

# HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

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After the division of the kingdom in Israel following the death of King Solomon, the descendants of David and Solomon reigned over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon. Beginning with David, this earthly dynasty included 21 kings and lasted approximately 425 years. However, scripture records that after Solomon, only four kings walked in the steps of their father David: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. King Hezekiah is truly one of the great examples of faith and righteousness found in God's word.

## **Trust and obedience**

Second Chronicles 29:1-2 says, "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. *And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done.*" What is remarkable about Hezekiah's decision to serve the Lord is that his father, King Ahaz, was probably the most wicked king that Judah ever had, and is one of the most faithless and evil men that we read about in God's word (2 Kgs 16; 2 Chr 28). Ahaz turned to idols, and introduced the ritual of sacrificing children in fire into Judah (2 Kgs 16:3). He even shut the doors of God's temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 28:24). Hezekiah's first recorded act as king was to reopen and repair those doors (2 Chr 29:3). According to 2 Kings 18:4, he also "removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan." Several chapters in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah describe the righteous deeds of Hezekiah. His life is summarized in 2 Kings 18:5-6: "*He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.*" And 2 Chronicles 31:20-21 says that Hezekiah "wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

## **God's deliverance from the Assyrians**

Because of Hezekiah's (and David's) trust in him, the Lord saved the king and the city of Jerusalem from the Assyrians without them even needing to fight. Isaiah 37:33-37 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh" (see also 2 Kgs 18-19; 2 Chr 32).

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(continued)

## **Hezekiah's illness and recovery**

After God drove away the Assyrians, Hezekiah fell ill: "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 Kgs 20:1; Isa 38:1). Hezekiah then "turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, 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" (2 Kgs 20:2-3; Isa 38:2-3). God heard Hezekiah's prayer, and sent Isaiah the prophet to inform him that he would live for another 15 years (2 Kgs 20:4-6; Isa 38:4-6). Hezekiah indeed recovered from his sickness (2 Kgs 20:7). God even performed a miracle by Isaiah as proof that His word would be fulfilled. He made the shadow of the sun go backward 10 degrees (2 Kgs 20:8-11; 2 Chr 32:24; Isa 38:7-8).

## **Hezekiah's desire for life and fear of the Lord**

Hezekiah's desire was to continue to live and not be "deprived of the residue of my years" (Isa 38:10). Hezekiah's reason for desiring to live was that "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, they shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth" (Isa 38:18-19). This does not teach that the dead are unconscious (they are in fact *very* conscious, as noted in Luke 16:19-31; 23:39-43). Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 speaks similarly: "The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." This clarifies that these statements apply only to what is "*under the sun*." The dead have no knowledge of what is done on the earth, and they have no more portion of any thing (good or bad) of what is done on the earth. The dead cannot praise and celebrate God *on the earth* any more (Isa 38:18-19; see also Psa 6:5; 30:9; 88:5,10-12). They can no longer hope for God's truth on the earth or make it known to the children (Isa 38:19). Only the living are able to do those things. Thus, Hezekiah had the good desire to continue to serve God in this life. The desire to live in order to see and know more of what is good in God's sight so that we can then do His will and please Him more is the essence of the fear of the Lord (Psa 34:11-14; 1 Pet 3:10-11). In his desire and prayer, Hezekiah displayed his fear of the Lord.

## **God hears the prayers of the righteous**

What happened to Hezekiah is a clear reminder that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man does indeed avail much (Jas 5:16). God's eyes *are* over the righteous and His ears *are* open to their prayers (1 Pet 3:12; Psa 34:15). God is *pleased* by the prayers of His saints (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). God had been truly determined to take Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:1; Isa 38:1), but Hezekiah was a righteous man, and his prayer caused God to *change His mind* and gave him 15 more years to live. This was not a miracle. This was God's non-miraculous response to a righteous man's prayer. God said, "I have heard thy prayer" (Isa 38:5). This vividly demonstrates the power of prayer, which should motivate us to pray more diligently and fervently.