

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 18

2 KINGS 17 RECORDED THE DOWNFALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. ASSYRIA THE GREAT EMPIRE AND MILITARY POWER OF THE DAY HAS DEFEATED ISRAEL'S KING, CAPTURED ISRAEL'S CITIES AND NOW DEPORTED ISRAEL'S RESIDENTS. THOUGH THE LORD HAD CALLED THEM TO REPENTANCE, PERSISTENCE IN SIN, REBELLION AND IDOLATRY LED TO THIS TRAGEDY. AND NOW THE WRITER OF 2 KINGS TURNS THEIR ATTENTION DOWN SOUTHWARD. WHAT WILL NOW BECOME OF JUDAH? THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF JUDAH'S WORLD ARE COMPARABLE TO ISRAEL - ASSYRIA IS RAGING, IDOLS ARE CALLING AND THE PRESSURE IS ON. IT SEEMS THAT THE NATION WILL GO THE WAY OF THEIR NEXT KING. AND WITH THAT WE TURN TO 2 KINGS 18 AND MEET HEZEKIAH,

2 KINGS 18:1-8 - HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH

WOW. WHAT A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEXT KING OF JUDAH, HEZEKIAH. (MAKES YOU WANT TO CALL HIM "HEZEKIAAAAAAH."). UNLIKE THE LISTING OF THE SINS OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL, WE READ A DESCRIPTION OF A DAVID-LIKE KING WHO LOVES, REALLY LOVES, THE LORD. HERE'S A SNAPSHOT REVIEW OF WHAT THE TEXT SAYS ABOUT HEZEKIAH: "HE DID RIGHT...LIKE DAVID...(V. 3), HE REMOVED AND BROKE (THE IDOLS) (V. 4)...HE TRUSTED IN THE LORD (V. 5)...HE CLUNG TO THE LORD (V. 6)..." AND HERE IS WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT THE LORD'S RESPONSE: "AND THE LORD WAS WITH HIM...(V. 7).

THIS IS AWESOME. AND 2 CHRONICLES GIVES US MORE DETAIL INTO WHAT KIND OF KING HEZEKIAH WAS.

2 CHRONICLES 29:3-17 - THE TEMPLE CLEAN AGAIN

HEZEKIAH RENEWED THE COVENANT WITH THE LORD AND THE NATION. HE CHARGED THE PRIESTS TO CONSECRATE (PURIFY) THEMSELVES AND BEGIN THE RESTORATION OF THE LORD'S HOUSE. REMEMBER, HEZEKIAH'S FATHER HAD SET UP A PAGAN ALTAR IN THE TEMPLE (2 KINGS 16). IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM THEY ARE VIOLATING THE COVENANT, AND IN THE SOUTH HEZEKIAH IS HONORING IT.

2 CHRONICLES 29:18-36 - WORSHIP IN THE LORD'S HOUSE

THIS IS A PICTURE OF REVIVAL. HEZEKIAH RECOGNIZED WHERE THE NATION HAD BEEN IN SIN, REPENTED AND GOT BACK TO WORSHIPPING THE RIGHT WAY. THEY PREPARE THE LORD'S HOUSE TO BE HOLY AND NOW THEY GATHER THE PEOPLE TO BECOME HOLY AGAIN AS WELL. THEY MOVE TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER AGAIN - THE MAJOR FESTIVAL WHICH CELEBRATED THE NATION BEING BORN AND REDEEMED FROM THEIR ENEMY (EGYPT). THIS FESTIVAL WAS TO BE A REMINDER OF THE POWER OF GOD AND THE TESTIMONY OF HIS LOVE FOR AND POWER TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE. HOW APPROPRIATE TO RESUME THIS DURING THIS TIME.

IN FACT, HEZEKIAH ORDERS FOR AN INVITATION TO BE SENT TO ALL OF THE REMAINING PEOPLE IN THE LAND (EVEN IN ISRAEL WHO HAD NOT BEEN MOVED TO ASSYRIA YET). TRUE REVIVAL ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN KEEP TO YOURSELF.

2 CHRONICLES 30:6-12 - INVITATION TO PASSOVER, CALL TO RETURN TO THE LORD

THE LETTER IS SENT THROUGHOUT THE LAND AND DESPITE SOME MOCKING BY THE SCATTERED TRIBES, SOME PEOPLE RETURN TO WORSHIP IN JERUSALEM.

2 CHRONICLES 30:25-27 - JOY IN THE LAND

2 KINGS 18:9-12 — REMINDER: ISRAEL IS DESTROYED

WE RETURN TO REMEMBER THE STORY OF ISRAEL'S FALL AS IT IS BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED IN THIS CHAPTER. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THE NARRATOR WANTS TO RETELL THE STORY IN THE CONTEXT OF HEZEKIAH'S STORY TO ILLUSTRATE HOW CLOSE ALL OF THESE EVENTS ARE TO EACH OTHER. WHAT HAPPENED TO ISRAEL IS SO CLOSE TO JUDAH!

2 KINGS 18:13-18 - ASSYRIA SETS IT'S SIGHTS ON JUDAH & JERUSALEM

V. 14-16 - "I HAVE DONE WRONG" - IT SEEMS LIKE HEZEKIAH'S INITIAL RESPONSE IS ONE TO BARGAIN WITH ASSYRIA AND AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN PAYING THE TRIBUTE ASSYRIA MUST HAVE DEMANDED (V. 7). HE IS HOPING THAT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL GESTURES WILL SOLVE HIS PROBLEM. WHAT HEZEKIAH WILL LEARN IS THAT IT IS ONLY GOING TO BE SORTED OUT THROUGH SPIRITUAL MEANS.

THE KING OF ASSYRIA SENDS 3 REPRESENTATIVES TO JERUSALEM. THEY ARE MET BY 3 AMBASSADORS FROM HEZEKIAH. THE SPOKESMAN OF THE 3, RABSHAKEH, IS GOING TO DELIVER A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE ASSYRIANS TO JUDAH AND HEZEKIAH.

2 KINGS 18:19-25 - RABSHAKEH'S MESSAGE

RABSHAKEH'S MESSAGE WAS A DIRECT ATTACK ON HEZEKIAH AND THE WORD OF GOD. HE IS VERY SKILLED IN HIS POSITION AS SPOKESMAN FOR ASSYRIA. HE MOCKS JUDAH, HEZEKIAH AND THE LORD, THE GOD OF JUDAH. HE TELLS HEZEKIAH'S REPS THAT THE LORD SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED AND EVEN CONCLUDES HIS OPENING REMARKS (V. 25) BY SAYING THAT "THE LORD (HEBREW: YAHWEH) ACTUALLY SENT ASSYRIA TO DESTROY IT!

2 KINGS 18:26 - JUDEAN OFFICIALS RESPOND

HEZEKIAH'S REPRESENTATIVES ARE CLEARLY TROUBLED BY THE CONFIDENCE OF RABSHAKEH. THEY ASK HIM TO STOP SPEAKING IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE (JUDEAN). IN SUCH A CRITICAL TIME AS THIS, MORALE IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT THING. HEZEKIAH'S REPS DO NOT RESPOND TO RABSHAKEH'S WORDS WITH CONFIDENCE, THEY RESPOND WITH CONCERN AND FEAR BECAUSE THEY FEAR THE CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM BECOMING TROUBLED:

NLT: "PLEASE SPEAK TO US IN ARAMAIC, FOR WE UNDERSTAND IT WELL. DON'T SPEAK IN HEBREW, FOR THE PEOPLE ON THE WALL WILL HEAR."

2 KINGS 18:27-37 - RABSHAKEH'S CONTINUED VERBAL ATTACK

RABSHAKEH'S RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST TO NOT SPEAK IN THE COMMON LANGUAGE IS REFUSED. IN FACT HE AMPS UP HIS RHETORIC AFTER THAT EVEN MORE. HE APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR WITH WHAT YOU WOULD IMAGINE WOULD HAVE BEEN HEZEKIAH'S MESSAGE TO HIS OWN NATION. HE MOCKS HEZEKIAH'S WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PEOPLE TO TRUST IN THE LORD AND CALLS INTO DOUBT THE LORD'S ABILITY TO EVEN HELP IN SUCH A TIME.

HE'S MAKING A PRETTY COMPELLING CASE. INDEED ASSYRIA HAS DEFEATED EVERY OTHER NATION BEFORE JUDAH, AND BY DEFAULT THE GODS OF ASSYRIA WOULD BE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE GODS OF THE OTHER NATIONS THEY HAVE DESTROYED. RABSHAKEH IS NOT JUST CALLING INTO QUESTION THE INTEGRITY OF HEZEKIAH, HE'S CALLING INTO QUESTION THE INTEGRITY OF YAHWEH.

IF YOU DON'T IMMEDIATELY THINK OF THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS BY THE DEVIL HIMSELF, YOU MIGHT WANT TO RE-READ RABSHAKEH'S SPEECH (OR THOSE TWO RECORDS IN GENESIS 3 AND MATTHEW 4). RABSHAKEH IS SPEAKING FROM SATAN'S SCRIPT. HE'S LYING. HE'S CALLING INTO QUESTION THE WORDS OF GOD (AND HEZEKIAH). HE'S OFFERING SOMETHING "BETTER" (V. 31-32 - I'LL TAKE YOU TO A GREAT LAND...). AND HE'S TRYING TO SOW DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE.

THIS IS THE TACTIC OF OUR ADVERSARY. HE WANTS TO LIE AND DECEIVE AND PRESSURE AND INTIMIDATE. RABSHAKEH'S OFFER WOULD HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY TEMPTING. THE PEOPLE ARE SURROUNDED BY THE ARMY THAT'S WON EVERY BATTLE THEY HAVE FOUGHT SO FAR. YOUR CHOICE IS TO STAY HELD UP BEHIND JERUSALEM'S WALLS, STARVING OR LIVE IN YOUR OWN NEW LAND WITH YOUR OWN VINE AND CISTERN AND GRAIN. AND ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MAKE THE CHOICE TO BELIEVE HIS WORDS...AND ALL OF YOUR PAIN WILL GO AWAY... MAKE ONE CHOICE, ONE DECISION. WHOSE OFFER SOUNDS BETTER?!

BUT THE TRUTH OF IT, NONE OF WHAT RABSHAKEH IS OFFERING IS TRUE. ASSYRIA ISN'T GOING FROM NATION TO NATION OFFERING FREE TROPIC TIMESHARE INVESTMENTS - THEY ARE DEFEATING AND DESTROYING AND DEPORTING. HIS OFFER IS A MIRAGE. JUST LIKE SATAN'S WAS TO EVE (YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED, YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, YOU WON'T DIE) AND SATAN'S WAS TO JESUS (I'LL GIVE YOU ALL OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD). IN FACT THIS IS MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF WHAT EVIL LOOKS LIKE IN OUR DAY THAN ALL OF THE EVILS OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON FOR US TO LEARN HERE ABOUT THE DEVIL'S METHODS. HE IS VERY SUBTLE AND OFFERS SOMETHING SEEMINGLY CLOSE TO WHAT GOD OFFERS, WITH AN EASIER WAY TO GET THERE. IT IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. IN FACT IT'S NOT GOOD NOR IS IT TRUE. WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR US IS RECOGNIZING THAT THE DEVIL WANTS TO CAUSE US TO COMPROMISE, QUIT, GIVE UP AND SURRENDER. TAKE THE "EASY ROAD" TO PLEASURE AND GOOD THINGS. JUST A LITTLE LIE WILL GET YOU OUT OF TROUBLE. JUST A LITTLE INDULGENCE WILL FEEL GOOD. JUST A LITTLE SIN WILL BE SAFE. BUT IN THE END, NONE OF IT IS GOOD. COMPROMISING OUR FAITH AND EMBRACING LIES INSTEAD OF THE TRUTH EVENTUALLY LEADS TO PAIN, HEARTBREAK/ACHE AND DEATH. THIS IS SATAN'S MESSAGE TO US AND IT WAS ASSYRIA'S MESSAGE OF JUDAH.

WHAT COMPROMISES ARE YOU MAKING? HOW ARE YOU IMPROVISING IN YOUR LIFE RATHER THAN WAITING ON GOD? WHAT LIE ARE YOU EMBRACING AS TRUTH IN YOUR HEART? WHAT CHOICES ARE BEING PRESENTED TO YOU WHICH ARE NOT GOD'S BEST FOR YOUR LIFE? HOW ARE YOU RATIONALIZING THE CONTINUANCE OF SIN IN YOUR LIFE AND HOME? WE MUST LEARN TO IDENTIFY THE OFFERS BEFORE US - WHAT IS THE LORD'S VOICE OF TRUTH AND WHAT ARE THE DEVIL'S WHISPERS OF DECEIT? MAY THE WORD OF GOD AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MARK THE WAY OF TRUTH BEFORE US LIKE THE NOON DAY SUN.

RABSHAKEH'S MESSAGE WAS COMPELLING. SO HEZEKIAH WAS WISE TO PREPARE HIS PEOPLE FOR SUCH A MOMENT. FROM WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR, HE TOLD THEM NOT TO RESPOND AT ALL (V.36). NOT A BAD IDEA AS YOU WAIT AND DISCERN WHAT IS TRUE/FALSE, OF GOD AND OF THE ADVERSARY. AND NOW HEZEKIAH AND THE REVIVED PEOPLE OF GOD WILL FACE A GREAT TEST, A MOMENT OF DECISION. WILL THEY MODEL THEIR FOREFATHER ADAM WHO TOOK THE TEMPTER'S OFFER? OR WILL THEY REMAINED RESOLVED AND CONTINUE TO "CLING" TO THE LORD AS THEIR DESCENDANT MESSIAH JESUS, THE PROMISED SON OF DAVID DID? WE'LL SEE HOW THINGS END UP IN 2 KINGS 19.