

## 2 Kings 18

Written by K B Napier  
Wednesday, 28 September 2016 12:12

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In this chapter we read an echo of Satan's challenge to Adam and Eve... "Hath God said...?" Hezekiah trusted in the Lord to save the nation, but the Assyrians taunted him, saying that the gods of other subdued nations did nothing to save them, so why did Judah think *their* God could save them from the might of Assyria? It is the same taunt uttered today by loud-mouthed atheists and Islamists. How do you respond?

### Verses 1-3

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.

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.

3.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

25 year old Hezekiah began to rule Judah when Hoshea had ruled Israel for three years. Hezekiah ('Jehovah is my strength') ruled for 29 years. His rule was just and good, as he served the Lord "according to all that David his father did" - a commendation from God Himself and one we should seek for ourselves.

### Verses 4-6

1.

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in

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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.

2.

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.

3.

For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

Unlike the other kings, he removed the pagan groves and high places, breaking all the statues to false gods. The closest we have come to this was in reformation times when Henry ruined Romanist places of worship. Hezekiah even destroyed the brass serpent Moses made. The reason was simple – the people worshipped the serpent rather than the God Who had saved them from Egypt. In the time of Hezekiah the serpent was simply called Nehushtan, 'a thing of brass'. Catholics do this today, worshipping things and humans rather than God. And genuine believers, as well as pseudo-believers, fall into the same trap with a variety of traditions.

Hezekiah trusted God completely, making him unique amongst all the kings who ruled before and after him; some came close, but still allowed idolatry to continue. As a Jew he followed the laws of Moses and God. Even today, many who claim to be Christian worship things of God, rather than God Himself. Satan tends to use the same ploys throughout history; only the name changes.

### Verses 7-12

1.

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.

2.

He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the

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watchmen to the fenced city.

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

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:

6.

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.

Importantly, and to be embraced today, “...*the LORD was with him.*” Because he served God truly, he prospered in everything. Hezekiah cast off the rule of the king of Assyria, moving his army west to strike the Philistines in Gaza and surrounding area. After four years of Hezekiah’s rule, Shalmaneser (‘fire worshipper’), king of Assyria, laid siege to Samaria. His army finally took Samaria after three years, and this was the end of Israel as a nation, as well as the end of the kings of Israel. The people were taken as slaves, dispersed around Assyrian vassal countries.

Note the reason this happened? It was not due to a mighty king overpowering Israel – it was due to Israel’s continuous rejection of God and His law; no-one can say God was not good, for He put up with two centuries of evil, but they did not return to Him. Thus, this inglorious end to Israel was a punishment from God for their disobedience. Today, the churches are experiencing the withdrawal of God’s presence; this is why we are now under daily attack from homosexuals,

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atheists and Islamists.

### Verses 13-16

1.

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.

2.

And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou putttest 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.

3.

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.

4.

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.

Half-way through Hezekiah's reign, Judah was attacked by the king of Assyria, who captured every fortified city in the land. Hezekiah sent a message to the king, pleading with him to stop his war, saying he would gladly do whatever Sennacherib demanded of him. Was this a foolish thing to do, when Hezekiah had his faith in God? We cannot tell from the details given. Sennacherib considered the request and demanded three hundred talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. This was a considerable amount to demand. A talent, or *kikkār*, was not a coin, but a huge disk of gold or silver, weighing about 75 pounds/35 kilograms. A talent was the largest currency of the time, and was kept in a secure room.

Revelation warns that in the end times men would be punished by hailstones, each stone weighing the same as a talent (16:21)! In 2 Samuel 12:30, we read that David very briefly wore a crown of an enemy, weighing a talent. When we think of a talent compared to today's money,

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a man who had just five Old Testament talents would today be a multimillionaire, each talent being the equivalent of five years' wages; New Testament estimates put a talent at between \$1000 and \$30,000 today.

Another comparison – one talent was equal to about 3,000 shekels (each weighing about 11 grams, or 60 of the larger denomination, minas. In Jesus' time a shekel was a silver coin... but in Hezekiah's day, each talent was a very heavy disk to be kept in a vault. Thus, Assyria demanded a weight of 22,500 pounds of silver, and 2,250 pounds of gold. This was an incredible amount of gold and silver. Hezekiah had to clear out all these precious metals from the Temple and the palace. To make up the full weight, Hezekiah had the gold coverings removed from the Temple doors and pillars. It was a massive blow to Judah and its treasury. But, as I have said before, appeasement is never a good idea.

### Verses 17-20

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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?

4.

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?

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Before too long, the king of Assyria sent a very large army against Jerusalem, under the generalship of Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh. 'Tartan' is not a personal name, but a title for a field marshal or general who came from Sargon. Rabsaris was a chief eunuch from Babylon. That is, the highest ranking official in the Babylonian court, a lord chamberlain. Rabshakeh was a chief cup-bearer at court, so a chief officer. Thus, we do not have the personal names of the generals, only their official titles.

The three leaders stood by the "conduit of the upper pool", on the road leading to the "fuller's field". The conduit was a channel containing water used for irrigation, issuing from a large reservoir sited higher up. Beside this water course was another place, complete with large rocks, used by laundry workers for washing clothes.

The Assyrian leaders shouted a message for Hezekiah to the soldiers above the main gate of Jerusalem. In response, Eliakim ('God raises'), son of the chief steward of Hezekiah's household, came out of the gate to speak to the men. He was accompanied by the secretary to the king, Shebna ('vigour'), and Joah ('Jehovah is brother') who recorded what was said and done for the court chronicles.

Rabshakeh delivered his message: Hezekiah was to be asked *'Why do you place trust in your own ideas, or in God? Why do you vainly think you can win a war? Who do you trust in your rebellion against the great king of Assyria?'*

### Verses 21-25

1.

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.

2.

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?

3.

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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.

4.

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?

5.

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.

*'You foolishly trust in the might of Egypt, whose pharaoh is but a bruised reed, a reed that, if pressed upon, will drive its way through a man's hand to do harm. The Pharaoh, then, is useless to you.'*

Rabshakeh continued: *'And do you not trust in your God, in whose name you destroyed the high places? I urge you to promise allegiance to the great king, who will then send you 2,000 horses as a gift, for riders of your choice'* . The horses were of good breeding, possibly from Hittite or Arabian sources, being the finest horses at that time. Of course, being a conqueror over many nations, the great king was not making a personal sacrifice – he just took the horses from his vassal countries. Even so, it was a way of showing leniency to Hezekiah.

The stern herald then said, *'Would you dare to reject this message from even the lowest of the great king's servants, and trust Pharaoh to save you with his chariots and cavalry?? I, the great king, warn you that I will come against you, without your God, to destroy Jerusalem. I do it because your God told me to destroy the city.'*

The king of Assyria was 'told by God' (?) to destroy Judah. Yet, Hezekiah was one of the best and most righteous kings of Judah. We do not really know why, but, at this point in the narrative, it could have been the day of reckoning for the many years that kings of Judah rejected God. God always brings a person or nation to account, even if there are intervening years of apparent

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silence.

### Verses 26-32

1.

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.

2.

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?

3.

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:

4.

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

5.

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.

6.

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:

7.

Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of

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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 spokesmen for Hezekiah replied. They said they understood the Syrian language, so the messengers did not need to speak in the Jewish language. It seems that they did not want the soldiers on the wall to understand what was being said.

Rabshakeh appears to have been offended, and shouted loudly in Hebrew so that the soldiers on the wall *could* hear what was said. He disparaged them, saying they ought to eat dung and drink urine alongside these three courtiers. He then shouted, again loudly in Hebrew: *'Hear what the great king of Assyria is telling you! Do not be deceived by Hezekiah, for he cannot save you from the great king! Do not believe him when he says your God will keep you safe, or that Jerusalem will not fall into our hands! Listen to me, the great king of Assyria – agree to my terms and I will allow you all to eat your own produce and to drink from your own water containers.'*

Thus, the message was that if Jerusalem obeyed the Assyrian king, they would not be taken captive and made slaves. Again, the messengers advised the people not to believe God would deliver them from harm. Should Hezekiah still have looked to God for deliverance? Or, should he understand that it was God Who sent this great army against them in the first place, so he should give in?

### Verses 33-37

1.

Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

2.

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?

3.

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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?

4.

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

5.

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.

The taunting continued: *'Have ANY gods of nations we have conquered, saved them? (Several gods were mentioned as examples)... did they save those nations? Did they save Israel? Why, then, should you believe your God will save you?'*

Hezekiah's spokesmen and the men on the walls did not reply, but remained silent: Hezekiah told them not to make an answer. The three spokesmen returned to the city, while the generals of Assyria waited for a reply. The spokesmen tore their clothing in anguish and repeated everything said to them, to Hezekiah.

At this time Isaiah was a prophet in Judah, but we do not yet hear from him until the next chapter. Did God tell the Assyrian king to attack Judah, or was it just clever propaganda used to frighten Judah into submission?

It should be a rule of all believers, to trust in God, no matter what the wicked say and do. Also, to repent and turn back fully to the Lord, Whose hand can stay the mighty in favour of His people. It does not matter what happens in life – trust in God. To shake with fear is to allow in doubt and uncertainty. The fear should be in God, not in circumstances or enemies. When we trust, *"God is with thee in all that thou doest"*

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Today, many enemies surround us, shouting words of anger and hatred. Some suffer adverse circumstances. But, we must still hold firm.

*“Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.”* (Exodus 20:20)

*“For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”* (Deuteronomy 4:24). AND YET...

*“(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.”* (Deuteronomy 4:31)

Do you fear the enemy having more power than your God?

*“Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.”* (Deuteronomy 7:21)

*“For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”* (Deuteronomy 20:4)

*“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26)

*“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* (Revelation 2:7)

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