

Hezekiah

Hezekiah's name means "Yahweh is my strength" and the record of his life shows that he had a close relationship with the Creator God.

Hezekiah's father Ahaz had not been a good example for him to follow.

2 Kings 18:1-4 [New King James] *"Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan."*

The "sacred stones" refers to pillars of stones [Exodus 23:23-24] along with "Asherah poles" which were both associated with the worship of Baal, [Judges 3:7] pagan Canaanite gods.

The bronze snake had been made to cure the Israelites of the bite of venomous snakes [Numbers 21:4-9]. It demonstrated God's presence and power and reminded them of His mercy and forgiveness at that moment of their history.

But it had become an object of worship instead of a reminder of Who to worship, so Hezekiah was forced to destroy it along with the other objects of pagan worship.

We must be very careful that any aids to our worship do not become objects of worship themselves.

2 Kings 18:5-6 [New King James] *"He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses."*

This statement refers to the kings of Judah and Israel after the division of the kingdom so it does **not** refer to King David, considered the king most devoted to the true Creator God.

2 Kings 18:7-8 [New King James] *"The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city."*

Judah was sandwiched between two world powers, Egypt and Assyria. Both wanted to control Judah and Israel because they lay at the vital crossroads of all ancient Near East trade.

The nation who controlled Judah would have a military and economic advantage over its rivals.

When Hezekiah became king, Assyria controlled Judah due to the actions of his father King Ahaz, [2 Kings 16:7-9].

So it was with great courage that Hezekiah rebelled against this mighty empire, placing his faith in God's strength rather than his own.

Hezekiah then watched as Israel, who continued to violate the covenant God had made with them and ignored the laws that God had given them through Moses, be taken into captivity, [2 Kings 18:9-12], by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.

2 Kings 18:13-16 [New King James] *“And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, ‘I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.’ And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house. At that time Hezekiah stripped 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.”*

This event occurred four years after Sennacherib, the son of Shalmaneser, became king of Assyria.

When Sennacherib became king, Hezekiah stopped paying the tribute hoping Assyria would ignore the fact.

When Sennacherib and his army retaliated, Hezekiah resumed paying the tribute money.

Sennacherib was not as war-hungry as previous Assyrian kings, which allowed Hezekiah to institute many reforms and strengthen the nation, [**2 Chronicles chapters 29-31**].

Sennacherib invaded Judah and sent his officers with messages to Hezekiah and letters that insulted the Creator God, [**2 Chronicles 32:1-19**].

King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to God and the angels of God annihilated the army of the Assyrian king, [**2 Chronicles 32:20-23**].

2 Kings 20:1-6 [New King James] *“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 the LORD: “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. And 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 for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David.’”’”*

Because of Hezekiah’s faith and prayer, God healed him and saved Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

Faith and prayer, if they are sincere and directed towards the one true Creator God, can heal physically and spiritually and change any situation, [James 5:13-18].

2 Kings 20:12-15 [New King James] *“At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, 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 and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armoury, all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, ‘What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?’ So 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.’”*

Was it the pride that Hezekiah had as a result of how he had been blessed by the Creator God?

Whatever it was, it was a bad decision, as God told him through His prophet Isaiah, [2 Kings 20:16-21].

The past is an important part of today's actions and plans for tomorrow.

The people and kings of Judah had a rich past, filled with God's action, guidance and commands. But with each passing generation they experienced tragedies that occurred when the people forgot that the Creator God had cared for them in the past, also cared about their present and their future.

Hezekiah was one of the few kings of Judah who was constantly aware of God's acts in the past and His interest in the events of every day.

Such an awareness caused Hezekiah to have a close relationship with the Creator God.

We also can have such a close relationship with the Creator God if we seek to eradicate sin from our lives, accept on confession of our sins the merciful forgiveness of our loving Creator God, and allow the active Holy Spirit to develop within us the very character of God, [**Galatians 5:22-25**].

The lives of three kings who followed Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon and Josiah, were deeply affected by both Hezekiah's accomplishments and his weaknesses.

Our past affects our decisions and actions today, and these in turn affect the future.

There are always lessons to be learnt from our past mistakes, errors to be avoided in the future.

Part of our success in life will be measured by what we do with the experiences of the past to prepare us for the future.

Lessons from the life of Hezekiah –

Sweeping reforms, personal and national, are short-lived when little action is taken to preserve them for the future.

Past obedience to God does **not** remove the possibility of present and future disobedience.

Complete faith and dependence on the Creator God will yield amazing results in our lives.

Hezekiah's prayer life is an example we can follow.

2 Kings 19:14 [New King James] *“And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.”*

A simple physical action that expressed what was in Hezekiah's heart and mind.