

THE STORY

STUDY 16

CHAPTER 16

Summary of Chapter:

- The chapter begins with the Northern Kingdom of God's people, Israel, being conquered by the Assyrians and their people being deported to different parts of the Assyrian Empire. All this took place because Israel had sinned against God, their King Hoshea did evil in the sight of God, and the people worshiped other gods and aroused God's anger against them. And so God removed Israel from his presence, only the southern Kingdom of Judah remained.
- In the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, Hezekiah became King of Judah. King Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of God and he removed the high places where his people worshiped false gods, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the asherah poles. The Lord was with him and gave him success in whatever he undertook.
- After the King of Assyria had defeated Israel, he came to conquer Judah as well. He sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army to King Hezekiah to intimidate him into surrendering to the King of Assyria.
- These men sent word to Hezekiah that his own God, the God of Judah, had given them into their hands, and commanded them to destroy it. They even called out to the people of Judah and said that Hezekiah has destroyed the places of worship of their God and made them now worship at the temple in Jerusalem. The commander of the Assyrian army called out in Hebrew to the people to not let Hezekiah deceive them, for he cannot deliver them out of the hands of the Assyrians. He even said that they should not listen to Hezekiah when he says that "the Lord will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria."
- Clearly outnumbered, totally hemmed in and facing defeat, Hezekiah appealed to the prophet Isaiah to pray for God's help, in the meantime, Hezekiah tore his clothes and put on sackcloth in utter desperation, seeking God's word and help in this matter.
- Isaiah returned to King Hezekiah and speaking for God assured him that God would destroy the Assyrian army.
- When Hezekiah would not surrender to the Assyrians, Sennacherib sent another message to King Hezekiah and commanded him to look at the other nations whom the Assyrians had destroyed and to not let God deceive him into thinking that he can save them from the Assyrian armies.
- Hezekiah received the letter, he read it and went straight up to the temple where he lay the letter before the Lord. He prayed to the Lord to see how Sennacherib was ridiculing the Lord and for the Lord to deliver Judah from the

hands of the Assyrians so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that the Lord, is God alone.

- Then Isaiah the prophet sends a message to King Hezekiah , saying that the Lord has heard his prayer and has spoken against Sennacherib King of Assyria and prophesied his demise.
- That night the Angel of the Lord went out and killed 185000 soldiers in the Assyrian camp. In the morning the people of Judah saw all the dead bodies. When Sennacherib heard about this, he broke camp and retreated from Judah. Sennacherib would eventually be killed by his own sons as the Lord had said.
- During Hezekiah's reign as King, the prophet Isaiah rose to prominence. There were many false prophets during this time but Isaiah was God's mouth piece to his people. No matter the situation or the word of God, Isaiah spoke what God wanted his people to know. He spoke the bad news of Judah's fall because they would turn away from God and he spoke of their exile into Babylon. But he also spoke of God's love and mercy, how they would one day return to the land God had given them and rebuild their nation.
- Not only did Isaiah prophesy about the grace and mercy of God in the future return from exile in Babylon, but he spoke also about it being a precursor to a greater display of God's grace and mercy, namely the promises of the suffering servant and the coming of the Messiah who would usher in a glorious kingdom without end.
- King Hezekiah eventually died and his son, Manasseh, became King of Judah and he did what was evil in the eyes of God.

1. Why did Hezekiah experience so many difficulties? Does obedience to God guarantee prosperity?

Hezekiah loved God and did what was right in God's eyes, but Hezekiah still lived in a world that was hostile to God and his ways. Hezekiah was confronted by those who were living in opposition to God during his life, those who created difficulties for him and his rule because he tried to live according to God's ways.

Obedience to God does not guarantee prosperity, but it does guarantee God's blessing on his people. God's blessing might not necessarily mean wealth, health and prosperity although it can, but it might mean more often wisdom and strength to deal with difficult situations that arise, it might mean the ability to trust God for his deliverance in situations that do become difficult, or it might mean the confidence in God's word that he has a purpose in difficulties in our lives for our good. (James 1:2-4, Romans 8:28)

In fact, Jesus spoke about how difficulties would be part of the life of obedience to God, but how it would result in a "blessed life" in Matthew 5:10

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”

2. When Hezekiah received an intimidating letter from his enemies, he “went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.” When have you reacted to an attack or urgent problem with a similar attitude?

Our first response is normally to defend ourselves at all costs or to try and deal with the problem in our own wisdom and strength. Hezekiah rather, responded in running straight to his God and presenting his problem to the Lord. It would seem that Hezekiah knew and walked with his God intimately which resulted in knowing where to go when attacked or when problems arose. He trusted that God’s wisdom, power and purposes in dealing with difficulties was far superior to his and so he sought the Lord’s council concerning these matters. It’s part of the blessing of living an obedient life to God, trusting and knowing who to turn to in times of trouble for help.

3. What were some of the main themes in Isaiah’s prophecies?

- God’s Judgment on his disobedient people, the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Because of their disobedience and idolatry, Jerusalem would be conquered, and they would be exiled in a foreign land and live under foreign rule.
- God’s future grace and mercy in delivering and restoring them as a nation from his judgment. The Israelites would return one day to their homes from Babylon and rebuild their nation.
- God’s promise of a greater deliverer who would establish an eternal Kingdom. The promise of a suffering servant, the Messiah, who would come, deliver them and usher in a glorious kingdom which would never end.

4. How could God be merciful to his people in light of their actions toward him?

God could show mercy to his people because God can see into the future at the coming of his promised deliverer. God knew that his promised deliverer, Jesus, would one day pay the penalty for the people’s disobedience, his judgment on them would one day be borne by Jesus on the cross, and so in his mercy he did not give the people what they deserved because of the coming of Jesus.

5. How has God shown mercy to you?

Salvation is one way all Christians have experience God’s mercy. We all have sinned, rebelled against God, and are all deserving of his eternal judgment – life separated from God, but because of what Jesus did for us and the Israelites in paying God’s judgment upon us in full, God merciful delivers us

and restores us in a right relationship with him, he does not give to us what we do deserve.

Think of other ways, in everyday things, which God has shown mercy to us in not giving us what we do deserve.

6. Isaiah foretold the rise and fall of nations. Is God still in control of world events in our day.

The God we serve today is the same God Isaiah served and so yes he still controls world events. Remember it is His-Story and he is orchestrating world events to accomplish his purposes.

The cross of Jesus is a perfect example of the control God has over world events. We read in Acts 4:23 “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

We read in Colossians that all things and events find their purpose in God: “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” – Col 1:16

Then of course we read in the book of Revelation how God will control events during the last days, especially as he brings His judgment on the wicked.

Each event will happen at his specific time and for his purposes.

God’s Sovereign rule over his creation is clearly evident throughout scripture. No event or non event is a surprise to God. He knows the beginning from the end and is controlling all to accomplish his purpose.