiah chapters 36 through 39.

That's 36, 37, 38, and 39, four chapters in Isaiah. It covers exactly the same material as 2 Kings 18, 19, and 20. And then a shorter version of the same story is also found in 2 Chronicles, which is all occupied basically one chapter, 2 Chronicles 32, which tells the story more briefly.

But that the same story would be told three times in the Bible suggests that it's more than ordinarily important. And apparently it is because Judah at this point came very close to being destroyed. This would have been their end.

The northern kingdom of Israel had already been destroyed by Assyria, and the fall of its capital Samaria was now a done deal, and the northern kingdom was no more. But the southern kingdom had survived up to this point. It had not really been attacked previous to this by the Assyrians.

And now they have come down, and it looks like Jerusalem will fall also, but it does not happen on this occasion. And the reason it does not happen is because Hezekiah is a better king than any of the kings the northern kingdom had, and he's willing to listen to the prophet of God, who happened to be Isaiah the prophet in this case. And while Hezekiah was under siege from Assyria and greatly distressed, he was receiving counsel from more than one side.

Most notably, there was a group of counselors saying, you need to get Egypt to come and help us. You know, there's nobody who can stand up to Assyria in this region. There's no nation big enough to hold them off, except maybe Egypt.

If we could get Egypt to come to our aid, then we would have a chance to fight these guys off and not have to surrender to them, or get wiped out by them. Now that was one course of advice that was currently being given to Hezekiah. Isaiah was on another side.

He was on the Yahweh side. Trust Yahweh, don't trust in Egypt. In fact, he believed that trusting Egypt would be the opposite of trusting Yahweh.

You have to kind of make your choice. Are you going to trust in the arm of the flesh? Are you going to lean, as even the Rabbi Sheikha himself said, on that broken reed of Egypt, which if a man leans upon it, he'll pierce his hand and hurt himself. If you trust in Egypt, you're just going to disappoint yourself and damage yourself.

Don't even lean there. And the Rabbi Sheikha had said that both parties were wrong. Those who say that you should lean on Egypt, they're saying to trust in a broken reed.

Those who say to trust in Yahweh, Rabbi Sheikha said, well, what do they know? Yahweh sent me here to destroy you. Why would He help you out here? Why would He deliver you from me when He sent me here to destroy you? Now, of course, the Rabbi Sheikha didn't know much about Yahweh. And he thought that the high places which Hezekiah had torn down were things that Yahweh was attached to and that Yahweh would be offended at the reforms that Hezekiah had made.

The opposite was true, but the Rabbi Sheikha was so out of touch with Jewish religion, as all pagans pretty much were, that he felt like he could use that as an argument that Yahweh won't save you because you've been offending Yahweh by all these changes you've been doing in your religious structure. Remember, the high places had been unremoved from almost the earliest times. I mean, the reforms of good kings had seldom resulted in the removal of the high places.

Therefore, it was assumed, perhaps by the Rabbi Sheikha and others, that this was part of the original Yahweh worship from most ancient times. And here, Hezekiah interfered with that by tearing them down. In any case, Isaiah was the one who counseled Hezekiah most strongly to trust in Yahweh, not in Egypt.

And so, these threats having been uttered at the end of chapter 18, we come to chapter 19, and this is where Isaiah comes into the picture. It says, And so it was, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes. His negotiators came in with their clothes torn, and he saw the danger and was grieved and terrified as well, and so he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh.

Then he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shibna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. This is the first time Isaiah is mentioned in the books of Kings. He is, of course, very well known to us because he wrote the most significant, arguably, of all the books of the prophets that

are part of the canon of the Old Testament scripture.

Essentially the longest, 66 chapters, is Isaiah, and many would say the very most superb Hebrew poetry found anywhere in the Bible. Isaiah was a statesman, he was a prophet, he was of noble or royal birth, related to the kings, a cousin to the kings, and a great literary man as well. He not only could prophesy, but he could put it in wonderful terms, such as many have said outshines the poetry of Shakespeare and Milton and all the great English poets.

So it is argued. Anyway, this is Isaiah, who we've not heard of before. We've heard a lot about Elijah and Elisha in earlier chapters, but now we hear briefly, but very significantly, of Isaiah.

So, Isaiah was known to the king, and he sent the messengers to Isaiah, and they said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy, for the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth. It's not clear what that means, unless it is meaning that the famine in the city, because they're under siege and therefore have limited food, has so weakened people that even mothers who are at the point of giving birth don't have the strength to give that final push. And it may be a hyperbole, or it may be something that had actually come to that stage, that people are without strength, people are exhausted.

Even a woman who is bearing a baby at the time of delivery, it's not happening because she doesn't have the strength to bring the baby forth. It may be that the Lord your God will hear all the words of the Rabbi Sheikah, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.

So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, and Isaiah said to them, Thus you shall say to your master, Thus says Yahweh, Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. In other words, he will not succeed here, but that's not all.

So the Rabbi Sheikah returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libna, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. Now there was apparently more than one campaign being conducted by the Assyrians at the same time, and the king of Assyria himself, though he had sent the Rabbi Sheikah to besiege Jerusalem, he had himself gone to Lachish, and the Rabbi Sheikah heard that the king had departed from Lachish, and was gone to war at Libna, and apparently the Rabbi Sheikah felt like he had better go and assist his king there. So he did hear a rumor, and it did cause him to depart and go to his own land.

And so Isaiah's prophecy came true. And the king heard concerning Terhaka, the king of Ethiopia, Look, he has come out to make war with you. So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Look, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands by utterly destroying them. And shall you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeth, and the people of Eden, who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Eva? Now what he's saying is, these nations were not able to be delivered from him. Why do you think you will be? Of course, the reason is because Jerusalem did have a real god to protect them, and these other nations only had false gods that couldn't protect them.

It says, Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it. And Hezekiah went up to the house of Yahweh and spread it before Yahweh. That's always been an image that's appealed to me.

It's him spreading the letter out for God to read in the temple. Here's the threat, Lord. This is your problem.

And there's been times when I've done something almost essentially like that. It hasn't always been a written letter that someone has sent me, but it's been just bad news. Bad news or threats or things that were disturbing, that were something I had no control over fixing.

I just go to the Lord and kind of spread it out, like letting him read the letter, and he can decide what he's going to do about it. Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said, O Lord God of Israel, the one who dwells between the cherubim, you are God, you alone. Of all the kingdoms of the earth, you have made heaven and earth.

Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear. Open your eyes, O Lord, and see. And hear the words of Sennacherib, which was really apparently the Rabbi Sheikah's words, but from Sennacherib sent through Rabbi Sheikah, which he has sent to reproach the living God.

Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are Yahweh, God, you alone. Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, That which you have prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard. This is the word which the Lord

has spoken concerning him.

Now this prophetic word is given in poetry, as prophecies often are in the scriptures. It's a poetic oracle. It says, The Lord speaks this concerning Sennacherib, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn.

The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back. In other words, you're being reproached by a little girl, the daughter of Zion, the young girl, the virgin. She's scorning you.

Now, if there's anything that a macho king would not tolerate, it's being mocked by a little girl, of all things. You know, that'd be humiliating. And he's saying, Zion may be like a little girl, this virgin daughter of Zion, but she despises you, she's laughing you to scorn.

Now notice that Jerusalem here is referred to as the virgin. The reason that's interesting to me is that if you turn over to Isaiah chapter 7, a verse well known to us, Isaiah 7, 14. Isaiah is speaking to another king.

He's speaking to Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. And he says to him, in verse 14, Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin, not a virgin, but the virgin, shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Now, we know this to be a prophecy about the birth of Jesus because the New Testament in Matthew chapter 1 quotes it as a prophecy about the birth of Jesus. But what did it mean to Ahaz? This was to be a sign to him. Certainly what happened 700 years later in Bethlehem didn't prove to be a sign to Ahaz.

He was long dead. God on this occasion was giving Ahaz a sign trying to encourage him that the kings of Syria and Israel that were currently conspiring to overthrow him would not succeed. And here's the sign God gave.

The virgin will bring forth a son. He'll call his name God is with us, or God with us. And that son will not grow very old before these kings that you're afraid of will be gone.

He says. He says specifically in verse 16 of Isaiah 7. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good. The land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.

Israel and Syria will lose both their kings before this child will be very old. Now, this can't be a reference strictly to Jesus because Jesus' birth did not happen in the lifetime of the kings of Syria or Israel. And therefore, his childhood would not be a time marker for how long it would be before these kings would be destroyed.

There had to be a child that would be born sooner than that to serve as a sign to Ahaz.

And sure enough, if you'll look at chapter 8 of Isaiah, verse 1. Moreover, the Lord said to me, take a large scroll and write on it with a man's pen, concerning Maharshal El-Hashbaz. That's actually going to be the name of Isaiah's own son, which means speed the spoil, hasten the booty.

Maharshal El-Hashbaz. And I will take for myself faithful witnesses to record in verse 3. Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore me a son. Then the Lord said to me, call his name Maharshal El-Hashbaz.

For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria. Now, the riches of Damascus, that's Syria, and Samaria, that's the northern kingdom of Israel. Before this child, Isaiah's son, is old enough to say, my father and my mother.

In other words, while this child is still at a very early age, this threat from Syria and Israel will be done with. It's the very same thing that's predicted in different words in chapter 7, verse 16. Then, he continues to prophesy with reference to his son.

And look at Isaiah 8.8. He says of Assyria, he will pass through Judah. He will overflow and pass over. He will reach up to the neck and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel.

O Emmanuel? Isaiah's son, Emmanuel? It's obvious that the prophecy of Isaiah 7, 14-16, is a prophecy that involves this child of Isaiah, who will be born, and before he's very old, the threat of Syria and Israel will be done. And that Isaiah's son is himself called Emmanuel. Now, what we would have to say then, is that Isaiah and his son serve as a type, and a shadow here.

Because if you look at the same chapter, chapter 8 of Isaiah, and verse 18, Isaiah 8.18, Isaiah says, Now that statement, here am I and the children that the Lord has given me, is quoted in Hebrews 2.13, as if it's Jesus. It's actually Isaiah speaking about him and his son. Oh, by the way, it says, of them, in verse 18, Remember when Isaiah said, He says, So, in other words, everything that is said about this virgin son, is true of Isaiah's son.

He's a sign to Israel. His birth marks the not so distant deliverance from Israel and Syria. So how are we to understand this? Well, it seems clear that Isaiah's son, in at least one sense, is the son that is predicted in Isaiah 7.14. Though not the full fulfillment, any more than Solomon is the complete fulfillment of the promise that God made about David's son.

God made promises to David about his son. And we know that that was partially fulfilled in Solomon, but also Solomon was a type of Christ, and we recognize the fullest fulfillment in Christ himself. So also, this virgin son, is initially Isaiah's son, but a greater fulfillment we know of in Christ, the New Testament tells us.

But how could Isaiah's son be called the son of a virgin? We know that it wasn't a virgin that conceived him, because he says, I went into the prophetess and she conceived him, bore me a son. She wasn't a virgin. She was apparently his wife, but not a virgin.

Unless, of course, she was a virgin at the time the prophecy was given, and then he married her for this occasion. Married her, married the prophetess, and then she, who was at the time of the prophecy a virgin, ceased to be a virgin by marrying him and having his child. But the important thing is that Isaiah 7.14 doesn't say that a virgin will conceive and bear a son.

It says the virgin will have the son. And in Isaiah, the virgin apparently refers to Jerusalem. At least it does in Isaiah's words in 2 Kings 19.

In verse 21, Isaiah is speaking. He says the virgin. It's not the same expression, but there's two different words for virgin in Hebrew, and he uses a different one in Isaiah than he uses here.

But the imagery is the same. Jerusalem is referred to as a virgin girl. And whether it's this word or a synonym for it, the imagery would seemingly be the same.

The idea is that Jerusalem will bring forth a son. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, the city of Jerusalem will have a son born within it. And that was apparently initially Isaiah's son, born in Jerusalem.

But obviously the passage has a more literal fulfillment in Christ being born of the Virgin Mary. It's just an interesting collocation of terms in Isaiah's two prophecies, the one given to Ahaz and the one given in the presence of Hezekiah. In both cases, it appears that Jerusalem is referred to as the virgin, the daughter of Zion.

Now, this message is sent to Sennacherib that there's this little girl, Jerusalem, is scorning you, mocking you, laughing at you. Verse 22, Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. Notice you've really blasphemed God, the God of Israel.

By your messengers you have reproached the Lord and said, By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon. I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress trees. I will enter the extremity of its borders to its fruitful forest.

I have dug and drunk strange water and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense. Now, apparently he's saying this is how you've boasted, that you've come with your armies and you've besieged the city, you've cut off their water supply and you're going to defeat them by your military stratagems. He says, Did you not hear long ago how I made it? God says, From ancient times that I formed it.

Now I have brought it to pass that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins. Therefore their inhabitants had little power. They were dismayed and confounded.

They were as the grass of the field and the green herb as the grass of the housetops and grain blighted before its grown. Now, what he's saying is that the reason Assyria has had victories over other nations is because God decreed that Assyria would in fact do so. Even its victory over the northern kingdom of Israel was decreed by God.

If you look back at Isaiah chapter 10, Isaiah predicted that Assyria would be brought by God down to Israel to destroy it, the northern kingdom. In Isaiah 10.5 It says, Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger, and the staff in whose hand is my indignation. That is, Assyria is the staff that God is using to afflict somebody.

In this case, it's Israel. I will send him, that is Assyria, against an ungodly nation, that is Israel. And against the people of my wrath I will give him a charge to seize the spoil, to take the prey and to tread them down like mire in the streets.

So it's God saying, I'm going to bring Assyria against my disobedient people because I have wrath toward them and I'm going to use him to punish them. Yet he, that is Assyria, does not mean so as he doesn't deliberately do this in order to be obedient to Yahweh. Nor does his heart think so but it is in his heart to destroy, to cut off not a few nations.

For he says, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? Aren't all these cities just the same? As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols whose carved images excelled, those of Jerusalem and Samaria. As I have done to Samaria and her idols, so shall I do to Jerusalem and her idols. That's how Assyria is thinking.

Assyria is thinking that they can do the same thing to Jerusalem that they did to Samaria. However, that's not going to be so. In verse 15, Isaiah 10.15 says, Shall the axe boast itself against him who chops with it? Shall the saw magnify itself against him who saws with it? As if the rod could wield itself against those who lift it up? Or as if the staff could lift up as if it were not wood? Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send leanness among his fat ones and under his glory he will kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

So the light of Israel will be for a fire and his holy one for a flame. It will burn and devour his, that is Assyria's, thorns and his briars in one day. And it will consume the glory of his forest, etc., etc.

Now, he's saying that Assyria is being used by God to punish Samaria and other nations, but not Jerusalem. If you look back at Isaiah 8, where we were a moment ago, when Isaiah is prophesying at the birth of his son, he's prophesying about Assyria coming against Judah. If you look at Isaiah 8, verses 7 and 8, he says, Therefore, behold, the

Lord brings up over the waters, over them, that is over Judah.

Actually, I take that back, in this case, over Syria and Israel, but Judah is going to figure into the prophecy before we're done here. The Lord brings up over them the waters of the river, strong and mighty, the king of Assyria, and all his glory. That is, Assyria's armies are like a flood coming to overwhelm Israel and Syria.

It says, He will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. Then it says, He will pass through Judah. So the Assyrian armies are going to come to Judah also.

He will overflow and pass over. He will reach up to the neck. And that's the point.

When the armies of Assyria come to Judah, it'll be different than when they came to Israel. They totally deluged and drowned Israel. The head, Samaria, succumbed as well.

Judah, however, will only be flooded up to the neck. The head will still be above water, as it were. Jerusalem, the capital, will be unviolated.

Jerusalem will survive. The nation of Judah will survive where Israel had not, because God will keep Judah's head above water. The flooding of the Assyrian armies will come up to Judah, up to the neck only.

And therefore, that's what we're reading about in this story in 2 Kings. They have, in fact, at this time, when Assyria was besieging Jerusalem, they had already conquered most of the significant cities and villages of Judah. And now the country was inundated up to the neck.

But the head, Jerusalem, had not fallen. And it says in verse 27 of 2 Kings, 2 Kings 19, 27, But I know your dwelling place, Sennacherib, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against me, because your rage against me and your tumult have come up to my ears. Therefore I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way in which you came.

This is how Assyria usually led people into captivity, with hooks through their noses or their lips. They led them away into captivity. And God's saying, I'm going to do the same thing to you.

I'm going to lead you where I want you to go. You're going to go back. You're going to leave Jerusalem unharmed.

You're going to go back the way you came from. It says, This shall be a sign to you. You shall eat this year such as grows of itself.

And in the second year, what springs from the same? Also, in the third year, sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of

Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, shall do this.

Now this business about eating what grows of itself in the first and second year and so forth seems to talk about how long it will be before farming is resumed in the area. Because Assyria has inhabited all the farmlands around the city. All the farmers and people who have survived are in the walled city trying to survive there on food that's stored.

There won't be farming in Judah again for a few more years. But there will be eventually. And God is going to preserve a remnant.

Verse 32, Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor build a siege mound against it. Those are the normal ways you conquer a city, but Assyria is not even going to get that close to conquering Jerusalem. Not even so much as an arrow of the Assyrian army is going to fly into Jerusalem.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return. And he shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.

And that's the prophecy. Well, how was it fulfilled? It came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when the people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses all dead.

So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and went away, but they returned home and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Cherezer struck him down with the sword and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Ezraheddon, his son, reigned in his place.

Now it's interesting that his sons killed him but didn't take the throne from him. They killed him and fled. They must have just not liked him.

It wasn't that they were so much looking to usurp his position, but they just hated him and got rid of him. So he died in his own land, as was predicted, and a hundred and eighty-five thousand of his soldiers were killed, but by God, not by the Jews, not by Hezekiah and his people. Now, that was the great deliverance that came because Hezekiah trusted the Lord and went into the house of the Lord to present his case rather than to Egypt.

And thus Isaiah became, as it were, the savior of the nation by turning Hezekiah in that direction rather than in the direction that others were hoping he would turn. It's much

shorter in 2 Chronicles, I mean the details are much less of this story, but the reference to Isaiah in 2 Chronicles is considerably more brief like just a verse. In 2 Chronicles 32.20, after we read of the threat that had come against Jerusalem from Sennacherib, it says in 2 Chronicles 32.20, Now for this cause King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to the Lord.

Then the Lord sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned, shamefaced, to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his God, some of his own offspring struck him down with a sword there.

Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. And many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem and presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all the nations thereafter. Now, Chronicles goes on to tell some negatives about Hezekiah.

After giving more information about his reforms and everything than any other book did, it goes on and reports what others do not, and that is that he did some bad things at the end. Now in 2 Kings 20, we have the brief story of one mistake that he made. This was not an extremely grievous mistake, but it was sufficient to be a problem.

In chapter 20 it says, of 2 Kings, In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. Then he turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying, Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before you in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in your sight.

And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Return and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, surely I will heal you.

On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord, and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city from my own sake and for the sake of my servant David. Then Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs.

So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. We don't know what the nature of the sickness was, but there was at least one or more boils. And Isaiah apparently administered some kind of a fig plaster upon it, and that seems to have contributed to the healing.

Though, of course, God said, I will heal him. In this case, apparently God healed him

through something that was, at the time, a medical or herbal cure, which suggests that God can cure through medical things too. God could have just healed him directly, but he actually directed Isaiah in what we might refer to as a herbal remedy, which God used and the man was healed.

Now, this is a story of importance because it had a very negative impact on the later developments in Judah. You see, later Judah fell to the Babylonians, and when it did, it says in Chronicles that God caused Judah to fall because of the sins of Manasseh, the king Manasseh, who was the worst of Judah's kings. But at the time that Hezekiah was dying, Manasseh was not yet born.

The king was dying childless, which might be one reason why he was not happy to go at that time and why he wept. It may be why he considered such a tragedy that he died at that time. After all, when someone finds out it's their time to go, there have been people who have faced that with more aplomb and with more grace than he did.

He weeps and he cries and he begs God to change his mind, and God does change his mind. If Hezekiah had died at this point, as God decreed, Manasseh would never have been born. But because Hezekiah's life was extended 15 years, he had a son named Manasseh three years later.

And when Hezekiah died, of course 15 years after this story, Manasseh was 12 years old and became king. And the evils done by Manasseh are the things that the Bible credits for God sending the Babylonians to destroy Judah. So Hezekiah, by seeking the Lord in his day, delivered Judah from the fate that Israel had suffered at the hands of the Assyrians.

But ironically, this story becomes a turning point. Although Hezekiah isn't asking for something bad, and he's not a bad man, he's simply not resigned to God's will. God's will is that he should die at this time.

And to Hezekiah's mind, this is not good. That doesn't make sense. God, you're making a mistake here.

I'm a good man. I should live longer. And no doubt in his own mind, also thinking, if I die childless, what's going to happen to the line of David? Well, what would happen, no doubt, is that one of Hezekiah's brothers would probably take the throne, not a son.

And the line of David would continue. But instead, he didn't trust that God's will was best in the matter. And so he asked God to change it.

And God gave him his request, but it was not actually good. Not good for him or for Israel, or Judah. Not good for Judah, because his son that was born after this brought about the doom of the nation.

But also not good for Hezekiah, because had he died at this time, he would have died with no blot on his record. He had been a thoroughgoing reformer, devout and loyal to Yahweh, as he pointed out to God when he prays here, and where he asked for God to show mercy to him. Well, it was after this that Hezekiah made the mistakes and the errors that he would not have made had he died on this occasion.

So sometimes, you know, when God says it's your time to go, God knows it's better for you. It's better for others. Everyone has the time when God wants them to go.

That's what we have to remember. We're all going to go. And sometimes we just don't want to go too young.

Or we don't want to go before we've accomplished something more. Or seen grandchildren born, or children, or something like that. There's things that we think are just unfinished business that it'd be a shame for us to die now, because there's just something more I hope to see accomplished before I go.

But God knows the best time for everyone to go. And sometimes, if our lives are prolonged, well, I will say this, I know some people who served God for years and fell away. It would have been to their advantage if they had died while they were serving God, I believe.

And yet, they would have had to die rather young, but it would have been to their advantage nonetheless, because they would have died in a good way, in a good place with God, rather than otherwise. So, here we have an example of a man who, naturally enough, prefers to live rather than die, prefers to be healed rather than succumb to the sickness. But the prophet Isaiah has told him the will of God is that you will die.

You should get your house in order. Probably that means establish some heir to the throne for you. You don't have a son, so you have to pick somebody out, probably a brother, another son of Ahaz, and get that house in order, because you're going to die.

And the king should have said, fair enough, this is the will of God. I'm on my deathbed. God's taking me home.

He's taking me out. So I need to faithfully do what God said and make sure the kingdom is set up, as David did when he was dying. Though he was not very old.

David was only 70 when he died. He got the kingdom set up. He established Solomon in place and made sure everything was ready for him to depart.

He didn't whine and cry and ask to be preserved. But Hezekiah did, and God gave him what he asked for. But it ended up being bad for him and for the nation.

So Hezekiah, verse 8, said to Isaiah, What is the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that

I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day? And Isaiah said, This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which He has spoken. Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees? He means on the sundial. And Hezekiah answered, It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees.

That's the direction the shadow moves anyway. But let the shadow go backward ten degrees. This presumably would mean that the sun would move backward to make the shadow on the sundial go backward.

Now we know, of course, that wouldn't really be the sun going backward. The earth would have to change its direction of motion. It would have to come to a halt in its present turning and then move the other direction a little bit to move the shadow backward on the sundial.

Now the earth is spinning at a thousand miles an hour at the equator. And it would have to be stopped and then reversed a bit and then resume its normal course after this had served as a sign. And some believe that's what God did because the shadow in fact did go backward ten degrees.

It says in verse 11, So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz. Ahaz, apparently a built-up sundial, most believe it was made up of a number of steps constructed in such a way that at certain times the sun shadow hit certain steps and they knew what time of day it was that way. And so it went down ten steps, ten degrees.

Now, it is of course possible that God did change the direction of the earth's motion. He could easily do that. There's nothing too difficult for him.

But it's also possible that he could make the shadow go backward by some other means. I mean, if at the request of Isaiah the shadow went backward, whatever the means was, it would be seen as a sign that God had given. And, you know, God could cause a cloud to come over in such a way that it moves the shadow backward.

Not that the sun was in a different position in the sky, but that something else caused a shadow to come, some natural phenomenon. Not impossible. It would still mean the shadow went backward.

It does not tell us here that the sun went backward. It just says the shadow went down. And therefore, the shadow could have been caused by the moving of clouds or something else.

In any case, it would have been miraculous. Maybe we would prefer the most miraculous possible scenario, but the passage doesn't demand it. That just the clouds coming in response to Isaiah's prayer and causing the shadow to move backward would be supernatural enough.

At that time, Barad-dak Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, Now, Babylon has not really figured in the story yet. Babylon has not been, and is not even at this time, a threat to Israel. Babylon is far away.

It's a kingdom that has been having wars with Assyria up to this point. At a later time, as much as maybe a hundred years later or so, Nebuchadnezzar would be, Not really a hundred years from this point, probably. No, I'm sorry about that.

Not that long. More like 50, I suppose. Nebuchadnezzar would rise to power in Babylon and would expand the Babylonian empire, the Babylonian kingdom.

And that would be a threat to Judah. And eventually, they would destroy Judah. But at this time, in Hezekiah's reign, Babylon was not a threat, not a problem.

And they had heard about Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery. This must have been a significant sickness and recovery for them to hear about it all the way in Babylon. But they sent letters and a present to Hezekiah for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

And Hezekiah was attentive to them and showed them all the house of his treasures, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious ointment, and all the armory, all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Now, this was apparently just giving them a tour of the city.

But he especially laid emphasis on all the gold and all the wealth of the city. Especially, you know, Uzziah had made the city very wealthy in his reign and so did Jotham a couple of generations earlier. So Hezekiah had inherited great wealth as well as the kingdom.

And he thought it was something to boast about apparently. And he showed it to these emissaries from Babylon. Then when they were gone, Isaiah the prophet went to the king Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say? And from where did they come to you? And Hezekiah said, They came from a far country, from Babylon.

And he said, What have they seen in your house? So Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Yahweh.

Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and what your fathers have accumulated until this day shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget.

And they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good. For he said, probably under his breath or silently, There will be peace and truth, at least in my days.

Will there not? And so, this showing of the Babylonian emissaries all this wealth, Isaiah said, this is sort of important. They will covet your wealth someday. Someday in the distant future.

When your sons are ruling in your place after you're gone. And they'll come take everything away. And so Isaiah foresaw this.

And of course it happened. But Hezekiah said, Okay, if God says so. But then his motives were not very pure.

He thought, well, at least this is a prediction about something that will happen in my son's days, not mine. So I guess things will go well for me. What do I care? What happens to my sons? Well, that's something I can hardly relate with.

I mean, I'd rather that, see, my generation go through hard times if it's going to result in good times for my sons. Rather than have a prosperous and carefree life myself, knowing that my sons were going to have to pay the dues with some kind of disaster in their lives. I don't understand how anyone can be so selfish as Hezekiah was in this case, that he cared nothing about his son's well-being.

If you look over at 2 Chronicles 32, we have a little bit of extra information about Hezekiah. It doesn't really go into the story of his sickness and recovery. But it does say, after the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, it says in 2 Chronicles 32, 23, And many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all the nations thereafter.

Now, many brought gifts to him would include, as we know from 2 Kings, these emissaries from Babylon. They brought gifts to him. He was internationally famous for his wealth and greatness.

And this was apparently after he recovered from his sickness. However, he who had been such a wonderful reformer and loyal to the Lord, this went to his head when he became so wealthy and powerful. It says in verse 24, In those days Hezekiah was sick near death, and he prayed to the Lord, and He spoke to him and gave him a sign.

Okay, we got that covered in one verse. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up. That means proud.

Therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. So, he humbled himself in the end, but he got exalted in his heart for a while, and was in danger of suffering the wrath of God.

We don't know what form this pride took. In all likelihood, he did not re-erect altars to

Baals and things like that, as his ancestors had done. He had been very thorough in his elimination of idolatry from Judah.

But something he did was so evil in the sight of God that wrath over Jerusalem and Judah and him were looming from the Lord. Apparently, God almost wiped out Judah in his day because of his pride. But he finally humbled himself.

We're not told that it is so, but probably he was rebuked by Isaiah. And as a result, the inhabitants of Jerusalem repented too and so God's wrath was diverted to other, or out-verted, I guess we could say. He did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Now Hezekiah had very great riches and honor and he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of desirable items, storehouses for the harvest of grain, wine, and oil, and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks. Moreover, he provided cities for himself and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very much property. This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of upper Gion and brought the water by a tunnel to the west side of the city of David.

Hezekiah prospered in all his works. You can still see Hezekiah's tunnel and it still brings water in if you go to Jerusalem today. It's actually a tourist site.

However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him in order to test him that he might know all that was in his heart. Now, this is an interesting insight into the story we just read in 2 Kings. We're not told this little bit of interpretation of the story in 2 Kings, but only here, that when those messengers came from Babylon, he was flattered, and he wanted to make a good show for them.

In this matter, God withdrew from him, apparently meaning left him to be tested without special grace or special warning from Isaiah in advance or whatever. God did not tell him this was a test. You're in danger of being proud here.

God just allowed him to do what he would naturally do. He was being tested to see what was in his heart. Unfortunately, what was in his heart was pride, which might mean that that's what was in his heart through his entire reign.

We don't know. Or at least through much of it. Many of his reforms might have been done out of spiritual pride.

But he wasn't tested in this area until these men from Babylon came and flattered him and showed deference to him, and that caused him perhaps for his pride to blossom and him to show off all that he had. And so this was a test of Hezekiah's heart. Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet.

That vision, of course, we don't have. It's not the book of Isaiah. The son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Which you might think is our book of kings, but it's not the same one. At least scholars do not believe that it is. So Hezekiah rested with his fathers.

And they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh, his son, reigned in his place. Now Manasseh, we shall find, was 12 years old at the time he came to the throne at his father's death.

Which means that that 15 year extension was the time during which Manasseh was born. And we shall see that his story is a very ugly one. And it was because of the horrible things he did that Judah too fell to the Babylonians at a later day.

Well, we'll take a break there.