

Commentary on Second Kings chapter 18 by Chuck Smith 2.8.23

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February memory verse Luke 24:45 (NKJV)

And **He** opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the **Scriptures**.

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In chapter eighteen we now move back to the southern kingdom of Judah. Inasmuch as the northern kingdom has now been destroyed from the rest of the... from the rest of Second Kings on we'll be dealing actually with now the southern kingdom of Judah which still remains. And as we move south, we find that Hezekiah is coming to reign over Judah.

He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to the Lord and all that David his father did. And thus he removed the high places, he broke the images, he cut down the groves, he broke in pieces the brass serpent that Moses had made: for in those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan ([2Ki 18:2-4](#)).

So as he took over as king, the first thing he did was to start removing the false idols and gods and worship centers that the people had created in Judah. Destroying them, getting rid of them in order that he might turn the people back to the true worship of the true and living God. And one of the interesting things, one of the things that the people had made an idol out of and were burning incense to was this brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness.

You remember when the children of Israel had murmured against the Lord, the Lord sent serpents into the land. And the serpents began to bite the people and they began to die from the result of the bites of these serpents. And Moses cried unto the Lord and the Lord told him to make a brass serpent and to put it on the pole in the midst of the camp. And whoever was bitten by the serpent, if he would look on the brass serpent, he would be healed of the bite and live.

Now of course, brass is always a symbol of God's judgment, and the serpent was a symbol for sin. The people sinned against the Lord in murmuring against the Lord. So the brass serpent there on the pole in the wilderness was a symbol that their sin had been judged. And if they would just look at the provision that God made, the brass serpent on the pole, and believe in that provision, they would be healed of the bites of the serpents and live. Even so, Jesus Christ on the cross is a symbol of God's judgment against our sins. And if we'll just but look to Jesus Christ, the crucified Lord, we will be

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forgiven our sins and we will live. So I'm born again by believing on Christ, the fact that He bore my sins upon the cross.

But the people had taken now this brass serpent, and they made a little shrine and an altar, and they have began to worship it and burn incense to it. Now, whenever a man sets up an idol and begins to worship an idol, it tells a couple of things about that man. Number one, it tells us that he has lost the consciousness of the presence of God. Whenever I have to have an idol, a worship center, that means I have lost the consciousness of God's presence. And I need something to remind me of God's presence. That's a sign of spiritual dullness.

Paul the apostle said, "I know that you men of Athens are very religious people. I've seen all of your gods that you have through town and all of the altars that you built, and I saw this one altar I was interested in it because it had the inscription, 'To the unknown God.'" He said, "That's the God I want to talk to you about. For He is the God who made the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. And in Him we live, we move, we have our being" ([Acts 17:28](#)). Paul didn't need any idol. He was so conscious of God's presence that he realized that he was totally surrounded by God. I live in Him. I move in Him. I have my being in Him. I cannot escape Him. He surrounds me all the time. With that kind of consciousness you don't need a reminder. You don't need some little idol, some little trinket to remind you of His presence.

Man is so prone to want something to worship. Something I can see. Some object. And it is a sign that he has lost the consciousness. Something vital in his relationship with God. The consciousness of God's presence. But the second thing that an idol tells us is that somehow that man is longing to regain that which he lost. I want to be conscious of God's presence, and so I need this as a reminder because I'm longing for something that I have lost, the consciousness and the awareness of God.

And so the children of Israel have made an idol out of this brass serpent. They have made it an object of worship. They were burning incense to it. Again, that folly of "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore" ([Romans 1:25](#)).

Hezekiah, when he came into the throne as the king, as he began to destroy all of the false worship centers, he took this brass serpent and he broke the thing in pieces and he said, "Nehushtan." Now the word Nehushtan means a thing of brass. It's no God; it's a thing of brass.

Oh, how we get attached to things. "Oh, I always like to sit in that particular portion of the church because there one night I felt the presence of God. Don't ever remove that pew, you know." And I'm only letting you know that the first of the month the pews are to be removed. We'll sell it to you if you want. But it's Nehushtan. It's a thing of wood and cloth. It's not of God. It's a thing of brass. It's no God. Nehushtan, a thing of brass.

So Hezekiah initiated a tremendous religious reform.

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And he trusted in the LORD the God of Israel; so that after him there was none among all of the kings of Judah that were like him. For he clave to the LORD, he stuck with the Lord and departed not from following him, but he kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him ([2Ki 18:5-7](#));

When we get into Second Chronicles when Asa had come back from his victory over the huge force of the Ethiopian, the prophet met him and said, "The Lord is with you while you'll be with Him; and if you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" ([II Chronicles 15:2](#)).

Now Hezekiah was committed to the Lord. He obeyed the commandments of the Lord. He clave unto the Lord, and thus the Lord was with him. The inevitable consequence of commitment to the Lord. Not only was the Lord with him, but the Lord, prospered him wherever he went: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and would not serve him ([2Ki 18:7](#)).

Now the king of Assyria had come down to the area of the Philistines and he had actually smitten the city of Gaza and all of the little intermediary cities around there.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, that Shalmaneser the king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: which was the sixth year of Hezekiah. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel [as we've already covered] into the captivity because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant. And in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah Sennacherib the king of Assyria came against the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah the king sent to the king of Assyria and saying, I have offended; return from me: that which you put on me I will bear ([2Ki 18:9-14](#)).

In other words, he was offering to surrender unto Sennacherib. And so he laid upon Hezekiah a tribute of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

And Hezekiah gave him the silver that was there in the house of the LORD, the treasures of the king's house. And at that time he cut the gold from the doors of the temple and from the pillars which had been overlaid, he gave it to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria then sent a couple of fellows, emissaries, Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh to the king Hezekiah and they came with threats from the king of Assyria ([2Ki 18:15-17](#)).

They came to the wall and Hezekiah's prime minister went out and these guys began to call up unto them and he said,

Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak unto Hezekiah and say to him, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence wherein you're trusting? You say, (but they are vain words), I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom do you trust, that you're rebelling against me? Now, behold, you're trusting upon the staff of the bruised reed, upon Egypt, which if even a man will lean upon it in his hand, it will pierce

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his hand: so Pharaoh the king of Egypt and all of those who trust in him. But if you say to me, We trust in Jehovah our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said unto Judah and Jerusalem, You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem ([2Ki 18:19-22](#))?

Now that shows how, of course, little the people understood Jehovah God. He thought that all these high places and altars that were actually pagan altars that were built throughout the land were built unto Jehovah. How much people outside really misunderstand often our devotion of Jesus Christ, our worship of Him. And this guy is saying, you know, "You say you trust in Jehovah, but Hezekiah tore down all of His altars and all, and said you should worship only at this altar in Jerusalem." Wrong, he did not tear down the altars of Jehovah, but only the false pagan altars that were there in the land.

Now, he said, "I'll tell you what we'll do, pay us some money and we'll give you two thousand horses and see if you can find enough riders to put on them and we'll send the weakest captain that we have and he'll wipe you out." I mean, you know, really boasting and really threatening these people. And he said, "Tell you what, I'm come up against this place to destroy it because Jehovah told me to come." And so the guy is there blaspheming God and threatening the people, and these two guys on the wall said, "Hey fellows, don't talk to us in Hebrew. We understand the Assyrian language. Talk to us in Assyrian language and we will relay the message to Hezekiah."

And Rabshakeh said, No, king didn't send me to talk to the king but to these men who sit on the wall ([2Ki 18:27](#)),

And he continued to talk in Hebrew. Now threatening all these guys that were sitting up there on the wall in their Hebrew tongue and saying, "Hey, don't listen to Hezekiah. He tells you the Lord can help you, don't believe it. You think that God can deliver you out of our hands? Where are the gods, you know, all of these nations, we've conquered all of them. Their gods were no value to them and your God will be no value to you." And really began to threaten the people there that were on the wall. And yet the people did not answer them because Hezekiah the king had commanded, "Don't answer them anything." So Hezekiah sent a message to Isaiah the prophet.

Now at this point in the King, it will be well if you want a good side assignment to read the book of Isaiah in conjunction with these new chapters, because Isaiah was an influential prophet at the time that Hezekiah was king. And thus, to really put it together, you need now to really get background on this period of history by reading Isaiah. And you'll understand better the prophecies of Isaiah with this particular background, realizing that Hezekiah was a good king and he was reigning at the time that Isaiah was a prophet. And Isaiah had a great influence, and Isaiah was really the prophet to whom Hezekiah sought for advice.