

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 CHRONICLES 27-32

Here are three words you've probably never heard before – *ruckman*, *ruck rover*, and *rover*. They're associated with a particular sport... *Any guesses?*

Let me give you a clue... *Tony Liberatore*.

The answer... **Ruckman**, **ruck rover**, and **rover** are positions in a sport called **Australian Rules Football... Tony Liberatore** was one of the most famous rovers of all time. He was a little guy, but extremely tough. He now coaches in the league.

Ruckman, ruck rover, and rover are individual players within a category of positions known as "**followers**". They're called "*followers*" because they roam the field following the ball - rather than playing in a set spot. *Followers* cover more ground than any other players on the team. Their role is strategic.

In Australian Rules Football it's correct to say, "**If you don't have good followers you're sure to have a lousy team.**" And the same is true in most of life's ventures.

As we mentioned this morning, this is especially true in the church.

Leaders receive too much credit in the up times - and too much blame in the down times. Any group will suffer defeat without a strong line-up of followers.

This was also true in Judah during the reign of King Jotham.

Chapter 27, “Jotham was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok.

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the temple of the LORD).

But still the people acted corruptly.” Jotham was a good and godly king. He modeled his father Uzziah’s successes – and avoided his mistakes. Here was a man who was on-the-ball, but the people under him were poor followers.

“He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD, and he built extensively on the wall of Ophel.” The Upper Gate connected the king’s palace with the Temple.

Whenever a king took interest in this connection it was a positive sign. It revealed a revival in his heart - a desire to worship and seek the Lord.

Verses 4-5 talk about the cities and forts he built – and his victory over Ammon.

Verse 6 “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.” I’ve also experienced the strength that comes when you plan and prepare your ways before the Lord. Prior to acting on a task or plan take it to God - wait on Him – seek His direction, and wisdom, and power. Hey, make a habit of preparing all your ways before the Lord and you too will become mighty.

“Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel

and Judah. He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. So Jotham rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.” *Uzziah* was a good king. *Jotham* was a better king. *Ahaz* was a snake!

Chapter 28 opens with a list of his crimes. “Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.”

How’s that for an introduction – *Baal worship - Molech worship which involved child sacrifice - and the proliferation of idols all over the nation of Judah*. Idols were as common as acorns – you could find one under every green tree.

“Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought them to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter.

For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed 120,000 in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, Azrikam the officer over the house, and Elkanah who was second to the king.

And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000 women, sons, and daughters; and they also took away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria." Israel intended to sell Judah's women and children as slaves. Ahaz' reign was a disaster for the southern kingdom.

Imagine 200,000 women, sons, and daughters taken from their homes and husbands. This ripped apart families. This broke the heart of the nation.

Verse 9 "But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out before the army that came to Samaria, and said to them: "Look, because the LORD God of your fathers was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand; but you have killed them in a rage that reaches up to heaven." *Our sin impacts not only our families and friends, but it reaches all the way to heaven.*

And now you propose to force the children of Judah and Jerusalem to be your male and female slaves; but are you not also guilty before the LORD your God?

Now hear me, therefore, and return the captives, whom you have taken captive from your brethren, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you." Both Israel and Judah was God's people – and Israel was guilty of sins every bit as vile as those for which Judah was being judged. God would not allow Israel to be cruel...

“Then some of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah... Berechiah... Jehizkiah... and Amasa... stood up against those who came from the war, and said to them, "You shall not bring the captives here, for we already have offended the LORD. You intend to add to our sins and to our guilt; for our guilt is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." They heeded God's Word through Oded.

“So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the leaders and all the assembly.” Here's an example of *good followership*. Four Ephraimites stand up and demand that the people obey the Lord... and the soldiers back down.

“Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them; and they let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys. So they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.”

Husbands and wives were reunited. Families restored. I'm sure there was rejoicing in the streets of Jerusalem – and Oded was a very popular man.

Verse 16 “At the same time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him.”

It was during this time that the Prophet Isaiah met King Ahaz on the highway to the Fuller's Field. He came to comfort him, and restore hope to Jerusalem.

Israel and Syria will be as “two stubs of smoking firebrands”. He calls them “*cigarette butts*”. They’re more smoke than fire. God will protect His people.

Isaiah even offers Ahaz a sign from God. He tells him to ask for something so outlandish it would have to be from God. Ahaz refuses, so Isaiah tells him God will give him a sign. Isaiah 7:14, “The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

The virgin birth of Jesus was actually a sign to Ahaz of God’s protection.

Jesus won’t be born for another 730 years, but the promise and manner of His birth was a sign directed toward Ahaz. Isaiah goes on to say that Israel and Syria will both fall before this child reaches adulthood - which indeed was true. In a few years the rising Assyrian power will sack the capitols of both Syria and Israel.

The part of the sign relevant to the political situation at the time of Ahaz was not the manner of Immanuel’s birth, but His introduction to the nation. Isaiah 8 predicts that Immanuel will stretch out His wings and cover the land of Judah, and break the enemy to pieces. Judah will be delivered by “God is with us...”

This Immanuel - the Son who will be virgin born - is the Warrior who delivers Judah in the days of Ahaz’ son Hezekiah... In chapter 32 we’ll see him at work.

But here's the point... how does the wicked Ahaz respond to God's promise of deliverance? He ignores it and tried to buy the protection of the Assyrians.

Verse 17, "For again the Edomites had come, attacked Judah, and carried away captives. The Philistines also invaded the lowland of the South of Judah..." And he names the cities... *But Ahaz put more trust in Assyria than in God.*

Verse 19 "For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD."

Sadly Ahaz was consistent. He was "continually unfaithful."

Ahaz encouraged moral decline among God's people. The bar was lowered. The Law of Moses was ignored and God's standards of morality were violated.

Tragically, Ahaz was not the last ruler to "encouraged moral decline." It would not be difficult to name a few modern examples - and in our own country...

"Also Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him." Rather than an ally, the Assyrians became a thorn and threat.

Assyria was on the warpath. They were a lean, mean fighting machine and they were gobbling up kingdoms east to west... Including Syria and Israel...

"For Ahaz took part of the treasures from the house of the LORD, from the house of the king, and from the leaders, and he gave it to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him."

Rather than trust God, Ahaz used the Temple's holy articles to

strike a deal with Assyria - but Assyria struck back and distressed him.

Strike a deal with the world, and the world will strike back.

“Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the LORD.” He was “continually unfaithful”... and now “increasingly unfaithful”.

The older he got – the worse he got. Ahaz was like a piece of meat in the back of the refrigerator he spoiled, then soured, then gave off a foul odor, then stunk.

Compromise is a cancer. It grows and metastasizes and gets worse.

“This is that King Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." Recall Isaiah's prophecy of Syria's destruction. Ahaz ignored God's word and worshipped the Syrian idols.

Notice the end of verse 23 “But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.”

“So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem...” He closed down the Temple.

Ahaz locked the doors and disconnected the utilities on the one place where God desired to be worshipped. “And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his

fathers.” Ahaz was a blight on the nation of Judah – a blatant blasphemer.

“Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”

Here’s the good news... Hezekiah the son rebels against his father and serves the Lord. He’s one of Judah’s godliest kings and brightest lights.

It’s interesting Jotham was a godly king who had a wicked son, Ahaz. The evil Ahaz has a good son, Hezekiah. A godly Hezekiah sires the most ungodly king in Judah’s history, Manasseh. Manasseh has a godly grandson named Josiah...

It doesn’t always make sense. Regardless of a kid’s parents, and the training they provide, kids still have a mind of their own, and will make their own choices.

As parents we need to raise our kids the best we can - *then pray, pray, pray!*

Chapter 29, “Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years old, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah.

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of

the house of the LORD and repaired them.” He reopens the Temple.

“Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.”

“Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes.

For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense."

Hezekiah calls the nation – the people and its priests - back to the Lord.

Verses 12-14 list the priests who respond to the king’s plea... They enter the Temple, clean out the debris, and ready it for worship. It takes them 8 days.

Verse 18 “Then they went in to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offerings with all its articles, and the table of the showbread with all its articles. Moreover all the articles which King Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in his transgression we have prepared and sanctified; and there they are, before the altar of the LORD."

“Then King Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. And they brought 7 bulls, 7 rams, 7 lambs, and 7 male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah.”

The next few verses describe the offering of Hezekiah's sacrifices.

Verse 25, “And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.”

The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel.”
Sacrifice and song got together. *Sacrifice makes us right with God. Praise puts us in rhythm with God.*

“So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering

was finished. And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped.”

Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

Notice Hezekiah had them sing the psalms – songs right out of the Bible. I love the songs we do that come straight from Scripture. We’re singing God’s lyrics.

Verse 31 “Then Hezekiah answered and said, “Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD.” We’re given the number of the animals to be offered...

Hundreds of bulls, thousands of sheep... *but there was a problem...*

Verse 34 “But the priests were too few, so that they could not skin all the burnt offerings; therefore their brethren the Levites helped them until the work was ended and until the other priests had sanctified themselves, for the Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests...”

Notice a spiritual principle here... It’s not a Levite’s place to offer a sacrifice, but the years of spiritual attrition had depleted the priesthood. Until more priests are ready to serve the Levites have to pinch-hit and help out...

This is why God used Deborah to lead Israel against Midian. God ordains male leadership among His people, but when there's a shortage of ready men He uses a godly woman. God will place a pinch-hitter in the line-up to seize an opportunity.

The last line of verse 35 tells us, “So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.” God doesn't choose to move when we're ready. We need to always be ready when God chooses to move.

Here God moves “suddenly”. Thankfully, the people were quick to obey.

Chapter 30 “And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel.” The Passover was supposed to be annual, but it had been neglected for some time.

“For the king and his leaders and all the congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the 2nd month.” The prescribed time was the 1st month.

But “they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly.

“So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner.” Notice the invitation is sent to the northern kingdom as well as Judah.

Around this time the northern kingdom of Israel and Samaria were sacked by the Assyrians. This invitation probably went out to the remnant left in the land.

“Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: “Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.” Hezekiah offers the displaced northerners an amnesty and refuge.

“And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see.

Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.”

Turn from the calves of Jeroboam and return to Jehovah and the Temple.

“For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the

LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him." This is a great kindness shown by Hezekiah.

A few years earlier in the days of Ahaz Israel killed 120,000 men of Judah, and plunged 200,000 wives and children into slavery. Hezekiah could've been bitter. When Assyria attacked he could've said, "Well, they got what they deserved."

Instead he offers refuge, and an invitation to return to the true worship of God.

Verse 10... "So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them." Though defeated they remained unbowed and unrepentant...

"Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." This is what happens whenever we share the Gospel – some laugh and mock, but other folks humble themselves and come to God.

"Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD."

Verse 13 tells us this was a great Passover that attracted huge crowds to Jerusalem. It was a wonderful occasion, but it could've been derailed...

A problem arises with the northern worshippers. Verse 18, "For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed

themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written.

But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people." The people either lacked the knowledge or the time to purify themselves properly. But neither God nor Hezekiah wanted to frustrate their repentance because of a technicality.

These guys weren't exactly kosher, but God let them participate anyway...

This is grace in action. God allows people who don't necessarily have it all together still participate in His work. He makes room for *works-in-progress*. He fans the flame of revival in our hearts. He doesn't snuff it out on a technicality.

Verses 21-25 tell us the Passover was kept with "great gladness". It must've been a wonderful 7 days for the people extended it another 7 days. It lasted two weeks. They "praised the Lord day by day" – singing and playing instruments.

Verse 26 "So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven."

Chapter 31, “Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars - from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh - until they had utterly destroyed them all.”

Notice love for God produces a hatred for sin. They tore down their idols.

After the Passover, Hezekiah organizes the priests... Verse 3 “The king also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD.”

Note **Hezekiah puts his money where his mouth is...** He supplies the sacrifices with money from his own coffers.... *Then he commands the nation to give...*

“Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD. As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.

And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps.” The tithes were collected in heaps!

Here's how you know this was a true revival – **it impacted their wallets**. True devotion to God reaches below your mind – and your heart – to your wallet.

In the Medieval times armies were baptized before they went to battle. But as the soldiers were put under the water they kept their sword hand lifted in the air.

In other words, they were giving to God *almost all...* they were still reserving the right to use the sword at their own discretion. Christians today do the same with their wallet. They give God everything except their finances.

It's as if they're baptized with their wallet in the air... The revival in Hezekiah's day proves that true devotion to God will grab my wallet as well as my heart.

“In the 3rd month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the 7th month.” It took four months to collect the tithes. **“When Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel.**

Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance."

“Now Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them. Then they

faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them...

And he lists those who helped. In verse 14 a man named Kore was in charge of distribution. And notice in verse 15 he gave “to the great as well as the small.”

There was no prejudice or favoritism in their allotment of food to the priests and Levites. Everyone properly registered were served. Verse 16-19 provides details.

Verse 20 sums it up, “Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.”

Chapter 32 “After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself.” The Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser sacked Damascus in 732 BC. His successor, Shalmaneser defeated Samaria 10 years later in 722 BC. The Assyrian juggernaut is advancing westward and Jerusalem is next in line to fall.

The year is now 701 BC and Sennacherib’s army is camped outside the walls. This is Hezekiah’s worst nightmare. What he’s feared as finally come upon him.

“And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water

from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him.” Jerusalem’s water supply was the Gihon spring – which was outside the walls of the city. People left the protection of the walls to get water.

Hezekiah built walls around the spring and a tunnel to run water inside the city walls to the pool of Siloam. Jerusalem would have water in the event of a siege.

On our last trip to Jerusalem we saw this spring and Hezekiah’s tunnel. It’s an active archeological dig. They’ve unearthed tools in the area. This is an amazing feat of ancient construction – the tunnel is 1,750 feet long - cut through solid rock.

“Thus many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and built another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo (the watchtower) in the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance.” Hezekiah was preparing the city and its people for battle.

“Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." Judah has a secret weapon. Hezekiah has spiritual

reinforcements the King of Assyria and his generals know nothing about.

And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Verse 9 “After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem (but he and all the forces with him laid siege against Lachish), to Hezekiah king of Judah, and to all Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria: 'In what do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem?'"

This was a common Assyrian strategy – the Assyrian army fights against Lachish while messengers try to intimidate Jerusalem into surrender.

Like the Nazis in WW2, Assyria specialized in propaganda and intimidation.

Does not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves over to die by famine and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria"? Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, "You shall worship before one altar and burn incense on it"?" He's badgering the Jews to surrender.

Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way able to deliver their lands out of my hand? Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my

hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand?" The Assyrians were religious people.

When they went to battle it was not us versus them – it was our gods against their gods. And yes, they'd defeated all the gods of all the nations they'd attacked.

But they never considered that they'd yet to run across the one, true God?

The intimidation continues. "Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or persuade you like this, and do not believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?" "

The Assyrians write doubt-filled letters that question Hezekiah and blaspheme God. They even shout these taunts in Hebrew hoping to scare the common folk.

Verse 19 "They spoke against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth - the work of men's hands." They treated God as an idol.

I love Hezekiah's response to the enemy's taunts. He calls up his friend Isaiah and they pray! The Jews go to bed that night on the brink of annihilation, but they wake up the next morning to one of the most stunning miracles in all the Bible...

"Now because of this King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven. Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria."

2 Kings 19:35 gives this report, “And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000, and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead.”

Understand 185,000 is the population of Columbus, GA.

The authors of Chronicles and Kings attributed the victory to “the angel (or messenger) of the LORD.” But Isaiah 7-9 is more specific. Isaiah says that the enemy was defeated by *Immanuel* – the child that was a sign to Ahaz.

Hey, Jesus in His pre-incarnate state drew His sword and slaughtered the Assyrians. This is why it blew the minds of Mary and Joseph when the angel identified their baby as “Immanuel”. Heaven’s warrior had become an infant.

Assyria suffered a crushing defeat, and its big-mouthed king, Sennacherib went home embarrassed. Hey, #5 Michigan had just lost to I-AA Appalachian State.

Verse 21 tells us, “So he returned shamefaced to his own land.”

“And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there.” Ask the Michigan coach, Lloyd Carr if he felt safe among his own supporters after the upset lost to lowly Appalachian St.

“Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in

the sight of all nations thereafter.” Hezekiah was the king who defeated mighty Assyria.

Hezekiah got the notoriety, but the praise belonged to Immanuel.

“In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. 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.” In his old age, Hezekiah got proud.

He read one too many of his press clippings. “Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.” The king’s pride brought on a bout with an illness. Hezekiah was about to die. He prayed and asked God to extend his life. The Lord gave him 15 additional years.

“Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. The next few verses mention his *treasures* and his *tunnel*. Verse 30 tells us, “Hezekiah prospered in all his works.”

“However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.”

When God extended Hezekiah’s life He caused the shadow on the sundial to reverse 10 degrees. God added 45 minutes to a day. It was a sign. And it was an astronomical phenomena noted by the astrologers in Babel. They dispatch

a team to research its cause. And when they arrive in Jerusalem, Hezekiah gives them a royal tour. The king foolishly puts his treasure on display for the foreigners to see.

It was like showing a pit bull the meat locker. Later, when Babylon rises to power and plunders the nations, they set their sights on Judah's treasure.

“The rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.”