

2 Kings 20

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 28 September 2016 14:43

Israel's line of kings had already been removed by God. With the enthronement of Hezekiah's son, we see the end of the reign of the kings of Judah, by way of exile to Babylon. After that there is about 400 years of silence. God warned the people that by choosing a king to rule them, they forsook the reign of God directly guiding them in the paths of righteousness. He warned that by electing to have an human king, they would come to regret it, as each king imposed his own demands.

Today, when we refuse to live our lives after the rule of God, we sin, and we eat poison. We see the results every day on earth. We must get back to God as our direct King (because He rules whether or not we want Him to!), and until we do so we will be ravaged by earthly rulers, as they become progressively wicked and haters of God and His people.

Verses 1-3

1.

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2.

Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,

3.

I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

Hezekiah had a 'boil' or ulcer, possibly caused by leprosy. It was draining him of strength and health, possibly by way of deadly blood poisoning (septicaemia), and he was dying, laying in his bed. Isaiah came to see him and advised him to make out his final will, for he would not live much longer. Isaiah said this either because God told him to say it, or, because the various signs and symptoms demanded it.

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Hearing this devastating news (for he was still only in his early mid-age) Hezekiah turned his face to the wall in misery. He reminded God that he had lived a life of holiness, not out of pride, but as a plea to God to look upon him kindly. The king lay there weeping. Though many Christians (who feel healthy) claim they would happily accept their death, most still cry out to the Lord when the day comes. After all, we only know life on this earth, and see life in Heaven as something future but without real detail. So, the feelings of loss of the only life we have known may enter the mind.

Verses 4-7

1.

And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

2.

Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

3.

And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

4.

And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

Isaiah was making his way from the palace, and was in the courtyard outside the royal residence, when God stopped him. God told him to return to the king, whose prayers he had heard. He promised to heal Hezekiah, and he would be well enough to enter the Temple within three days. A further fifteen years would be added to the king's life. Also, the king of Assyria would trouble him no more, for He would deliver the city for His own honour's sake and for the sake of the promises made to David, whom He loved.

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Isaiah went back to the king's bed chamber and told the servants to boil a clump of figs. The resulting poultice was placed onto the wound (probably wrapped in muslin as protection), which was healed. Fig poultice is even used today.

Many Christians think that a doctor or surgeon can heal someone, to stop him dying. No, God heals if He wishes, and it is *He Who* brings life or death. A successful remedy is only a tool used by God, if He so wishes it. A successful medical intervention is only how God plans it.

When a person dies, he does so because God removes the spirit of life, not because medication or surgery has failed. God knows the time and date of death to the exact moment, of every person on earth, whether this is before birth or after a long life. Nothing will change that moment, unless it comes direct from God, Who will then change the time and date by His own will... the very change being predetermined.

Successful medication, etc., will only be the secondary means used by God. If He does not wish it, life will end. If He shows mercy, then life will continue, again by His direct command over the body. Any work by doctors is part of this holy intervention. We must not attribute new or extended life, or death, to human means, which are secondary ways God can use to alter what happens (seemingly rarely).

Verses 8-11

1.

And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?

2.

And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

3.

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

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4.

And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

It might sound odd, that though Isaiah concocted a poultice to get rid of the problem, Hezekiah still wanted to know how he could KNOW it was God, and not the poultice, that healed him. This is an important distinction, for so many Christians today trust in remedies and doctor intervention, instead of in the God Who gave them their potency/knowledge. So, how could Hezekiah know that his problem would be healed, and that he would again visit the Temple in three days' time? (This suggests the poultice was applied on a Thursday, or maybe Wednesday).

The answer from Isaiah might seem very bizarre, but he would only have given his answer because God gave him the words to utter. The sign that God intervened would be dramatic – the shadow from the sun would go forward ten degrees or backward ten degrees; Hezekiah could choose which. This would obviously be a miracle, for the sun does not act this way under 'natural' laws.

Note that God did not cause a change in the sun, or the movement of the earth, but only in the shadow it cast! If you like, God 'bent' the shadow, leaving the sun and earth where they were. To show that this was no random event, Isaiah asked Hezekiah what he wanted – shadow to move forward or backward? This would be a double-proof that it was God and not any natural activity.

Hezekiah said that if the shadow moved forward it would not be too hard, for the shadow would move that way anyway in the normal course of the day. So, he chose for the shadow to move backwards. Isaiah called out to God in prayer and asked for the shadow to move backwards, which it did, as was proved by the sun dial built by Hezekiah's father, Ahaz.

In any miracle there must be solid proof that God has indeed intervened. Without such proof no man can say with certainty that it was done by God. Thus, mention that the miracle was witnessed by the sun dial is important.

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Verses 12-21

1.

At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

2.

And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

3.

Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon.

4.

And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

5.

And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD.

6.

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

7.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

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8.

Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?

9.

And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

10.

And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Meanwhile (because news took time to travel), the king of Babylon heard of Hezekiah's illness, and sent a message to wish him well. (Interestingly, the king's name means 'worshipper of Baal'). With the letter of sympathy went a 'present' or *minchah*. This need not be money, but it was probably a bloodless sacrificial offering. Was this to Baal? We cannot prevent others from worshipping Baal or any false god in retrospect, but at least the Babylonian king showed respect for Hezekiah.

By the time the messengers reached Jerusalem, Hezekiah was much better. Foolishly, he took the messengers (who were probably of high rank) around Jerusalem, showing them all the contents of his treasury. On many occasions people trust those who come to them, but it is prudent not to divulge everything, for we never know what will be done with the information. This accounts for the saying that we should not "wear our hearts on our sleeve", showing our inner feelings or desires. As I know from my own life, others can use these against a person. Be careful what strangers you are opening up to. This even applies to such activities as counselling; it is unwise to be completely open with strangers, even if they claim to want to help you. (I know this from experience... knowledge is power!).

When Isaiah heard what Hezekiah had done he confronted him, asking what the men had said and what they had been told. The king told him who they were. Isaiah asked Hezekiah what he had said and what he had shown them. Isaiah must have sighed deeply, shaking his head,

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before giving him a message from God.

The news was devastating – everything in the treasury would be taken in the near future by Babylon; nothing would be left! The king of Babylon would also take the high-born descendants of Hezekiah, and they would serve Babylon as eunuchs (in this text, meaning officers of the court, rather than ruling Judah as they ought to have done). Thus, the future exile of Judah and Daniel, etc., was foretold.

Hezekiah thanked Isaiah for the prophecy, correctly saying that it was ‘good’ – it had to be because it was given by God. At least his last days would be filled with “peace and truth”. Even the best believer can make mistakes and wrong judgments. If anything, Hezekiah’s error was to be ‘too trusting’ of fellow men. What Hezekiah did is found in Chronicles, along with details of building a new water channel and pool to supply it, for the use of Jerusalem. (Probably the one used to enter the city by enemies).

When he died, his son, Manasseh (‘causing to forget’), reigned. It was Manasseh whose actions led to the exile of Judah, so Isaiah’s prophecy did not take long to come about.

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