



Hezekiah: Trusting an All-Powerful God

Lesson 18

If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Isaiah 7:9

Teacher's Note: This lesson has a lot of content, and I mean a lot! The first point alone covers 3 chapters of Scripture! Obviously, it will not be possible to cover all of this in your lesson. You will need to decide in advance what to cover and what not to cover. I would suggest briefly covering point I, and spending the majority of your time on point II, and then finishing up quickly with points III and IV. Some verse are put in brackets as suggestions for less reading, although reading all of these will still likely be more than you have time to cover.

God is the God who can conquer impossible problems. If you've ever found yourself staring at a problem that felt like an impossible mountain, this lesson has good news for you. If you've ever felt backed into a corner with nowhere to turn, this lesson has good news for you. If you've ever been in an impossible situation, this lesson has good news for you. And that good news is that we serve a God who can do the impossible.

Hezekiah found himself in an impossible situation. He rebelled against Assyria, and woke up to an army over 100,000 strong at his front door. Hezekiah worked hard to prepare for the attack, but realized in the end the only hope he had was God. As we study this lesson, we will see the connection Scripture makes between our faith in God and the stability we need to live for Him.

What kind of daunting situations do believers face today?

I. Hezekiah's reforms (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29-31)

The author of Kings gives us about eight verses describing Hezekiah's faithfulness to God and the blessings that flowed from that (2 Kings 18:1-8). Chronicles, on the other hand, gives us a lot more information! Hezekiah is a critically important king because he is one of the godliest

kings in Judah, and because he is king during one of the most critical time periods in the nation.

A. Hezekiah restores the temple (2 Chronicles 29 [vv 1-11])

Hezekiah begins by undoing the damage his father had done. Ahaz had creatively updated the temple, and had apparently allowed a lot of defiling materials inside the temple itself. Hezekiah upon coming to throne restores it to the way it was supposed to be based on God's plan and not Ahaz's plan and sought to remove the pollution. This was such a big task that it took them half a month to complete it (2 Chronicles 29:17)!

B. Hezekiah reinstates the Passover (2 Chronicles 30 [1, 10-13, 26-27])

As Hezekiah continued his restoration of the proper worship of the Lord, he next turned his attention to keeping the Passover. He invited those left from the northern tribes to join in the celebration of this holiday, remember the deliverance which the Lord had provided when Israel left Egypt. Although many mocked, some came and the celebration was a time of joyous celebration and the Lord's blessing.

C. Hezekiah organizes the priests (2 Chronicles 31 [1-3, 20-21])

Finally, after cleansing the temple and celebrating Passover, Hezekiah makes sure that the priests and the Levites are properly set up to fulfill their duties. At this point, the proper worship of the Lord has been set up and the normal rhythm of worship and life can resume.

II. Hezekiah and Assyria (2 Kings 18:9-19:37)

Spiritually speaking, Hezekiah had a wonderfully strong start. Politically speaking, he made a huge miscalculation at the beginning of his reign. After his father had become a vassal (servant) of Assyria, Hezekiah decided to rebel (2 Kings 18:7b). Understanding the historical situation behind this will be helpful:

"This was not a particularly courageous act at the time, for the Assyrian army was preoccupied in the eastern part of the empire for several years, and Sargon II died in 705 B.C. But now the picture had changed drastically. In 701 B.C., Sennacherib, having consolidated the empire and reorganized the army following the death of his father, moved westward to punish various kings, including Hezekiah, and to force them once again to pay heavy annual tributes to Nineveh."¹

¹ John C. Whitcomb and John J. Davis, *Israel: From Conquest to Exile: A Commentary on Joshua–2 Kings*, Combined paper edition. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2012), 448.

Despite all that Hezekiah does in seeking God, things will quickly begin going wrong for him. Why is it that obedience sometimes brings greater problems?

Should Hezekiah have rebelled against Assyria? Why or why not?

Why do you think God allowed Hezekiah to find himself in the position that he did regarding Assyria?

A. Assyria attacks Judah (2 Kings 18:9-37 [19-25])

After Assyria regathers itself and comes after Judah, Hezekiah immediately caves. He sends a messenger begging for peace and willing to pay any price for his insurrection. After paying an exorbitant amount of money, Hezekiah learns that it isn't enough, and that Assyria is still coming for them.

Instead of going home, Assyria sends diplomats who try to discourage the people into overthrowing the king and turning themselves over to Assyria (18:19-25). He intentionally does this in the common Hebrew language so that everyone listening in can hear and (in his mind at least) hopefully revolt. Hezekiah instructed everyone to be quiet, and to Assyria's disappointment, they did.

This speech is riddled with lies and half-truths. How does Rabshakeh twist the truth to discourage God's people? How does Satan use similar arguments to discourage people today?

B. Hezekiah prays to God (2 Kings 19:1-19 [15-19])

Hezekiah receives the report of what happened and is devastated by it. He mourns and asks God what to do. God promises to bring deliverance, and yet there is another letter that is sent by Assyria. In this letter, Rab-shakeh doubles down on his threats. Hezekiah responds by bringing this letter before the Lord and asking him to do something about it.

Read Hezekiah's prayer. In what ways can this prayer be an example for believers today who are going through impossible circumstances?

C. Isaiah promises deliverance (2 Kings 19:20-34 [20, 29-34])

God sends Isaiah to give a message of hope to Hezekiah. This prophecy assures Hezekiah that God will work on his behalf.

D. God defeats Assyria (2 Kings 19:35-37)

After the long speeches, the prayers, and the prophecy we finally come down to the very end of the story where we find out what happens. In just three short verses this story

comes to a swift conclusion. The point seems to be that the actual outcome was easy for God. He just sent an angel and wiped out 185,000 men. No problem.

In other words, the plot of this story isn't "How will Hezekiah be saved from Assyria?" For God, that's a piece of cake. Rather, the question is "Will Hezekiah trust God?" In our own lives "how will God solve this problem" isn't really the question. Solving any problems we have is no problem for God. The real question is "Will I trust God to solve this problem or try to solve it on my own?"

III. Hezekiah's illness (2 Kings 20:1-11)

In this story, God brings Hezekiah to his knees by announcing that he will die. Hezekiah begs God to allow him to live longer, and God answers his request. Isaiah then offers Hezekiah a sign to prove what God will do, and Hezekiah asks for a sign and sees God confirm his prophecy. God listened to Hezekiah's prayer, and God answered it.

What is the difference between Hezekiah and Ahaz when it comes to asking God for a sign?

Why do you think God brought this into Hezekiah's life?

Does God change his plans?

IV. Hezekiah and Babylon (2 Kings 20:12-19)

The story of Hezekiah ends on a sad note. As we have seen so many times before success breeds arrogance which breeds destruction. Hezekiah proudly shows off the wealth of the land to Babylonian emissaries. They seem to be quite impressed, because in less than a century Babylon will come and will take that wealth for themselves.

Why is it that even the godliest of kings in Judah continue to fall into pride? How can we as believers avoid this all too common fate?

The prophet Isaiah had warned King Ahaz that "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isaiah 7:9). In other words, your stability comes from your faith in God. Ahaz ignored Isaiah and chose to buy off Assyria, a decision that left the country paying a heavy toll and that paved the way for conflict between Assyria and Judah under the reign of his son.

Hezekiah did trust God, however, and saw God do an incredible work on his behalf. Unlike his father, Hezekiah did believe God, and was established as a result. The choice lies before all of us today. Will we trust God and listen to him, living life His way? Or will we in our wisdom trust in our own way and seek to live life apart from God?

The words of Isaiah still echo throughout history "If you do not believe, you will not be established." We've seen people believe and be established, and we've seen people fail to believe and be destroyed. But now the question lies before each of us, will we believe, or will we be destroyed?