

Monday - Week Twenty-seven

Lesson Seventy-eight: Isaiah and Good King Hezekiah

Read: 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39

Summary: Hezekiah listened to God and made as many good changes in Judah as he could. Hezekiah and Isaiah made a powerful team.

Background and Comments

- Most of the time children are just like their parents. Fortunately Hezekiah was unlike his father Ahaz. Hezekiah became a true spiritual successor of David. 2 Kings 18:5-6 tell us that Hezekiah was a believer and sought the Lord with all his heart.
- Hezekiah did have his moments of doubt. Instead of taking things to the Lord he made a treaty with Sennacherib that nearly emptied the national treasury. When Sennacherib again attacked Jerusalem (he went back on his word) Hezekiah turned to the Lord. In one of the most dramatic accounts in the Bible the forces of Assyria taunted the Israelites who had gathered inside Jerusalem in fear. God sent His angel to kill 185,000 Assyrians in one night (His angel is more deadly than viruses, bombs or any other weapon we have!)

Lessons for Today

- Hezekiah got seriously ill and heard that God was calling him home to heaven. After Hezekiah prayed we read that God changed His mind. Prayer is a magnificent blessing from God - imagine, the Almighty God listens to us as we pray. He wants us to confidently bring our requests to His throne!
- Hezekiah's pride got the best of him when the king of Babylon sent presents and ambassadors to visit him. He must have thought, "The king of Babylon is concerned about me!" His pride led him to show the wealth and weapons of the nation (little did he know that in a number of years Babylon would destroy the city of Jerusalem!). How has your pride gotten the best of you in the last few days?

Read: Psalm 119:97-104; Luke 23.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, let me use Hezekiah as a role model. Make me confident in prayer, knowledgeable of Your Word and sure of Your promises. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Twenty-seven

Lesson Seventy-nine: Reformation under Josiah

Read: 2 Kings 21-23; 2 Chronicles 33-35

Summary: Josiah embarked upon another period of reformation after Manasseh had reintroduced idolatry to the county.

Background and Comments

- The story of Manasseh has a happy ending. He repented and was able to return to Jerusalem to try to undo the damage he had done. It must have been much harder to rid the land of idol worship than it was to reintroduce it in the first place.
- The temple was in such disrepair (and the worship life was in such shambles) that they had lost the book of the law. Josiah made every effort to get the “Word” out. Is your church making every effort to get the “Word” out?
- Josiah’s reformation was quite extensive ... yet not complete.

Lessons for Today

- We don’t quite understand how Manasseh could have been so evil (he was called a second Ahab!) since he had such a godly father. Couldn’t Hezekiah have shielded his young son from idolatry and false prophets? We need to remember that evil is always one step behind us ... ready to overtake us. We aren’t told this but perhaps Hezekiah spent so much time being the king that he didn’t take care of his other big responsibility: being a father. Are you (or your friends and relatives) spending the time necessary to be good parents?
- The threat of destruction still hung over Judah because the people’s hearts had not turned to the Lord despite Josiah’s reforms. This is what makes spiritual renewal difficult. We can encourage Bible study and prayer, offer devotion guides, start mission fields, etc ... but we cannot change anyone’s heart. That is up to the Holy Spirit. People can reject the Spirit’s gracious work to their own damnation.

Read: Psalm 119:105-112; Luke 24

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, as I interact with people in my home, at work and at church please guide me to lead them closer to You by getting them into Your Word. Use me as You used Josiah to be an agent for change. Amen.

Wednesday - Week twenty-seven

Catechism Review

Read Questions 218-225

1. Why doesn't the Holy Spirit seem to get the same "attention" in the Bible as God the Father and Jesus the Son?

2. Sanctify means to make holy. When the Holy Spirit brought us to faith He completely sanctified us by making the forgiveness of sins ours through faith. Why do we still sin if we have been made holy? (Hint: a better word for "made" here would be "declared")

3. Conversion (turn around), regeneration (born again) and rebirth (born again) are all picture words for coming to faith. Think of one object lesson you could use to teach someone this truth.

4. The Holy Spirit has quite a list of gifts for us (question 225)! How do we get these gifts?

5. What gift could you especially use right now? Why?

Read: Psalm 119:113-120; Hebrews 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, fill me with the gifts of the Spirit; Amen.

Thursday - Week Twenty-seven

Lesson Eighty: Judah's doom foretold

Read: Isaiah 6:9-13; Jeremiah 10, 14, 15.

Summary: Isaiah and Jeremiah foretold the destruction of the southern tribes. Tragically very few listened to these prophets.

Background and Comments

- The assigned reading in Isaiah talks about hardening of the heart. Normally when God has His Word proclaimed His purpose is to bring people to faith. However, when someone's heart is hard then it is impossible for the person to believe anymore. Who hardens heart - God or the person? The answer is both. People harden their heart by thoroughly rejecting the Word of God; God then says, "OK, have it your way. You have permanently rejected Me." The problem we have is that we cannot peer into a person's heart to see if their heart is hard or not. We need to assume that their heart is not hard and continue to preach the Word to them. If someone is worried that he or she has hardened their heart we can be sure that they haven't; people with hard hearts don't worry about having a hard heart!
- Jeremiah 15:16 makes the reason for Jerusalem's destruction crystal clear: Judah had rejected God.

Lessons for Today

- Jeremiah was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament even though hardly anyone listened to him. He remained faithful to the Lord even though he was thrown into prison, pits, and even stocks. God judges people on faithfulness instead of on results (because the results depend on God not on us).
- Jeremiah 14:11 is shocking. God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people of Jerusalem anymore! Jeremiah disobeyed and God repeated His command. The nation was going to be destroyed by the Babylonians - that was God's will. Jeremiah's prayer was no longer going to make a difference. God has not given us such injunctions against prayer. Are you taking advantage of that?

Read: Psalm 119:121-128; Hebrews 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly pray that I will remain faithful to You for my whole life. Keep me from hardening my heart. Amen.

Friday - Week Twenty-seven

Life Questions

Topic/Question: How can I better witness to non-Christians? I never know what to say and I get pretty nervous too.

Bible References and Considerations

- The Bible makes it very clear that we have the responsibility to share the good news with everyone. Of course we could point to Matthew 28:19-20 but Romans 10:14 makes the point in even stronger terms: *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* Those are good questions ... and we are the answers!
- The Bible also makes it clear that we do not convert anyone. That is the Holy Spirit's job. Our job is to share the Word of God with people and pray that the Spirit would work in that person's heart. That certainly takes the pressure off, doesn't it?

Practically Speaking

- If you want to become an excellent bowler you had better start practicing. Have you ever practiced witnessing your faith? God wants us to be able to give clear reasons and explanations about why we believe in Jesus (1 Peter 3:15). Ask your pastor about leading a Bible study about sharing your faith. One popular format to use is "God's Great Exchange". Better yet, sit down and plan how you can best share the law and the Gospel with someone. You could even think of a few illustrations to use.
- We feel nervous when we witness for a number of reasons:
 1. We might say something wrong. It's better to get tongue tied than to say nothing at all. You will be surprised at what you know! If you can't answer a certain question you have an "excuse" to approach the person again later.
 2. The other person might laugh at us. That would be their (eternal) loss. The "risk" is well worth it.
- Keep a prayer journal about the people you witness to.

Read: Psalm 119:129-136; Hebrews 3.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing me to faith. Use me to bring many others to faith. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.