

HEZEKIAH: SURROUNDED, OUTMANNED AND OUTGUNNED

I. 2 Kings 18:13-37 2 Kings 19:1-19 Romans 8:31-39

A. Last Sunday we introduced the next to last good king of Judah--King Hezekiah. 2 Kings 18:5-7a summarizes his reign: "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following Him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered." (See also: 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39)

B. Today we continue with Hezekiah and we will see how he earns his reputation as one who trusts in God. How many of you have had your trust in the Lord put to the test? Ever felt surrounded, outmanned and outgunned? Hezekiah sure did...

C. 2 Kings 18:13-37 (ESV) Good King Hezekiah faces dire straits:

1) V13-14: 13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. **14** And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me. Whatever you impose on me I will bear." And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. **(One talent weighed 75 pounds. We're looking at 22,500 pounds of silver and 2,250 pounds of gold.)**

2) V15-16: 15 And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house. **16** At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord and from the doorposts that Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. **(Hezekiah tries an appeasement strategy. Winston Churchill: "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.")**

3) V17: 17 And the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rab-saris, **(Military Bigs)** and the Rabshakeh **(Multi-lingual intimidator; the voice of the enemy.)** with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Washer's Field. **(On this very spot, Isaiah had earlier prophesied a victory for Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, but he rejected God's Word.)**

4) V18-22: 18 And when they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder. **19** And the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours? **20** Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? **21** Behold, you are trusting now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. **22** But if you say to me, "We trust in the Lord our God," is it not He whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, "You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem"? **(Rabshakeh engages in psychological warfare. He taunts the king of Judah, trashes their ally, Egypt, then mocks Yahweh. Big mistake!)**

5) V23: 23 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. **(2 Chronicles 32 indicates Hezekiah had prepared his people quite well.)**

6) V24-26: 24 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? **(Then he lies.) 25** Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, "Go up against this land and destroy it." **26** Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." **(Rabshakeh speaks in Hebrew to intimidate the people inside!)**

7) V27-37: 27 But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?" **(A nasty taunt!)** **28** Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! **29** Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. **30** Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord by saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' **31** Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: **(More lies.)** 'Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, **32** until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live, and not die. And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, "The Lord will deliver us." **33** Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? **34** Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? **35** Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" **36** But the

people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." **37** Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of the Rabshakeh. **(An evil empire bullies God's people!)**

D. 2 Kings 19:1-19 (ESV) How will Hezekiah respond to the threat of extermination?

1) V1-2: **1** As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth **(humbles himself)** and went into the house of the Lord. **2** And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. **(Hezekiah seeks God for help!)**

2) V3-14: **3** They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. **4** It may be that the Lord your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the Lord your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." **5** When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, **6** Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the Lord: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled Me. **7** Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'" **8** The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he heard that the king had left Lachish. **9** Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has set out to fight against you." So he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, **10** "Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. **11** Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? **12** Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? **13** Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?'" **14** Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. **(Threats of annihilation come again but Hezekiah still seeks God first.)**

3) V15-19: **15** And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said: "O Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth. **16** Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. **17** Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands **18** and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. **(Idols!)** Therefore they were destroyed. **19** So now, O Lord our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that **You**, O Lord, are God alone." **(We'll find out what happens next Sunday!)**

E. What desperate situations has God allowed you to be in? What insurmountable threats have you faced? Have overwhelming enemies surrounded you? What have been your dire straits? A life-threatening diagnosis? Loss of a loved one? An addiction? Financial ruin? Divorce? The loss of a business or job termination? The betrayal of a close friend or friends? And yes we all face the consequences of sin and death! Have these put you on your face before God? Have you cried out to Him?

F. Romans 8:31-39 (ESV) Where our trust should lean and hold fast:

1) V31: **31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **(Without God you cannot win!With God you cannot lose!)**

2) V32-34: **32** He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **(Do you think any of Jesus' prayers for you ever go unanswered?!)**

3) V35-39: **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(So what is the ultimate answer to all of our woe? Christ Jesus is always the answer!)**

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

2 Kings 18:13-37 (ESV)

13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. **14** And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done

wrong; withdraw from me. Whatever you impose on me I will bear.” And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. **15** And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house. **16** At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord and from the doorposts that Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. **17** And the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rab-saris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Washer's Field. **18** And when they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder. **19** And the Rabshakeh said to them, “Say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours? **20** Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? **21** Behold, you are trusting now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. **22** But if you say to me, “We trust in the Lord our God,” is it not He whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, “You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem”? **23** Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. **24** How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? **25** Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, “Go up against this land and destroy it.”” **26** Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna, and Joah, said to the Rabshakeh, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” **27** But the Rabshakeh said to them, “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?” **28** Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! **29** Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. **30** Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord by saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ **31** Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, **32** until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live, and not die. And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, “The Lord will deliver us.” **33** Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? **34** Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? **35** Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” **36** But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, “Do not answer him.” **37** Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

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into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. **19** So now, O Lord our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, O Lord, are God alone."

Romans 8:31-39 (ESV)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, "*For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*" **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Quote by Winston Churchill

"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last."

Film Clips & Other Links

"Crying Out to Jesus" - Third Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmVxRI5bc4Y>

Hezekiah's Story - Pastor Andy Cook

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO7U10UhX8A>

Who Was Sennacherib? - Renato Cardoso

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TR_poifNJYU

Romans 8 - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0jgr0NsovE>

Bonus Stuff

Proverbs 12:5-7 (ESV)

5 The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. **6** The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them. **7** The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

2 Chronicles 32:1-23 (ESV)

1 After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. **2** And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, **3** he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. **4** A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" **5** He set to work resolutely and built up all the wall that was broken down and raised towers upon it, and outside it he built another wall, and he strengthened the Millo in the city of David. He also made weapons and shields in abundance. **6** And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, **7** "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. **8** With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. **9** After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria, who was besieging Lachish with all his forces, sent his servants to Jerusalem to Hezekiah king of Judah and to all the people of Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying, **10** "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? **11** Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, "The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria"? **12** Has not this same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, "Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices"? **13** Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? **14** Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? **15** Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver

you out of my hand!” **16** And his servants said still more against the Lord God and against His servant Hezekiah. **17** And he wrote letters to cast contempt on the Lord, the God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, “Like the gods of the nations of the lands who have not delivered their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand.” **18** And they shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. **19** And they spoke of the God of Jerusalem as they spoke of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men’s hands. **20** Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. **21** And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. **22** So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and He provided for them on every side. **23** And many brought gifts to the Lord to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

What Were the “High Places”?

By Adam Couturier

<http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/what-were-the-high-places.html>

In 1–2 Kings, the presence of “high places” serves as a type of litmus test for Israel’s morality. When the kings build these worship sites, the people forsake Yahweh for foreign gods. When they remove them, God is pleased and promises His presence (2 Kgs 18:3–4; 22:2; 23:4–27). What were these high places? And why were they so detrimental to Yahweh worship but yet surprisingly acceptable at times?

A high place was a localized or regional worship center dedicated to a god. Worship at these local shrines often included making sacrifices, burning incense, and holding feasts or festivals ([1 Kgs 3:2–3](#); [12:32](#)). Some of these high places contained altars, graven images, and shrines ([1 Kgs 13:1–5](#); [14:23](#); [2 Kgs 17:29](#); [18:4](#); [23:13–14](#)). The Canaanites, Israel’s enemy who worshiped Baal as their chief deity, also used them.

The term “high places” was translated from the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), not from the Hebrew. The term conjures up images of remote hilltops, but in the biblical context, it wasn’t limited to mountaintops; [Jeremiah 7:31](#) locates a high place in a valley and [2 Kings 23:18](#) at a city gate.

High Places Weren’t for Lowly Worshipers

When the Israelites first entered the promised land, they were told to destroy the high places, idols, and molten images of the Canaanite inhabitants ([Num 33:52](#)). They were also instructed not to worship at high places that were Canaanite sites ([Deut 12:2–3](#)). They were told Yahweh wanted to be worshiped in another way: “You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way. But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there” ([Deut 12:4–5](#)).

Until a temple to Yahweh was built, the Israelites primarily worshiped Yahweh at a local center of worship—a practice that was not condemned. The prophet Samuel blessed sacrifices that were offered at high places, and Solomon sacrificed 1,000 burnt offerings on the altars in Gibeon ([1 Sam 9:12–25](#); [1 Kgs 3:4](#)). In [1 Kings 3:2](#), we find these high places were intended to serve Israel’s worshipping needs for a season “because no house had yet been built for the name of the Lord.”

Temple Worship

The temple, built in Jerusalem by Solomon, ushered in a new period of Israelite worship, bringing the 12 tribes together as one people to worship God in one place. Yahweh took up residency in His temple and the need for other centers of worship became obsolete ([1 Kgs 9:3](#)). But despite this new temple, God’s people were still found worshipping at high places.

Ironically, we find one of the first references to high places in the narrative of Solomon, the very king who built the temple. He taints the new era of collective worship by building high places for Chemosh, Molech, and all of his wives’ foreign gods ([1 Kgs 11:8](#)). The tipping point toward tragedy comes with the opening words of [1 Kings 11:1](#): “Now King Solomon loved many foreign women.” The compromise he made would lead the nation astray: “His wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was David his father” ([1 Kgs 11:4](#)).

After the kingdom splits, the kings that follow—from both Israel and Judah—often continue this practice. Jeroboam, king of the northern tribes, institutes local worship at high places throughout the northern kingdom and shrines at Bethel and Dan for his own political purposes ([12:28–32](#)). He effectively perverts Yahweh worship by mixing it with pagan worship. The kings that follow don't do much better. And the kings that tear down the high places are succeeded by kings that build them up again ([2 Kgs 21:3](#)).

The Murky Middle

Recognizing that high places are not the way Yahweh desired to be worshiped, some kings, like Hezekiah and Josiah, tear them down ([23:8–9](#)). Others, though they are called righteous, never tear them down, like Jehoshaphat ([1 Kgs 22:43](#)), Jehoash ([2 Kgs 12:3](#)), Azariah ([15:3–4](#)), and Jothan ([15:34–35](#)). Sometimes this was due to ignorance, as was the case with Josiah ([23:3–25:27](#)), but in most cases it was flagrant disobedience.

After the temple is established, these structures are never viewed positively—even when they are dedicated to God. Yahweh wanted to be worshiped in the place where He made His name known ([Deut 12:4–5](#)). For the ancient Israelite, to worship God anywhere else was disobedience, and the consequences were severe. In 1 Kings, Solomon's lack of loyalty to God and their covenant relationship results in God splitting the kingdom ([11:6–13](#)). For the divided kingdoms, it also resulted in royal lines being cut off, civil and foreign wars and eventually—exile ([1 Kgs 13:33–34](#); [2 Kgs 17:20](#)). Like many aspects of the biblical text, high places present us with some ambiguity; the theological message, however, is straightforward. God is long-suffering and He is willing to forgive His people's disobedience. Indeed, not everything that goes around comes around. But He wants our uncompromising obedience and loyalty. In the end, He is not satisfied with anything less.

- Article by Adam Couturier, Contributor to Bible Study Magazine, Crosswalk.com, August 5, 2014.