

# SECOND KINGS

## Chapter 18

### *Hezekiah King of Judah*

In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. <sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. <sup>3</sup> He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. <sup>4</sup> He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.) <sup>5</sup> Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. <sup>6</sup> He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. <sup>8</sup> From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory. <sup>9</sup> In King Hezekiah's fourth year, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. <sup>10</sup> At the end of three years the Assyrians took it. So Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> The king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in towns of the Medes. <sup>12</sup> This happened because they had not obeyed the LORD their God, but had violated his covenant—all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out. <sup>13</sup> In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. <sup>14</sup> So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. <sup>15</sup> So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. <sup>16</sup> At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

**Chs 18–25** Story returns to the kings of Judah and the kingdom's ultimate downfall under the Babylonians. (TLSB)

**Ch 18–20** *Hezekiah*. Fall of Northern Kingdom occurred in the early part of the reign of Hezekiah, the pious son of wicked Ahaz (18:9–10). Six more kings were to occupy the throne of Judah. Chs 18–19 tell what happened when Hezekiah "rebelled against the king of Assyria" (18:7), whose vassal he had become after the fall of Samaria. (TLSB)

**18:1** *third year of Hoshea ... Hezekiah ... began to reign.* 729 B.C. (see 17:1). Hezekiah was co-regent with his father Ahaz from 729 to 715 (see note on 16:2). (CSB)

**18:2** *became king.* Became sole king of Judah. (CSB)

Hezekiah's father was only 36 when he died (16:2). (TLSB)

*Zechariah.* Likely not the prophet who wrote the Book of Zechariah. (TLSB)

*twenty-nine years.* 715–686 B.C. See also 2Ch 29–32 and Isa 36–39 for a description of the events of his reign, including a more detailed account of the reformation he led (2Ch 29–31). One of his first acts was to reopen the temple, which had been closed by his father Ahaz (see note on 16:19; see also 2Ch 29:3). (CSB)

**18:3** *right ... as his father David.* Hezekiah is one of the few kings who is compared favorably with David. The others are Asa (1Ki 15:11), Jehoshaphat (1Ki 22:43) and Josiah (2Ki 22:2). A qualification is introduced, however, with both Asa and Jehoshaphat: They did not remove the high places (see 1Ki 15:14; 22:43). (CSB)

**18:4** *removed the high places.* Hezekiah was not the first king to destroy high places (see notes on 1Ki 3:2; 15:14), but he was the first to destroy high places dedicated to the worship of the Lord (see 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35; 17:9; 1Ki 22:43). This became known even to the Assyrian king, Sennacherib (see v. 22). (CSB)

*sacred stones.* See 3:2; 10:26–27; 17:10; see also note on 1Ki 14:23. (CSB)

*Asherah poles.* See 13:6; 17:10, 16; 1Ki 16:23; see also note on 1Ki 14:15. (CSB)

*the bronze serpent.* Hezekiah's reform was more thorough than that of his predecessors. He even broke the bronze serpent to which the people burned incense as if it were an idol, perhaps a symbol of fertility or healing. (TLSB)

*Nehushtan.* Combination of Hbr words for serpent and bronze. (TLSB)

*Israelites had been burning incense to it.* It is unlikely that the bronze snake had been an object of worship all through the centuries of Israel's existence as a nation. Just when an idolatrous significance was attached to it is not known, but perhaps it occurred during the reign of Hezekiah's father Ahaz (see ch. 16). Snake worship of various types was common among ancient Near Eastern peoples. (CSB)

**18:5** *trusted.* Hbr *batach*, rarely used in 1 and 2Ki but is used repeatedly in ch 18 for the story of Hezekiah. (TLSB)

*no one like him ... either before him or after him.* A difference of emphasis is to be seen in this statement when compared to that of 23:25. Hezekiah's uniqueness is to

be found in his trust in the Lord, while Josiah's uniqueness is to be found in his scrupulous observance of the Mosaic law. (CSB)

**18:6** When Israel went into exile, the Lord raised up an exceptional king for Judah who was well acquainted with the Law of Moses. (TLSB)

**18:7** *rebelled against the king of Assyria.* Judah had become a vassal to Assyria under Ahaz (see 16:7)—which required at least formal recognition of Assyrian deities. Hezekiah reversed the policy of his father Ahaz and sought independence from Assyrian dominance. It is likely that some-time shortly after 705 B.C., when Sennacherib replaced Sargon II on the Assyrian throne, Hezekiah refused to pay the annual tribute due the Assyrians. (CSB)

Results of his rebellion are given in 18:13–19:37. Actually, Jerusalem almost shared Samaria's fate, briefly recalled (vv 9–12). (TLSB)

**18:8** *defeated the Philistines.* In a reversal of the conditions existing during the time of Ahaz, in which the Philistines captured Judahite cities in the hill country and Negev (see 2Ch 28:18), Hezekiah was able once again to subdue the Philistines. Probably Hezekiah tried to coerce the Philistines into joining his anti-Assyrian policy. In one of his annals Sennacherib tells of forcing Hezekiah to release Padi, king of the Philistine city of Ekron, whom Hezekiah held prisoner in Jerusalem. This occurred in connection with Sennacherib's military campaign in 701 B.C. (CSB)

Events mentioned in the introductory survey of Hezekiah's reign (vv 1–8) are not dated. His campaign against the Philistines may have been an attempt to force the coastal cities to join him in his rebellion against the Assyrians. (TLSB)

*from watchtower to fortified city.* Battlements small and great, an expression that may describe the military outposts along the Judean hills. (TLSB)

**18:9–10** Provides a link from the earlier history (17:6) to the setting for 18:13–19:37.

**18:9** *Hezekiah's fourth year.* 725 B.C., the fourth year of Hezekiah's co-regency with Ahaz (see notes on v. 1; 17:1). (CSB)

**18:10** *three years.* See note on 17:5. (CSB)

*ninth year of Hoshea.* See note on 17:6. (CSB)

**18:11** *king of Assyria deported Israel.* See note on 17:6. (CSB)

**18:12** *violated his covenant.* See 17:7–23. (CSB)

**18:1–12** The Lord raises up Hezekiah to guide Judah through its most challenging moment, facing the great Assyrian Empire. Like Hezekiah, you are to trust and serve the one true God

without compromise, presenting a positive testimony of His grace. The Lord will support you in the face of every obstacle, equipping you through His Word (v 6). • “I am trusting Thee to guide me; Thou alone shalt lead, Ev’ry day and hour supplying All my need.” Amen. (LSB 729:4) (TLSB)

**18:13** *fourteenth year.* Of Hezekiah’s sole reign: 701 B.C. (see note on v. 2). (CSB)

According to Assyrian records, this was 701 BC, which in turn should have been Hezekiah’s 28th year, for according to vv 9–10, Samaria’s fall (722 BC) took place in the sixth year of his reign. Likely, his first 14 years are here reckoned as a period before he assumed sole regency. (TLSB)

*Sennacherib ... attacked.* Verses 13–16 correspond very closely with Sennacherib’s own account of his 701 campaign against Phoenicia, Judah and Egypt. (CSB)

Succeeded Sargon to rule Assyria (704–681 BC). In his annals, he relates how after four years he was able to deal with rebellious groups in the west, including Hezekiah. According to Assyrian records, when Sennacherib held a rally of his vassals to gather tribute, Hezekiah and a few rulers did not attend. (TLSB)

*fortified cities.* Judah’s line of defense along the hill country. There may have been as many as 46. (TLSB)

*captured them.* In his annals, Sennacherib claims to have captured 46 of Hezekiah’s fortified cities, as well as numerous open villages, and to have taken 200,146 of the people captive. He says he made Hezekiah “a prisoner in Jerusalem his royal residence, like a bird in a cage,” but he does not say he took Jerusalem. (CSB)

**18:14** *Lachish.* Strongly fortified city, c 28 mi SW of Jerusalem, guarded the main road from the lowlands up to Judah’s capital. Before proceeding to Jerusalem, Sennacherib took time to capture Lachish, not wanting to have a center of resistance at his rear. (TLSB)

*I have done wrong.* He had resisted Assyrian demands for tribute. (TLSB)

*impose.* Tribute to assure peace. A relief depicting the siege records Sennacherib reviewing the tribute. Archaeological remains at Tell ed-Duweir show the Assyrian siege ramp and a counter-ramp raised by the Judeans. Sennacherib’s records boast the conquest of 46 Judean settlements during the campaign and the deportation of c 200,000 people. (TLSB)

*three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.* See NIV text notes. The Assyrian and Biblical reports of the amount of tribute paid by Hezekiah to Sennacherib agree with respect to the 30 talents of gold, but Sennacherib claims to have received 800 talents of silver rather than the 300 specified in the Biblical text. This discrepancy may be the result of differences in the weight of Assyrian and Israelite silver talents, or it

may simply be due to the Assyrian propensity for exaggeration. For the relative value of this amount of silver and gold see note on 5:5. (CSB)

**18:15** *silver ... in the temple ... and in the treasuries of the royal palace.* See 12:10, 18; 14:14; 16:8; 1Ki 7:51; 14:26; 15:18. (CSB)

Still safe behind Jerusalem's walls, Hezekiah sent Sennacherib a huge amount of gold and silver, apparently with the understanding that nothing beyond payment of tribute was expected of him (vv 13–18). To make the tribute payment, Hezekiah even stripped the gold foil off the recently repaired areas of the temple. (TLSB)

### ***Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem***

**<sup>17</sup> The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They came up to Jerusalem and stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. <sup>18</sup> They called for the king; and Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to them. <sup>19</sup> The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah: " 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? <sup>20</sup> You say you have strategy and military strength—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? <sup>21</sup> Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. <sup>22</sup> And if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem"? <sup>23</sup> " 'Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! <sup>24</sup> How can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? <sup>25</sup> Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.' " <sup>26</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall." <sup>27</sup> But the commander replied, "Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the men sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine?" <sup>28</sup> Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! <sup>29</sup> This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. <sup>30</sup> Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' <sup>31</sup> "Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, <sup>32</sup> until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and**

vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death! “Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’”<sup>33</sup> Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?<sup>34</sup> Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand?<sup>35</sup> Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”<sup>36</sup> But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, “Do not answer him.”<sup>37</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said.

**18:17–19:37** See Isa 36–37; cf. 2Ch 32. (CSB)

**18:17** *Tartan ... Rab-saris ... Rabshakeh.* Not personal names but titles of Assyrian officials. A tartan was also the commander in chief for Sargon, Sennacherib’s predecessor. (TLSB)

*great army.* 185,000 men. Cf Is 37:36. (TLSB)

*Lachish.* See note on Isa 36:2. (CSB)

*aqueduct ... Field.* See note on Isa 7:3. It is ironic that the Assyrian officials demand Judah’s surrender on the very spot where Isaiah had warned Ahaz to trust in the Lord rather than in an alliance with Assyria for deliverance from the threat against him from Aram and the northern kingdom of Israel (see 16:5–10; Isa 7:1–17). (CSB)

Here, outside the city, Isaiah had tried in vain to persuade Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, that the Lord was able to avert a threat to Jerusalem. A well-known site at the time, it can no longer be identified with certainty. (TLSB)

**18:18** Hezekiah sent top-ranking men of his cabinet to meet Sennacherib’s delegation. Such officials aided the kings since the days of Solomon (1Ki 4:1–6). (TLSB)

*palace administrator.* See note on 1Ki 4:6. (CSB)

*secretary.* See note on 2Sa 8:17. (CSB)

*recorder.* See note on 2Sa 8:16. (CSB)

**18:19** *great king.* A frequently used title of the Assyrian rulers—and occasionally of the Lord (Ps 47:2; 48:2; 95:3; Mal 1:14; Mt 5:35). *says.* The following address is a masterpiece of calculated intimidation and psychological warfare designed to break the resistance of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (see vv. 26–27). (CSB)

*this trust of yours?* Assyrian official maligns Hezekiah’s greatest quality. (TLSB)

**18:20** *rebelled against me?* Cf v 14. The tribute had not satisfied Sennacherib. (TLSB)

**18:21** *depending on Egypt.* See 19:9; Isa 30:1–5; 31:1–3. (CSB)

To rely on Egypt for help was as foolish as leaning for support on the crushed stalk of a marsh plant. The last king of the Northern Kingdom learned this lesson too late (17:4–6). Trust in Egypt proved to be a fatal mistake also in Judah's policy (Is 31:1–3). (TLSB)

**18:22** *isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed ... ?* The Assyrians cleverly attempted to drive a wedge between Hezekiah and the people. They attempted to exploit any resentment that may have existed among those who opposed Hezekiah's reformation and his destruction of the high places (see note on v. 4). (CSB)

The Assyrian argued that Judah could not expect divine intervention because Hezekiah had curtailed rather than promoted the worship of the national deity. Later, he blatantly mocked the living God with the blasphemous claim that even if the Lord would put all His power at Hezekiah's disposal, He would not be able to "deliver Jerusalem" out of Sennacherib's hand (vv 30, 35; 19:4, 10). (TLSB)

*saying to Judah.* The Assyrian was fully informed about Hezekiah's policies, intimidating the king with his intimate knowledge. He perhaps implies the use of spies or citizens who defected to Assyria. (TLSB)

**18:23** *if you can put riders on them!* With this sarcastic taunt, the Assyrians undoubtedly accurately suggest that the Judahites were so weak in military personnel that they could not even take advantage of such a generous offer. In contrast with the Assyrians, the army of Judah at the time consisted largely of foot soldiers. The city under siege would have contained few chariots, and it is not known whether the Israelites ever employed mounted men in combat. (CSB)

Even if Egypt supplied the horses, Hezekiah did not have the manpower to set riders on them. (TLSB)

**18:24** *captain.* Minor governing official. (TLSB)

**18:25** *The LORD himself told me.* Possibly Assyrian spies had informed Sennacherib of the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah. (CSB)

**18:26** *Aramaic.* Had become the international language of the Near East, known and used by those experienced in diplomacy and commerce. It is surprising that the Assyrian officials were able to speak the Hebrew dialect of the common people of Judah (see 2Ch 32:18). (CSB)

The kingdom of Aram or Syria did not attain world power by force of arms. However, its Semitic dialect became the language of international diplomacy, understood by government officials but not by the common people. After the Babylonian captivity, Aramaic replaced

Hebrew even on the popular level. A few Aramaic words spoken by Jesus are preserved in the NT (Mk 5:41; 15:34). (TLSB)

*language of Judah.* Hebrew language. (TLSB)

*people ... on the wall.* Troops on the ramparts were straining to listen to the negotiations. Hezekiah's officials feared that their troops would be demoralized by the Assyrian's rhetoric. (TLSB)

**18:27** *men sitting on the wall.* The Assyrian strategy was to negotiate in the hearing of the people in order to demoralize them and turn them against Hezekiah. (CSB)

*doomed.* Threatening a severe famine because of the siege. (TLSB)

*eat their own filth and drink their own urine.* A vivid portrayal of the potential hardship of a prolonged siege. (CSB)

The Assyrian demonstrates a knowledge of vulgar Hbr terms. Later, scribes placed more polite terms in the margins of manuscripts so the text could be read aloud in synagogues without giving offense. (TLSB)

**18:28–35** The Rabshakeh tried to convince the people that their only hope of survival was surrender to Sennacherib. Even if they were exiled, life would be agreeable, at least preferable to death by starvation in the doomed city. (TLSB)

**18:29** *the king says.* The Assyrian officials now address their remarks directly to the populace rather than to the officials of Hezekiah, as in vv. 19–27. (CSB)

*Do not let Hezekiah deceive you.* Here and in vv. 30–31 the people are urged three times to turn against Hezekiah. (CSB)

**18:30** *this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.* Hezekiah could say this on the basis of God's promise to him (see 20:6; see also note on Isa 38:6). (CSB)

**18:31** *eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern.* Depicting peaceful and prosperous times (see 1Ki 4:25; Mic 4:4; Zec 3:10). (CSB)

**18:32** *until I come and take you to a land like your own.* Ultimately surrender meant deportation, but Sennacherib pictured it as something desirable. (CSB)

The Assyrian promises a pleasant location for their exile. (TLSB)

*Choose life and not death!* The alternatives depicted for the people are: (1) Trust in the Lord and Hezekiah and die, or (2) trust in the Assyrians and enjoy

prosperity and peace. These words directly contradict the alternatives placed before Israel by Moses in Dt 30:15–20. (CSB)

*The LORD will deliver us.* The Assyrian knows about or anticipates the king's encouragement and faith. (TLSB)

**18:33–35** *Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?... How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?* The flaw in the Assyrian reasoning was to equate the one true and living God with the no-gods (Dt 32:21) of the pagan peoples the Assyrians had defeated (see 19:4, 6; 2Ch 32:13–19; Isa 10:9–11). (CSB)

**18:34** *Hamath.* See notes on 14:25; 17:24. (CSB)

*Arpad.* A city located near Hamath and taken by the Assyrians in 740 B.C. (see 19:13; Isa 10:9; Jer 49:23). (CSB)

*Sepharvaim.* See note on 17:24. (CSB)

*Hena.* Probably located in the vicinity of the other cities mentioned. (CSB)

*Ivvah.* See note on 17:24. (CSB)

**18:36** *silent.* People show solidarity with their king. (TLSB)

*because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him."*; The Assyrian attempt to stir up a popular revolt against the leadership and authority of Hezekiah had failed. (CSB)

**18:37** *clothes torn.* An expression of great emotion (see 6:30; 1Ki 21:27). Perhaps in this instance it was motivated by the Assyrian blasphemy against the true God (see 19:4, 6; Mt 26:65; Mk 14:63–64). (CSB)

**18:13–37** An Assyrian official shows disdain for Hezekiah, but the people demonstrate their steady trust in their faithful king. At times, we may grow discouraged that there are no good leaders left. Be assured: the Lord always leads His people and can raise up faithful leaders for them. Pray for your leaders, entrusting them to Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. He will faithfully lead you in the way of peace. • Trustworthy Lord, bless our leaders with faith, discernment, and courage to stand up for what is right. Amen. (TLSB)