

Life Lesson 94

Hezekiah

Text: II Kings 18:1 to 21:21; II Chronicles 29:1 to 32:33; Isaiah 35:1 to 38:22

Introduction

We've learned about a string of wicked kings of Israel. Because they didn't believe and obey God, they were carried away into captivity.

We also have learned about King Uzziah of Judah who was mostly good, until he thought he could worship God in his own way. When Uzziah was stricken with leprosy, his son Jotham became king.

The Story

Jotham was a fairly good king. He wasn't one of the best, but he wasn't especially bad either. He tore down the idols, but he wouldn't even go into the temple. He must have been afraid he would get leprosy like his father if he did.

After Jotham came a very bad king named Ahaz. He did all the bad things that the wicked kings of Israel did before they were carried away into captivity.

After Ahaz – surprise!—came a good king. Hezekiah, the new king, was one of the best kings of Judah. He started right away to straighten out the kingdom.

The first thing he did was cleanse the temple. It had fallen into bad repair during the times the people were worshipping idols. He cleared out everything that displeased the Lord, and fixed everything up.

Next, Hezekiah got rid of all the idols. Then he invited all the Israelites living far away to come and worship together with him at the temple in Jerusalem. This was especially nice of

Hezekiah since most of the other kings had fought with the other tribes of Israelites and despised those who were living in other countries.

How it must have pleased God to see the great feast and celebration His people made as they came to worship together! It pleases God to see us invite people to come and worship with us.

God blessed Hezekiah and gave him victory over his enemies. Hezekiah's reign wasn't without problems, though. Big trouble came when Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, attacked Jerusalem. Sennacherib had a powerful army and he was a smart leader. He knew that if he could get the Israelites to give up hope and to fear him, his battle was half won. Hezekiah knew that, too, and gave a stirring speech to his people. We can read it in II Chronicles 32:78.

"Be strong and courageous," he said. "Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."

The people took courage from those words and trusted in the Lord.

"Don't listen to what Hezekiah tells you," Sennacherib's men called to the soldiers guarding the walls of Jerusalem. "He says to trust in God. Hasn't he torn down the altars of God? Why should your God want to help someone who has torn down his altars?"

Hezekiah hadn't torn down God's altars. He had torn down the altars of the idols. That's a big difference! People who mock and make fun of God and His people are always talking about something they know nothing about.

On and on the messengers tormented and taunted. They did their best to make God's people afraid. They gave a letter to Hezekiah from King Sennacherib. In it Sennacherib made fun of God and told Hezekiah what horrible things the Assyrians planned to do to the Israelites.

King Hezekiah was wise enough to know what to do about that letter and about those terrible Assyrians. He spread the letter out before the Lord and prayed about it. He cried to the Lord and asked the Lord to deliver them. And God did. He sent an angel to defeat the army and Sennacherib went home in disgrace. When he got home he went to the temple of his god. While he was there, his own sons came up and killed him.

King Hezekiah had a long prosperous reign. At last, though, the time came for him to die. He was in bed sick when the prophet Isaiah came to visit him.

"It's time for you to die," Isaiah told him.

Instead of getting ready to go and be with the Lord, Hezekiah began to cry and mourn.

"Please don't let me die yet," Hezekiah begged God. "Let me live a little longer."

As Isaiah was leaving the palace, God told him to turn around and go back to Hezekiah.

"The Lord has decided to answer your prayer and let you live a while longer," he told the king. "In three days you will be well enough to go to the temple and pray."

Hezekiah was overjoyed!

"What sign will you give me that this will surely happen?" he asked.

Isaiah asked God to move the shadows back ten degrees. That meant the earth had to change its orbit around the sun to make the sun appear higher in the sky. That wasn't hard for God. He made the shadows go back ten degrees as a sign that He would heal Hezekiah.

The king did live many more years, but there were some bad things that happened because of those extra years. He showed off the treasures of the temple to some foreigners who later came and attacked the Israelites. Since they had seen the treasures, they knew just where to look for loot to carry away.

The Life Lesson

Hezekiah wasn't perfect, but he did many good things. He fixed up the Lord's house, the temple. That certainly pleased God. Do you think it pleases God when you help keep His church building clean and nice? Even the youngest church member can do that by not playing rough inside the building. I've seen kids toss song books around and put their dirty shoes on the pews. What do you think God thinks when He sees kids doing that?

Then Hezekiah invited everyone to come and worship God with him. That's something else everyone can do. You can invite your friends to Sunday school. Maybe they will hear about God and be saved.

Best of all, Hezekiah trusted God and encouraged other people to trust Him, too. That's something else you can do to please God. If you trust God when bad or scary things happen to you, and encourage other people to trust him, too, God will bless you and He will never let you down.

Review Questions

Who was king after Uzziah was stricken with leprosy?

Jothan

Who was the next wicked king after Jotham?

Ahaz

Was King Hezekiah a good king or bad king?

Good.

What good things did Hezekiah do?

He cleaned up the temple and destroyed the idols.

What did Hezekiah do when the Assyrians attacked Israel?

He prayed and asked God to help them.

Did God deliver them from the Assyrians?

Yes

What foolish thing did Hezekiah do when Isaiah told him he would die soon?

He begged God to live longer.

Did God answer his prayer?

Yes, he got well and lived for twelve more years.

What sign did God give that he would live?

He made the shadows go back ten degrees.

What foolish thing did Hezekiah do in those extra years?

He boasted and showed off his treasures to people from other countries. They came later and stole the treasures.