

# Old Testament History

## The Divided Kingdom – Lesson 12

### Background:

#### Introduction:

Hezekiah ascended to the throne of his father Ahaz in 715 BC, just six years after Sargon destroyed Samaria. Hezekiah immediately set out to remove from the kingdom everything that had contributed to Israel's downfall, including the bronze serpent of Moses that had been turned into an object of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4). The result was a religious reformation which Judah had not seen in all her history as a separate kingdom, nor would ever see again. Even the faithful of Samaria were invited to come to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah (2 Chronicles 30:1), something they had not been able to do legitimately since the kingdom was divided two hundred years earlier. Some suggest this action may indicate some effort was made to reunify the nation politically – which constituted a defiant act of rebellion against Assyria, since Samaria was now an Assyrian province.

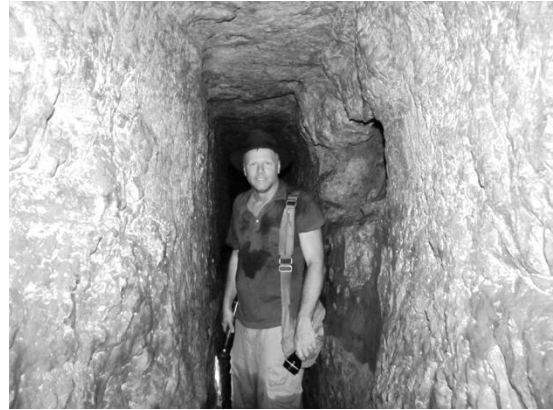
Although Ahaz had been subservient to Assyria, his son Hezekiah, in line with his desire to reverse his father's policies, decided to rid Judah of Assyrian domination. He apparently was too preoccupied throughout the reign of Sargon with his programs of reform to contemplate taking any action against Assyrian rule. But when Sennacherib became king, Hezekiah saw this as an opportune time to free Judah of the Assyrian yoke. By this time Egypt had regained power under the leadership of its king, and could be relied on to help Hezekiah against the Assyrians – which Egypt was only too happy to do, since Judah would be a buffer between the Assyrians and Egypt. Isaiah, however, insisted that Hezekiah have nothing to do with the Egyptians. They could not be trusted (Isaiah 31:1-3). The prophet urged the people of Judah to put their complete trust in God.

Hezekiah's rebellion began by withholding tribute from Assyria that had been paid since the days of Ahaz (2 Kings 18:7). This act of defiance was timed (either by purpose or providence) when Sennacherib was having difficulties in Babylon and unrest in Egypt. Other lesser states like Tyre and some of the Philistine cities also became involved and formed a coalition with Judah to withstand what they knew would be certain Assyrian retribution. At this time Hezekiah rebuilt the fortifications of Jerusalem and surrounding territories (2 Chronicles 32:1-8), constructed a water tunnel from the spring of Gihon outside the city to the pool of Siloam located within (2 Kings 20:20). This would ensure a constant source of water for the city in the event of siege.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Excavation of a 1,750-foot tunnel under Jerusalem, known as Hezekiah's tunnel, diverted water into the city. In 1880 an inscription was found near the Siloam entrance of the tunnel describing and commemorating the project. More information is available from Ferrell Jenkin's blog site: <http://biblicalstudies.info/hezekiah/hezekiah.htm>

In 701 BE Sennacherib moved his armies west and then south, sweeping all resistance in his path, until he reached Judah and Philistia. He had managed to defeat the Egyptian army at Eltekha, but decided against taking his armies into Egypt. He then turned on the Philistine cities, which were easily destroyed, and finally turned toward Judah and its prize, Jerusalem. After defeating approximately forty-six Judean cities and towns, he approached Jerusalem. Perhaps in a moment of wavering faith, Hezekiah offered to come to terms by paying an immense sum to protect the city from



Hezekiah's Tunnel

destruction - even going so far as to strip the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple (2 Kings 18:13-16). This did little to quiet the ongoing threats of the Assyrian king. However, Hezekiah was reassured by the prophet Isaiah who prophesied that the Sennacherib would "fall by the sword in his own land" (2 Kings 19:1-5; cf. Isaiah 37:1-7).

In the meantime, Hezekiah had fallen so ill that he was certain he would die (2 Kings 20:1; 2 Chronicles 32:24; Isaiah 38:1). In desperation he turned to the Lord and Isaiah came with a message that Hezekiah would live because God had heard his prayer. As a sign that the healing was certain, the Lord caused the sundial to go backward ten degrees, thus lengthening the day by approximately forty minutes.<sup>2</sup> After the miracle, Hezekiah was visited by Merodach-baladan of Babylon, to wish him a speedy recovery, but more importantly, to ask Hezekiah's support against the Assyrians. Although Hezekiah gladly accepted, Isaiah condemned this move, predicting that the time would come when these same Babylonian people would come to Jerusalem and destroy the city, carrying off the holy treasures they had now seen (Isaiah 39:6-7).

Some scholars suggest there was a second campaign by Sennacherib against Hezekiah several years later, since the story of the destruction of Assyria's army by the angel of God could not have occurred during the siege of 701 BC. Sennacherib sent some of his ambassadors to Jerusalem to convince Hezekiah to submit voluntarily. Hezekiah refused. However, knowing he was facing a serious threat, Hezekiah called for Isaiah, who urged the king to stand firm against the Assyrians. Sennacherib issued another ultimatum to Hezekiah to surrender while he could. This time Isaiah prophesied that Sennacherib would not enter Jerusalem since he had blasphemed the God of Judah, and would ultimately be forced to retreat to his homeland in shame. It was during the night that the angel of God swept down on the Assyrian camp and slew 185,000 troops, a disaster that gave Sennacherib no choice except to return home.

<sup>2</sup> Aha's sundial was a device for showing the time of day by the shadows, possibly a series of steps rather than a modern sundial. The Hebrew word *maalah*, which is translated dial or sundial, means elevation (such as a journey to a higher place), a degree, stair, or step. The backward movement of the shadow, the sign of Hezekiah's choice, was contrary to the laws of nature, and clearly a miracle.

Hezekiah reigned with his son Manasseh (as co-regent) during the last ten years of his life. When he died, the young prince was ready to take authority of the kingdom. Unfortunately, he immediately made it known that he would set a new record in Judah for wholesale apostasy by building alters to the Baals and planting groves to Asherah, as well as serving the hosts of heaven (the planets and stars), even building alters to honor them within the temple.

### Historical Notes:

From Ferrell Jenkin's Blog (Hezekiah's Tunnel): Hezekiah was the king of Judah at a very critical period in the history of the nation. The Assyrians destroyed Samaria in 722 BC and then moved south into Judah. Sennacherib, in one of his prisms, claims to have taken 46 Judean cities. The most famous of these was Lachish. When Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, he had the walls of his palace decorated with the siege of Lachish.



Farrell Jenkins at the Siloam exit of Hezekiah's Tunnel

Hezekiah served Assyria for a while and then rebelled (2 Kings 18:7). He set about to strengthen the fortifications of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:3-5). He had the fountains of water stopped so the king of Assyria could not find water. He also built a pool and dug a tunnel. "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?" (2 Kings 20:20).

The water supply of ancient Jerusalem was the Gihon spring on the east side of the city where Solomon acceded to the throne of David (1 Kings 1:28-53). About 1800 BC, the Canaanites who lived in Jerusalem built two towers at the Gihon spring, a Spring Tower, and a Pool Tower. Recent excavations have brought these to light and they can now be visited. This is where the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem got their water. Hezekiah's tunnel brought water from Gihon spring on the east

side of the city to a newly constructed pool on the west side. In New Testament times the pool was known as the pool of Siloam (John 9).

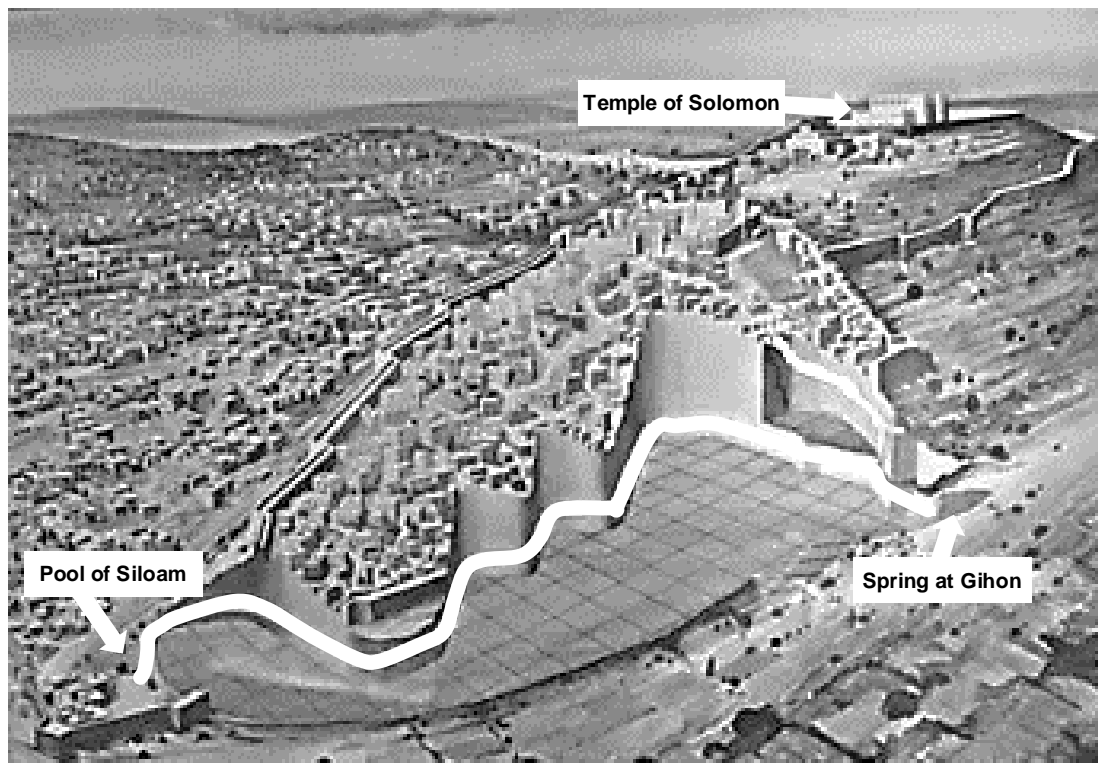
The conduit or tunnel is a great engineering feat of antiquity. Edward Robinson measured it at 1,750 feet long. The tunnel was cleaned and restored in 1909. The average height of the tunnel is slightly less than 6 feet, with a width of 23 to 26 inches. There is a total fall of 7 feet and 2 inches from the spring to the reservoir.

Digging the tunnel has been estimated as a 6 or 7 month job. The Siloam inscription was found in 1880 on the east wall about 20 feet inside the Siloam end of the tunnel. The inscription is about two and one half feet long, written in fine classical Hebrew.

A. H. Sayce was the first to decipher it. It reads in part: "...and the waters began flowing from the source toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits..." The Turks controlled Palestine at the time of the discovery, so the inscription was taken to Istanbul where it is now on display in the Museum of the Ancient Orient. Unfortunately, it is in a section of the museum that is not always open to the public, but I have been able to arrange several times for my groups to see it.



- Ferrell Jenkins Blog (<http://biblicalstudies.info/hezekiah/hezekiah.htm>)



## Outline:

- I. Hezekiah reigns in Judah (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29:1 – 31:21)**
  - A. The reforms of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-3; 2 Chronicles 29:1-11)
  - B. Hezekiah cleanses the temple (2 Chronicles 29:12 – 30:27)
  - C. Hezekiah's additional reforms (2 Kings 18:4-8; 2 Chronicles 31:1-21)
- II. Hezekiah and Judah at war (2 Kings 18:9-37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; cf. Isaiah 37:36-38)**
  - A. Hezekiah and Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:9 – 19:7; 2 Chronicles 32:1-16)
  - B. Hezekiah's prayer and Sennacherib's defeat and death (2 Kings 19:8-37; 2 Chronicles 32:17-23; Isaiah 37:36-38)
- III. Hezekiah's final days (2 Kings 20:1-21; 2 Chronicles 32:23-33; Isaiah 38:1-8)**
  - A. Hezekiah's illness (2 Kings 20:1-19; 2 Chronicles 32:23-31; Isaiah 38:1-8)
  - B. Hezekiah's death (2 Kings 20:20-21; 2 Chronicles 32:32-33)

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblehub.com/> or <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Hezekiah reigns in Judah (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29:1 – 31:21)**

#### **A. The reforms of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-3; 2 Chronicles 29:1-11)**

1. To which king is Hezekiah compared? (2 Kings 18:1-3; 2 Chronicles 29:1-2)
2. What did Hezekiah command the priests and Levites to do in the first year of his reign? (2 Chronicles 29:3-5)
3. What had the people done to incur the wrath of God, and what was the result of these sins? (2 Chronicles 29:6-9)
4. What was the desire of Hezekiah's heart? (2 Chronicles 29:10-11)

#### **B. Hezekiah cleanses the temple (2 Chronicles 29:12 – 30:27)**

1. What was Hezekiah asked to do? (2 Chronicles 29:12-19)
2. For whom was a sin offering and burnt offering made? (2 Chronicles 29:22-24)

3. After offering a burnt offering with musical instruments and singing (2 Chronicles 29:25-28), what did the king and all who were present do? (2 Chronicles 29:36)
  
4. When the people consecrated themselves to the Lord, they brought their sacrifices into the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 29:31-35). What did Hezekiah and the people do? (2 Chronicles 30:1-5)
  
5. Hezekiah sent letters throughout all Israel and Judah urging the people to come to Jerusalem for what event? (2 Chronicles 30:1-5)
  
6. What was the reason for the people to turn again to the Lord? (2 Chronicles 30:6-9)
  
7. What was the reaction of the people? (2 Chronicles 30:10-12)
  
8. When the people assembled in Jerusalem to keep the feast of unleavened bread what did many of them do? (2 Chronicles 30:13-14)
  
9. The priests and the Levites sanctified themselves for Passover (2 Chronicles 30:15-16). What was Hezekiah's prayer regarding some of the congregation who were unclean? What was the Lord's response? (2 Chronicles 30:17-20)

10. What did the people do for seven days? (2 Chronicles 30:21-22)

11. The whole assembly took counsel to keep another seven days with gladness (2 Chronicles 30:23-25). Since when had there not been such joy in Jerusalem? (2 Chronicles 30:26-27) <sup>3</sup>

**C. Hezekiah's additional reforms (2 Kings 18:4-8; 2 Chronicles 31:1-21)**

1. When the feast was finished, where did the people go and what did they do? (2 Chronicles 31:1)

2. What did Hezekiah destroy? Why? (2 Kings 18:4)

3. Hezekiah instituted further religious reforms (2 Chronicles 31:2-19). How is he described? Why did he prosper? (2 Kings 18:5-7; 2 Chronicles 31:20-21)

4. Against what king did Hezekiah rebel? What nation did he smite? (2 Kings 18:7-8)

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<sup>3</sup> This Passover was held in the second month rather than the first month as required by law, but the Lord allowed the substitution (cf. Numbers 9:1-14).

**II. Hezekiah and Judah at war (2 Kings 18:9-37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; cf. Isaiah 37:36-38)**

**A. Hezekiah and Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:9 – 19:7; 2 Chronicles 32:1-16)**

1. A summary of the fall of Samaria occurs in this section. (2 Kings 18:9-12)
  - a. How long was Samaria besieged by Shalmaneser, the king of Syria?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What was the reason for Israel being carried captive and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire?
  
2. Who invaded Judah during Hezekiah's reign? (2 Kings 18:13; 2 Chronicles 32:1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What tribute did Hezekiah give to the king of Assyria? (2 Kings 18:14-16)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What defenses did Hezekiah make? (2 Chronicles 32:2-6)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why were the people not to be afraid? (2 Chronicles 32:7-8)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Who did the king of Assyria send to Jerusalem? What message did he deliver to Hezekiah's servants? (2 Kings 18:17-25; 2 Chronicles 32:9-12)



7. What request did Hezekiah's servants make to Rabshakeh? (2 Kings 18:26)
  
8. How did Rabshakeh react to this request? (2 Kings 18:27-35; 2 Chronicles 32:13-16, 18-19)
  
9. How did the people respond? What did Hezekiah's servants do? (2 Kings 18:36-37)
  
10. When Hezekiah received the message, to whom did he appeal? (2 Kings 19:1-5)
  
11. What prophecy did Isaiah speak against the Assyrians? (2 Kings 19:6-7)

**B. Hezekiah's prayer and Sennacherib's defeat and death (2 Kings 19:8-37; 2 Chronicles 32:17-23; Isaiah 37:36-38)**

1. When Hezekiah received a letter from Sennacherib, he went to the house of the Lord and prayed. Describe his prayer. (2 Kings 19:8-19; 2 Chronicles 32:17-20)
  
2. God's response to Hezekiah's prayer was delivered through the prophet Isaiah. (2 Kings 19:20-34)
  - a. Why was Sennacherib despised and scorned by the "daughter of Zion"? (2 Kings 19:21-22)

- b. Describe Sennacherib's boasting. Why had he been successful militarily? (2 Kings 19:23-26)
  
  - c. What would the Lord do to Sennacherib? (2 Kings 19:27-28)
  
  - d. What sign did the Lord give to Hezekiah? (2 Kings 19:29)
  
  - e. What did the Lord say concerning the remnant of Judah? (2 Kings 19:30-13)
  
  - f. What did the Lord say concerning the King of Assyria? (2 Kings 19:34)
  
  - g. Why would God defend the city of Jerusalem? (2 Kings 19:34)
3. What happened to Sennacherib and his army? (2 Kings 19:35-37; 2 Chronicles 32:21-23, cf. Isaiah 37:36-38)

**III. Hezekiah's final days (2 Kings 20:1-21; 2 Chronicles 32:23-33; Isaiah 38:1-8)**

**A. Hezekiah's illness (2 Kings 20:1-19; 2 Chronicles 32:23-31; Isaiah 38:1-8)**

- 1. When Isaiah told Hezekiah he was about to die, what did the king do? (2 Kings 20:1-3)

2. What message from God did Isaiah deliver to Hezekiah? (2 Kings 20:4-7)
  
3. What sign was given to Hezekiah? (2 Kings 20:8-11; 2 Chronicles 32:24)
  
4. What did Hezekiah do when he was visited by the ambassadors of the king of Babylon? (2 Kings 20:12-15)
  
5. What was God's purpose? (2 Chronicles 32:25-26, 31)
  
6. Following the visit from the Babylonians, what prophecy did Isaiah deliver to Hezekiah? (2 Kings 20:16-19)
  
7. Describe Hezekiah's prosperity. (2 Chronicles 32:23-29)
  
8. What engineering feat did Hezekiah achieve? (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30; cf. 32:3-4)

**B. Hezekiah's death (2 Kings 20:20-21; 2 Chronicles 32:32-33)**

- 1 Describe Hezekiah's death.

**Application:**

In your own words, explain the lessons we can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations?