

2 Kings 18-19 - Trusting God

This commentary was written for the Come, Follow Me Old Testament 2022 lessons for these chapters in 2 Kings. You can read the first and last part of the article that goes with this commentary on the gospelstudy.us website here: [2 Kings 18-19 - Trusting God](#)

Note: Ignore all the names. There are only four you need to worry about - Hezekiah, king of Judah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and Rab-shakeh, Sennacherib's envoy to Judah. I'm guessing you are already familiar with Isaiah, God's prophet. :)

2 Kings 18

17 ¶ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh 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.

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.

19 And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

20 Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I

The story in these two chapters actually happens over the reign of two kings of Assyria. The first king, Shalmaneser, conquered, and carried away, the entire northern kingdom of Israel. It was the Assyrian's custom, to discourage rebellion, to scatter those whom they conquered and bring in Assyrians to live in the vacated homes of those they vanquished.

The second king, Sennacherib, is now trying to finish off what his predecessor started by conquering the southern kingdom of Judah. He sent an army as a show of force, but he first tried diplomatic efforts to save on the bloodshed. His messengers were Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rab-shakeh. Their job was to talk the Jews into submitting themselves to the Assyrians, "for their own good."

King Hezekiah sent his delegation out to talk to Rab-shakeh, their chief spokesman. What follows is their conversation and posturing. Well, all of the posturing was on the part of the Assyrians, since Hezekiah commanded his servants to make no reply to whatever the Assyrians told them.

Rab-shakeh accused Hezekiah of being confederate with the Egyptians. I don't know how much truth there is in this accusation. Hezekiah had been paying tribute to Assyria, but rebelled. Being confederate with Egypt may have been an assumption on the part of

have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

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.

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?

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.

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?

the Assyrians, since Egypt and Assyria were the two super powers of the day, each hating the other.

Here is a paraphrase of Rab-shakeh's argument: You may be saying to yourself, (vainly, for you can't possibly believe it) 'I am strong enough to take on Assyria with the help of my ally. I can afford to rebel against the king of Assyria. But just as when you break a reed it has a jagged edge that when pressed into the hand will cut you, so too will your trust in Egypt become a betrayal to you, for Pharaoh betrays all who trust on him.'

(Notice in Rab-shakeh's statements that he is taking shots in multiple directions to see if he can hit something. At this point in his negotiations, he is just trying to strike a nerve with the people to make them scared. There is actually a lot he doesn't know, so he is playing out multiple scenarios in the hopes of hitting the truth and seeing a reaction among Hezekiah's servants.)

'But, then again, you may be saying to yourself, "We trust in the Lord our God." But isn't this the very god whose altars and high places Hezekiah has taken away from you? He just wants you to have to come to him in Jerusalem to do your worshipping.'

(Rab-shakeh obviously knew nothing about the Jews' religion or how they lived. He probably didn't care. Otherwise he would have known that the images and high places Hezekiah destroyed were considered those of false gods, and that they were offensive to the only true and living God.)

'If you will give your pledges to the king of Assyria, I can give you two thousand horses, if you are even able to find that many riders in your little country. How can you hope to turn away the face of even the least of my king's

servants if you can't trust Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?'

Do you hear the not-so-subtle tone of mockery throughout his speech to the people?

Remember, the Assyrian diplomats weren't just talking to king Hezekiah's servants, they were talking to all the citizens who were gathered on the walls of the city to listen to the talks. This was all very public.

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.

Verse 25 is clever. Rab-shakeh tells the citizens of Jerusalem that it was the Lord who told them to come to Jerusalem to destroy it. He is just doing God's bidding. This, it appears, was meant to cast doubt in the minds and hearts of the Jews.

There is also the possibility that he was referring to his own king when he used the word "Lord," but if so, it is the only time in the scriptures he uses that term. In all the other instances of these chapters, he uses other designations for his own king. Lord appears to only refer to the God of the Jews.

26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, 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.

Hezekiah's delegation pled with the Assyrians to speak in the Syrian language so the Jews wouldn't understand them. This showed the Assyrians they had hit a chord with them. They were nervous and didn't want the people to understand what was really at stake here.

27 But Rab-shakeh 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?

Rab-shakeh responded to the plea for a language change with an insult to Hezekiah's servants. 'Have I not been sent here by my master with the express purpose to make you eat your own dung and drink your own piss with the rest of the population?'

28 Then Rab-shakeh 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:

Rab-shakeh then turned to the crowd and said in their own language his conditions to the crowd as found starting in verse 29.

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

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.

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:

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.

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

34 Where are the gods of Hamath, and of

These are the words of men who do not believe there is such a thing as a one true God.

Those of the world in power believe that all gods serve a purpose, and mostly it is to control the rabble. This is why kings so often promote the worship of gods of any kind. To many kings and rulers, religion is just another tool in their political arsenal. Rulers throughout history have committed many atrocities in the name of their people's god.

Rab-shakeh wanted to remind the people that Assyria had already done great damage to the Hebrews. They carried away the entire northern kingdom, and now they were systematically doing the same to the southern kingdom. What could possibly convince the Jews they stood a chance of winning this war?

Verse 31 is nothing more than a serpent talking to Eve again. Rab-shakeh promises the people that if they make an agreement with him to give up peacefully then every man could eat of his own vine and fig tree, and drink of the waters of his own cistern. They would have the peace they sought - that is, until he came to take them away to Assyria.

But in Assyria they would have their own land, which was a land of corn, wine, bread, and vineyards, a land of oil, of olives, and of honey. Here the Jews would live, and not die (emphasis on the "not die" part). But they must not listen to their king, Hezekiah. They must not listen to his lies that their God would deliver them.

Rab-shakeh tried to reason with them. He said, 'have any gods from any nation been able to deliver their people from the hand of the king

Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

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?

37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, 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 Rab-shakeh.

of the Assyrians? There were many gods in Samaria (northern kingdom). Where are they now? All gone (along with their people).

Who is the Lord that he can say he can stop the hand of the king of the Assyrians. Who is the Lord to think he can deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?'

After this brow beating from the Assyrians, Hezekiah's delegation returned to report to the king. They came in with rent clothes, the proof that they were in the deepest of mourning and sorrow. After they delivered their message to the king, he too rent his clothing.

Dismissing God as being real, changes all the rules of society. No longer is anything of value beyond the grave. Everything is based on what you can get and control today. Values don't matter, for they are God given. As the saying goes, "The end justifies the means." The goal of the Assyrian delegation was to demoralize and crush the Jews. From the torn clothing in the king's chambers, it looks like they succeeded nicely. But Hezekiah wasn't just any king. He was the most righteous king since the days of David himself. Faith makes a big difference in how we can find the strength to face things that would seem otherwise insurmountable.

2 Kings 19

1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

Hezekiah was a good man. He put on all the outward appearances expected of a man who is humbled to the dust - he rent his clothes and covered himself in sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth is the equivalent of burlap. It is very rough and scratchy. (Only the poorest of the poor regularly wore sackcloth.) After donning the sackcloth those in mourning, or who were repenting, would heap ashes upon their head as a sign of being reduced or beaten down to the dust of the earth. When Jacob/Israel learned of

Joseph's "death" from his brothers, he clothed himself in sackcloth and sat in the ashes for a long time while he mourned the loss of Jacob.

2 And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

King Hezekiah didn't just privately mourn, He went to the temple this way, and all the advisors and priests dressed in sackcloth and ashes as well. He then sent a delegation dressed in sackcloth to the prophet Isaiah.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

The image of this verse is beautiful. The people have gotten themselves into "trouble". The time for delivering the baby has come, and there isn't the strength to get the child out. This would mean certain death for the mother and the baby. But in this case, the mother who was in trouble was the nation of Judah. He was saying that he couldn't see a way out of this mess they were in.

4 It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

Hezekiah is wondering to himself, 'What if the Lord hears the words of Rab-shakeh that were meant to mock and ridicule the God of Israel and will want to chasten the Assyrians for their words? Please pray for Judah, the only children of Israel left in the Promised Land.'

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Let's reduce these five verses. Isaiah told Hezekiah that God acknowledged Hezekiah's righteousness and faithfulness to Him. He promises that Jerusalem is safe, and will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

At times like these it is very easy to begin to doubt that whatever you felt you have been doing is good enough. Perhaps you missed something and the Lord will still be mad at you. In this case, Isaiah's words were those of comfort and peace.

8 ¶ So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the

king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezep, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar?

13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

14 ¶ And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to

These are the words of a letter sent to Hezekiah from the king of the Assyrians. They are roughly the same words spoken to him by Rab-shakeh. The time line here is fuzzy. We don't know if he received the letter before Rab-shakeh arrived, at the same time, or later. So just take it for what it is, and recognize that he, at some point, received this letter, and this is what he did with it.

When Hezekiah received the letter he took it to the temple and placed it before the Lord. What follows is a very personal prayer from the king to God.

(Remember that the space between the wings of the cherubims above the Ark of the covenant was called the Mercy Seat. It was considered to be the throne of God when He came to the temple.)

Read verses 16-19 again. These are a declaration of Hezekiah's faith in God. He acknowledges what the Assyrians have

reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.

20 ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

21 This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

23 By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

24 I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

accomplished in the past, and pleads with the Lord to spare his kingdom from this powerful enemy.

(Hezekiah acknowledges here that other gods are referred to as false gods, because they are all manmade. Only Jehovah is a real God.)

After Hezekiah pours out his whole soul to God in mighty prayer for the safety of his people, the Lord reveals to Isaiah what He is going to do for Hezekiah and against the Assyrians. The Lord's message to Sennacherib is that He acknowledges how powerful he is as a king in the earth. But He also informs Sennacherib that He is more powerful than any king. The Lord asks Sennacherib if he remembers the stories he has no doubt heard of what He did in Egypt to bring His people to their Promised Land. The Lord tells Sennacherib that those who stood against them were as "corn blasted before it be grown up."

25 Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.

26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

27 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.

32 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.

God says, 'I know how angry you are, and how you rage about, but like a horse, I am going to put my "hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." And then God gave him a sign, a prophecy of the future of Judah.

Don't you love the absolute confidence of the Lord's words here in verses 22-34? To a man like Hezekiah, who regularly exercises faith in God, these words must have been a great comfort.

34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

The statement in verse 34 must have been music to Hezekiah's ears. That was the assurance he was hoping for.

35 ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

As if to make His point to the Assyrian delegation, during the night the Lord sent an angel and killed 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian army. So much for the Assyrian show of strength. With their army decimated in a matter of hours, without a single blow being struck, they picked up their gear and went home.

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

I find this telling that for all his boasting of his ability, his strength, and his power, his invulnerability, Sennacherib was murdered by his own sons as he worshiped his own false god.

To finish the article, return to Week 29 of the CFM Old Testament lessons for 2022 on page 129 or go to the following link: [2 Kings 18-19 - Trusting God](#)