



Hezekiah

*Concerned Most With Present
Obedience*

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Overview

HEZEKIAH WAS MOST CONCERNED WITH PRESENT OBEDIENCE

Hezekiah's story is told in 2 Kings 16:20-20:21; 2 Chron. 28:27-32:33; Isaiah 36:1-39:8. He is also mentioned in Proverbs 25:1; Isaiah 1:1; Jeremiah 15:4; Jeremiah 26:18-19; Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1.

The past is an important part of today's actions and tomorrow's plans. The people and kings of Judah had a rich past, filled with God's action, guidance, and commands.

But with each passing generation, they also had a growing list of tragedies that occurred when the people forgot that their God, who had cared for them in the past, also cared about the present and the future—and demanded their continued obedience. 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. The Bible describes him as a king who had a close relationship with God.

As a reformer, Hezekiah was most concerned with present obedience. Judah was filled with visual reminders of the people's lack of trust in God, and Hezekiah boldly cleaned house. Altars, idols, and pagan temples were destroyed. Even the bronze snake Moses had made in the desert was not spared because it had ceased to point the people to God and had also become an idol. The temple in Jerusalem, whose doors had been nailed shut by Hezekiah's own father, was cleaned out and reopened. The Passover was reinstated as a national holiday, and there was revival in Judah.

Although he had a natural inclination to respond to present problems, Hezekiah's life shows little evidence of concern about the future. He took few actions to preserve the effects of his sweeping reforms. His successful efforts made him proud. His unwise display of wealth to the Babylonian delegation got Judah included on Babylon's "Nations to Conquer" list. When Isaiah informed Hezekiah of the foolishness of his act, the king's answer displayed his persistent lack of foresight. —

King of Judah

2 Kings 16:20

And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings 18:1-2

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.

Judah still lapses into sin. Hezekiah and Josiah begin many reforms, but this is not enough to permanently turn the nation back to God. Judah is defeated by the Babylonians, who exile many of them, but they are not scattered and the land is not repopulated. Sometimes we do not learn from the examples of sin and foolishness around us.

Hezekiah began to reign.

2 Chron. 29:1

Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

Religious zeal of Hezekiah

2 Chronicles 29

The Levites, chosen by God to serve in the temple, had been kept from their duties by Ahaz's wickedness (2 Chron. 28:24). But Hezekiah called them back into service, reminding them that the Lord had chosen them to minister.

We may not have to face a wicked king, but pressures or responsibilities can render us inactive and ineffective.

When you have been given the responsibility to minister, don't neglect your duty. If you have become inactive in Christian service, either by choice or by circumstance, look for opportunities (and listen to the "Hezekiah's") God will send your way to help you resume your responsibilities. Then, like the Levites, be ready for action (2 Chron. 29:12-15).

Throughout the Old Testament, the sacrifice was God's appointed way of approaching him and restoring a right relationship with him. The sin offering made by Hezekiah was one such sacrifice, given to ask God's forgiveness for unintentional sins. (For more information on why God required sacrifices and how they were carried out, see the notes in Leviticus 1.)

The blood sprinkled on the altar represented the innocence of the sacrificed animal taking the place of the guilt of the person making the offering. The animal died so the sinner could live. This ritual looked forward to the day when Jesus Christ, God's perfect Son, would sacrifice his innocent life on the cross in order that the sinful and guilty human race might be spared the punishment it deserves (Hebrews 10:1-14).

2 Chronicles 30

The Passover celebration

The Passover celebration commemorated the time that God spared the lives of Israel's firstborn sons in Egypt.

God had promised to send a plague to kill all the firstborn sons except in those homes where the blood of a slain lamb had been painted on the doorframes. The Israelites obeyed, and when the destroyer saw the blood, he "passed over" the house and did not harm anyone in it (Exodus 12:23).

After this plague, Pharaoh freed the Israelites from slavery. This celebration was to be a yearly reminder of how God delivered his people.

The careful preparations, both in the temple and for the feast, show that this was not a temporary or impulsive revival, but a deep-seated change of heart and life.

Hezekiah was a king dedicated to God and to the spiritual progress of the nation. He sent letters throughout Judah and Israel urging everyone to return to God. He told them not to be stubborn, but to submit to the Lord.

To submit means to obey him first, yielding our bodies, minds, wills, and emotions to him. His Holy Spirit must guide and renew every part of us. Only then will we be able to temper our stubborn selfishness.

The northern kingdom of Israel had recently been conquered by Assyria, and most of the people had been carried away to foreign lands. Hezekiah sent a proclamation to the few people who remained, inviting them to come to the Passover (2 Chron. 30:1), but most responded with scorn and ridicule.

People may mock you when you try to promote spiritual renewal and growth. Are you prepared to be ridiculed for your faith? When it comes your way, do not waver. Stand strong in your faith, as Hezekiah did, and God will honor you.

2 Chronicles 31

Why was idol worship so bad? The Israelites had access to the one true God, but they constantly fell into worshipping lifeless idols made of wood or stone. They put aside worshipping the Creator in order to worship the creation. We are just as guilty when God no longer holds first place in our lives.

When we think more about wealth, pleasure, prestige, or material possessions than about God, we are actually worshipping them as gods.

Idol worship resulted in captivity.

Because of idol worship, the people of Judah were eventually sent into captivity in foreign lands (2 Chron. 36:14-17). We may not be sent into captivity, but discipline awaits all those who continually put earthly desires above spiritual priorities.

The priests had not been supported by the government during the evil kings' reigns. Now that the temple was repaired, Hezekiah organized the priests and resumed the work of the temple according to a plan originally set up by David (1 Chron. 23:6-23; 1 Chron. 24:3-19).

Hezekiah reinstated the practice of tithing

Hezekiah reinstated the practice of tithing—giving a tenth of one's income to the priests and Levites so they could be free to serve God and minister to the people. The people responded immediately and generously. God's work needs the support of God's people. Does God receive a regular percentage of your income? Generosity makes our giving delightful to us and to God (2 Cor. 8-9). How different the church would be today if all believers consistently followed this pattern.

Because Hezekiah did "what was good and right and faithful before the LORD," he led the people of Judah in spiritual renewal.

His actions serve as a model of renewal for us:

- (1) He remembered God's compassion (2 Chron. 30:9)
- (2) He kept going despite ridicule (2 Chron. 30:10);
- (3) He aggressively removed evil influences from his life (2 Chron. 30:14; 2 Chron. 31:1);
- (4) He interceded for the people, asking for the Lord's pardon (2 Chron.30:15-20);
- (5) He was open to spontaneity in worship (2 Chron. 30:23);
- (6) He contributed generously to God's work (2 Chron. 31:3).

If any of these are lacking in your life, consider how they might apply, and renew your commitment to God.

Purges the nation of idolatry

2 Kings 18:4

He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and knocked down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.

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 the people of his mercy and forgiveness.

But it had become an object of worship instead of a reminder of *whom* to worship, so Hezekiah was forced to destroy it. We must be careful that aids to our worship don't become objects of worship themselves. Most objects are not made to be idols—they become idols by the way people use them.

False God's destroyed

2 Chron. 31:1-3

Now when the festival ended, the Israelites who attended went to all the towns of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, and they smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and removed the pagan shrines and altars. After this, the Israelites returned to their own towns and homes.

Hezekiah then organized the priests and Levites into divisions to offer the burnt offerings and peace offerings, and to worship and give thanks and praise to the Lord at the gates of the Temple.

The king also made a personal contribution of animals for the daily morning and evening burnt offerings, as well as for the weekly Sabbath festivals and monthly new moon festivals, and for the other annual festivals as required in the law of the Lord.

Hezekiah's piety

2 Kings 18:3-6

He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestor David had done. He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and knocked down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.

Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was never another king like him in the land of Judah, either before or after his time. [6] He remained faithful to the Lord in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the Lord had given Moses.

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Hezekiah pleased the Lord.

2Ch 29:2

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Hezekiah pleased the Lord in his distribution.

2 Chron. 31:20-21

In this way, King Hezekiah handled the distribution throughout all Judah, doing what was pleasing and good in the sight of the Lord his God.

In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow the law and the commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful.

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(5) He was open to spontaneity in worship (2 Chron. 30:23);

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The acts of Hezekiah are recorded.

2 Chron. 32:32

The rest of the events of Hezekiah's reign and his acts of devotion are recorded in The Vision of the Prophet Isaiah Son of Amoz, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

Why did God leave Hezekiah to himself? After Hezekiah was healed of his sickness, he developed excessive pride.

When envoys came to inquire about his miraculous healing, God stepped back to see how Hezekiah would respond. Unfortunately, Hezekiah's actions revealed his runaway pride.

He pointed to his own accomplishments rather than to God (see 2 Kings 20:12-19). Pride is any attitude that elevates our effort or abilities above God's, or treats with disdain his work in us. It causes us to congratulate ourselves for our successes and to look down on other people.

God does not object to self-confidence, healthy self-esteem, or good feelings about our accomplishments. He objects to the foolish attitude of taking full credit for what he has done or for setting ourselves up as superior to others.

Because of forgiveness, the Lord holds back a disaster.

Jeremiah 26:19

But did King Hezekiah and the people kill him for saying this? No, they turned from their sins and worshiped the Lord. They begged him to have mercy on them. Then the Lord held back the terrible disaster he had pronounced against them. If we kill Jeremiah, who knows

The elders remembered the words of the prophet Micah (Micah 3:12), which were similar to the words Jeremiah spoke. When Micah called the people to repent, they turned from their wickedness.

Although these people did not kill Jeremiah, they missed the main point—which the application of the story was for them. They spared Jeremiah, but they did not spare themselves by repenting of their sins. As you recall a great story of the Bible, ask how it can be applied to *your* life.

Military operations of Hezekiah

2 Kings 18:19

Then the Assyrian king's personal representative sent this message to King Hezekiah:

"This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident?"

Sickness and restoration of

2 Kings 20:1-11

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, O Lord, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight." Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the Lord:

"Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, 'this is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord.

I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.' "

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil." They did this, and Hezekiah recovered!

Meanwhile, Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, "What sign will the Lord give to prove that he will heal me and that I will go to the Temple of the Lord three days from now?"

Isaiah replied, "This is the sign that the Lord will give you to prove he will do as he promised. Would you like the shadow on the sundial to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps?"

"The shadow always moves forward," Hezekiah replied. "Make it go backward instead." So Isaiah asked the Lord to do this, and he caused the shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!

Although Hezekiah came boldly to God, he did not take God for granted or approach him flippantly. Instead, Hezekiah acknowledged God's sovereignty and Judah's total dependence on him. Hezekiah's prayer provides a good model for us. We should not be afraid to approach God with our prayers, but we must come to him with respect for who he is and what he can do.

Hezekiah seeks the Lord for healing.

2 Chron. 32:24

About that time, Hezekiah became deathly ill. He prayed to the Lord, who healed him and gave him a miraculous sign.

His psalm of thanksgiving

Isaiah 38:9-22

The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. [18] For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot 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: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we

will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

For Isaiah had said, let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover. Hezekiah also had said, what is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?

Hezekiah realized that his prayer brought deliverance and forgiveness. His words “the grave cannot praise you” may reveal that he was unaware of the blessedness of the future life for those who trust in God (Isaiah 57:1-2), or he may have meant that dead bodies cannot praise God.

In either case, Hezekiah knew that God had spared his life, so in his poem Hezekiah praises God. Hezekiah recognized the good that came from his bitter experience. The next time you have difficult struggles, pray for God’s help to gain something beneficial from them.

Hezekiah spoke of the significance of passing the joy of the Lord from father to child, from generation to generation. The heritage of our faith has come to us because of faithful men and women who have carried God’s message to us across the centuries.

Do you share with your children or other young people the excitement of your relationship with God?

His lack of wisdom in showing his resources to commissioners of Babylon

2 Kings 20:12-19

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

And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed 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 showed them not.

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. 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 showed them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord.

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.

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.

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?

Hezekiah had been a good and faithful king. But when Isaiah asked him what he had shown the messengers from Babylon, he replied, “They saw everything in my palace.” From the account in 2 Chron. 32:24-31, it appears that Hezekiah’s prosperity, success, and deliverance from sickness had made him proud.

Rather than giving credit to God for all his blessings, he tried to impress the foreigners. When God helps us, we must not use his blessings to impress others. A testimony of victory can quickly degenerate into vanity and self-congratulations.

Prospered by God

2 Kings 18:7

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.

Sending the supreme commander, the chief officer, and the field commander was like sending the vice president, secretary of state, and the head general of the army to speak to the enemy prior to a battle. All of these men were sent in an effort to impress and discourage the Israelites.

2 Chron. 32:27-30

And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;

Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.

Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.

This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

God tested Hezekiah to see what he was really like and to show him his own shortcomings and the attitude of his heart. God did not totally abandon Hezekiah, nor did he tempt him to sin or trick him. The test was meant to strengthen Hezekiah, develop his character, and prepare him for the tasks ahead.

In times of success, most of us can live good lives. But pressure, trouble, or pain will quickly remove our thin veneer of goodness unless our strength comes from God. What are you like under pressure or when everything is going wrong?

Do you give in or turn to God? Those who are consistently in touch with God don't have to worry about what pressure may reveal about them.

Conducts the Gihon Brook into Jerusalem

2 Kings 18:17

And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh 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.

Sending the supreme commander, the chief officer, and the field commander was like sending the vice president, secretary of state, and the head general of the army to speak to the enemy prior to a battle. All of these men were sent in an effort to impress and discourage the Israelites.

Events Recorded in History of Judah's Kings

2 Kings 20:20

The rest of the events in Hezekiah's reign, including the extent of his power and how he built a pool and dug a tunnel to bring water into the city, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

The pool and the tunnel refer to a 1,777-foot tunnel built from the Gihon spring to the Pool of Siloam (see 2 Chron. 32:30). It was from a water source outside the wall of Jerusalem to a secure reservoir inside the city. This was done so the Assyrian army would not cut off the city's water supply.

Scribes of Hezekiah

Proverbs 25:1

These are more proverbs of Solomon, collected by the advisers of King Hezekiah of Judah.

Hezekiah's story is told in 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron. 29-32; and Isaiah 36-39. He was one of the few kings of Judah who honored the Lord. By contrast, his father Ahaz actually nailed the temple door shut.

Hezekiah restored the temple, destroyed idol worship centers, and earned the respect of surrounding nations, many of whom brought gifts to God because of him.

It is not surprising that Hezekiah had these proverbs copied and read, for "in everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered" (2 Chron. 31:21).

Death and burial of Hezekiah

2nd Chron. 32:33

When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the upper area of the royal cemetery, and all Judah and Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then his son Manasseh became the next king.

Lessons from life:

The past affects your decisions and actions today, and these, in turn, affect the future. There are lessons to learn and errors to avoid repeating. Remember that part of the success of your past will be measured by what you do with it now and how well you use it to prepare for the future.

Sweeping reforms 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 disobedience
Complete dependence on God yields amazing results

Key verses:

“Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses” (2 Kings 18:5-6).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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