

## Hezekiah's Prayer - II Kings 20 6-7-15AM

Hezekiah was king of Judah during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. If we wanted to sum up the nature of this man, we can do so with two verses: *"He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses"* (2 Kings 18:5-6).

There are several important events in the life of King Hezekiah that are a valuable study for a Christian. For one thing, we note that while his father was a truly evil king (King Ahaz, II Chronicles 28:1-8), Hezekiah turned to God in his youth and immediately sought to restore his nation to God. He restored the worship of Israel by repairing the temple, restoring the priesthood, and restarting the lost Passover (II Chronicles 30-31). Another remarkable event was his spiritual warfare he waged when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem (II Kings 18-19). Finally, he also has a remarkable prayer to God when he was told he was dying, and God restored his health; this is the subject of our study.

II Kings 20 records that Hezekiah was told he was about to die. He prayed to God, and God changed His mind. He commanded through Isaiah the prophet that Hezekiah should treat his sickness, and then God gave Hezekiah a miraculous sign (the sun moving on the steps) to prove it would happen. While there are many miraculous healings in the Bible, this even is unique because it suggests that when Hezekiah asked, God changed His mind. God has changed his mind before; consider Moses in Exodus 32:14, or David in 1 Chronicles 21:15.

How is it possible God can change His mind? We are told in Numbers 23:19 that *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*. We are told that God does not change (Malachi 3:6, James 1:17) by His very nature. This itself can cause confusion; if God does not change, how could there have been a change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. This is answered through Scripture, which tells us that God's purpose has never changed (that is, the covenant of Christ is God's "eternal purpose", Ephesians 3:11). God declared *"the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"* (Isaiah 46:10). Thus, we are being told that the "changes" of the Old Covenant and new Covenant were God's plan from the beginning.

This truth (that God has never changed His purpose, but has used steps to achieve it through the Old Testament) is also demonstrated to be true when we see that the "changes" of old to new were preordained; consider Moses' promise before the Law had even been finalized in Deuteronomy 18:15 as compared to Acts 3:22; consider the covenant statements of Jeremiah 31:31 with Hebrews 8:8-20; even before the law the promise to Abraham revealed the purpose of God (Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:8, 16-17); indeed, from the very beginning God's final purpose was revealed (Genesis 3:15 with Romans 16:20). God's purpose (the redemption of man) has never changed, and the variation in covenants were necessary in order to bring us to Christ.

However, what happened to Hezekiah is remarkable in teaching us that God may change His purpose for us. IF/WHEN we are righteous servants (Genesis 18:23-25), we offer effective prayers (James 5:14-18), and we are fervent in our prayers (Acts 10:2-4). We need to see that prayer accomplishes great things when we are right with God, when we ask in faith with diligence, and when we are humble supplicants.