

AUGUST 2

2 Chronicles 32:1-33:13

These are two chapters full of observations and lots to think about. Basically we'll see Hezekiah's greatest challenge and God's amazing deliverance. Hezekiah will be shaken and will stumble. Manasseh will royally ruin Judah; he will be humbled, repent and be restored. It is all quite an adventure and it all happens today.

2 Chronicles 32

Vs. 1-8 A couple of things are of note here that were not covered in 2 Kings 18. First, Hezekiah hid all the streams around Jerusalem and created a tunnel under the city, and was able to draw water from it during the siege. Hezekiah's tunnel was an engineering feat; because they began at opposite sides of the mountain on which Jerusalem is built, tunneling about 1700 feet through rock and met in the middle under the city. Second, vs. 7 and 8 show that Hezekiah gave a lot of leadership in preparation for the coming of the Assyrian army. He strengthened them and gave them confidence. Although they prepared, they knew their real hope was in the Lord.

Vs. 9-15 Some of this we've read; some is summary, and some is brand new. Hezekiah's spiritual leadership was really under fire in what was said. It is interesting that Sennacherib thought that Hezekiah had given the people confidence in his leadership and the preparations. Hezekiah had given them confidence in the Lord. Verse 15 was the height of arrogance. I'll bet he remembered these words.

Vs. 16-19 Although this is in summary form, Ezra is trying to show his readers that being scorned for following God was nothing new. The returnees were ridiculed and encouraged to abandon the rebuilding of the temple.

Vs. 20-23 What is interesting to me is that it mentions that Isaiah also prayed and cried out to God. We didn't see that in 2 Kings. Notice that both God and Hezekiah were honored by the surrounding nations.

Vs. 24-33 This is also in summary form, although some significant stuff is added by Ezra. You might want to read the account of this in 2 Kings 20 to compare.

V. 31 Notice that the envoy from Babylon came because of the sign, that is, the sun going back on the sundial. It is interesting that they knew where to come and inquire, and it is interesting that Hezekiah showed off the glory of Israel more than he did the glory of God.

It seems that Hezekiah was shaken by the prospect of an early death. He was only 39. He felt like he deserved more. After he was given the additional 15 years, he became proud about his reputation and flaunted all the Lord had given him, as if it were his doing. This pride was already in place when Hezekiah acted proud before the envoy from Babylon. Verse 31 is a very scary commentary on what happened here. I think the Lord does this to us too; and in my case, when it happens, it probably doesn't show the kind of stuff that is glorifying to God. It is hard to say when God rebuked Hezekiah. It might have been before the visitors from Babylon, but Kings and Chronicles both mention the envoy, so maybe this was when Isaiah spoke and told him that everything the envoy saw would someday become theirs.

When you see this all in the perspective of time and the drama on earth, you wonder if it was worth it. Hezekiah, even with 15 more years, only lived to be 54. And his last 15 years were a disaster in his relationship with God. Do we really consider it "death" and the loss of everything good to go to be with God and get off this rotting rock? Even when Isaiah came with God's rebuke, Hezekiah's only thought was, "At least there will be peace during my life," as we read in 2 Kings 20. And with this thought and his newly found pride, Hezekiah decided to "slide for home," and the next generation of Israel was lost. The next godly king, Josiah, will hear the same

message from God (judgment is coming, but you will have peace); and his response to that news will be used to save Israel.

2 Chronicles 33

Vs. 1-9 Manasseh was a piece of work. He was the child born in those extra 15 years that God gave Hezekiah. I assume that Hezekiah had other sons who could have reigned. This was the son then that Hezekiah selected to continue his legacy. Manasseh was the king who reigned the longest, 55 years, and he was the worst king either kingdom, north or south, had ever known. God vowed to bring punishment against Judah because of this guy.

Notice the references to David. The promise to David is now in conflict with the desecration of the temple and Jerusalem. Ezra will show that in spite of the great evil of this man, God would still hold true to the promise to Abraham, David and Israel.

V. 10 Not only did they pay no attention to those sent by God, but they killed them. What brought irrevocable judgment against Judah was that Manasseh filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. (2 Kings 21:16 and 24:4) Manasseh ruled for 55 years by killing the competition and silencing all the servants of the Lord. Tradition has it that Manasseh sawed Isaiah in two.

Vs. 11-13 I wish they hadn't ended this portion here, so read ahead to v. 20. This is completely new information given to us from Ezra and the Spirit. It is ironic that though captured by Assyria, Manasseh was led to and imprisoned in Babylon. Manasseh would be responsible for Judah being taken there in exile. Notice too that they captured him with hooks. The Assyrians had a brutal way of leading people captive. They would put a hook through the flesh of the chest (or in the nose) and connect it by a rope to a wagon or horse. This not only struck fear into the people who saw what Assyria did to those who opposed them, but it motivated the person who was "hooked" up, to keep up. Also, all the people of other lands would see these processions of prisoners and decide they didn't want that to happen to them.

If you know the story here, v. 13 has to be one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. Who says God doesn't show grace and love in the Old Testament? Who says there is no hope for those who have fallen the deepest? Ezra is showing that the returned nation can find grace and restoration. He is also showing that those who returned and fell into sin could turn to the Lord and find forgiveness.

For us in the harvest, we need to remember that we cannot "convince" people to come to Christ or follow Him in the harvest. Only God can humble a heart. It is enough for us to know that even the worst person can come to Christ and receive forgiveness, even in the 11th hour.

Romans 15:23-16:7

Romans 15:23-33

Vs. 22-23 So the reason that Paul never visited was that he was being urged on by the Spirit to complete his mission in Asia Minor.

V. 24 No one knows if Paul ever went to Spain.

V. 25 This is the collection mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16.

Vs. 26-27 Notice that Paul was very much focused on the interaction between God's plan for the Jews and His plan for the Gentiles. Salvation was from the Jews, and the Gentiles were allowed to become partakers.

Vs. 28-29 These were Paul's plans, but we'll see in v. 32 (also Rom. 1:10) that there was an "if God wills," attached to this.

Vs. 30-33 Paul appealed to them for their prayers, knowing that he was walking into danger. In fact, this prayer was answered with a "sort of." We've read Acts and know that Paul was arrested

in Jerusalem and sat under house arrest for the next 4-5 years. God had another plan for Paul not envisioned in this prayer. However, Paul did make it to Rome and was there in peace with freedom to preach.

Romans 16:1-7

Vs. 1-2 The word *servant* is the word deaconess. Cenchreae was a port suburb of Corinth. Phoebe was probably on her way to Rome to do something for her church, maybe to extend some kind of aid to a relative of someone in the church in Corinth. It is suggested that when Paul found out she was heading to Rome, he “whipped off” this letter and sent it with her to save postage. ☺

Vs. 3-4 This couple was very close to Paul. They were not just friends and very devoted workers, but they were well known, sort of like heroes of the early church. If there were action figures for the people in Acts, there would be one for Prisca and one for Aquila. It is quite an honor for Paul to say that all the churches of the Gentiles were thankful for them. In Acts 18 we met P&A after all the Jews got kicked out of Rome. By divine appointment and displacement, they met Paul in Corinth and we see them again in Ephesus. Apparently they did some traveling with Paul. What is interesting here is that they were now back in Rome.

V. 5 Did you know this guy was the first convert in Asia?

V. 7 Apparently these guys were relatives of Paul who were believers before he was.

Tomorrow we get some more names, a great conclusion, and you will have finished Romans. When's the last time that happened?

Psalm 25:16-22

This is like a summary of the psalm. It is interesting to me that all of the sweat and fear and tears and hope and love and yearning are mixed together by God to help us know and understand Him.

Vs. 16-18 It is interesting that David couldn't calm his own heart. He knew that only the Lord could give him the peace and rest he sought. Part of this was giving David a sense of being forgiven for his fears and lying. Remember that when David first ran from Saul, he acted pretty badly. He lied to the priests, which resulted in the death of the priests and their families; and David went to Gath seeking refuge and had to act crazy to get out of it. These were not David's finest moments. His own efforts didn't bring him peace. David needed peace, knowing that God would continually rescue him.

Vs. 19-21 It is hard to depend on the Lord when the threat is very real and physical. God doesn't always seem physical and present. In danger, if it came down to relying on God's invisible presence or grabbing a baseball bat, most people would go for the Louisville Slugger. Yet David's hope was in the Lord, and he was willing to be looked upon as a fool.

V. 22 I think that David saw all of the events around him as not only pertaining to Israel, but as a part of Israel's troubles. But through the Son of David, all of David's shame will be put to rest and Israel will be established.

Proverbs 20:16-18

Vs. 16 and 17 are actions with regrets that did not come from v. 18, wise counsel.