

**The Reunited Kingdom, part 9
(2 Chronicles 29:1–36:23)**

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**The Reign of Hezekiah, part 9: Hezekiah's Inconsistencies during the
Assyrian Invasion, part 3: Hezekiah's Inconsistent Pride;
Hezekiah's Inconsistent Alliance; Closure of Hezekiah's Reign
(2 Chronicles 32:24-33)**

Hezekiah's Inconsistent Pride (32:24-26)

The Chronicler's second look at the Sennacherib invasion involves another example of inconsistency in Hezekiah's faith. Sometime during the troubles with Assyria, Hezekiah became ill and received a miraculous healing. Instead of humbling himself in gratitude, however, Hezekiah became proud and incurred divine anger. Nevertheless, Hezekiah repented of this pride and finally received God's blessing.

Comparison of 32:24-36 with 2 Kgs 20:1-11 (Isa 38:1-22)

The Chronicler's version of Hezekiah's sickness and healing both simplifies and complicates the account of Kings. The following figure displays the relation between the records (see figure 56).

A cursory comparison of these two accounts reveals two kinds of variations between Chronicles and Kings. In the first portion of his record (32:24) the Chronicler abbreviated Kings by omitting Isaiah's oracle of judgment against the king (20:1b). He also severely abbreviated Hezekiah's prayer and Isaiah's response (20:2-8). Moreover, he shortened the discussion between Isaiah and the king concerning God's sign (20:9-11). This abbreviated style accords with the other episodes within this half of Hezekiah's reign (32:1-3). By comparison with Kings, the Chronicler softened Hezekiah's inconsistencies in each of the episodes to avoid a strongly negative appraisal. The Chronicler's chief interest in this material appears in his addition to Kings (32:25-26b). Hezekiah became full of pride after his healing, but his repentance led again to blessings from God.

Structure of 32:24-26

This episode consists of three brief scenarios. Each scenario is initiated by Hezekiah's action and closes with an act of God (see figure 53). Hezekiah began with a dramatic experience of God's mercy (32:24). He incurred the wrath of the Lord (32:25), but finally received the mercy of God again (32:26).

2 Chr		2 Kgs
32:24a	Hezekiah Becomes Sick (abbreviated)	20:1
32:24b	Hezekiah Prays (severely abbreviated)	20:2-8
32:24c	God Answers Hezekiah (abbreviated)	20:9-11
32:25-26	Hezekiah's Pride, Repentance and Blessing (added)	-----

Comparison of 2 Chr 32:24-30 and 2 Kgs 20:1-11 (figure 56)

Hezekiah's Blessing (32:24)

The Chronicler followed 2 Kgs 20:1 and introduced this episode of Hezekiah's sickness with the phrase **in those days** (32:24). This temporal reference indicates that Hezekiah's sickness occurred during the Sennacherib invasion reported in the previous chapter. The fuller account of Kings makes this chronological orientation plain. Isaiah responded to Hezekiah's prayer saying, "[God] will add fifteen years to your life... and ... will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria" (2 Kgs 20:5-6). The healing of the king took place while Hezekiah was under the Assyrian threat before the deliverance of city. For this reason, it would be appropriate to translate the verbs of this section of Chronicles in the past perfect ("In those days Hezekiah *had* become ill ... *had* come to the point of death ... *had* prayed ... etc.).

Hezekiah had become sick **to the point of death** (32:24). The reason for this sickness is not altogether clear, but 2 Kgs 20:1-11 indicates that it was the judgment of God against Hezekiah. Such a perspective on illness accords with the Chronicler's theology as well (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*). Perhaps, Hezekiah's illness resulted from his infidelity in preparation for war (see 32:1-31). If so, his sickness probably contributed to his change of heart. Whatever the case, Hezekiah had **prayed to the Lord** and God had provided a **miraculous sign**

indicating that his healing and the deliverance of the city would occur (32:24 see 2 Kgs 20:8-11). As such, Hezekiah's healing demonstrated that Solomon's hopes for the temple as a place of prayer were realized in Hezekiah's life for a second time (see 6:28-31; 32:20-21; see also *Introduction: 17 Prayer*).

Hezekiah's Judgment (32:25)

Having abbreviated the record of Kings in 32:24, the Chronicler now added information not found in Kings. Once Hezekiah had been healed he **did not respond to the kindness shown him** with humility and gratitude (32:25). Instead, his **heart was proud** (32:25). Ingratitude entered Hezekiah's heart following a time of blessing. (For the Chronicler's warning against permitting blessings to lead to infidelity see comments on 1 Chr 5:24.) The Chronicler focused on the heart of the king as he did in many passages (see *Introduction: 16 Motivations*). In this case, however, the king's heart was full of pride. As a result of Hezekiah's arrogance, **the Lord's wrath** came on the king and **Judah and Jerusalem** (32:25). The Chronicler's notice that divine wrath was against **Judah and Jerusalem** (32:25) may be an oblique reference to Sennacherib's turn toward Jerusalem (see 31:9). If so, Sennacherib's success at Lachish may have occurred in part because of Hezekiah's ingratitude for his healing. Such a view supports the earlier suggestion that Hezekiah's speech was not sincere (see 31:2-8). At any rate, Hezekiah was full of pride as he reflected on his healing and this ingratitude brought the city under the judgment of God. For other examples of pride as the cause of sin see 25:18; 26:16; 32:26.

Hezekiah's Blessing (32:26)

As the wrath of God became evident, Hezekiah came to his senses and **repented of the pride of his heart** (32:26; see 32:25). Moreover, the Chronicler noted that similar repentance took place among **the people of Jerusalem** as well (32:26). Apparently, Hezekiah's healing had engendered pride in both the king and the people. Once again, the Chronicler's concern with the devotion of the inner person is evident (see *Introduction: 16 Motivations*).

The Hebrew word translated **repented** in the NIV may be translated "humbled himself" (NRS, NKJ). It is the same term translated "humble" in many places in Chronicles (e.g. 7:14; 12:6,7). Humility was one way in which the Chronicler taught that God's people could avoid judgment and receive God's blessing (see *Introduction: 18 Humility*).

As expected in Chronicles, when the king and people humbled themselves before God, **the Lord's wrath did not come upon them** (32:26). The city of Jerusalem was delivered from Sennacherib. Yet, the Chronicler quickly noted that Jerusalem's deliverance from wrath was not permanent. It did not **come upon them during the days of Hezekiah** (32:26). The account of Kings explains this matter more fully (2 Kgs 20:12-19; see also 2 Chr 32:31). Sometime after his healing, Hezekiah sought to make an alliance with Babylon against Assyria. Isaiah responded to this infidelity by saying that a future generation would see the treasures of Jerusalem carried to Babylon. Despite this

undercurrent of future doom, Hezekiah and Jerusalem were delivered from the judgment of God in the Sennacherib invasion.

Once again, the Chronicler offered hope to his post-exilic readers. In many respects, the post-exilic community faced a situation very similar to Hezekiah's circumstance. God had displayed miraculous power in response to their prayers for deliverance from exile, but they had taken this grace as an opportunity for ingratitude by refusing to follow the ways of God. This episode of Hezekiah's life offered them the hope that judgment did not necessarily follow such failure. Even the proud of the post-exilic community could avoid the wrath of God, if they would humble themselves as Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem had in the past.

Hezekiah's Inconsistent Alliance (32:27-31)

The third episode of Hezekiah's inconsistency during the Assyrian crisis follows a similar pattern to its predecessor. The Chronicler offered an elaborate description of Hezekiah's blessings and success only to follow it with a brief reminder of the king's failure.

Comparison of 32:27-31 with 2 Kgs 20:12-19

This portion of Chronicles compares to Kings in two ways. First, the Chronicler added 32:27-30. These verses consist of a list of successes Hezekiah experienced which are not mentioned in Kings. Second, in 32:31 the Chronicler briefly alluded to the visit of emissaries from Babylon recorded in 2 Kgs 20:12-19. Apparently, the Chronicler assumed his post-exilic readers knew this story and his allusion would suffice to make his point.

The chronological framework of this passage is ambiguous as it stands in Chronicles. At first glance, it would appear that the Chronicler spoke of a time after the Sennacherib invasion. It is more likely, however, that the Chronicler assumed that his readers knew the chronology from the book of Kings.

Several factors place these events during the Sennacherib invasion. 1) 2 Kgs 20:12 introduces the visit of Babylonian emissaries with the notice that it occurred "at that time..." This temporal reference corresponds to **in those days** in 32:24 (// 2 Kgs 20:1) and places this event squarely in the days of the Sennacherib invasion. 2) Moreover, both Kings and Chronicles indicate that the Babylonians came to inquire about Hezekiah's healing (32:31; 2 Kgs 20:12). His healing also occurred during the Sennacherib campaign. 3) The Chronicler already associated Isaiah's threat of Babylonian captivity with these events (2 Kgs 20:16-19) and with Hezekiah's humility after his pride (32:26). As a result, it is best to understand this material as a temporal regression offering yet another description of events that took place during the Assyrian crisis. For this reason, it is appropriate once again to translate the verbs in this section as past perfects ("Hezekiah *had* acquired very great riches ... he *had* made ... he *had* also made ... etc.).

Structure of 32:27-31

This section consists of two main parts (see figure 53). The first portion of this material consists of a series of three reports and a summary (32:27-30). The final verse stands in contrast, reminding the readers of another of the king's failures during the Sennacherib invasion (32:31).

Hezekiah's Successes (32:27-30)

As noted above, the Chronicler regressed temporally to set the stage for another example of Hezekiah's inconsistency during the Sennacherib invasion. After re-establishing the temple (see 29:3-31:21), God blessed Hezekiah in many ways. Hezekiah had acquired **very great riches and honor** (32:27a). He had also engaged in an assortment of building projects to contain his wealth: **treasuries** (32:27), **storehouses** for agricultural surpluses, **stalls** for livestock (32:28) as well as **villages** (32:29). To form an inclusio around these accomplishments, the Chronicler explained that **God had given him very great riches** (32:29b see 32:27). After his work with the temple, Hezekiah reached heights of prosperity. These reports of Hezekiah's riches aligned him once again with the ideal reigns of David and Solomon (see *Introduction: 26) Prosperity and Poverty*).

The Chronicler also noted Hezekiah's well-known water system (32:30). He had **blocked ... the spring and channeled the water** across the city. This water channel, known to archaeologists as the Siloam Tunnel, was a monumental achievement.

The Chronicler summed up Hezekiah's condition just prior to the Sennacherib invasion in a characteristic manner. **He succeeded in everything he undertook** (32:30). The theme of "success" or "prospering" occurs a number of times in Chronicles to indicate divine approval of a king (see *Introduction: 26) Prosperity and Poverty*).

Hezekiah's Failure (32:31)

To bring this episode into conformity with his other accounts of Hezekiah's behavior during the Assyrian crisis, the Chronicler followed notices of Hezekiah's successes with a brief allusion to the visit of Babylonian emissaries. According to 2 Kgs 20:1-19, Hezekiah showed his riches to the Babylonians. This move was an attempt to establish an alliance with Assyria's eastern enemy at the time of Sennacherib's preoccupation with matters in the west. Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah for this attempt (see 2 Kgs 20:14-19), much as he had earlier warned Ahaz against an alliance with Assyria (see Isa 7). In fact, the prophet told Hezekiah that any attempt to join with Babylon would eventually lead to the removal of the royal treasures to Babylon.

The Chronicler's version of this event is different from Kings in at least two ways. First, Kings reports that the envoys came to Jerusalem because they had heard that Hezekiah **had been sick** (2 Kgs 20:12). The Chronicler emphasized instead that the Babylonians had noticed **the miraculous sign**, probably a reference to the reversal of the sun that accompanied the king's healing (see 2 Kgs 20:10-11).

Second, instead of describing the details of events that occurred during the visit, the Chronicler offered a theological summary of the whole matter. He noted that **God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart** (32:31). As he did elsewhere in his history, the Chronicler went behind the scene to explain the divine purposes in events that took place (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). God brought the Babylonians to Hezekiah to **test** not just the actions of Hezekiah, but **his heart** (32:31). David had warned Solomon that God searches the inward motivations (see 1 Chr 29:9). Here God tested the heart of Hezekiah. As the record of Kings demonstrates, he failed the test. Once again, the Chronicler revealed his interest in the inner motivations of his characters. Fidelity grew out of a whole-hearted commitment to God (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*).

In his profoundly subtle closure to this portion of Hezekiah's reign, the Chronicler challenged his post-exilic readers to compare themselves carefully with Hezekiah. Although Hezekiah was a great king and accomplished much, God was not satisfied with mere external obedience. He desired the wholehearted devotion of his people.

Closure of Hezekiah's Reign (32:32-33)

The end of Hezekiah's reign in Chronicles closely parallels 2 Kgs 20:20-21. Nevertheless, several changes should be noted. First, Kings draws attention to records of "all his achievements ... the pool and the tunnel ..." (2 Kgs 20:20). Chronicles has already mentioned these facts and substitutes **his acts of devotion** (32:32).

Second, the Chronicler recommended a prophetic source, **the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz** (32:32), much as he did elsewhere (see 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; see also *Introduction: 15) Prophets*). This record is not to be confused with the biblical book of Isaiah for it is further identified as being contained **in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel** (32:32; see *Introduction: Historical and Theological Purposes*).

Third, the Chronicler expanded 2 Kgs 20:21 in two ways to give honor to the king. 1) He added that the king **was buried on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are** (32:33a). 2) The Chronicler also added that **all Judah and the people of Jerusalem honored him when he died** (32:32).

This final portion of Hezekiah's reign amounts to a series of reports focusing on the king's records (32:32), demise, burial, and successor (32:33). The Chronicler's emphases appear in those portions which he added.

As noted above, the Chronicler drew attention to other records of Hezekiah's **acts of devotion** (32:32). Instead of merely mentioning that Hezekiah had achieved much (2 Kgs 20:20), the Chronicler gave a moral evaluation. In general, Hezekiah's reign was one of devotion to God. The account of Hezekiah closes with a positive evaluation of the king just as it began (see 29:2).

Moreover, the Chronicler also added that Hezekiah received an honorable burial. He was placed **on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are** (32:33a). The expression translated **on the**

hill is not altogether clear. It may refer instead to an "upper chamber" [NKJ, NAS] within the tombs themselves. If so, it denotes the prestige afforded Hezekiah at his burial. Here the Chronicler again honored Hezekiah as one of the great kings of Judah (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).

In much the same way, the Chronicler mentioned that **all Judah and the people of Jerusalem honored him when he died** (32:32b). In all likelihood, the Chronicler had in mind the ritual burial fire which accompanied the deaths of Judah's honorable kings (see 16:14), but was withheld from dishonorable kings (see 21:19).

This closing to Hezekiah's reign brought the Chronicler's evaluation of the king to the foreground. Despite Hezekiah's inconsistencies during the Sennacherib invasion, on the whole the Chronicler was very positive. Hezekiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah.