

2Kings 18:1 ¶ 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.

2Kings 18:2 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.

In the 3rd year of the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, became king of Judah. He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi (Abijah in Chronicles), the daughter of Zachariah.

2Kings 18:3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

2Kings 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

The Chronicler (chapter 29) adds that the first thing Hezekiah did was to repair the doors to the temple. Then he gathered the priests together and instructed them to clean and sanctify the temple. When they had done so, the king led a great celebration, offering sacrifices and singing praise to the LORD. He goes on to record (chapter 30) that Hezekiah then reinstated the keeping of Passover and invited all the people of Judah and even those remaining in Ephraim, to come and participate. The people of Judah and many in Ephraim came and celebrated Passover in a way that had not been experienced since the days of Solomon.

Hezekiah did what was right before the LORD, following the footsteps of his forefather King David. It was after Passover that he led the people in removing all the high places, breaking all the idols and cutting down the groves. He even broke into pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had lifted up in the wilderness since it had become an object of worship, and the people burned incense to it. It was called Nehushtan, copper serpent of the Desert.

All of this will be covered more completely when we get to Chronicles.

2Kings 18:5 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.

2Kings 18:6 For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

Hezekiah trusted in the LORD God of Israel. His commitment to the LORD was well known, and the historian notes that there was no king of Judah like him either before or after him. I think this is a specific reference to the southern kingdom of Judah; David and Solomon ruled over a united Israel and would, therefore, not be part of the comparison.

Hezekiah was committed to serving the LORD and continually following him in

obedience, according to the commandments of the LORD as detailed in the writings of Moses.

I liked the way the Chronicler phrases it: *2 Chronicles 31:20–21 “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and 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.”*

2Kings 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. 2Kings 18:8 He smote the Philistines, *even* unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

The LORD “was with” Hezekiah and caused him to prosper in all that he did. He refused to pay tribute to the king of Assyria as his servant. He drove the Philistines back to Gaza, destroying the towns they had established both small and large.

2Kings 18:9 ¶ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. 2Kings 18:10 And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. 2Kings 18:11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: 2Kings 18:12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*.

It was in the 4th year of the rule of Hezekiah and the 7th year of Hoshea, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, set siege to the city of Samaria. After three years, Samaria fell to the Assyrians, and a vast number of the people of Israel were carried captive to the Assyrian cities of Halah, Habor by the river of Gozan and the cities of the Medes. The LORD brought this about in judgment against His people because they had continually disobeyed His commands and broken covenant with Him. They totally ignored the commands of the LORD as recorded by Moses.

2Kings 18:13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 2Kings 18:14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 2Kings 18:15 And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house. 2Kings 18:16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the

temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

In the 14th year of King Hezekiah (ten years later), Sennacherib, king of Assyria, (son of Shalmaneser) attacked and conquered the fenced cities of Judah. This time Hezekiah quickly capitulated to the Assyrian king and agreed to pay him tribute. Sennacherib demanded a payment of 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. Hezekiah paid him by giving him all the silver in the house of the LORD and in his personal treasures. He even cut off the gold from the doors of the temple and from the pillars that he had personally had overlaid with gold to meet this payment.

2Kings 18:17 ¶ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh 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.

2Kings 18:18 And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

As can usually be expected, this bribe did not appease the king of Assyria; it only made him want more. He sent Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish, leading a great host against Jerusalem.

The IVP Commentary provides this historical note: "Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh appear in some translations, while the NIV refers to them as 'supreme commander,' 'chief officer,' and 'field commander.' The NIV is correct that these are titles rather than names. They are well-known from Assyrian texts. The first, Tartan (Akkadian, *turtan*), the 'field marshal,' was the chief military officer. He represented the king and was sometimes the crown prince. The second, Rabsaris (Akkadian, *rab sha reshi*), the 'chief eunuch,' was probably the representative of the separate military division, the king's bodyguard. The third, Rabshakeh (Akkadian, *rab shaqe*), the 'chief cupbearer,' is thought to be the provincial governor."

When the Assyrian delegation arrived, they took up a position by the conduit of the upper pool, a water source located in the highway of the fuller's field. When they called out to speak to the king, Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, supervisor of the king's household, Shebna, the scribe or secretary, and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder or historian, presented themselves as representatives of King Hezekiah.

2Kings 18:19 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

2Kings 18:20 Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

2Kings 18:21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed,

even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

2Kings 18:22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?*

Rabshakeh was the spokesman for Sennacherib. He declared the following message to be delivered to Hezekiah from “the great king,” the king of Assyria. The phrase “the great king” is a phrase declaring Sennacherib to be the most powerful of kings among the nations.

My paraphrase: What makes you think you can withstand me? Whose counsel are you trusting and upon whose strength are you depending to think that you can rebel against me? Are you counting on the support of Egypt, a staff so broken that you will be injured if you lean on it? Pharaoh cannot be depended upon. Are you trusting in the LORD your God? Do you think He is going to help you in spite of the fact that you took down all the high places and altars that were used to worship Him and told the people they could only worship at the altar in Jerusalem?

Sennacherib was certainly misinformed. He didn’t even realize that it was in obedience to the LORD’s will that Hezekiah had torn down the high places and altars or that they were used to worship false gods. He didn’t understand that the LORD had sanctified the altar in Jerusalem for worship before Him.

2Kings 18:23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

2Kings 18:24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master’s servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

2Kings 18:25 Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

Rabshakeh continued (my paraphrase): Let’s make a deal. I will give you 2000 horses if you have enough riders to put on them and see how well you do against even one company of Assyrian troops led by one of my weakest captains. Do you think I have come to destroy you without the LORD’s approval? The LORD actually told me to come and destroy this land.

2Kings 18:26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand *it*: and talk not with us in the Jews’ language in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall.

2Kings 18:27 But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?*

Hezekiah's three representatives asked Rabshakeh to speak in the Syrian language (Aramaic) because they understood it. They didn't want him to use the language of the Jews in the hearing of the people of the city.

Rabshakeh answered that he was speaking purposely to the people and to warn them that if they rebelled against Assyria, they would suffer hunger to the point that they would eat the waste products from their own bodies.

2Kings 18:28 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:

2Kings 18:29 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:

2Kings 18:30 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

2Kings 18:31 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me by a present, and come out to me, and *then* eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:

2Kings 18:32 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

Rabshakeh then called out even louder so that the people could hear him better. He told them that the king of Assyria warned them not to let Hezekiah deceive them. He would not be able to deliver them from Assyria nor would the LORD deliver them—no matter what Hezekiah said. He urged them to make an agreement with him and pay the required tribute. If they did, they would get to live in peace and enjoy the fruits of their own possessions. He told them that although they would be deported to other lands, it would be to lands similar to their own—a land of corn and wine, bread and vineyards, and of olive oil and honey. They would live and not die. Then he warned them once again not to listen to Hezekiah when he told them that The LORD would come to their rescue.

2Kings 18:33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

2Kings 18:34 Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

2Kings 18:35 Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

2Kings 18:36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

Rabshakeh then asked some questions for them to think about. Had the gods of any of the other nations been able to deliver their people from the Assyrian

army? What about the gods of Hamath and Arpad? What about the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah? Had any of them been rescued? Were any of the gods of the countries able to rescue them from the might of Assyria? Do you think the LORD can deliver Jerusalem?

Wisely and courageously, the people held their peace and said not a word in response because the king had commanded that they not give the man an answer.

Rabshakeh did his best to get Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to surrender. Guzik made a great application to the way Satan attacks the Christian.

“The enemy of our soul uses the exact same approach. Many of us picture Satan as itching for a fight with us. Really, Satan doesn’t want to do battle with you. First of all, there is the strong chance you will win. Second of all, win or lose, the battle can draw you closer to the LORD. Thirdly, what the LORD does in your life through the battle can be a great blessing for other people. No, Satan would much rather not fight you at all! He would much rather try to *talk you into giving up!*”

2Kings 18:37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

The three servants of Hezekiah, Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, tore their clothes in distress and went to report the words of Rabshakeh to the king.