

## God or Tyrants: A Study of 1 & 2 Kings

### Lesson 10: From +30,000 to -36,000

#### Settling In

What questions do you have from your reading of 2 Kings 18:1 – 21:26?

#### Introduction

The contrast between Hezekiah and Manasseh (father and son!) is stunning! What lessons can we take from Hezekiah's life... from Manasseh's life... and/or from the relationship between the two?

#### Big Things from Small Stories!

1. The author of Kings tells us that Hezekiah “held fast” to the LORD. The verb translated “held fast” is the same word used in Genesis 2:24. Look up the Genesis passage and then comment on the significance of “held fast” as it relates to Hezekiah.
2. For as “righteous” as Hezekiah was, still the Assyrian army took over the major cities of Judah *and* were knocking on the doorstep of Jerusalem. What does this teach us about faith as it relates to the things believers face in this world?
3. The Assyrian field commander gives two speeches (2 Kings 18:19-25; 28-35). Read the two discourses and identify the theme (or, single word) that defines each speech. How do his themes play into the human psyche? How do they play into our relationship with the true God?
4. The Assyrian army seemed to be holding “all the cards” and Hezekiah and Co. had no play. Or did they? What had happened that was still in Hezekiah's favor and to whom did Hezekiah turn in this utmost distress?

5. 2 Kings 19:14-19 are “Hezekiah’s Prayer”. Flesh out the following outline of this section:
  - 1) Disclosure:
  - 2) Invocation:
  - 3) Complaint:
  - 4) Supplication:
6. What insights does Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Assyria’s fall give you concerning history?
7. God’s message to Hezekiah during his illness seems both direct and clear, “... **you are going to die; you will not recover.**” And yet Hezekiah pleads in prayer... and God “changes his mind”. What might have been the purpose of God’s direct and clear announcement of Hezekiah’s demise?
8. God accompanied Hezekiah’s request (and God’s answer) with a visible sign (the “reversing” shadow). Why would God do that? What other visible signs did God attach to his promises in Scripture? What visible signs has God attached to promises for us today?
9. Hezekiah is a confusing character – at once forthright in faith and then foolish in folly. How is that typical of most Bible characters? Why would God include such vacillating characters in his Bible History? What message does that preach to us today?
10. Manasseh may rightly get the moniker, “the worst king in Israel” (and here I include both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms). Make a list of the “evils” that Manasseh engaged in. Why would God allow this to happen... and for 55 years?!
11. The author of Kings doesn’t include the stunning reversal recorded in 2 Chronicles 33. What happened to Manasseh... and why do you think the author of Kings *didn’t* include this detail?

## Thinking More Deeply

1. With Hezekiah, the leadership (and people?) of Israel take a turn *toward* the truth and the “glory days of David”. Some might say it was a move *away* from progress... a move *backward*. This is not the norm, but at times it does happen – even in church bodies. If a church body (or a portion, thereof) takes a turn like Hezekiah’s, what is the likely source of such a turn and what will give it sustainability?
2. Few kings receive the kinds of “faith” accolades as Hezekiah, and yet Hezekiah wavered in the face of the Assyrian threat (2 Kings 18:14-16). In the face of life’s challenges or even direct challenges to our faith, we may waver. When our legs become like Jello in the face of life’s challenges, what can we do? What can we do when we see this happening in the life of someone else?
3. Think of a circumstance(s) in church history in which the defeat of the cause of the Gospel seemed inevitable. Why would God allow the Gospel’s cause to reach such a distressing point? Now, consider times in your life (or the lives of people you know) in which faith was stretched to the limit. What are we to do in such situations?
4. Comment on the insight of the following statement: *Prayer is frequently unnerving because it is the activity we engage in between catastrophe and deliverance. But if we pray truth, as Hezekiah did, we will find it not only reaches God but anchors us.*
5. Prayer is emphasized in more than one place in these chapters. Prayer is a privilege that God intends for us to take advantage of both boldly and persistently. Below are two verses of a hymn by John Newton (of “Amazing Grace” fame) that speak about the boldness of prayer. Write a THIRD verse (77 77):
  - 1 *Come, my soul, with ev’ry care,*  
*Jesus loves to answer prayer;*  
*He Himself has bid thee pray,*  
*Therefore will not turn away.*
  - 2 *Thou art coming to a King,*  
*Large petitions with thee bring;*  
*For His grace and pow’r are such*  
*None can ever ask too much.*
6. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Pope Gregory I codified what we know as the Seven Deadly Sins. Can you name them (for extra credit, in order of supposed increasing severity)? Of which “deadly sin” is Hezekiah guilty? Which one(s) are particularly tempting to you?
7. The reign of Manasseh may be seen as a reason for God’s judgment on Judah OR a part of the judgment already! Why might “corrupt rulers” be an indication of God’s judgment and what does such a judgment say about the people over which such corrupt rulers govern?