

HEZEKIAH: EXECUTIVE ORDERS, 2CHRON 29:1-11; 2KGS 20:1-11

The Return of the Kings #2

◆**Intro:** We cannot talk about Hezekiah without talking about his dad, Ahaz. Chapter 28 tells us he made cast idols, he sacrificed his own sons to them, he rebuilt “high places” on every hilltop and under every spreading tree. He took all the furniture/ equipment out of the temple and boarded it up! Set up pagan altars at all the street corners in town. Whatever God said not to do, he did it. He lived by the motto “Rules were made to be broken.” and “It’s good to be bad.” and other thoughtlessly clever sayings.

◆Then came Hezekiah. You may have noticed over the years that when the White House changes occupants, the new administration often radically reverses policies of the old. You can often tell a leaders priorities by the executive orders he enacts in his first days of office. Here are some of Hezekiah’s executive orders:

- ◆Reopen the church!

- ◆Re-hire pastors and teachers to come and pray over each room and dedicate every space, one by one, to the service of God Almighty so that worship can take place. (It took 16 consecutive days to do it.)

- ◆Establish Levite Teams (Praise Teams) to sing and play all kinds of instruments that King David has once provided.

- ◆Call for a special Passover Feast/communion service (that by the way, brought so much joy to the congregation that they decided to keep a party going all week).

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- ◆ Tell the people to tithe again to God, (which they did, so much so that they just piled all the giving in “heaps” all summer long (2Chron31:6)!
- ◆ All this, beginning in the first month of the first year Hezekiah took office. I mean, it reads like stories on a news website, doesn't it?
- ◆ Hezekiah's story is clearly a turnaround story. His reign was a ray of hope for God's people. It is recorded in 2Kings and in 2Chronicles as well as in Isaiah's book (his contemporary). In this season of Lent leading up to Easter, Hezekiah is another biblical king that returned Israel to the real King of Heaven. And he's a model for all who follow the God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth. What do his executive orders show us?
- ◆ **1. Put God first in your daily life.** The Sovereign God is by rights, the center of every human life. Hezekiah clearly demonstrates this. His very first action in office is “open up the church!” His very name means “God is his might.” Hezekiah's religion was the central principle of his life and his success.
 - ◆ *2 Kings 18:5-7 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook.*

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◆**A.** To much of humanity, God is a lingering add-on if we feel like it. What about us? Is God an add-on? First comes having fun. Or there's being beautiful, or getting to the Xbox after school, or excelling at baseball, or... Just ask yourself what you spend the most hours of your week, or most of your brain-time on? Some would have to say golf or hunting, or TV sitcoms, or Facebook gets the largest number of hours in my week. Some might say "raising my family" or "doing my job", that's what takes most of my weekly existence. Others might say, "I live for adventure. I work to pay for it. That's all." Then you hear a statement from a preacher that says, "Hey everyone, God is meant to be your biggest priority of your daily life.", and you think -"Well, that's a church staff person talking." But you see, it isn't. It's God's Word talking. It's Israel's history talking. It's the life of Jesus, who changed human history, talking.

◆God did not make you to play a ball game. God did not make you to spend money modeling unique fabrics and fashions. God did not make you to create art. God did not make you to discover new mathematical equations, or balance ledgers. Your purpose is not to farm ground. Or teach children about any of these things. Those might all be things you're good at, or interested in. But they are not your primary purpose. Your purpose is to live life with your Maker. And that's a call for many of us to return.

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◆ Nothing in all of existence comes first before walking with God. It's what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. For Hezekiah, his faith came first. That was foundational to his executive orders.

◆ **B.** What does that look like for us? How do I return to putting that God first?

◆ Well one way to get before the face of God is to get your face in his Word. But we'll save that one for King Josiah's story in two weeks. You'll see why.

◆ There are the classic spiritual disciplines: learning God's word, giving to see his Kingdom come over all the earth, gathering with fellowship with God's family, developing a life of constant prayer (we talk about all of these in Discovering Spiritual Disciplines class). Several of them are in our text. Let's look.

◆ **2. Gather with God's people to worship.** People will often tell you that you don't have to go to worship to be a follower of God, but no serious follower of God thinks that. Sure going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. But if you want to find a hamburger you go to a place like McDonald's. And if you want to find a true follower of God, you'll go to God's house. Anyone serious about God in their life can tell you it a hard road, and it can't be done alone. Why?

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◆A. Because humans have spiritual drift; we need God's family to stay awake to God. Both the writer of Chronicles and the writer of Kings notice and record that King Hezekiah resembles Israel's greatest, King David:

◆He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. (2 Chronicles 29:2)

◆David was a worshiper of God, and as you might know, wrote most of the songs/psalms in the Hebrew scriptures!

◆*Psalms 42:2-4 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ... These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.*

◆ Most of the nation of the northern ten tribes of Israel were dragged off to Assyria in 722, Hezekiah's 6th year as king. So now, for the first time in 200 years, Israel has only one King again, like the time of David. And for the first time in nearly as long, Hezekiah summons all of Israel to worship together.

◆2 Chronicles 30:1,5 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel... It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.

◆**B.** How about you? Have you experienced spiritual drift? Is there a place in your life where you need to hear the executive order to give God the worship he deserves and gather with his

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people? Bear in mind that you don't find the support and power of God's family without time with God's family. Just showing up here for an hour is a start, but spiritual health requires community.

◆ And if you're the leader of your house what kind of executive orders have you laid down for your family when it comes to worshipping God? I've heard parents say, "Oh, Jonny didn't want to come to church with us today." And I think, "Does Jonny run the house? Does Jonny pay his own grocery bill? If not, why is Jonny the one deciding what he does in the family?" No employer asks the employees what they want to do today. Well parents, you are the administration God has put in place to lead your family to the ways of God.

◆ **3. Trust God against the odds.**

◆ **A.** Again Hezekiah resembles King David in that he was small in power compared to the boastful, Goliath-sized army of Sennacherib of Assyria. Goliath said he'd feed David's body to the birds. David said,

◆ *1 Samuel 17:45,47 "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied...All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S,*

◆ Sennacherib made a similar boast, not terribly surprising when you consider his accomplishments. (see map



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of Assyrian Empire)

◆ 2 Kings 18:32-36 "Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him."

◆ King Hezekiah said

◆ 2 Chronicles 32:7-8 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

◆ The biblical record says God sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian troops. Poor Sennacherib, I guess he hadn't paid attention in Sunday School. Even Assyrian inscriptions confirm that Sennacherib did not capture Jerusalem, and that he returned home and was killed by two of his own sons, a direct fulfillment of 2Chron.32:21.

◆ **B.** What about this executive order? Is there a place in your life where you are saying, "I'm sorry, everyone else says this, so I'm not buying God's word on the matter?" Maybe it's "everyone lives together before they're married" so we will, even though all

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studies show this doubles your odds of being divorced. Most of the world seems to assume children should engage in sex as soon as possible. Florida passed a law this month that you couldn't teach about it to 3rd graders and under, and the media is pulling their hair out over it, calling it discrimination! The odds are against truth and morality in so many ways.

◆ The Lord rules in all the affairs of all men/women. This is explicitly clear in Hezekiah's story and throughout the Bible.

◆ *Acts 17:26-27 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.*

◆ Is there anyplace in your culture where you need to stand up and speak the truth even though the odds of the culture are flowing the other way? What about the battle for women's sports going on now? Or battle over the legality of abortion? Or our open borders? Or the war in Ukraine? Or the fact that USA Today named a MAN the "Woman of the Year"? I know its easy to think, "Why should I contact my Senator's office? What difference will it make if I say anything?" Or "Why should I send a few hundred dollars to Ukrainian relief funds? How do I even know it'll get there?" Maybe like David you just need to sling a little stone and let God do the rest.

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◆**4. Put your wealth where your witness is.** Spend your wealth on what you believe in. It's another way of putting God first. And it's another way of "returning" to the King.

◆2 Chronicles 31:4-6 [Hezekiah] ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD. As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps.

◆ The prophet Malachi records this same teaching.

◆*Malachi 3:7-10 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. **Return** to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' ..."In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.*

◆B. How about you? Maybe God is calling you to believe in him for real, and prove it by funding his Kingdom on this earth. Maybe it's time for you to stop tipping God a dollar or two in the offering basket when you tip the waitress 20% and think nothing of it.

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◆ **Conclusion:** You can tell a lot about an administration by the executive orders it gives and the changes it makes when in power. Hezekiah's reforms were right in the eyes of the Lord and it made him a king like his forefather David. But there remains another King who also cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem.

Pictured already in Hezekiah, he too was consumed with "zeal for the Lord's house." He was also from the line of David. And this King also re-instituted the Passover saying that from then on, it was about him. That he was the sacrifice that causes the Angel of Death to pass you over. His name is Jesus, and though the Kings of Israel have died and been buried, this King is still alive to this very day. And you can know him. And he has promised to return to save all who believe on his name.