

Sermon by Philip C. Herrmann, September 23, 1973

Willo Bible Chapel, Willoughby, OH (45:59)

... to begin that, I'd just like to mention, in regard to the announcements, that this brother Sanchez, who'll be Lord willing speaking to us, on October 10th, the evening of October 10th, is a young brother who has had quite a success with the young Spanish people in the city, and I think more particularly Brooklyn, the city across the river from New York City, and he would like to tell us of that work, and elicit our interest and prayer.

Now about the life and times of Hezekiah, you need to have a little background for that, but before I give that I would like to just read three or four verses in the book of Kings and Chronicles, although a good part of the life and dealings with Hezekiah is given us in the book of Isaiah, in the prophecy of Isaiah. And the fourth place in which we find something of Hezekiah in the Old Testament is in the book of Proverbs. It's not generally known that four chapters, the 25th I think to the 28th chapters of Proverbs are concerned with the proverbs of Solomon that were evidently not included in the first part of the book, but were later added because they were found in the time of Hezekiah. And it says that it wasn't Hezekiah that did it but the men of Hezekiah, the men who were authorized or appointed by Hezekiah to do this work.

The verse is in the book of II Kings, the 18th chapter, and it is the commendation or the condemnation, either one, depending on whether the king did what was wrong, or what was right in the sight of the Lord. And you remember this is just mentioned once, so that a man's life, a king's life in those times was characterized as either having been good, or evil. It's either on the good side, the Lord's side, or he was on the evil side, he was helping the work of Satan. We must remember that in those days there were idols, there were images, there were gods, false gods that the nations all around Israel were worshipping. And these gods, according to the spiritual state of the nation of Israel, they were either bowing to these idols, or befriending those who were, linking themselves with idols. And that of course that was abomination in the sight of the Lord because it was linked with the worship of Jehovah.

In the third verse of this 18th chapter we read "He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did." Now David was not his father; Hezekiah was the 12th king in the line of David. So if we were to say great great great great we would have to say that eleven times before we would say father, before we'd say grandfather. So that you see Hezekiah was in the line of the kings which the Lord had chosen. It never was his purpose that there should be any king in the nation of Israel. But in his grace, in his mercy, he acceded to their request to be like the nations around them. That was what he did. He gave them first a false king, a king after their own hearts. Then the next king after Saul was David. He was described as a man after God's heart.

Then in the fifth and sixth verses of this same chapter we read, "Hezekiah trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, (he clung to the Lord) and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses." You see this was the great commendation for Hezekiah, that he went back to the word of God. He disposed of all the idols, the images, the groves, the high places, though not all of them I'm afraid because it says that Josiah did the same thing,

and it said even more specifically about Josiah who lived some 65 years later.

At any rate, Hezekiah, in the beginning of his reign, it is said that this was done in the first year of his reign, when he was 25 years old, and it continued right on through. There was no declension, though I believe that the heart of the nation was still not fully returned to God as Hezekiah was, but that was the system. As the king went, so went the nation. and the nation followed his example, though I believe in a good many cases, their heart was not in it.

Then the other passage that I would like to read is in the book of Chronicles, II Chronicles, which is, by the way, Chronicles is more the history of the nation of Judah. You remember that after Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam said that he would be even more strict than his father. Whereas his father, he said, had whipped them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions. 1Kings 12:14 And Solomon was a hard taskmaster, especially in the later years of his life. So as a result of Rehoboam's statement, and his threat, the nation split. Ten tribes went their way, and only the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe, and the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah remained in the line of David, remained faithful to the kings of David.

Well, in the 32nd chapter and the 26th verse, we get not so much a commendation but a restoration of Hezekiah. It says that "Hezekiah rendered." This was in response to the wonderful cure that happened to him; remember he was sick nigh onto death. The prophet Isaiah had said that the Lord had told him to tell him to settle his accounts, prepare for death, for he was going to die. And Hezekiah demurred at this, for he had only been king for 14 years, then. And he prayed to the Lord very earnestly, and reminded the Lord of his faithfulness, and how he had sought to be the right kind of a king, had done good in His sight, done that which was right. And the Lord heard his plea, and sent Isaiah back to him, even before Isaiah had gotten to the point of praying for Hezekiah, he sent him back with news that "I've heard thy prayer, I've acceded to thy request, and thy days will be lengthened for 15 years" [II Kings 20:5,6].

And so he becomes the one person, in all history, that knew the date of his death. None of us know that; and that's one of the remarkable things. God has hidden this from us. We don't know when he is going to put his finger upon each one of us and say, stop. But Hezekiah knew for 15 years, he had 15 years of opportunity to accede to God's further requests and do his work. But among the things that are listed, he did a great many things for the nation of Israel.

But one of the sad things is that in those 15 years, he sired a son, who became the next king; you've no doubt heard of Manassah. And Manassah reigned for 55 years, and was proclaimed the worst king Judah ever had. He made rivers of blood flow through Jerusalem. I think he must have done the same thing that his grandfather, the father of Hezekiah did. His name was Ahaz; it says of him that he caused the sons and daughters, some of them at least, to pass through the fire [2Kings 17:17], which means that he sacrificed them, made human sacrifices of them to the idols of Canaan.

You see that will immediately raise the thought in your mind, as it did mine, how is it possible, that Hezekiah, who is a reformation king, who turned the nation upside down, turned it back to God, ostensibly, how is it that he was the product of a man who was such a villain, such an evil king, one who is said to have done evil in the sight of the Lord.

Well, there's an interesting statement at the beginning of three books, one of the major prophets and two of the minor prophets, that all read the same way. That this prophet, and the first one of course

is Isaiah, that he prophesied in the days of Jotham, of Ahaz, and Hezekiah [Isaiah 1:1]. That is also repeated in the book of Micah [Micah 1:1], one of the minor prophets, not that he was any lesser a prophet but his writing were of a smaller character; what we have in our Bible is just 12 chapters of Micah, whereas in Isaiah we have 66.

And the last one then is Hosea, who also prophesied in these, but Hosea was more a prophet for Israel, for the ten tribes [Hosea 1:1]. So the belief is that Isaiah, and Micah, and Hosea had a great deal of influence with Hezekiah before he became king. His mother's name is also mentioned; she was the daughter of Zechariah who is mentioned in the early part of Isaiah as having been a faithful witness to God And so I believe it was the training that this young man received from perhaps his earliest years to the time when he ascended the throne, and that was the reason why we have, but of course it must have been God's work in the man's soul. Because all the work of the mother and father, and all the prayers, "I'm praying for you," that was a very good hymn, I wish I could say that, that I had done more praying for my relatives, for those that I've spoken to about their souls, that I've been burdened about. I know, I must confess, that I haven't been doing the praying I should. And I suppose if we're all honest we'd have to say the same, because prayer, if not answered, prayer can become monotonous. Prayer can become, has a sameness.

I was told this summer, the young man that said it felt that praying for blessing upon the meal was a sort of a ritual. It didn't seem to have much value. And it's a sad attitude to take, because everything we have comes from God. Most of all our health; that could be taken from us in a moment. And if we're not thankful for it, the Lord can just as easily take it from us. That doesn't mean that because we're ungrateful we fall into sickness. We have certain characteristics and certain things that are a part of our nature that perhaps lend to sickness; we become subject to infection and other things.

But here was Hezekiah and his name means "Jah is strength." Jah is another word for Jehovah. It is not usually used in the Old Testament; in fact I think in your King James Version of the Bible you will find Jah just mentioned once, that's in the 68th Psalm, but the name Jah, one of the names for God, is given many times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and should have been translated Jah in all of our Bibles, but it hasn't. And wherever you see the word LORD in the Old Testament, in capital letters, capital L, capital O, capital R, and capital D, you'll know that that is really in the original it is Jehovah. And Jehovah means the I am, the one who was and is, and ever shall be, the ever existent one, the one who never had a beginning.

Well a little more on the background, and the placing of this time. I've spoken of a time of idolatry, when men bowed down to idols, and if you want to get a good idea of what Isaiah thought of it, and what God thought of it, because he was inspired by God to write it, you ought to read the 44th chapter of Isaiah in which you will see that the Lord ridicules the man who plants a tree, and he's speaking of his people here in Israel who are doing it, plants a tree, waits for it to grow, then cuts it down, builds a fire, gets his meals through it, and then builds either a house, but the final thing is that he makes an idol of it, builds an image which is an idol, and then bows down to that and calls that his god. And in sarcastic language which is beautiful and remarkable the Lord shows what he thinks of those who think that that represents him.

Well, Hezekiah lived in approximately 700 years before Christ. This was, if we take the others that probably have been spoken about here in this hall, in this chapel, this summer, David for instance,

David was a thousand years before Christ. Elijah I understood was spoken on the other evening, and he was a hundred years later, he would have been approximately 900 years before Christ. And Hezekiah lived just in the time, six years after he was on the throne, the Lord poured out his judgment upon the ten tribes. They came to an end; the king of Assyria took them captive, and not only made slaves of them, but took them to his own land. What was left of the poor of the land, he mixed them with the people around that neighborhood, and they were what were in the Lord's time called the Samaritans. because the capital of the ten tribes was Samaria, and Samaritans was the name given to the people that lived there. And of course they had intermarried with these people that were thrown in their midst, and were worshipping their gods.

So that it was a wonderful thing for the Lord to have gone to Samaria, for no other Jew would have done so. The disciples were not interested in doing so, and the Lord went to this place [John 4:5] and I think in the city of Sychar met this woman who turned out to be such a missionary. And the next time we read of it is when Philip went down to Samaria [Acts 8:5] and was used of God for the conversion of many souls.

Well, very shortly after Hezekiah's time we have Josiah, and then very shortly after that we have the times of the Gentiles beginning, for the very men who came to congratulate Hezekiah about his wonderful recovery at the time when the Lord healed him and told him he had 15 years to live, that time began the time of the Gentiles. Jerusalem was destroyed; not only Samaria, but Jerusalem was destroyed and the two tribes, two and a half tribes were taken captive and brought to Babylon.

Hezekiah's life divides into two periods. If you read these three chapters in Kings, and the four chapters in Chronicles, and I think it's four chapters in the book of Isaiah, you'll find that his 29 years of reign divides very equally into two periods, one of 14 and one of 15. And in those 14 years we're told a great many details that are apparently glanced over in that wonderful commendation that he did what was right, because I'm sure the Lord never expected that Hezekiah would accede to the demand to the king of Assyria to pay him tribute. After not only taking the beseiged or the defended cities of Judah, taking them captive, Hezekiah was made to pay tribute, a tremendous sum of money; I hesitate to say what it would be, 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. A talent of gold today would represent a fortune, and I believe this was a payment that he had to make each year.

Well he did it at the expense of taking down the doors of the temple, and remember this was what Solomon had built. It was what was supposed to have been the finest edifice in all the world in that day, but of course it had been robbed and it had been sacked, and kings had taken the vessels, the golden vessels out of them and replaced them with brass. So that what Solomon originally had, 666 talents of gold in one year, an almost impossible amount to imagine, in wealth and so on. And one of the last statements about Solomon is that the Lord gave him not only wealth, but also wisdom. Now that's what Solomon had prayed for, he'd asked for wisdom. The Lord had said because he'd asked for this, and not for wealth, or glory, or for the kingdoms of the earth around him, he would give him wealth as well. That's evidently what the Lord gave him in great abundance.

But Solomon's wisdom was divine wisdom, but it seems that it was lost on Solomon towards the end of his life. And I believe that's why he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, because the book of Ecclesiastes reads, in part, just like a disappointed man, a man who is at odds with everything. He has had everything, but nothing has satisfied him. His verdict on life is that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

I don't believe any of us have reached that point. Maybe we would, if we'd had all that Solomon had. But it's a valuable lesson for us, isn't it. Be satisfied with what God has given us, whether it's much or little. Use it to the best of your ability; use it as you believe the Lord would want you to use it.

Well, evidently King Hezekiah saw the wrong of this, or perhaps he couldn't keep it up. I should imagine such a payment every year would be an intolerable burden. At least he rebelled. It doesn't that say he prayed to God for that, but at least he rebelled, and I believe that was in the mind of God.

Well, Sennacherib the King of Assyria came then with a much larger army, and surrounded Jerusalem, sent his general to insult Hezekiah and all the people of the land, the people of Jerusalem, and insulted God besides. You'd have to read the chapter yourself to see the contempt, and the arguments that this general used, said that God had not allowed any of the other nations to resist the Assyrians and get away with it, so he said "how will your God do that?" And then curiously enough, you know how Satan defeats himself, he uses the argument that, "why, God sent me to tell you to surrender." After insulting God and degrading God as much as he could, he then says that God sent him to do this.

Well, we understand the ridiculousness of that, and Hezekiah did the right thing. He took the letter, he took the words of this general and put them before the Lord. And his plea to the Lord is a masterpiece of pleading. He asks that the Lord take his people under his wing, and save them. And the Lord did. Isaiah was sent to tell Hezekiah that this general, and his army, and Sennacherib won't even move a foot towards Jerusalem. because I am going to put a rumor in his mind, and he will turn away, which is exactly what happened.

Well, Sennacherib came again, and this time with even more victories to throw up at the Jews, the people of Judah, and Isaiah is sent again to tell them that this will not happen. Jerusalem will be kept for his name's sake. You see Jerusalem was the place where the Lord's name was put. Twenty times in the book of Deuteronomy you hear Moses telling the children of Israel, and I think what he told them there was all given them on one day, the day before they entered into the land of Canaan, before they went over the river Jordan, telling them that they were going to worship the Lord in the place that he would choose. And that is repeated some twenty times; and we find that out that the Lord had finally, after a number of places that the nation worshipped him, it was finally the city of Jerusalem in the time of David that the Lord had fully appointed for his name be put, for his name to be worshipped.

And so the chapter ends with a most remarkable statement that shows how easily a thing can be translated and made to sound ridiculous. That very night, as the army was waiting to beseege Jerusalem, the angel of the Lord, it may have been the Lord himself, angel of the Lord, executed 185,000 men. And it says, "and when they arose in the morning, they were all dead corpses" [II Kings 19:35], which is a strange way to put it. But it was when the Israelites woke up in the morning, the Assyrians were all dead corpses.

So that was the great crisis in Hezekiah's life. Well, very shortly after that, it was apparent that his work was done. And he became sick. And just as Lazarus, I was speaking on Lazarus this afternoon, Lazarus became sick, but he died, and the Lord allowed him to be a dead corpse for some four days, before he came to the city of Bethany, and visited the sisters, and went to the grave. Hezekiah was told in advance that he would not live, but die and to prepare his accounts, prepare his going, and Hezekiah wept sore, and prayed to the Lord again for a change of mind, which strangely enough happened. The

Lord sent Isaiah back to tell him that he would live, and that the Lord would grant him 15 years extra life.

Well, in those 15 years, we read a wonderful account of what Hezekiah did. I'd just like to read it, verse 27 of II Chronicles 32: "And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and precious stones, and spices, and shields, and all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works."

This perhaps would have occupied quite a number of years of that 15, and it sounds a little bit like Joseph, doesn't it, preparing for a famine. We don't know whether these things helped at all; they certainly didn't prevent the nation from falling captive to the Babylonians within a hundred years. But now notice, in the end of that chapter, "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. Now the rest of the acts" and so on, "Hezekiah passed on, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. [II Chronicles 32:31-33].

Now this reference to the kings of Babylon who came to see him "to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land," this was not to the benefit or the improvement of Hezekiah. This was something that he did as a matter of pride. How natural it is for the human heart to boast in what one has, his ability, his possessions, what he has been able to accomplish, all of that. God hates that. It says in the second of Corinthians, the tenth chapter, at the very end of the chapter, summing it up in the matter of boastfulness and pride, it says, for not what one himself commends, but what the Lord commends. That's what counts. [I Corinthians 10:18]

And the Lord has commended Hezekiah for being a man that there was none like, as I read at the beginning. There was none like him. But you see he had his faults too, plenty of them. There was one that I've omitted, I'd forgotten. In addition to the casting out of all these idols that had been prevalent throughout the land for perhaps 50 or 100 years or more, so that the temple was no more a holy place, nothing where God could look down with pleasure upon, but he not only destroyed the works of Satan, and the idolatry of the nation, but he instituted once again the Passover, that hadn't been observed for many years. The Passover is the greatest event in the history of the nation of Israel. It was to remind them how God had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. By the way, that expression, "brought them up out of the land of Egypt" I think is given some 70 times in the Old Testament; it shows what an importance God places upon that great event. And we have been brought out of Egypt, we too have been brought out of this world, a world that is condemned by God, that is under his judgment, we deserve the same thing. But through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ each one of us has received eternal life, has been born of the family of God, and is God's child. And as a representative of God in this scene, we are his sons.

Well the king instituted the Passover, and though it was not ready to be observed the fourteenth day of the first month, Hezekiah was not stopped by that: he had it observed on the second month, and it

was a great success. And the people went back to the worship of God, and sacrifices in the ordered manner, and followed the system of worship, and the singing, and the reading of the law and all of that, as David had instituted it some 300 years before. So that the Spirit of God says “there was no passover observed like that since the days of Solomon” [II Chronicles 30:26].

I’ve a note here that the contrast of Israel, of the two tribes, and the ten tribes, is that in the shorter history of Israel, the 10 tribes, there were 19 kings. All of them were said to have done evil in the sight of the Lord, and the great majority of them earned their place as king through murder. And they were the first to depart from God; they departed from God almost at the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam, when Jeroboam took them away, became their king, and instituted worship in the northern part of Israel in two places, in Dan and Beersheba, or rather Bethel. And those two places were the place where worship was instituted. You see this was in direct conflict with the word of God which said that Jerusalem was the place where men were to worship, where his people were to worship.

The Lord confirmed that when he was here upon earth. So these ten tribes came to an end. They were taken captive in the sixth year of King Hezekiah. What a lesson that must have been to them. To see God’s judgment through the King of Assyria. They probably could see the handwriting on the wall, and that they would be the next. But God averted his judgment upon the two tribes for another hundred years, or about another hundred years. And that brings us to the time of Daniel, and Zedekiah, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Esther, and Daniel and his companions as I’ve said.

Well, the thing that I wanted to mention in connection with the Passover was that Hezekiah did something that very few, I think only one other man had done. And that was Elijah; Elijah, when he built his altar you know, in which he was going to bring the nation back to God, he made it of twelve stones, and it says that each stone was to represent one of the tribes, each tribe, of Israel [I Kings 18:31]

Now that’s what Hezekiah did. Hezekiah sent messages, sent out posts, men on horses, to deliver his invitation to come up to Jerusalem, to worship with them, to leave their idols, to come back to God. You see that’s the grand message of the Old Testament, as well as of the New, that man is away from God and needs to return to him. That’s what a repentance is, it’s turning one’s back upon the past, upon their ways, their evil, and turning towards Christ. In the Old Testament it was to the Lord; in the New Testament it was to Christ. Jesus Christ, who had come from God and revealed God’s full mind. And so this was a wonderful thing to do. But what do you think happened? All of the ten tribes were invited. The messengers were insulted, they were scorned, they were mocked, they were sent back, but it says a few, from three or four of the tribes sent those that felt they should return.

And so that is the lesson I believe, for us, God has to deal with remnants. God deals not with the mass of men, he deals with the smaller numbers. And I believe that even in the Lord’s time there were those of the ten tribes who had returned, who had become part of the two tribes again, part of the nation of Judah. And for an example of that we have the mention of Anna, who was in the temple in Jerusalem when the Lord was born. The Lord as a baby was brought into the temple, and she was one of the tribe of Asher who was looking for redemption, and the savior for Israel [Luke 2:36].

Well that’s, I believe, as far as I could go in the time that was given to study this subject. There are a great many spiritual lessons in this thing. I believe that much of the matter of idols is not a thing that we can look at and say, “well, we’re not concerned with that.” These idols that are mentioned in the Old Testament were physical things, they were things that you could look at. Man is always more

interested in that which he can see, rather than that which he has to think about, to have faith about. But the Apostle John, almost at the end of his life, at the end of his fifth chapter of the first epistle, makes this very trenchant statement, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” [I John 5:21].

Now, we don’t have idols that we look at and worship; that is a thing of the past for Israel. When they got out of Babylon, as you will read in the book of Esther, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and when they got back into the land, and when the Lord was there, 400 years later, there was no suggestion of idols. They had gotten past that; they had seen what idolatry meant in the land of Babylon. But for us, for spiritual things, what are we occupying our time with? What is our object in life? What are we putting our time in? What is our goal? And I’ll leave it to each one of us to answer for himself or herself. That’s what the Lord expects us to keep from.

One of the greatest, the greatest, I believe, promise in the book of Revelation, at the end of the Bible, is the promise, the reward, given to the people of Philadelphia, the church at Philadelphia, “thou has kept my word, and not denied my name” [Revelation 3:8]. There are two things: they have been faithful to his word, the entire Bible, the scriptures as we have them, and not denied his name. For idols
...

END OF TAPE