

King Hezekiah

When we come to consider the principles of Scripture that are shown in the Ministry and Sacrifice of Messiah, we can see the way in which various characters of old foreshadowed his work. King Hezekiah is a case in point. In various ways: the manner by which he conducted himself, and the circumstances of his reign both point forward to the ministry of Messiah. For our exhortation today therefore, we shall consider more fully the example of this righteous king.

2 Chronicles chapter 29 introduces us to King Hezekiah with reference to the things he did at the very beginning of his reign:

“Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old ... and he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that David his father had done. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, **opened the doors** of the house of Yahweh, and repaired them² (2 Chron. 29:1-3).

Here was the beginning of a new era in Israel’s history. The doors that gave entrance to the Temple had been closed by previous kings (see 2 Chron. 29:7), and so the system of worship prescribed by the Mosaic code had come to an end. But the first recorded thing that Hezekiah did, was to open the doors to acceptable worship again, and to cleanse the Temple from the filthiness of idolatry that former kings had placed there. So, he commanded the priests and Levites:

“Here me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of Yahweh God of your fathers, and **carry forth the filthiness** out of the holy place ...” (2 Chron. 29:5).

In this matter, we see the ministry of Messiah foreshadowed: on two occasions he cleansed the Temple from those who turned it in to a house of merchandise, once at the beginning, and once at the end of his ministry. So we read in Matthew 21 of this matter:

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mat. 21:12-13).

FINISHING THE WORK

The record in 2 Chronicles describes the beginning and ending of this preparatory work:

“Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify ... and in the sixteenth day of the first month, **they made an end.**” (2 Chron. 29:17).

There is an emphasis in these chapters, of how the work was not only started, but it was seen through to the end: it was finished. See, for instance, 2 Chronicles 29:17, 28, 29, 34, 31:1. All these verses demonstrate the completion of the work begun. So 2 Chronicles 31:21 summarises the life of Hezekiah in these terms:

“And in every work that **he began** in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, **he did it** with all his heart, and prospered” (2 Chron. 31:21).

This is a key verse in the history of Hezekiah, as it epitomised the spirit that governed his entire life.

How many times have we begun a task, or project, and not seen it through to the end? But Hezekiah was not like that: he **finished** the work he began.

And in this matter, he again foreshadowed the work of the Master, who said in his prayer:

“I have glorified thee on the earth: **I have finished the work** which thou gavest me to do” (Jno. 17:3).

And again, on the cross, he ended his mortal life by saying, **“It is finished”** (Jno. 19:30).

But there is another work in which Messiah is engaged, which will also be finished at the appointed time: “we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works ...” (Eph. 2:10). And if we permit it, this work will be finally completed before the judgment seat of Christ:

“... he which hath **begun** a good work in you **will finish it** (RV) in the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

The way in which this workmanship is conducted, is by the Word which is a powerful force in the life of the disciple: “... ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13).

THE PASSOVER – A FINAL APPEAL TO ISRAEL

One of the main features that characterises the reign of Hezekiah, is the holding of a great Passover. But this was not restricted to Judah only, the tribes of Israel were invited also, and this invitation represented a final appeal to Israel to turn from their ways of self-indulgence and wickedness:

“And Hezekiah sent to **all Israel and Judah**, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Yahweh at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto Yahweh, God of Israel” (2 Chron. 30:1).

So it was that the messengers went out to all the house of Israel – yet for the most part, rather than to repent, they mocked and despised them:

“So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun : **but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them**” (2 Chron. 30:10).

Similarly, the prophets whom Yahweh constantly sent to testify against the people “had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings ...” (Heb. 11:36). Indeed, Messiah himself was mocked:

“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, **and mocked him**, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate” (Lu. 23:11).

But the One who was despised and rejected of men will soon show himself to be the great Redeemer:

“... we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God**” (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), the means of salvation from death, the great destroyer. Being “the power of God”, he is able to deliver from death itself – something that no other man can do.

But all was not negative for Hezekiah's great Passover: there were some who listened, and heeded the warning:

"Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem ..." (2 Chron. 30:11).

Those who came from Israel into Judah would have been saved from the impending destruction of Israel by the Assyrians as described in 2 Kings 18:10.

THE INVASION OF SENNACHERIB

After this national reform and the keeping of the Passover, the record of 2 Chronicles 31 describes how that Sennacherib thought to take the Judaeen kingdom for himself:

"After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered into Judah, and encamped against the defenced cities, and thought to win them for himself" (2 Chron. 32:1).

There appears to be stages in the invasion, which involved sending the military commander Rab-Shakeh to try and intimidate the king and his people. He set himself directly against Israel's God, hence Yahweh issued the reply through his Prophet:

"This is the word that Yahweh 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. 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 ...**" (2 Kings 19:21-22).

So it was that Yahweh would fight for his people, and defeat the invading host.

Hezekiah, however, was a man of great insight and faith – he trusted in the power of Yahweh to save. So he exhorted the people:

"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: **for there be more with us than with him**: with him is an arm of flesh: but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32:7-8).

The highlighted words come from the words of Elisha to his servant, who fretted about the multitude of chariots that were coming against them:

"When the servant of the Man of God was risen, early, and gone forth, behold, and host encompassed the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered "fear not: **for they that be with us are more than they that be with them**. And Elisha prayed, and said, Yahweh, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:15-17).

Here, the man of God knew of the Angelic host, seeing them with the eye of faith, but his servant needed to have his eyes opened to their presence. Even so, we must always recognise the Angelic presence with us – as the Psalmist wrote:

“The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them”
(Psa. 34:7),

We are not left alone in our warfare of faith. The Angels are with us, as “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14) to deliver out of our afflictions. Not that afflictions will not come – the same Psalm says that “many are the afflictions of the righteous” – but the point is, that “Yahweh delivereth him out of them all” (Psa. 34:19) – the Lord Jesus Christ himself being a case in point.

So it was, that the angels fought on Judah’s behalf, and delivered them from affliction:

“And Yahweh sent an Angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the King of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land ...” (2 Chron. 32:21).

HEZEKIAH’S SICKNESS

The final event in the life of Hezekiah that we wish to take note of, is his period of sickness. He was smitten with an illness that humanly speaking could not be cured. But being the man of faith that he was, he turned to the Father in prayer:

“Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Yahweh ...” (2 Kings 20:1).

“Hezekiah wept sore” (2 Kings 20:3), as he poured out his soul to Yahweh. So Isaiah was told to return to him, and give him the message:

“Thus saith Yahweh, the God of David thy father, I have **heard thy prayer**, I have seen thy **tears**, behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of Yahweh. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years ...” (2 Kings 20:5-6).

Again, we see in these events, a foreshadowing of the experiences of Messiah. He is the One of whom it is written:

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up **prayers** and supplications with **strong crying and tears** unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

There is a difference, of course, as there always is in the types and shadows of Scripture. Jesus was not saved from death (as per the AV rendering), but was saved **out of** death. The difference is that he did die, and was saved from that situation of being in the grave. But in the *type*, Hezekiah’s extension of life pointed forward to that of Christ Jesus – as the Psalmist has it:

“**he asked life** of thee, and thou gavest it him. **Even length of days** for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation ...” (Psa. 21:4-5).

In the example of Hezekiah then, we have a wonderful example of faith in action. Both externally with the invasion of the Assyrians, but also internally, with the weakness of his own human nature. Hezekiah was not perfect, and did fail in aspects we have not considered here, but he is a glorious Type of the Lord Jesus Christ – and a supreme example for us to follow.

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