

Victory Comes When Prayer is Aligned with God's Will

Isaiah 37:21-38

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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

A. Historical Background

The Bible provides a comprehensive coverage about **King Hezekiah** in (a) **2 Kings** chapters 18, 19 and 20, (b) **2 Chronicles** chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32 as well as **Isaiah** chapters 37, 38 and 39. As you carefully read and study these chapters, a full picture emerges about Hezekiah's **Character Traits Profile** as a Person, Spiritual Leader and King of Judah. *Personally, Hezekiah loved God and he was committed to pleasing the LORD.* This is extraordinary in view of the history of the Israelites about which the Bible describes as wishy-washy, stiff-necked, disobedient and unfaithful people. In addition, Hezekiah looms large as a king compared to most of the kings of Israel and Judah. After the reign of King Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel, fully regained, restored and firmly established by King David, was divided into two due to the introduction of idol worship: Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom). Israel, the northern kingdom, lasted 260 years ruled by a successive of **20 kings**, of which the Bible describes **19 of them as evil kings!** *The northern kingdom had **only 1 good king**, Jehoash, who reigned for 40 years. That means, the Israelites in the northern kingdom spent 220 years of spiritual, political, social and economic turmoil due to idol worship led by evil kings! Consequently, the northern kingdom was totally destroyed by the Assyrians who took most of the Israelites as captives/exiles. **They ceased to exist as a kingdom after that!***

On the other hand, the situation in Judah, the southern kingdom, was much better because they had **7 good kings out of the 19 kings** who reigned for a combined 400 years. The 7 good kings ruled for a combined 238 years! **Among those good kings was King Hezekiah** about who is written in Scripture that **“he did what was right in the eye of the LORD, just as his father David had done.”** The Bible *testifies* about him this way in 2 Kings 18:1-8 [READ].

B. Biblical Context

Hezekiah's Biblical Character Trait Profile indicates that he *demonstrated* his faithfulness and obedience to God by the way he lived, worshiped and ruled Judah as a king. From the start of his reign as a king, Hezekiah demonstrated by his actions how serious and dedicated he was about the Kingdom of God! He went

about removing all the idols from the Jerusalem Temple, the city, towns and villages of Judah! *2 Chronicles chapter 29 reveals the essence and true personality of Hezekiah. Beginning at verse 3, the Bible tells us who Hezekiah really is. It says, "In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said, 'Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your fathers. Remove all the defilement from the sanctuary. ..."* The Bible also describes how King Hezekiah sent invitations throughout his kingdom for the people to come together to praise, worship and give thanks to the LORD. It is clear that He was the major force in ushering in Spiritual Revival in Judah at the time. King Hezekiah was not only a zestful promoter of praise and worship, he also *personally practiced Prayer, Praise and Worship. Clearly, King Hezekiah was a faithful and praying man.* In addition, King Hezekiah had a very close personal relationship with Prophet Isaiah as well. **Obviously, King Hezekiah was dedicated to conforming his personal, spiritual and leadership roles to God's Plan in spite of the odds stacked against him.**

II. THE LESSON TOPIC: Victory Comes When Prayer is Aligned with God's Will.

To gain a thorough understanding about the sequence of events, the deep revelations in connection with King Hezekiah and the fate of Judah, let us examine the verses.

1. v. 1. Hezekiah Sought God first in Humility and Prioritized Prayer.

When King Hezekiah was facing a crisis situation as described in Isaiah chapter 37, the Bible says in verse 1, "he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD." *That is extremely remarkable for various reasons!* For one thing, King Hezekiah didn't call for an urgent meeting with his war council to discuss strategies on how to respond to Sennacherib's threat and psychological warfare. Instead, Hezekiah presented himself before the LORD with humility. He "tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD." **He sought God first in humble spirit.** He went before the LORD with a humble spirit. **He prioritized prayer.** Before he consulted anyone, he prayed to God for answers regarding the overwhelming crises facing him and the kingdom.

2. vv. 2-7. Hezekiah Sought Confirmation to His Prayer from Isaiah.

Next, Hezekiah sent an emissary to Prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, seeking God's *confirmation* to his prayer. God's *response* through Isaiah was clear and comforting: "Do not be afraid of what you have heard – those words with which the

underling of the king of Assyria have **blasphemed Me**. ..." God sent word to Hezekiah essentially saying, ***I will take care of him!***

And yet, King Hezekiah received a letter from Sennacherib which contradicted what Isaiah's message to him.

3. vv. 8-13. The Departing Words of Sennacherib.

What we must realize in this section is that God was *already fulfilling* Isaiah's prophecy as to how He was going to deal with Sennacherib. **Of course, Sennacherib doesn't know that!** Meanwhile, King Hezekiah received the letter from the departing Assyrian filled with words of threats and intimidation which are intended to cause doubt in his mind. It was a *sophisticated psychological warfare targeting King Hezekiah's faith in God*. The Assyrians knew Judah was strong as long as their king remained strong in the LORD. Therefore, in their propaganda campaign, they kept on attacking King Hezekiah's reputation as God seeking and trusting man. Their strategy was to magnify the gods of the Assyrians and their successful aggression and conquests of various kingdoms while casting doubt about God's ability to defend them! **One of the best ways of doing that is to cast doubt about King Hezekiah's proven reliance on God and his ability to defend Judah.** Recall that as the king goes, so does the nation!

4. vv. 14-20. King Hezekiah Presented the Letter to the LORD.

Hezekiah did what he always had done. He went back into "the temple of the LORD and spread [the letter] out before the LORD. And Hezekiah **prayed** to the LORD. ..." **Hezekiah spread out the letter before God and prayed!** I love this about Hezekiah! Notice that in his prayer, King Hezekiah highlighted the following:

- a) He addressed God by **His Sovereign Titles** – LORD Almighty.
- b) He addressed **the LORD as being his/their God** – God of Israel.
- c) He acknowledged **God as Sovereign** over "all the kingdoms of the earth."
- d) He acknowledged **God as the Creator** of "heaven and earth."
- e) He expressed his **deep dismay and displeasure** regarding Sennacherib's public and repeated **blasphemy against God**.
- f) He acknowledged the fact that the Assyrians have conquered many nations and destroyed their gods.
- g) He **petitioned** the LORD Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, by saying, "Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, **so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God**" (v.20).

King Hezekiah was more concerned about God's reputation than his or his nations survival! *Notice Hezekiah's prayer was fully concentrated on God's Sovereignty and*

Reputation in view of the Assyrian's assertion and propaganda that their gods are more powerful than the God of King Hezekiah! His petition and heart's desire was for God to avenge Himself while saving the kingdom of Judah! Hezekiah's petition was not only in line with God's Will for Israel, but also not self-centered. In other words, Hezekiah's prayer was more for the preservation of God's Reputation and Judah than his welfare!

5. vv. 21-38. God's response to King Hezekiah through Isaiah.

Here below are the break downs of the verses and the revelations within them.

- a) Verses 21-22: Because Hezekiah Prayed, the Daughter of Zion/Jerusalem will Rejoice as the Assyrians Flee!
- b) Verse 23. Your Blasphemy is Against the Holy One of Israel.
- c) Verse 24-25. You Have Boasted with Pride what You Did.
- d) Verses 26-27. What the Assyrians Did is What I Planned Long Ago.
- e) Verses 28-29. I Know Who You Are and Where You Live! I'll Avenge Myself!
- f) Verses 30-35. **The Sign for Hezekiah from the Holy One of Israel.**
 - You Will Harvest What You Didn't Sow 1st and 2nd Year.
 - Third Year, You will Reap What You Sow.
 - Once More, A Remnant will Emerge out of the House of Judah! The Zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
 - I Will Defend this City. The Assyrians, therefore, will not enter Jerusalem! "By the way that he came, he will return.
- g) Verses 36-38. **His sons killed Sennacherib in the temple of his god.**

God sent an angel to kill 185, 000 of the Assyrian soldiers who had encircled Jerusalem according to the word of God. Also, the word of God was fulfilled according to the prophecy of Isaiah earlier in verse 7 regarding Sennacherib. His own sons cut his head off while he was worshipping his idol.

III. CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

- 1. Prioritize Prayer and Worship in Times of Crises.**
- 2. Run to the House of the Lord, before you call people.**
- 3. Leave a Consistent Legacy of Prayer, Praise, Worship and Service.**
- 4. Your Victory Comes When Your Prayer is Aligned with God's Will for your Life!**