

Hezekiah, Then and Now, Pt. 3

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We're now continuing in the current series entitled *Hezekiah, Then and Now*, and this is *Part 3*.

In *Part 2* we covered how Assyria, the nation of Assyria had come down and conquered, took captive the 10 tribes in the northern part of Israel. They were actually called Israel at that particular time; Judah had long been broken off with each other. But this is a period of time where the northern 10 tribes, as they're normally referred to, were taken captive and so this is the period of time we've been covering there in *Part 2*. They were taken north, to the north, farther up into the areas of Assyria and so forth. Again, this had been taking place during the time of Hezekiah's reign of Judah.

Then toward the end of *Part 2*, the latter part of that section we were covering how the next king of Assyria, Sennacherib, was invading Judah. So his father had come down, taken the northern 10 tribes captive and now his son was coming down to conquer Judah farther to the south there. As we've been going through this story we've been looking at some of those things happening along a physical plane during Hezekiah's reign that parallel some of the things we have been experiencing along a spiritual plane.

This is always good because you can learn spiritual lessons anywhere in scripture, as a whole, but there is a uniqueness to some of Hezekiah's story here, a uniqueness to the time we live in now. I find that very interesting, exceptionally interesting sometimes when you come across various stories, and there are some things geared more toward the latter end, toward the latter times, if you will, or the end-time, and we can certainly learn or glean lessons from those parallel examples as we go through this. That's what we've been talking about in the two sermons ahead of this.

So we're going to review just a little of the ending of *Part 2* because we covered that two weeks ago, over two weeks ago. I guess it's been three Sabbaths ago when we were covering this. So since it's been a little bit of time here we're going to go back and catch just a few of the verses here in 2nd Kings 19. So if you want to turn over to 2nd Kings 19 we'll pick up a part of the story there. We're going to break into the story where Sennacherib had sent word a second time to king Hezekiah in the form of a personal letter.

So again, these are the examples of those things that were taking place at that particular time and what Sennacherib was telling those in the area of Jerusalem, specially king Hezekiah and the people, and trying to get them to surrender to make it easier for him to conquer and this is a part of that story.

2 Kings 19:14—And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up to the house of the Eternal and spread it before the Eternal. Whenever

you're going through a battle, whenever you're going through a difficult time that's the first thing you should always do. It's one thing to share life with God in prayer, which sometimes we don't do that as well as we should day by day, week by week. God wants to be a part of our life.

We fellowship with one another, more so on the Sabbath when we have those opportunities, but God desires a fellowship with us. He wants to know our response, our response to Him. How do we look to Him? And candidly, we're judged according to much of that as well. How much do we want God in our life? How much do we include God in our life? How real is this to us? The more real it is the more we'll just naturally be doing it.

It would be like a young child getting up in the morning and coming and talking to their parents. It's something they just do every day. It's natural. There are certain things they're going to discuss and go through, what that day is about or whatever they're experiencing in life, and this is no different, in that sense, along a spiritual plane. God wants to be a part of our lives. He's called us into His family and so we grow in that process, we learn through that process.

I guess I should say, backing up a little bit here, that we have to make a distinction here between that which is a physical family and that which is a spiritual family because we learn things about God that are so much different than our physical examples in life because there is a relationship we're able to have with God that is a matter of perfection, which a physical family can't give. Though a physical family can have a great closeness there is that on a spiritual plane enabled by God's spirit that is much, much closer. We learn things about God because of God's ways, because of God's laws, because of God's truth, because of how God works with us in life and deals with us that endears us to Him, that helps us to learn how to love Him in a way that goes beyond physical relationship.

Again here, God wants to know. He wants to share in our growth and our development. Because He is, He's molding and fashioning us. If we have surrendered our life to God and God's way, we want that, we have chosen that, and the more we desire it, as it said about Hezekiah, he was like (going clear back in time), the one he descended from, king David. He was a man after God's own heart, too, in that respect. He was of that kind of mindset. He desired with all of his heart to draw close to God, to have a close relationship with God so he sought him with all of his heart. That says a lot because it shows what's inside of a person.

So, anyway, he took this letter and spread it before the Eternal and started praying about it. Well, this is what we should do when we're going through some difficult trial. Sometimes people just try to work things out themselves or they try to ignore what they're going through and try to put it off and not address it, and all the kinds of things we go through in this human life sometime in dealing with battles or difficulties or trials. But the reality is the very first thing that every one of us should do is take it before God. Just lay it out there in front of God and let Him know what you're dealing with.

Now, He already knows, but you have to verbalize it, in the sense of your mind, not necessarily in words. You can pray to God and it doesn't have to be out loud. It can be in the mind and through this process then we learn. It's not just a matter of something that we do before God, it's something that is a matter of a way of life. So I'll come back to some of this as we go through it. But again, lay it out before God. Look to God. Again, God knows what's in our mind, what's in our thinking, but we need to be able to pray about it or to communicate it to God, because this is our response then to certain things we're going through, and really, in many ways, this is a part of our being molded and fashioned. What is our response? Because our response determines much of our molding and fashioning.

There is a mouthful said there. There was a sermon given just there. There is so much to learn about how God works in our lives, how He molds and fashions us, how He works with us.

So again, he laid this out before the Eternal and he prayed unto the Eternal and said, **O Eternal, God of Israel.** It's a great way to start prayers, in that respect. It's a matter of putting yourself in a place where you realize what you are, who you are. We're nothing. The only reason we are something is because of God. That's the only way life continues on. Our life centers in that, upon that, if you will, centered upon that.

So again, **O Eternal, God of Israel, the one who dwells between the cherubim.** So he has this picture in his mind, "This is where You dwell. You dwell on high. You are the Almighty God." **You are God; You alone.** It's amazing how often this is in scripture, especially in the Old Testament, "You alone." No one else. You alone. And yet how blind were we to that for so long, even within God's Church after things began to be given back to the Church, if you will, because it had been lost. We had that period of time where God worked through Mr. Armstrong to re-establish truth within the Church, and not everything was re-established because it wasn't God's time. So it's awesome to think about these things and how God works in our lives.

So he says, "You're the one who dwells... You alone are God." Another thing here. You haven't known this that long. You haven't been aware of this that long. If you have had a history in the Worldwide Church of God, if you've gone through certain things, how long has it been since you had understanding, since you were able to comprehend that there is only one Eternal God and that there weren't two, or whatever gods that existed for all eternity? Sometimes we come along and we forget how awesome it is what we have learned. Sometimes people are told things and they just learn it then because they've never known anyway. Again, how appreciative, how thankful are we for what God gives to us and do we recognize that the only reason we grasp anything we do is because God has given it to us?

Anyway, going on... **The one who dwells between the cherubim. You are God. You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth.** Awesome to remind ourselves God has created everything. **Incline Your ear, O Eternal, and hear. Open Your eyes, O Eternal, and see.** Well, it's not that God doesn't see or doesn't hear but there are times when we want God to hear us, to see what we're going through in our lives, to give us that recognition, if you

will, in the sense of “Am I being heard?” To have the confidence that, “Yes, I am.” In God’s Church we should always know that every time we go and kneel before God the only thing that would cause a problem there is what? Sin. Because if there is sin and we’re not addressing it and addressing it up front then we’re cut off from God’s spirit. Why should He listen to us? Why should He hear us? Why should He see what we’re going through? In the sense of not just seeing what we’re going through but intervene to help us in what we’re going through because that’s really what we’re asking for, that’s what we’re saying. “See my problem. See my difficulty. See what it is that I’m dealing with because I need help!”

Incline Your ear, O Eternal, and hear. Open Your eyes, O Eternal, and see and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. That can give you a lot of confidence right there. When your prayers are right, what do they do? They strengthen you, as they should, because they’re not just words. They’re filled with spirit. They’re filled with life that God gives to us if indeed we’re praying in spirit and in truth. That means you better be in the truth. It means you better be in the truth in the sense of even recognizing that if there are some sins in your life you’re not just kind of holding them back here and hoping God will hear without repenting.

Truly, Eternal, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands. So they have done these things that he said in the letter. They’ve been able to do these things. ...**and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the works of men’s hands, wood and stone.** Sometimes it’s, again, awesome to remember, awesome to thank God as you’re remembering some of those things about God, that that which the world worships, “That which the world thinks it knows it doesn’t know. And so how blessed am I to be able to know and to see these things?”

...Therefore, they destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Eternal, our God, I pray, Save us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the Eternal God, You alone. Beautiful! There are times in our life where people know us, where people, whether it be on the job or neighbors or family and they may put pressure on you in some form or another and you can take those things before God and to talk to God about it. “I believe what You have given to me. You have given me the ability to believe what is true and now they are pressing against that truth. They are pressing against what is true that You have given. Strengthen me. Hold me up. Fight this for me.”

Verse 20—Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah saying... So incredible sometimes, put these things together to see what period of time people lived in. When the northern kingdom was taken captive, it was in the days of Isaiah. Things that Isaiah wrote about then, he wrote about that, he wrote about things; some places in Chronicles are the exact same words that are used because it’s a chronicle of what is written in the book of Isaiah word for word about Hezekiah’s life. Again here, awesome and inspiring to see some of these things, to see how God used these things in a very powerful way.

So again here, Isaiah was sent saying, **Thus says the Eternal God of Israel: Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard.** In other words, “I have heard your desire. I have heard your petition. I have heard your request, so have confidence and boldness in that.” Again, so often when we’re going through a trial that’s what we want. We want to be able to stand. We want to be able to have confidence, not doubt. Because the opposite of those things are the things that are a matter of the human mind - doubt, a lack of faith, a lack of confidence, a lack of reliance and looking to God to fight our battles. So again here, this is the kind of focus we need to have.

Verse 21—This is the word which the Eternal has spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion has despised you, laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back! Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice...? So again here, this is God’s response to the letter that Sennacherib sent and he’s telling Hezekiah His response.

Again here, when you see this, “The virgin, the daughter of Zion” there is a lot more involved here because it is about God. It’s about those with whom God is working, and there are prophetic things that come out of this as we go on, as we continue on, and they are addressed specifically. Some of it has to do with the end-time. Because all of God’s plan, all of God’s planning, all of God’s purpose, it is about 6,000 years before He finally brings an end to man’s rule. It’s giving man 6,000 years to learn you can’t govern yourself. “Look what government is like. Look what it has done. Look what it has done since you rejected Me from ruling over you, Israel,” basically.

God is always planning and so much of it is for what? His government, His kingdom to come to rule over this earth, to send his son, to send the Messiah. The Messiah was that which all the prophets through time have spoken of, that God gave a hope that there is something far better, far greater. God’s focus has always been on that. Everything He has worked through history concerning Israel, concerning Judah, concerning time, concerning the Church is about that focus, is about that purpose, a purpose that we are blessed to be able to see a transition in.

We have no comprehension of how blessed we really are to live at this time. We can strive to appreciate that, but it’s far greater than what we can comprehend, it truly is.

So again, he says, **This is the word of the Eternal which the Eternal has spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion has despised you and laughed you to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed. Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel!** It’s about God Almighty. That’s who it is. “This is who you have addressed. It’s not just some other gods out here and you’ve gone into these different nations and you’ve conquered them and you’ve been able to do this, those who were not gods at all, just as Hezekiah said. You have fought against the Eternal. You have spoken against the Holy One of Israel.”

Then going on from where we left off, **verse 23—through your messengers you have reproached the Eternal** (the LORD), in other words, “to express disapproval, rebuke, to criticize,” that he was criticizing the God whom they served, mocking and making fun of the things that they believed in. ...**and said...** So this is what He’s reminding Sennacherib of what he said. This is what God is saying to Sennacherib. **By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains.** You know, it’s amazing how human beings are: “Look what I have done!”

Boy, when I say that one there I think of the worst of that I think I ever experienced in God’s Church, when an individual whom I thought was starting to understand why we went through the Apostasy and starting to maybe grasp and understand how much people were hurting because of the scattering that had taken place and he sat down with one motive and one motive only, to have me be a minister under him. Because, basically, what he was showing was, “I can give you a lot. I can give you a lot of churches here. We have a lot we can accomplish.” That was what the message was. He said, “Because I have raised up this church and that church in this area of the country. I have raised up churches over here...” and you think... I thought right then and there, “I’m not going to tell you because it wouldn’t do any good, “You didn’t raise up diddly squat and you never have.” It’s God Almighty who rules His Church, Him and His Son. Joshua the Christ is the head of the Church. No man is able to accomplish and do anything unless God has them do it if it’s true and right.

That’s why there is no haughtiness that should ever be involved in our lives in being able to be a part of God’s Church. We are just so blessed to share in what God is doing. It’s about God! It is never about us. And yet so often within God’s Church, which has happened in times past, which is happening less because we’re growing, is that people get lifted up with self-importance. That should never happen! We are not important except as a part of what God is doing. That’s what makes us important, the work that God is doing in and through us. That’s what’s important. I hope you understand what I’m saying, and to whatever degree I’m sure you do, depending on where we are.

He said, **By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon...** Sometimes I don’t know how much to share and give. You know, I think everything, something that’s on all of our minds, “How much longer?” See, well, okay, we’re passing 2019 when we went past Pentecost. 2020? Maybe. Then God began to show some things that could even be shorter period of time, not the seven like I’d thought. So it’s up to God. It’s in God’s hands as to when He does things and how He does things. We have a desire and a hope that it won’t be a long time. What an awesome thing!

Some things I’ve been thinking about, “What do we do if this is the case or what do we do if that is the case?” So you’ve always got to be planning, what are you going to do and how are you going to do it? The main thing you have to do is cry out to God for help, for guidance and direction in your life and for the Church that we be able to be focused on the things that we need to. Just

like the Feast of Tabernacles. I'm sure, I'm certain that people are praying about the sermons that are going to be given, that God is inspiring those and inspiring their preparation and the content as we do every year. That's our hope and our desire because we want to be fed, we want to be a part and we want to share in those things, hint, hint. We need help! The desire is to have those things done ahead of time, prepared ahead of time so that God's people can be fed.

The same sort of thing is true as far as our future is concerned, what we're to do and how much will we be blessed to see and to understand. I understand that there are some things that maybe we can't be given right now in too much depth and detail because there is a spirit world out there. The reality is God is not just working with this physical world and preparing it for the end of an age. He's working with a spirit one, too. That's not a small thing because, again, we don't know the number of the angelic beings that exist but we know there was one and that there was a third of the angelic realm that followed him. God is bringing that one to a bit of a close as well, isn't He? Again, that's not a small thing, and so that realm has great power. Though God has restricted it mightily as to what it's capable of and what it is allowed to do, it still has great power and God is dealing with that realm as well. There are some things that God is not going to allow them to know at specific periods of time. Then at other times He's going to let them know. That's in God's hands. There's a lot said there.

We have hope and we have desire that we're not going to have to go through this a whole lot longer. I, candidly, realize that I maybe don't have a whole lot of time left. Been pulled out of the pits there a few different times, you know, and each time realizing, well, if this is it, this is it. God's work goes on. God's going to do what God's going to do and God's Church is going to do what God intends for it to accomplish and do. And yet here we are. I also know that God molds and fashions and prepares people to do various things and sees those things through because of necessity, too, because of how God works, so I'm thankful for that.

The reason I was telling you some of this is because of some of these kinds of things here, that are written here, about what is said here, and not knowing how much to say in some cases. I'll just mention this part, when it says "I," "I," "I," I have always loathed, in the sense of my nature, the very first time and the very first book of putting on the back there about being a prophet. Some of the main reasons were because I have realized God has blessed me I think a long, long time ago in the beginning, and probably for a very great purpose, to loathe and despise talking about self. I loathe that because in the world and too often within the Church it's "I," "me," "I," "me," and none of it is. It's God. When it's about what God is doing it's about God and His Son and what they're doing and we're blessed to share in it. But the "I" part is a difficult thing to deal with.

That's why I think in Spokesman's Club very early on that that was even made stronger. To me one of the hardest speeches that I ever gave was the icebreaker, because it was about me, what is my life. Without God it was pretty bad. It was going down the toilet and God blessed me to see that. If everyone in the world could just see that their lives are really going down the toilet without

God, because without God, if you know God's purpose and God's plan, that's where you want to be. But people can't see that yet. That's coming in time.

So my honest desire has been if I were to write a fourth book, which I hope I don't have time to do, but it's in my mind to do, and it's a compilation of three books, and basically there is not going to be a single "I" in it, if God will let me do it. I am sick of "I" in the sense of this isn't about any individual and I'd just as soon the world not even be addressed with it. I hope you understand what I'm saying. That's the way we all have to feel.

If we're a part of God's Church, a part of God's work, just be thankful to be a part of whatever part that is, and if God has you do something like that, fine, so be it. But I really don't like that. I really detest that. Because there is a fine line there in people's lives and you have to be careful of that, that it never enters into the area of pride, because that's what human beings tend to do. That's why it's such a red light, a stop sign, if you will, a warning signal. These things are dangerous for human beings. Enough said.

So that's why this is important, to see this. Don't let this happen in your life. Don't ever think of things like that - "I," "me," "what I'm doing." Sometimes if we're not careful it's in our conversations. It's fine to share your life, but be careful that you're not trying to have others focus in on—because to me that's where drama comes from—"Look what I'm going through. Last week, you wouldn't believe what happened to me..." I'm sorry. "This is what I have been dealing with." So? I'm sorry. We all have problems. We all have difficulties in life and sometimes it's not just a good thing when we want to be the focus of some of that. That's human nature. I hope we all understand that.

By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon. I had this drilled into my mind one time many years ago before I became a minister, that I screwed up. Because I worked with a company that sold all kinds of electronic devices, control devices, and so forth, to petro-chemical companies. Lived in the Houston area so all the main engineering companies were in Houston and I called on most of those with this company I was working with. There are devices for measuring gas, which you have to have, plastics and all the things you have to do for controls and plants, how to control a plant. There was one where they were making certain plastic type materials, if you will. Some of the pellets and so forth they made in these huge containers, they had to have ways of measuring them and it was a difficult process.

Well, this one company out of Germany that we represented had a great way of doing it so I went to an engineering company and if you can get something spec'd in, which means they have specifications, they are going to build a plant, they're going to have certain kinds of controls, and if your device is the one they choose, that it has to meet these specifications, and you're the only one who can, woo, that's pretty good. So if you're able to get in and talk to the engineers and you can help them to see this is really the only way to really control this well, here, try it out in your plant, come back and they try it out and they say, "This is has worked better than anything

else we've ever had, let's spec this." So if you're going to sell to them you have to be able to do this, what this instrument does, and if you can do that then you can bid on the project. No one could so I had beaucoup of this instrument going into this plant.

The company then asked me to come up to Indiana from Houston to talk to other sales people and tell them how I was able to do this, accomplish this, and I did. Afterwards it hit me, "You fool!" Because you know what happened? Afterwards I lost it all for a time, and it came back, but I lost a gigantic sale for a time. I thought to myself, "You idiot! You can't tell them that, but you know that, you didn't do it, God gave you the ability to have this, the ability to know how to work with these kinds of things." You know, I don't know how to explain this.

I think of those who were a part of helping to build the temple. It says God gave them talents. He just gave it to them, certain abilities, certain peoples for the purpose of accomplishing all of this, craftsmanship and ability to see things that, and when you're able to be involved in something like that to where you are able to grasp and see things that you normally couldn't, sometimes we fail in big ways, even in God's Church, by not giving the honor to God. God blesses us in what we do in our lives and He gives us favor. If we fail to recognize those things, just as quickly as He gave it He can take it away. Do you understand what I'm saying? Okay, good. Hope so.

Because that was one of the great lessons I learned very early on in the Church, how stupid that was to take that credit that "This is how I was able to do this." You idiot! God had opened those doors for me and after that then other doors began to open up. We learn through that sometimes. So here it is, don't ever take the honor and credit for things in God's Church, the blessings of life that you have, the talent. The abilities we have, so often we just fail to give God the credit, the honor, whatever it might be. Whatever abilities you have understand that God gives you these abilities. Truly does. The reality is in life, whatever it might be, be thankful, be grateful for whatever talents and abilities you have. Don't forget, don't leave God out of the picture, in other words. Too often we do.

What abilities do you have even on a physical plane? "Well, it just was that way because both my parents were smart. They were good in this particular area." "My father was a great carpenter and it just kind of passed through to my genes." And think, "Well, be thankful he was and that you inherited certain abilities because God has given to human beings the ability of many things but God did it, whether it was a long time ago and various talents and things that have been passed.

I think of different races. Some are known, some are hated for certain talents and abilities they have, like in banking, like in working with things that have to do with economics and the like. There is a particular race of people who do really well at that, and (a group of people, a tribe), and there are people in the world who hate them for that, for their certain abilities they just naturally have. Well, why? People leave God out of the picture. There are reasons why God has given certain things, allowed certain things, and it's a matter of recognizing God has blessed us with so many things in life.

The things you have, the physical things you have, if you just take the credit to yourself, “This is what I did; this is what I accomplished,” you’re missing the mark. Who gave you the ability to have all that? Who gave you life? Who gives you the ability to see? You know, this ought to really strike us when we see people who can’t see. Who gives you the ability to walk? It’s awesome when you can come to a recognition of some of those kinds of things and you realize how blessed you are in life to have what you have. And who gives you that? God Almighty! Everything we have comes from God Almighty. I hope you understand what I’m saying.

By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon. I will cut down its tall cedars and it's choice cypress trees. I will enter the extremity of its borders to its first fruit forest. In other words, “I’m going to take the best of the land. I’m going to take the best of everything I want to take, and I have done this, my army.” “Mine.” “I.” “Me.”

I have dug and drank of foreign waters. This is what Sennacherib is saying. “Look what I’ve done. You haven’t stopped me.” You remember the first thing they did when they came into the areas of Judah? What they started, the Jews did? They started plugging up all the places, stopping the water and the ability of cisterns and so forth. He said, “We’ve dug them up ourselves anyway. You’re not going to stop us.” **And with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defence.**

Did you not hear how I determined, God is saying, **Did you not hear how I determined this long ago, that you would be able to do this,** Sennacherib? “I determined that you would conquer. I determined you would have this might and this power. I did it! You didn’t! So Sennacherib, “Why don’t you know these things?” That’s what God is telling him. **Did you not hear how I determined this long ago?** Because God did. He prophesied it a long time ago that there would be a people who would take them captive and told who it would be. Awesome!

From the days of old I planned all this and have now brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into piles of ruin. Judah. Cities of Judah. Fortified cities. So it happened because God allowed it, because it was a part of God’s purpose that not only should the northern 10 nations be taken captive but that this should take place as well, that Judah should be shaken up for what they had done.

But this was at a time when Hezekiah was setting things right. Do you remember what happened before? The high places of worship, what they’d done? They’d let the temple go to waste, the Levitical system wasn’t even functioning, they hadn’t been keeping the holy days? Incredible.

Verse 26—Therefore, their inhabitants had little power before you and they were shattered and confounded. They were as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass of the housetops and the grain blighted before it is grown. But I know where you live... Awesome! “I know where you are. You can’t hide from me.” ...**and your going out and your coming in. “I know every move you make.”** Awesome! ...**and your irritation toward Me, because your**

irritation with arrogance have come up to My ears. So I will put My hook in your nose, you know, like a bull. That's what it's giving an example of. An oxen. They put these rings in there and it's not so hard to lead them around them. They put this clamp on with a rope and they'll follow a whole lot easier. You don't put it around the neck because they're strong and powerful and they don't give a flip. Put it around their nose and you get through to them.

It's like a bridle in a horse's mouth. The reason they do more, tend to do more is because that doesn't feel so good and they respond to that quickly. He doesn't, a well trained horse, it doesn't take much to move them around, see. That's the exact reason why those are there. There are different kinds of bridles that they've used on horses even in training them in order to break them of various things. The more they hurt, for a stubborn horse, that's the kind of bridle they use, that kind of device in their mouth. The less and the more they learn then the more that's taken away to where they're finally trained.

This is what He's showing here on a physical plane to a particular ruler. He said, **I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your mouth and I will turn you back by the way which you came.** Awesome! "I'm going to do this to you."

So again here, what we've just reviewed is what God said through Isaiah to Hezekiah about what He would do to the king of Assyria—that's an awesome thing to understand—and what it says then that happened afterwards. Now, it's not that the king ever learned from this. But the words came to pass and God did it because it's written for those who would be able to be inspired by it, be moved by it, a story about the power of Almighty God. It was for Hezekiah. It was for the people of his time and for those who would read about these accounts, like us today.

2 Kings 19:29—This shall be a sign to you; you shall eat this year as such grows of itself and in the second year what springs from the same. And in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward, for out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant and those who escape from Mount Zion. Awesome! **The zeal of the Eternal will do this.**

So again here, God is talking to Hezekiah. He's telling Hezekiah through Isaiah, if you will, what the message to Sennacherib is and what is to be stated to him. He's strengthening Hezekiah by His words, by what He has said, and then this part that's added toward the end here about them and about what they would accomplish and do, that they're going to have a prosperity amidst a time where they have suffered a great deal in war and battle, because many cities have already fallen. He came down and took many of them to the north already and had come up against Jerusalem like he had. They hadn't yet taken Jerusalem.

A physical example here of something is used to, candidly, point toward something that is far greater in the future. And this is it, **For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant.** It's prophetic about something that God was going to accomplish in time on a far greater plane spiritually, and

of those who escape from Mount Zion. So there's a lot written in scripture and that's why sometimes it's hard for us to grasp the time we live in. It's hard to grasp who we are as God's Church and what God is doing with a very small remnant.

Because this is what it's about. If you want to read, go through, and there are so many prophetic things in scripture. We've talked about them in times past. Ezekiel is filled with a lot of them. All the way up through the minor prophets, over and over again, things about the end-time, things about God's judgment, things that would come at the latter days, in the latter time because that's God's focus. Everything that's happened over this past 6,000 years has been about a focus of giving man a space of time to experience horrific things, evil, to experience the way government's are, to experience all the things that they try in religions, and nothing works.

God has given that period of time so He can train and teach or give something far greater later on and until it comes to a time when God's government is ushered in, 1,000 years, 1,100 years. It's hard for us to grasp sometimes all the things that are written that have been written through time that point to this end-time.

So again, it's very difficult for us sometimes to grasp how blessed we are to be a part of something that's so small, a remnant of that which has escaped because what has happened now is far more important than what happened back then physically. It really is because this has to do with what God is molding and fashioning on a spiritual plane. That which has lived and existed a long time ago and the millions who have died in battles and wars, they're important in a sense of looking to the future of what God's purpose is, and God's purpose is to raise them up in the last hundred years. God's purpose is then about the Church and what has been accomplished through the Church.

Going on, the flow of this account goes back then to speaking about the king of Assyria and what follows next. **Therefore, thus says the Eternal concerning the king of Assyria...** So, just to make it perfectly clear so that you understand, that last part we just read is about God's Church, is about what has happened at the end-time. It is not about what happened to them on a physical plane as much as it is about us that God was accomplishing or purposing or going to purpose on a spiritual one. That's why I say sometimes we do not grasp what God has called us to. We don't grasp how blessed we are as His people. We really don't. We have no idea what's before us in the sense of really grasping it.

That's good in some parts because there is more humbling that has to come before you can receive that through the experience of it all. There's going to be more humbling that comes upon us, there really is. When you see these things begin to take place on the earth you're going to experience some things that you cannot grasp.

Verse 32—Therefore, thus says the Eternal concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a bank or a mound to lay siege against it, because that's what they would do. If you've seen some of those

crazy kind of movies sometimes and the massive armies. I mean, sometimes we can't grasp the massiveness of some of those armies and how large they were. You think of Normandy and what went in there. Some of these armies were as large that came up against cities. You want to talk about a hundred thousand people plus in some of these battles? Incredible! The ones who were at the front coming in first? So they'd build the mounds up so they could come up to those walls and cross in, cross into it. Nothing could stop them if they had the protection and so forth from anything that might be thrown their direction, to conquer, and eventually they conquered with massive armies like that. That's how they conquered them if they couldn't do it through any other means.

He says here, **None of these things are going to happen to you... nor build a bank or a mound to lay siege against it. Verse 33—By the way that he came by the same shall he return, and he shall not come into the city, says the Eternal, for I will defend the city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.** So it's difficult for us to put ourselves in people's shoes in times past. You have no idea what it's like to live through something like this. You don't have any idea what it's like to be inside of a city, a walled city, and be concerned about water, concerned about food, concerned about whatever it might be that strikes you when you see something like that or know of something like that that's coming up against you.

What would go through your mind? How would you think? How would you think about your families and about what's already been destroyed out there in front of all this, a people you know of and people you have met and probably family? We can read something like this and be distant from it. But you've been told the same things for a greater purpose. You've been told exactly the same kind of things by God over and over and over again. God has called us to live through this. God has called us to bring us through something in a very powerful way to show very powerfully so His great might, not only to us, obviously, but to the world. These things were recorded and written and done for a great purpose and it's to strengthen those who follow.

I think about the millennial period. They're going to have an incredible history, of being able to learn from everything that God did and put it together, piece it together in ways that you're not even able to yet because God's going to continue to reveal more and more, obviously, during that time period. They're going to grasp and be able to see things that will be astounding, when they see from the beginning to the end, piecing it together in a way that God shows how He molded and fashioned everything.

He says, "I'm going to do these things for My name's sake and for my servant David's sake," because of His purpose and because of His plan. Is God going to do less for His Church? Is God going to do less for His people that He's called to come through these things? So you're going to be tried and tested in things that you haven't even come close to yet. So how do you work through and respond to various trials and tests you go through now?

I hope you understand what I'm saying because you're going to have "you know what" scared out of you when the first nuclear weapon goes off. And you can't understand that yet. You can't grasp **Hezekiah, Then and Now, Pt. 3**

that yet. Just one—I don't care where it is in the world—and that's just the first one, see, and we can't grasp what that's going to be like. But I'm here to tell you you're going to be afraid like you have never been afraid in your life. Do you know why? Because you've been told about this for a long, long time. You've been told about what's going to take place, when God's going to allow a third of the world very early on to be destroyed before He steps in. It sounds horrifying and it is. I can't grasp that and neither can you yet.

It's going to be a matter of looking to God and understanding the promises of God, the purpose of God, and why He's called you, why He's opened your mind, what He's doing in your life and why He's doing it in your life. Because He has a purpose for you continuing on and your example is going to be a strong one for others, and your prayers are going to be strong for others.

And it came to pass on a certain night... I can't help but think of something that happened just the other day that's not really in the news. A little bit, that some pieces of it are and some pieces of it aren't, how much of it is true, how much is speculation, I don't know. But when there are reports of two submarines, or some submarines that have gotten in a skirmish with each other and 17 have died, but that's covered up... I say covered up... But knowing how government's work... See, a lot of people don't even know that Vice President Pence was called back here recently. He was going to go up to one of the New England states (I can't remember, I think it was New Hampshire) and he was called back to the White House to be there for a period of time at the same time that Putin was called back or cancelled some plans that he had. Some of this is out here, pieces, little pieces. Well, there are enough pieces that make we wonder. Now, how much is true? I don't know. And you don't know. But we can read little bits here and there and you just wonder because some day some of these things are going to be very real because something did happen. They're calling it, basically, a submarine that was, a test submarine, if you will, the Russians, 17, I think it was 17 died, and so this has been in the news. I don't know if you've heard about it.

But then there is this other thing that comes out that talks about there may have been a skirmish between some submarines and then there was one that had 17... Was there any connection happening all at the same time? I don't know. But it's scary because more and more both sides press against each other testing each other. We hear of certain times when there are certain things that fly by through Alaska or somewhere else. It might be crossing over into airspace but how often does the other side press against it as well, in other words, US against Russia and testing their boundaries? Some day when it's God's time it's just too late. It doesn't take a whole lot sometimes to start a war. I don't know how much of this you watch, but India and Pakistan, the things that are going on there right now, skirmishes again flaring back up. It only takes one stupid act in the world, and when it's time it's going to happen.

But I'll tell you what, when I heard some of those news articles it's like a chill, because you realize that's just how close it can be. That's just how close things can take place. That's just how easy things can come to pass. One stupid incident, one firing of a torpedo and it all starts

because of these clashes, because of these little things that keep pushing at each other. That's the kind of world we live in today. But one thing about it is we know it's going to happen at some point.

And to me, I'll be candid with you, it's an exceedingly scary thing because you don't want to see this happen in the world, but we know it's going to, and so we have to plan ahead, think ahead, be close to God. Be close to God. Be strengthened by God because you're going to need it in the future.

And it came to pass on a certain night that an angel (verse 35) of the Eternal went out and killed in the camp of Assyria one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Normandy was big. This was big. Big! It's hard for us to grasp this. 185,000 and they all died, one night. Awesome! Incredible, the power of Almighty God, life and death. They lived and died for a purpose - to be written here and to be resurrected later during the one hundred years. Incredible, the power of Almighty God and His plan. We don't grasp this, truly, in its depth.

And when people arose early in the morning there were the corpses all dead. So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and went away. Yeah, kind of lost his army, kind of lost his power. Just like God said, "With that hook in your nose I'm going to turn you around, and like a bridle in a horse's mouth I'm going to lead you back to where you came from." "I'm going to control this. I'm going to do this to you."

It's stories like this, it's through understanding of things like this that should give us strength. God is all powerful. He didn't call you not to succeed. He called you to be one of His children. He called you to receive the impregnation of His spirit so that you could be born into His family; some in this first great resurrection, most at the end of a thousand years, another thousand. That's incredible. We have no comprehension of how great that calling is. It's great.

So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and went away and returned home and remained at Ninevah. Now, it came to pass as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his son Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place. His own children. Little dysfunctional. Not uncommon in those days, of things that happened even within the areas of Israel.

So the next section here, **2 Kings 20:1—In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death.** So it was in this time period, and by going through the story it's very clear that this happened when he was thirty-nine years old. Now, if you remember rightly he began to reign when he was twenty-five, so this is after fourteen years of reigning over Judah. A lot happened in this year when he was thirty-nine and it was a time of trial and a time of testing for him in a very big way, in that respect, as the story continues to reveal. And in this particular part here, again here, he was thirty-nine when this happened and this story is backing up just a little to insert what had happened while Assyria was still in their country and a threat to Judah and Jerusalem.

So again here, as with so many stories in scripture they don't just go through in strict chronological order. The New Testament is very much like that. You have to know what's being spoken of and when and so forth. So it is here in the Chronicles and in the Kings of things that took place.

So here, picking it up, going on here it goes on to say, **And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, Thus says the Eternal...** So at some point here when he was thirty-nine, this is another account of something that Isaiah had come to tell him what God had to say. He said, **Set your house, in other words, your affairs in order, for you are going to die and not live.** Well, this comes from God and you see what He's done, it's going to strike you pretty strong, especially at age thirty-nine.

So goes on to say here, **Then he turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Eternal saying, Remember now, O Eternal, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart.** That says a lot. To be able to do that? To know that you're speaking truth to God and you say, "I have walked before you in truth and of a loyal heart. This has been my heart." Because you know God knows. If you have a relationship with God, you know God knows. He knows what's going on. He knows. He knows. He's just showing what's in his heart. Obviously, he's crying out to his God because he's learned how to do that over time.

I have walked in this way and have done that which is good in Your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly. He didn't want to die. He was thirty-nine. That's pretty young, really, in this respect, knowing that different ones had lived to different ages. David lived to age seventy, you know, king David.

Verse 4—Then before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court that the word of the Eternal came to him saying... Now, I love this because this reveals a lot how God works. It wasn't like a bush that was burning. It wasn't like some angels were sitting around and being able to hear something that they were giving in communication. God gave it right here. Isaiah had been worked with long enough to know what God was giving to him and God was making it very clear what was to be said and what was to be done.

So anyway, He said here (verse 5), **return and tell Hezekiah, leader of My people, Thus says the Eternal, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Eternal and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.** So you see part of the picture here of the timing because they hadn't been delivered yet, certain things hadn't happened yet. The army hadn't been destroyed yet, Sennacherib hadn't started his return to Assyria yet, but it was in that particular year, that same time period that some of this happened and began to take place. At what specific point? Maybe just before that army? We don't know. It doesn't say. But it's all very close.

He says, I will deliver you and the city from the hand of the king of Assyria and I will defend this city for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David. So again, timing. It's always awesome to go through some of these things to look at some of this.

I want to read this again here in 2 Kings. Well, I don't need to. I'll just mention it about the 185,000. So we can see that, we can understand that, that that hadn't taken place yet.

So going on in the story here of Hezekiah's sickness it continues here in **verse 7—Then Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs; so they took and laid it on the boil and he recovered.** Now, whatever the sore was, it's vague in Hebrew, some of these things when they give some of these examples, but whatever it was he was suffering through. As human beings sometimes are prone to do it's like, "Hmm, figs. I haven't tried that one yet. Hmmm. It's kind of like that serpent on a pole. If it worked for Hezekiah maybe it'll work for me." I'm speaking a little facetiously but you have to be careful, see. We have to be careful sometimes to think there's some kind of mystical ability in healing. It's just a matter that sometimes God gives to us certain things, like He did in the serpent on the pole, "You do this and you learn from obedience." "Because this is what Isaiah told you to do..." "This is what God's prophet told me to do so I'm going to do it that way." It's as simple as that.

Take a lump of figs; so they took and laid it on the boil and he recovered. And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What is the sign that the Eternal will heal me? We're carnal human beings even when God's working with us. There are times when we'd like to have more. Who wouldn't? I think of what we're going through right now. I'd like to know a whole lot more but He's not giving it yet. So it's God's purpose and His timing.

What is the sign that the Eternal will heal me? And that I shall go up to the house of the Eternal the third day? We're all different, and he didn't have the benefit of growing up in the church and knowing what we know today, but with what he did know and what he had experienced this was still something he was struggling with a little bit and it was like he wanted to know a little bit more here. "What is going to be the sign that this is going to work out just like God said and I'm going to live through this and I'm going to go up there to the third day like He said?"

Then Isaiah said, This is the sign to you from the Eternal, that the Eternal will do the thing which He has spoken, Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees? Now, you have to realize as these things are happening it's like instantaneously, because Isaiah, he's not going back and forth somewhere. Things are just being given to him as he's speaking. This is not a small thing. You have to know this is what it is at a particular moment in time. We're talking about the sundial! "The shadow for telling time, do you want it to go backward or do you want it to go forward ten degrees? Choice is yours, Hezekiah; which do you want?" Oh, this is going to happen right way, whatever it is, type of thing.

And Hezekiah answered... You know, God knows these things. He knows exactly what we're like. He knows exactly the kind of choices we'll make and the kinds of things we'll do in certain circumstances like this one here, obviously, and knew Hezekiah exceedingly well, as He does every one of us. **It's an easy thing...** You know, that's why it's so easy sometimes for us to judge others. Because we might do something different than what they have chosen to do or what they're going to do, but we're not them. God works with each one of us uniquely so, individually so. God molds and fashions each one of us individually so, and it isn't up to us how God does that with each person. One of the greatest things sometimes in God's Church has been this thing of judging, is we have to be exceedingly careful that we don't insert ourselves into a situation that is dangerous for us to do so because we don't know what God's doing. We don't know how God is doing it in all cases. We have to be certain of that before certain judgments are made. A lot more to that. Something to mull over because that's a series that's coming in time as well having to do with how to judge righteous judgment as God has given us growth and greater ability to see and perceive and understand these kinds of things.

That's why, to me, it's an exciting thing to learn how God works, how God works with us, how He molds and fashions us, because the more you learn the more you become in awe of God, that He has so many and He works with each one and He molds and fashions things in our lives so that we can be prepared for whatever it is that awaits us. It's like in any construction, there are different parts, different phases, different places of a building, and certain things have to fit into place. It's like your cabinets (like we just did), you don't want them "Just, oh, put them anywhere up there. I don't care." That's fine if that's what you want to do, or you can decide which ones you want to have in certain places for what purpose and so forth. That's what God does. We're all in certain places for a specific purpose, His purpose, His design. That's where we'll be the most fulfilled and accomplish the most in life.

Anyway, going back to this. So this is a sign, shall it go forward or backward. **Verse 10—It's an easy thing that the shadow is to go down ten degrees, but instead let the shadow go backward ten degrees.** So if you're watching the sundial and the time and the sun coming down here and the shadow is being cast and all of a sudden it goes back ten degrees? Wow! That's an awesome thing. Because we're talking here about the rotation of the earth. This is not a small thing! This is about the rotation of the earth. So wherever you are and all of a sudden it goes backward, well, did the sun move? I don't know what they knew back then. They knew about the dial, they knew about certain things taking place and being able to follow it, but even for us, the power of God to do. He can do whatever He wants, and just because the earth went backward or stopped and then went backward everything didn't fall off, gravity. These are big things we're talking about. Then it started forward again. So somewhere in time we've lost ten degrees... or gained ten degrees. Hmm.

So anyway, this is what he said to do. **So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Eternal and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward from which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.** So it's talking about a specific sundial and here this is what happened.

Now let's turn over to 2 Chronicles 32. It adds a little more to this particular story and some of the story flow here of what's being covered. 2 Chronicles 32:24. See, the more we can have in our minds to understand various things, that's why I marvel at various stories that God has given us through time, because they give encouragement.

I think of the three hundred in the days of Gideon. I'm always amazed, how God has worked with this remnant group, body, and this physical example that's given of how they ran down and it's inspiring. Stories like that are inspiring. Joshua coming into the promised land. Inspiring. Some of the analogies of things that have happened on a physical plane that all have to do with something that pictures something in the future, the time we live in. Because that's why they're there, that's what they're about. Because God's plan is so meticulous, so incredibly awesome, the things He brings to pass, and so with this story here.

2 Chronicles 32:24—In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. So now here is a chronicle of the account summarized and this is what it says, **And he prayed to the Eternal, and He spoke to him and gave him a sign.** So this was through Isaiah, the sundial being turned back by ten degrees that we read about. **But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up.**

Now, I had a bit of a struggle with some of this story at different points here because whatever is given my heart and my desire is to give what is absolutely true. But I realized that certain things had been said about Hezekiah in times past when it came to this that he "did not render according to the benefit," is how it says in the Old King James.

Well, it happened to me in Cincinnati the first time I ever heard that particular account in that story and it kind of put Hezekiah in a light that wasn't totally true. Because from the beginning, something that should stand out, is the uniqueness of Hezekiah and what it says about him and his character and his mind and his attitude toward God. Because it makes this very strong in scripture about this relationship he had with God and comparing him with others who had gone before and others who came afterward. And in all those cases it speaks exceedingly high, highly, if you will, of him, in a very high manner. So it causes one to ponder, if you will, and consider some of this and to realize there are different things we go through in life and different ways that God works with us, and just say that much can be learned from this. Here he is, a man of thirty-nine years old, certain things happening to him, still quite young in that respect, but God is working with him, molding and fashioning him, and he had already accomplished some incredible things all along the way here to this point in time.

This does not in any fashion or form mean that Hezekiah failed, all of a sudden here. But there is also a warning that things can happen like that, that people can go through various things in their life and they can come to a point where after a long period of being molded and fashioned they can just give it all up, which has happened a lot throughout time, which has happened a lot over the past 2,000 years. Many have been called, few have been chosen for that very reason. But

Hezekiah was unique and strong before God even to the end, because something took place later on that will come out in the story.

So at this point in time it's reflecting on what happened. Something happened at this period of time because of all that he had been going through at thirty-nine years old. And did he make mistakes? Absolutely. Every one of us does. Every one of us makes mistakes. Just like the one I told you about, the time I was invited up and got up, gave this speech and waxed eloquent. I don't know how eloquent it was, but how I was able to sell all these things through the engineering company to this plant in Louisiana and this is how you can do it and this is how great this machine is and this is what it'll accomplish and this is the best way of going about this, blah, blah, blah, blah... Stupid. Young man. Stupid young man.

So we make mistakes in life, but what do we have? The ability to repent. The ability to repent and the ability to continue on, the ability to be blessed, to be able to continue in a powerful, awesome relationship with God Almighty. Incredible!

So, "he didn't repay according to the favor shown him for his heart was lifted up." So this is something in part of the story that we haven't addressed yet. So God intervened, healed him, he didn't die, gave him fifteen more years, but something happened early on here that he fell into a trap. Not even a trap, he just fell into something. Human nature can be a great trap. You have to be on guard. That's why God says to watch, to be alert, to be on guard. Primarily against this, self. Really.

So it says here but Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up, therefore, wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. So this is a compressed little story here of things that are written in other places. This is condensed in that respect as to what took place. **He humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** It's a beautiful thing. Pride is an ugly thing. To be lifted up is an ugly thing. To look to one's self for our accomplishments and what we do without honoring and thanking God for what He's given us to be able to do those things, to not give God the glory, the thanks, that's an ugly thing. When we turn inward and we take things to ourselves it's just ugly. It really is. To leave God out of the picture in anything is ugly. To not go before God first when we're going through difficulties, trial in life, is ugly. God should be first in our life. That's what we're working toward. That's what we should be striving for.

So it shows here that in time indeed Hezekiah did humble himself for the pride of his heart. Whenever you do that in life it's a beautiful thing because you come to see yourself more clearly. You come to understand the dangers more clearly. Actually, if you do what God says, to be more alert, to be on guard, to realize how sick our human nature really is and how much you have to be on guard against it... It's got a lot of people. Tens of thousands of people this has taken to the cleaners around the time of the Apostasy.

So, he humbled himself and the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the wrath of the Eternal did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. See, because if they hadn't it would have come upon them. They would have suffered for that.

So again here, it doesn't fully explain when Hezekiah and the people humbled themselves but as the story is pieced together it becomes clearer that it had to be after visitors had come down from Babylon. So we're interjecting another part of the story here that we're going to throw in here before we quit for today.

So to this point in time what happened after the encounter with confronting the death. So it's important to take a look at this. This is the question. What happened? First, Hezekiah was healed of his illness and God had given him the sign of the sundial going backward by ten degrees. Then Sennacherib was defeated by God when an angel of the Eternal went out and killed the camp of the Assyrians, the 185,000 in his army. It was after this that Hezekiah's heart was lifted up. It becomes clear as you continue in some of the scriptures here. These events had an impact upon him that wasn't good because sometimes we just succumb to our own human nature after all we've gone through.

That's why you can't put yourself in someone else's shoes to be able to judge them for what they have done. You have to be careful in that because you don't know what they have gone through, you don't know how God has worked with them to that point in time, and that can be an exceedingly dangerous thing to do. So we're all unique, we're all different in how God works with us. So again here, don't want to go into anymore.

We're going to look at how some of this came to pass and why this came to pass. First, before we read about what happened concerning Hezekiah's visitors who had come down from Babylon it's important to see what God did before this event. So this is all going to come down to a point in time where we see some visitors come down to visit with the king, to specifically meet with the king.

Let's drop down here to **2 Chronicles 32:31—However...** This is just an insert here. Chronicles is just a summary of some of these events. **However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon**, so these were the visitors. They were some sent down from Babylon. Now, in the story we have Assyria, who came down and took captive the northern ten tribes. Who came down to take Judah? Babylon. So here we are in a story flow of certain things that happened and God didn't allow that to happen until later in time. It was part of God's purpose not to allow it.

So again here, there were those who were sent down, it says, these ambassadors or princes of Babylon **whom they sent to him to enquire about the wonder that was done in the land**. Now, again here, these other nations, especially great nations and powerful nations, they are farther up and they have their focus on other nations. That's the way they were back then. You want to become greater, take some more nations. Anyway, have a great army, have the greatest army,

become more powerful, have more influence in the world. So this is a part of this story about Babylon and what they're looking at long range.

But in the midst of this it's a unique thing it says here, **However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes...** so it's looking back as to what happened, **the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to enquire about the wonder that was done in the land.** What wonder? Sennacherib. You think the other nations didn't know. They've been harassing other nations. They've been conquering other nations all around them, Assyria had been, and now they've had 185,000 of their military disappear in one night. Do you think these things didn't spread throughout the world as much as when the Israelites came out of Egypt and all the nations around there heard about it, and the Egyptian army was destroyed and the Pharaoh was destroyed? These things spread to other regions.

This is a consequence of some of this, of Babylon rising up, see. But notice what it says here: **God withdrew from him, from Hezekiah, in order to test/try him that He might know what was in his heart.** This is powerful.

There are things that God does because He molds and fashions us, the righteous, almighty God, whom we give our lives to at baptism to mold and fashion, to become a part of His family, and there are times that God has done this in people's lives, maybe all at some point in time, to see what we will do with what we've been given. Awesome! What does that mean? It's similar to being cut off from God, from God's spirit, because, basically, in large part that's what it is. It doesn't mean that God leaves us, when we're in the Church, as an example, or for Hezekiah either, it's just that God's going to give him a little space of time, whatever that is, to see what he will do without the encouragement and the help that He would otherwise give through in the inspiration and the help of His holy spirit. Because there are many times in our lives when we go through trials and hardships, there are times when you just feel stronger. There are times when you know the answers more quickly.

But there have probably been times, too, if you've been in for a long period of time, that that hasn't happened as quickly and you have to go through some things to see what you will do. It doesn't mean you have sinned. Sin automatically cuts us off from God's spirit. That's another matter. Now, in this case here it wasn't a matter of sin. God just says He withdrew Himself to find out what was in his heart.

See, how God works with us is a beautiful thing. It's an awesome thing. It doesn't mean that God doesn't know how we might react under certain kinds of circumstances, but literally there are times when we don't know what we're going to do until we come to a certain moment in time. We really don't. There are some things that can happen in our lives that we don't have the answer to as to how we're going to respond until we come to that moment. There are things in our mind, in our being that we have to make a decision on.

I'll give you a perfect example and I'll stop there for the day. You remember the account of the two elders I had come visit one time because I was going to resign? I knew exactly what was going to happen in the church locally and I knew that people then would be looking, as a whole, to the leadership of the Church that would remain behind, because if I resigned they're going to look to some others who had been there because I had just gotten there in the summer and this Apostasy was happening at the end of the year in 1994, and these things were happening. So these elders were told, "I'm going to tell you. You have to make a choice right now because I am resigning tomorrow, and as soon as this goes out people are going to look to you as to what you're going to do. Which way are you going to go? Are you going to go the way that God gave us through Mr. Armstrong - the Sabbath, the holy days, clean and unclean meats, tithing, the laws that God has given to us that we have known - or are you going to follow the way of Mr. Tkach?" I told them, "You know what? If he was here he would tell you the very same thing." If he's going to go that way you had better choose to go this way. So you have a choice before you as to which way you're going to go. Oh, was that a disappointment because they chose to go the other way.

There are times that come in life where we don't know what we're going to do until it hits us. People who went through the Apostasy, in many cases, didn't know what they were going to do until that time came because they'd never had to address something of that nature, whatever it might have been along the way. What are you going to do now? Where is your mind? What is your deep, deep conviction? Why have you been doing this? I can't tell you about that except that you have experienced it fully. And if you've experienced it then you know how you came to some of the choices and decisions you did at various segments along the way and why. And the reality is in so many cases it isn't known until that time, until you're at a point in time where you have to make the choice, and you know what? It reveals what's in your mind then. It reveals indeed what you will do then. This is a process whereby God comes to know us more deeply because it's in the spirit, it's in the mind, it's who you are.

God works with that and molds and fashions that. He did that in Hezekiah's life as He does it in every one of your lives once you're baptized as well in how He does the molding and fashioning. So God, in so many cases, knows at that point in time what we're going to do under certain kinds of circumstances, but there are times when it's not known and it's our choice and God leaves it to us to make the choice. Awesome, to understand that.

With that we'd better quit for today and we'll come back to it next week.