

Nahushtan

2 Kings 18:1-12

June 27, 2010

For the last several weeks we have been focusing our study on events that were taking place in the northern kingdom of Israel. But now, as we turn to 2 Kings 18, we turn our attention to the southern kingdom called Judah.

In verse 1 we read that Hezekiah had become king of Judah at this time. He was only 25 years old when he became king. We also know something about his father and mother which will become important to our study.

We are encouraged immediately because we read that Hezekiah did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. Not only that, but Hezekiah received the greatest of all commendations from the Lord because in verse five we read that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.

Hezekiah, therefore, was an exceptionally significant king in the history of Judah and we will gain much from our study of his life.

There is a Hebrew word that also becomes an important part of this story. It's the word, Nahushtan. This is one of those words you could use to make a beautiful plaque and hang it on your living room wall and then when all your friends and family come over they'll ask you what it means.

As we study through God's Word, let's also prepare our hearts to receive wisdom and spiritual insight as we look to the Holy Spirit to apply this word to our lives today.

I. Revival is made of This

- Hezekiah was used of God to bring about a great revival in the nation of Israel. He cleansed the temple, he restored the priesthood, and he kept the commandments which the Lord had given Moses.
- What's amazing, however, is that Hezekiah's father was the worst king that the southern kingdom of Judah had seen.
- That's a powerful testimony that we do not have to repeat the sins of our fathers. God can do a new work from one generation to another. The sins of the father did not have to be repeated. And if you've had a father that was less than a good example, then let the sins of the fathers be ended with you.
- What's also interesting is that his mother was Avi, the daughter of Zechariah, a priest. The mother is also a very powerful influence in the children's lives. Compare Avi to Jezebel and you'll see there's no comparison at all.
- Isaiah was the prophet in Judah at this time. Could Hezekiah's mother have arranged for Isaiah to mentor him?

A. Do what is right in the sight of the Lord

- One of the first things that stand out in describing Hezekiah is that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord.
- *As compared to what?* Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord, in contrast to what was right in his own eyes. In other words, if there was a difference between what was right in

his own eyes versus what was right in God's eyes, then he would go with God's way.

Proverbs 12:15, The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Proverbs 16:2, All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.

Proverbs 21:2, Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.

- If you look at verses 9 to 12, you will read about the final downfall of the northern kingdom of Israel. Why did they fall? Because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God.
- Why didn't they obey the voice of the Lord? After all, we know that God's Word is not burdensome.

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

- Because they preferred the gods of Molech, Baal, and Ashtoreth. Why? Because they were permissive; they were gods of the flesh. These were gods of their own making that allowed them to do anything they wanted.
- God wanted them and us to see that if you give the flesh permissiveness, you will find that the price of permissiveness is terrible. God was trying to spare them suffering, hardship, misery, and emptiness of life.

Illus – I've had several conversations with my children about why they needed a parent that would say "no" to them. One of my favorite conversations was when one of my kids said that when he becomes a parent he'll give his children anything they want! "Hah! Good one. That's exactly why you need a parent!"

B. Look unto Jesus, the true serpent of our sin

- At first, that statement may seem very provocative, but this is a very powerful spiritual point that we must carefully and thoroughly understand.
- As part of Hezekiah's revival, he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people were burning incense to it; they were worshipping the bronze serpent itself! This bronze serpent has an interesting history.
- We studied this in Numbers 21. This took place while Israel was in the desert 40 years. Israel had been grumbling and complaining that there was no food or water and that they loathed that miserable food, the manna that God had provided. So fiery serpents came among them and bit the people and they came to Moses and confessed that they had sinned.
- So God told Moses to make a fiery serpent of bronze and set it on a standard, a wooden pole and lift it up; and all who looked upon it would live.
- Clearly, the serpent was a picture of their own sinfulness; the complaining and discontent and bitterness that was in their heart.

- The serpent, then, could also be a picture of our own sinfulness as well.
- Jesus, then, gave us the understanding that this very event was prophetic of Himself.
- The occasion was that a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus at night...

John 3:1-19 He is the serpent lifted up

- How is it that Jesus could be pictured as a serpent? That is a very powerful question and requires a very powerful answer.
- In fact, Jesus said that this has everything to do with whether a person will have eternal life.
- Paul gave us great insight into this question when he wrote to the church at Corinth...

2 Corinthians 5:21, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Even that may sound like a provocative statement. How can Jesus become sin on our behalf?

Romans 6:3-5, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death... for if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life

which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

II. God Wants Present Reality Not Relics

- Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent and called it, "Nahushtan," which means, "It's just a piece of bronze."
- The bronze serpent didn't cause Israel to live, it was God Himself. They were worshiping this piece of bronze rather than having a relationship to the Lord.
- No doubt, there would have been those who complained, "But Moses made that bronze serpent! That was sacred!"
- Holding on to and worshiping a religious relic is an indicator that there's no present reality in the heart of the worshiper.
- By the way, if you go to St. Ambrose Cathedral in Milan, Italy, you will see a brass serpent on display. It is said that in 941 A.D. an envoy from Constantinople brought the pieces of the brass serpent as a gift to the Emperor. It was reassembled and set on a column in the nave.

Illus – One Sunday Pastor Chuck Smith came to church early and there was a sign, “No shoes, No service.” He took it down and called the leaders to ask who did that and why. “Those hippies make the new carpet dirty with their bare feet,” one of them said.

A. Trust in the Lord with all your heart

- At first, that may sound like a rather simplistic statement, until, that is, we understand what was happening during that time.

- Assyria was arising in terrible power and intimidating and destroying all the nations around them. In verse seven, we read that Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.
- Hezekiah trusted in the Lord that God would pour out his favor, believing that he and God would be a majority.
- This is deep water, this is a terrible storm, but that's when we need to trust God most.

Psalm 37:3-4, Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

- In fact, this is what caused Hezekiah to stand out amongst the other kings of Judah, the fact that he trusted in the Lord with all his heart.

B. Cling to the Lord

- This is also what set Hezekiah apart from the other kings; that he clung to the Lord and did not depart from following Him.
- This same word is used in Genesis 2, "A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife."

- It means to be "glued to the Lord;" that nothing could get between and wedge him away from his God.

Joshua 23:8, "You are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day."

- It means that we must be careful not to leave our first love. In other words, we must be careful to keep a relationship to the Lord fresh and new.
- Is your relationship to the Lord based on the "good ol' days?" Or do we have a religion that is filled with religious trappings?

Illus – In Russia they have icons that they believe have power unto themselves. Some people have a picture of Jesus and they feel that Jesus is watching them from the wall.

Illus – Isn't this just a building? "I'm going to go to church to be with God," many people believe. Isn't God with you when you're driving? Isn't God with you when you're talking to your family?

- Can we agree together that what we need is the reality of a relationship to Christ where we are on fire? That's when a fire will sweep through our land and transform lives!
- If God used some method in the past, many become convinced that the power is in the process.

Illus – Notice that there aren't many who use Jesus' process of spitting in the dirt and rubbing mud in people's eyes.

- "Say this prayer 10 times," No, give your heart.