

EPISODE NO. 195

2 Kings 18:5-37

Hezekiah Was a Good King

5 Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God of Israel. There was NO ONE like Hezekiah among all the kings of Judah. There was no king like him — either before him or after him. 6 Hezekiah was loyal to Yahweh. He did NOT turn away from following Yahweh. He obeyed the commands that Yahweh had given to Moses. 7 And, Yahweh was with Hezekiah. He had success in everything he did. He rebelled against the king of Assyria; he stopped serving him. 8 Hezekiah defeated the Philistines all the way to Gaza and its borders. He defeated them everywhere, from the watchtower to the strong, walled city.

9 Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, surrounded Samaria and besieged it. This occurred in the 4th year that Hezekiah was king of Judah. And, it was during the 7th year that Hoshea (the son of Elah) was the king of Israel. 10 After three years, the Assyrians captured Samaria. This happened in the 6th year when Hezekiah was king. And, it was Hoshea's 9th year as the king of Israel. 11 The king of Assyria took away the Israelites to Assyria. He put them in Halah and in Gozan on the Habor River. He also put them in the cities of the Medes. 12 This happened because they did NOT obey Yahweh, their God. They broke His covenant, not obeying all that Moses, Yahweh's servant, had commanded. Yes, they would NOT listen to the commands or do them.

The Assyrians Threatened Jerusalem

13 During Hezekiah's 14th year as king, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, attacked Judah. He attacked all the strong, walled cities of Judah and seized them. 14 Then Hezekiah, the king of Judah, sent a message to the king of Assyria who was at Lachish. He said, "I have made a mistake. Turn away from me! I will pay whatever you demand of me!" So, the king of Assyria told Hezekiah how much to pay. It was about 22,000 pounds of silver and 2,000 pounds of gold. 15 Hezekiah gave Sennacherib all the silver that was in the temple of Yahweh. And, Hezekiah gave him all the silver in the royal palace treasuries. 16 At that time, Hezekiah (the king of Judah) stripped off all the gold that covered the doors of the temple of Yahweh. He also removed the gold from the doorposts. He gave it all to the king of Assyria.

17 The king of Assyria sent out his supreme commander, his chief officer, and his field commander. They went with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. When they approached Jerusalem's waterway from the upper pool, they stopped there. (The upper pool is on the road to Bleacher's Field.) 18 They called for the king. So Eliakim, Shebna, and Joach went out to meet them. Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, was the palace manager. Shebnai was the royal assistant. And Joach, the son of Asaph, was the historian.

19 The Assyrian field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah this: " "The great king, the king of Assyria, says: "What is there that remains that you can trust?" 20 You claim that you have battle-plans and military strength, but your words are EMPTY! On whom are you trusting for help such that you rebel against me? 21 Look, you are now depending on Egypt to help you. Egypt is like a splintered walking-stick. If you lean on it for support, it will stab you and hurt you. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, will hurt anybody who depends on him. 22 But you might tell me: 'We are depending upon Yahweh, our God!' Well, Hezekiah destroyed Yahweh's altars and the high places of worship. Hezekiah told Judah and Jerusalem: 'You must worship only at this one altar in Jerusalem!'

23 " 'Now, let's make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you 2,000 horses, . . . if you can find enough men to ride them! 24 You could NOT defeat even one of my master's least important officers! So, why do you depend on Egypt to give you chariots and horsemen? 25 I have not come to attack and destroy this place without an order from Yahweh. Why, Yahweh Himself told me to come to this country and destroy it!' "

26 Then Eliakim (the son of Hilkiah), Shebna, and Joach spoke to the field commander. They said, "Please speak to us in the Aramaic language. We understand it. Do not speak to us in Hebrew, because the people on the city wall can hear you!"

27 But the field commander said to them, "No! My master did not send me to tell these things only to you and your king. My master sent me to say them also to those people sitting on the wall! Like you, they will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine!"

28 Then the field commander stood up and shouted loudly in the Hebrew language. He said, "Listen to the word from the great king, the king of Assyria! 29 The king says that you should NOT let Hezekiah fool you! Hezekiah cannot save you from my power! 30 Don't let Hezekiah talk you into trusting Yahweh! Hezekiah says: 'Yahweh will surely save us! This city won't be given over to the king of Assyria!'

31 “Don’t listen to Hezekiah! The king of Assyria says: ‘Make a peace-treaty with me. Come out of the city to me. Then everyone will be free to eat the fruit from his own grapevine and his own fig tree. Everyone will be free to drink water from his own well.
32 Then I will come and take you away to a land similar to your own land. It is a land with grain and new wine. It is a land of food and of vineyards. It is a land of olive oil and of honey. Then you can choose to live and not die!’

“Don’t listen to Hezekiah! He is fooling you when he says: ‘Yahweh will save us!’ 33 No god of any other nation has saved his people from the power of the king of Assyria!
34 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? They did NOT save Samaria from my power! 35 Not a single one of any of the gods of these countries has saved his people from me! Therefore, Yahweh cannot save Jerusalem from MY power!”

36 The people kept silent. They did NOT answer the field commander at all. (This was because King Hezekiah had ordered them, “Don’t answer him!”)

37 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joach tore their clothes. (Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, was the palace manager. Shebna was the royal assistant. And Joach, the son of Asaph, was the historian.) The three men went to Hezekiah and told him what the field commander had said.