

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND TRIAL

BIBLE TEXT : II Kings 20:1-18; II Chronicles 32:26, 31-33.

LESSON 15 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Kings 20:1-18

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.

⁴ And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

⁸ 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?

⁹ And Isaiah said, This sign shalt

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Sickness of Hezekiah During the Time of Judah's Distress

1. Jerusalem is threatened by Sennacherib's armies, II Kings 20:6;

2 Kings 18:17

¹⁷ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsharis 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. Isaiah tells Hezekiah he will die of his sickness, II Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1.

3. Hezekiah weeps before the Lord, II Kings 20:2, 3.

II The Miracle-Working God

1. God sends Isaiah back with the answer, II Kings 20:4-6.

2. Hezekiah is healed, II Kings 20:7;

James 5:14-15

¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Exodus 15:26

²⁶ And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee.

3. God sends a sign, II Kings 20:8-11;

Mark 16:17-18

¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

III Hezekiah's Trial

1. Hezekiah receives an embassy from Babylon, II Kings 20:12, 13; II Chronicles 32:31.

2. Hezekiah's heart is lifted up, II Chronicles 32:25, 26;

Psalms 101:5

⁵ Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Proverbs 6:17

¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

3. Isaiah reproves Hezekiah and tells of the Babylonian captivity, II Kings 20:14-18.

4. Hezekiah dies, II Chronicles 32:32, 33.

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?

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ And of thy sons that shall issue

NOTES:

Strength in Weakness

Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. He sought the Lord three times to have it removed, only to hear the words: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). It is certainly true that in time of trial and sickness -- when we are weak -- our reliance on God is the strongest, and God's strength is made manifest.

The Refiner's Fire

Hezekiah was a godly king, a man who served God with all his heart; but, yet, he faced many trials to prove him and to humble him. Sennacherib came against him with all his Assyrian host; the kingdom of Judah faced annihilation. To face this trial Hezekiah strengthened himself in the Lord. To make matters more serious, it was during this invasion that Hezekiah became sick unto death. To bring, as it were, even more despair, the Prophet Isaiah was sent to tell the 39-year-old king to set his house in order, that he was going to die.

How dark must have seemed that day to the king when Isaiah delivered his message of death, and then left! It must have seemed as though all hell was arrayed against him and the heavens were as brass over his head. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and, in the bitterness of his soul, wept sorely. How quick and powerful was the answer when God saw that his servant was in danger of being overcome in the fires of affliction. It was like that moment when Abraham lifted his knife to offer his only son, and the angel of the Lord called out of Heaven and stayed his hand. May all the children of God know that the Refiner of Levi knows his gold and will not let the fire burn hotter than necessary to purify His sons!

Signs and Wonders

How marvellous are the works of the Lord! and how great is the deliverance when He stretches forth His hand! With signs and wonders He made Himself known to Hezekiah. The angel of death passed over the king of Judah and smote the host of the Assyrians, leaving Sennacherib to make his way back to Nineveh, moping, and with shame of face, as the virgin daughters of Zion shook their heads and laughed him to scorn.

These were not all the strange events of that memorable time, for God sent Isaiah back to tell Hezekiah that He would heal him and add fifteen years unto his life. As a proof that his message was from God, Isaiah cried unto the Lord and God sent the sun eastward for forty minutes in its flight, and the dial of Ahaz must have appeared to have gone away as the shadow moved backward ten degrees. What a shock it must have been to the inhabitants of the world to see the sun reverse its order in the skies! Let the sceptics mock at such an event if they will; but the God of Hezekiah is the God who created the sun, earth, and sky; it is He who set the worlds in motion; and when He wills, He can reverse that motion to the confusion of those who do not believe.

Praise

What a rejoicing there must have been, and how the house of the Lord must have vibrated on that third day as Hezekiah gave thanks to God for deliverance and fifteen years of extended life! "The grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day," were the words from the lips of the king, that rang through the corridors and echoed in the courts of the Temple.

Healing

To pray unto the Lord for healing as Hezekiah did is not strange to the children of God. The Lord hath promised, "I am

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

2 Chronicles 32:26

²⁶ Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 32:31-33

³¹ Howbeit in *the business* of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart.

³² Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, *and* in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

³³ And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). In His Word, the afflicted are exhorted to pray, and the sick to "call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:14, 15). His power to heal is still made manifest to those who put their trust in Him.

A curse is pronounced upon those who look to the arm of flesh and fail to put their trust in God. God was displeased with Asa who "sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians" (II Chronicles 16:12). Asa found no healing, and died; but Hezekiah prayed, and lived. Some would point to the plaster of figs that Isaiah told Hezekiah to lay upon the boil as an example of using earthly remedies. It was not expected that the figs would heal the boil, nor that the waters of Jordan would heal leprosy. The clay that Jesus used to anoint the eyes of the blind man was no more a remedy for blindness than the oil of anointing that is placed upon the forehead by the elders of the church. Obedience to the word of command, and faith in God bring healing to the sick, and no aids or helps are necessary to accomplish His purpose. Let those who serve God put their trust solely in Him "who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalm 103:3).

Pride

"But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up" (II Chronicles 32:25). With his health regained, the Assyrian threat removed, and riches and honour bestowed upon him, Hezekiah should have walked softly before His Maker who had so wondrously wrought for him. However, when ambassadors came with presents from Babylon, it was too tempting for him. With swelling pride he showed them all his treasures. Once more God sent His Prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah, this time with a word of rebuke for his folly.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Everything that Hezekiah and Judah pointed to with pride was to be swept away from them. All the treasures in which they had vaunted themselves were destined to fall into the hands of the men of Babylon before whom they boasted. May God help us all to realise that pride is an abomination in the sight of God. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Ecclesiastes 10:1).

Humility

Hezekiah accepted the rebuke from the Lord and, as a truly great man, humbled himself; and God delayed the captivity of Judah so that it did not come in Hezekiah's day. God certainly respects the humble and "saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). God regarded the murderer, even Ahab, when he humbled himself at the rebuke of Elijah; and He heard the prayer of Manasseh who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, because he humbled himself greatly. The mercy of God is always extended to those who will humble themselves and acknowledge their guilt before Him. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). Are you big enough to be small?

QUESTIONS

1. Study the chronology of Hezekiah's life and tell how you know that his sickness came at about the time of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah.
2. Relate some of the things Hezekiah had done during his reign prior to his sickness.
3. How old was Hezekiah when he became sick?
4. How long was God in answering Hezekiah's prayer for

healing?

5. What are some of the Scriptural reasons why we trust God for healing?
6. How do we figure that ten degrees on a sundial is 40 minutes?
7. What part did the figs play in the healing of Hezekiah?
8. Look up other prophecies about the Babylonians captivity.
9. What prevented the wrath of God from being poured out on Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign?