

HEZEKIAH

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Who Was Hezekiah?

- 13th King of Judah
- From around 715 BC until 687 BC
- Son of King Ahaz
- 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 29-32
- Contemporary of the prophet Isaiah

Historical Context

During the time of King David (1000-960 BC) Israel was one united kingdom. Each of the twelve tribes had their allotted land, and the capital city was Jerusalem.

- It remained united during the reign of his son Solomon, but things changed when his grandson Rehoboam became King.
- Rehoboam made some bad decisions so the northern tribes revolted and put Jeroboam on the throne (2 Kings 12).
- He was set up as King of the northern tribes which became known as the Kingdom of Israel, the southern tribes became the Kingdom of Judah.
- Jeroboam created new temples in Dan and Bethel but he included golden bulls and idols which became a focus for idolatry and pagan religion.

These were very turbulent times for the region.

- They were surrounded by various tribes who waged war, influenced their culture and distracted them from following God.
- In 722 BC northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians after an attempted rebellion and a three-year siege. (2 Kings 17:5, 18:9)

Around this time Hezekiah became King of Judah in the south.

- His father Ahaz had remained loyal to the Assyrians which had allowed their pagan practices to flourish in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:1-18)

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the Lord his God, as his ancestor David had done. Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel, even sacrificing his own son in the fire. In this way, he followed the detestable practices of the

pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree. (2 Kings 16:2-4, NLT)

This was the Kingdom that Hezekiah inherited.

Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule over Judah in the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. 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 cut down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had been offering sacrifices to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before or after his time. He remained faithful to the Lord in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the Lord had given Moses. So, the Lord was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute. He also conquered the Philistines as far distant as Gaza and its territory, from their smallest outpost to their largest walled city. (2 Kings 18:1-8, NLT)

Key Events of His Life

Instigating civil and religious reforms (2 Chronicles 29-31)

- He rededicated the temple which his father Ahaz had closed up.
- Reinstated Passover celebrations with all the proper ceremonies and purification. Organised peace offerings, burnt offerings, restarted the weekly Sabbath festivals, the annual festivals, all as laid down in the law of the Lord. The people started to bring their tithes and gifts to the temple again.

Verse 21 - In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow God's laws and commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful.

The invasion of the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:13-19:37, 2 Chronicles 32:1-23)

- When Hezekiah came to the throne the King of Assyria was Sargon II and around 711 BC he captured a city near to Jerusalem.

Hezekiah knew he would have to confront the Assyrians at some point so he began to fortify Jerusalem.
(2 Chronicles 32:1-8)

- When Sennacherib became King of Assyria in 705 BC, he invaded Judah.

Hezekiah attempted to pay him off with tribute, but Sennacherib invaded anyway

- The Assyrians came to taunt the people in Jerusalem, to discourage them and say that their God would not protect them

Hezekiah sought the Lord's help and God promised to save them.

- God destroyed a large portion of the Assyrian army

That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. 36 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.

(2 Kings 19:35-36, NLT)

- When Sennacherib got back to Nineveh he was assassinated by his own sons

Sickness, recovery and envoys from Babylon (2 Kings 20:1-19, 2 Chronicles 32:24-31)

- Hezekiah became ill and was told he would die.
- God was very gracious to him – he healed him and promised him 15 more years and protection from the Assyrians.
- God also provided a sign of Hezekiah's choosing that God would keep his promise.
- But Hezekiah became proud.
- After his illness, envoys from Babylon visited to bring their wishes and probably spy out the situation in Judah.

Hezekiah showed them everything in his treasure houses.
(2 Kings 20:12-19)

- This was one of the only bad decisions Hezekiah made.

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill. He prayed to the Lord, who healed him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So, the Lord's anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself and repented of his pride, as did the people of Jerusalem. So, the Lord's anger did not fall on them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

(2 Chronicles 32:24-26, NLT)

- But he did recognise his sin, humble himself and repent.

Life Lessons

- Complete dependence on God yields amazing results.
- Past obedience doesn't remove the possibility of present disobedience.
- Sweeping reforms are short lived without action taken to preserve them.

What We Learn About Jesus

- Hezekiah was in the lineage of Jesus, as a descendant of David, so is listed in both genealogies in Matthew and Luke.
- Hezekiah was an imperfect descendent of David attempting to save his people, foreshadowing the arrival of a perfect Son of David to save all of humanity.
- It was around this time that many prophecies about Jesus were given.
- We can understand why the Jewish people at the time didn't recognise Jesus when he came.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen! (Isaiah 9:6-7, NLT)