



## Hezekiah's Reversionism, Recovery, & Reprieve: Introduction: Positive KER; Background of the Assyrian Empire & Rulers; Its Levant Campaign in 701 B.C.

### Hezekiah's Reversionism, Recovery, & Reprieve

#### A. Introduction:

**Hezekiah:** Succeeded his father Ahaz to the throne of Judah in 716 B.C. King Ahaz had made a number of foreign policy mistakes with regard to the powerful Assyrian Empire to the northeast. Ahaz had also allowed idolatry to gain a severe hold on the hearts of the people which brought the nation to a low point politically and spiritually. Hezekiah was able to restore Judah to a biblically-based lifestyle in both areas and for this he received an excellent KER.

#### KER:

**2 Kings 18:1** - Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king.

**v. 2** - He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.

**v. 3** - And he did right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father David had done.

**v. 4** - He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan [ \ne-hush' tan\]: as referred to by Hezekiah, "a piece of brass." ].

**2 Kings 18:5** - He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.

**v. 6** - For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him; but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.

**v. 7** - And the Lord was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

- 1) First of all we need to get a fix on the time period involved and the various kings of Judah and Assyria that lead up to the confrontation between Hezekiah and Sennacherib in the year 701 B.C.:

**Visual: Kings of Assyria & Judah: 835-642 B.C.:**

[HTTP://WWW.GDCMEDIA.ORG/VISUALS/KINGSOFASSYRIAJUDAH.PDF](http://www.gdcmmedia.org/visuals/kingsofassyriajudah.pdf)

- 2) Over the course of a little better than a century and between the reigns of Joash and Hezekiah the Assyrian Empire came to power.
- 3) Our study will reveal how the Lord permitted Assyria to become a threat to Judah and a source of discipline for Hezekiah. We will observe later how the Assyrian threat is also designed by the ambassador demons to once again target the line of Christ.



- 4) The confrontation between Hezekiah and Sennacherib is considered so important that the Holy Spirit provides us with three major references of it: 2 Kings 18:13-20:21, 2 Chronicles 32:1-33, and Isaiah 36:1-39:8.
- 5) A brief synopsis of the historical events that lead up to this confrontation will serve as a further introduction to our study.

#### **B. Background of the Assyrian Empire & Its Rulers:**

**Pfeiffer, Charles F. "The Assyrian Threat." Chap. 50 in *Old Testament History*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 333-336:**

Adad-nirari 'a' dad-nē-ra' rē\ III (805-783 B.C. attacked Damascus in 804 B.C. The attack on Damascus indirectly helped Judah which had been suffering as a result of attacks by the Aramean rulers of Damascus (Hazeal in 2 Kings 12:17). Joash of Judah recovered towns on his northern border which had been lost to Hazeal of Damascus before the Assyrian advance in 2 Kings 13:25 (Ben-hadad).

Following the death of Adad-nirari III, Assyrian power was on the wane. His successor, Shalmaneser 'shal' ma-nē' zer\ IV (783-773 B.C.), continued to exert pressure on Damascus (but) Assyria, however, was feeling pressure on its northern border from Armenia, or Urartu 'u-rar' tū\, and its internal politics were in a state of flux. Adad-nirari had died young and childless, with the result that the succession was uncertain. No advances were made during the rules of Asher-dan III (773-755 B.C.) or Asher-nirari V (755-745 B.C.). An eclipse of the sun in 763 B.C. was considered a sign of ill omen as it marked a defeat of Assyrian arms in the north. The states in western Asia seemed free to regroup and to challenge Assyrian claims on their territory.

After a generation of uncertainty an Assyrian warrior and statesman who took the name Tiglath-pileser 'tig' lath-pī-lē' zer\ 745-727 B.C.) III usurped the throne in 745 B.C. He sought to restore the lost glories of Assyria. Under the name Pul (noted in 2 Kings 15:19) he was proclaimed king of Babylon. He achieved victory on his northern borders over the Armenians (Urartu) and turned his attention to the west where the local princes had thrown off the Assyrian yoke. (p. 333)

A few years later Pekah 'pē' ka\ (king of Israel from 740-732 B.C.) joined Rezin 'rē' zin\ king of Damascus in an alliance against Assyria. They moved against Ahaz (king) of Judah (732-716 B.C.) in an attempt to force Judah into an anti-Assyrian alliance (2 Kings 16:5-9). Ahaz turned to Tiglath-pileser for help, with disastrous results for the whole of western Asia. Tiglath-pileser marched westward and then down the coast of Palestine. The king of Gaza fled across the River of Egypt to find sanctuary in Egypt. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Ashkelon, and Judah paid their tribute to the Assyrians. Rebellious Israel was attacked. (p. 334)

Damascus fared even worse than Israel. In 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser entered Damascus, executed Rezin its king, ravaged the city, and deported a large portion of its population. Among those who hastened to Damascus to pay tribute to Tiglath-pileser (was) Ahaz. (pp. 334-35)

Judah was a vassal of Assyria as a result of the policy of King Ahaz, but Israel still hoped to be able to resist Assyrian power. When Tiglath-pileser III died in 727 B.C. he was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.).

Hoshea (king) of Israel (732-721 B.C.) listened to his pro-Egyptian counselors and refused to pay tribute to Shalmaneser. Egypt promised help (2 Kings 17:4), but help never arrived. Shalmaneser besieged the Israelite capital at Samaria, and after three years the city fell, bringing the northern kingdom to an end (721 B.C.).



Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) actually claims credit for the destruction of Samaria. In his Annals, Sargon states, "The town I rebuilt better than it was before, and settled herein people from countries which I myself had conquered." This policy of transportation caused the Israelites to be scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire, and brought into their former territory the ancestors of the people who came to be known as Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24-41).

Other campaigns in Syria and Palestine took Sargon to Raphia where he defeated an Egyptian army. This was the first clash between the Egyptians and Assyrians, the two nations that would vie for control of western Asia. In 717 B.C. Sargon conquered Carchemish (kar' ke-mish) and campaigned farther north in Cilicia (si-lish' i-a). In 715 he sacked the Philistine cities of Ashdod and Gath, and claimed to have subjugated Judah. (p. 335)

Sargon made his capital successively at Ashur, Calah (kā' la), and Nineveh. East of Nineveh he built a new capital, Dur-Sharruken (dur' sha-rü' kin). The large palace built during the last years of Sargon's rule was discovered in 1843 and was among the first structures carefully studied by scientific archaeologists. Sargon, himself, died in battle before he could move into his new palace.

Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) spent the early years of his reign putting down the revolts which broke out following the death of his father. Merodach-baladan (mi-rō' dak-bal' a-dan) seized the throne of Babylon and attempted to set up a state there free of Assyrian control. It was at this time that he sent an emissary to Jerusalem to show friendship to Hezekiah and enlist his support (2 Kings 20:12-19). Late in 702 B.C. Sennacherib defeated Merodach-baladan and his Elamite and Arab allies.

The northern frontier of Assyria was quickly pacified, after which Sennacherib was free to turn his attention to the west, where Egypt was stirring up trouble among the smaller states. Hezekiah of Judah was a leader in the opposition to Sennacherib ... and had strengthened his fortifications in Jerusalem. Anticipating trouble from Assyria, Hezekiah called upon Egypt for help (Isaiah 30:1-4). (p. 336)

### C. The Assyrian Campaign through the Levant, 701 B.C.:

- 1) The Assyrians were Semitics who migrated out of Babylonia to ultimately rule the Fertile Crescent from the 9th to the 7th century B.C. Sennacherib's reign commenced after the death of his father, Sargon II and he ruled from 704 to 681 B.C.
- 2) Sennacherib's name gives us yet another indication of the long history of idolatry throughout Arabia: סַנְחַרִּיבִּי \se-nak' er-ib\: "Sin has multiplied the brothers." This "Sin" is none other than the Sumerian moon god whose title was *al-ilah* but which was shortened to Allah in pre-Islamic times.
- 3) Thus Sennacherib's name contains a reference to Allah or the Sumerian mood god, Sin, who is credited with multiplying the Assyrian royal line although I'm afraid all responsibility must be placed on his father, Sargon II.
- 4) In 701 B.C., Sennacherib undertook a pan-Arabic campaign to broaden his power base. He defeated the Phoenicians, Philistines, and Egyptians in a sweep down the Mediterranean coast. He then turned his attention toward Judah.