

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

EE. God's Use Of Intense Trials As Future Warnings

(2 Kings 20:1-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We, or people we know, are facing intense trials today, a fact we can readily illustrate (as follows):

(1) At the national and international levels, Michael Barone's op-ed, "Return of the Big Lie," Republican-American, May 28, 2019, p. 6A, referring to "the claims that President Trump and his 2016 campaign colluded with the Russians," claimed, "It's apparent now that the collusion charges were a Big Lie promoted by top Barak Obama administration officials." Like what is also occurring in Australia and Britain, such Big Lies are "being deployed in the service of people seeking to delegitimize the results of elections," and it is "threatening . . . democracy."

(2) Last Monday, "The Talk of Connecticut" legendary radio talk show host Brad Davis called the Connecticut state budget "criminal" since it cut funds to the blind and the disabled while leaving the bloated state employee unions' pensions and benefits packages unreformed. Brad said that in all his years, he had never seen such a thing.

(3) This matter affects people at the grassroots: a man I know in Torrington has been diagnosed with cancer that was caused by tobacco use, he is unable to work, he has a large debt load and government and charitable agency aid are inadequate to help him avoid the threat of bankruptcy. [Believers we know also face big financial problems!]

(4) Intense trials hit people at work: Bill Dunn's column, "Doughnuts, and the trials of Job" (Ibid., May 31, 2019, p. 2D) told of stresses salesmen in his workplace face because they are paid solely by commission, that if "they don't sell anything, they don't get paid anything," Ibid. [We also often hear of intense trials believers face at work.]

(5) We currently face an intense trial of credibility regarding evangelical leaders: Brannon S. Howse's book, Marxianity, 2018, p. 97-98 warned, "Many" leaders "on the evangelical right . . . are compromised," so "never . . . assume you can get all your theology from one particular leader (not even me!)."

(6) Last week, one of our members expressed dismay at the ungodly corruption she sees in many realms of life, so she asked if any prophecy remained to be fulfilled before the rapture, for she was looking for some hope **now!**

Need: *So we ask, "Why is God letting us face especially intense trials today?!"*

- I. 2 Kings 20:1 relates the intense trial king Hezekiah faced of being afflicted with a life-threatening illness, and God shockingly told him set his house in order because he was going to die and not live.**
- II. Hezekiah rightly handled this trial by trusting God and His Word, so God healed him, 2 Kings 20:2-11:**
 - A. This severe trial greatly upset Hezekiah, so by relying on God's Deuteronomy 4:40 promise that he would have a long life if he heeded God's Word, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall on the bed of illness where he lay, he wept and asked God to recall the devout life he had lived that the Lord might heal him, 2 Kings 20:2-3.
 - B. God responded positively to Hezekiah's prayer, telling the king He had heard his prayer, that He would heal him and protect Jerusalem from Assyria, 2 Kings 20:4-6. [Hezekiah's illness occurred the same year Assyria invaded Judah, explaining this promise of deliverance from Assyria, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 578.]
 - C. To be healed, Hezekiah was to apply a poultice of figs to the boil, what was "well known in the ancient world as a means of helping to heal boils and ulcers, but Hezekiah's physicians had not prescribed it," Ibid.; 2 Kings 20:7a. When the poultice was applied, Hezekiah recovered from his life-threatening infection, 2 Kings 20:7b.
 - D. The Lord also provided the sign of making the shadow go back ten steps on a stairway to encourage Hezekiah that God would heal him of his life-threatening illness, adding fifteen years to his lifespan, 2 Kings 20:6, 8-11.
- III. Significantly, God had let this trial occur to equip Hezekiah to handle a later trial of greater importance:**
 - A. The 2 Kings 20:12a phrase, "At *that* time" ties Hezekiah's previous 2 Kings 20:1-11 healing event to the events in 2 Kings 20:12b-19 where Hezekiah faced a big temptation to form an unbiblical union with Babylon:
 1. Secular records indicate Babylon's king Merodach-Baladin at that time was seeking to form an alliance with other nations in the Middle East to oppose Assyria, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 579.
 2. Thus, 2 Kings 20:12b tells of the Babylonian king's diplomatic effort to congratulate Hezekiah for his healing and to provide him with a gift in order to impress Hezekiah to form an alliance with Babylon.
 3. However, God did not want Hezekiah to make such an alliance, for Deuteronomy 17:16-17 told Judah's kings to trust God for their nation's security instead of acquiring horses from Egypt, amassing great wealth to finance a military mission or forming marital alliances with other Gentile nations. (Ibid., p. 295)

- B. Thus, the "At *that* time" phrase of 2 Kings 20:12a reveals that **God** had *let* Hezekiah face the *intense trial* of his **life-threatening illness** back in 2 Kings 20:1-11 in order to urge him in his **future** 2 Kings 20:12b-19 temptation *similarly* to **trust God** for Judah's **national security** and **NOT** make an **alliance with Babylon!**
- IV. Sadly, Hezekiah failed to apply the lesson of his former intense, life-threatening trial, 2 Kings 20:13-21:**
- A. The Hebrew text at 2 Kings 20:13 claims Hezekiah "listened to; agreed with" (*shama'*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 597; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1033-1034) the officials of the Babylonian king.
- B. In proud self-sufficiency, Hezekiah even showed the Babylonian officials "the full extent of his wealth and armaments partly because he concluded his ally should know how much Judah would be able to contribute to their joint anti-Assyrian effort," *Ibid.*; 2 Kings 20:13b.
- V. God's prophet Isaiah then asked Hezekiah about his meeting with the Babylonian officials, and Hezekiah replied that he had shown them all of his riches and armaments, 2 Kings 20:14-15.**
- VI. For his sin of failing humbly to rely on the Lord as God had led him to do in his past intense, life-threatening illness, God claimed Hezekiah's wealth would one day be carried off to Babylon and his descendants would be taken to serve as eunuchs in Babylon's court, 2 Kings 20:16-18.**
- VII. Hezekiah repented: he replied that God's pronounced judgment was good, but that he was also grateful that he would enjoy peace and security in his lifetime, 2 Kings 20:19-21 NIV, ESV; *Ibid.*, p. 579.**

Lesson: *God let Hezekiah face an intense, life-threatening illness to teach him not only to rely on God to handle that trial, but similarly to rely on God to handle a later big temptation to make an unbiblical alliance with Babylon. Hezekiah failed to apply the lesson of his illness trial to his later trial, leading to great future trouble for Judah.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) If we believers face intense trials where we are pressed to heed God in some realm of life, may we rely on the Holy Spirit's power (Galatians 5:16) to apply the lesson learned from that first trial to future applicable trials where the stakes will most likely be much higher.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The issues noted in our introduction can be handled by applying this sermon in the Spirit's power (as follows):

(1) On the trial of the "Big Lie" we citizens in the U. S. and those in Britain and Australia face from powerful elitists who try to delegitimize election results for their own ends, **God is warning us** to put **Scripture above what any other "authority" claims as being the truth**, for Romans 3:4 states, "(L)et God be true, but every man a liar."

(2) On the trial of the state budget where funds for the blind and disabled were cut as state employee unions' bloated pensions and benefits packages went unreformed, **God is warning us** to heed 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 and Galatians 2:10 to work for our own needs and give to the needy we know around us instead of relying on a state government that is of the self-serving unions, by the self-serving unions and for the self-serving unions instead of being of the people, by the people and for the people of the state of Connecticut.

(3) On the trial of the man saddled by debt who faced a bankruptcy crisis with the loss of income due to cancer caused by tobacco use and insufficient aid from government and charitable agencies, (a) **God is warning us** to work for our own financial security (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12) and to rid ourselves of debt (Proverbs 22:7b). [Some believers have heeded Galatians 2:10 and paid off a debt the man owed, relieving him!] (b) **God is also warning us** to spend within our means and save and invest (Proverbs 27:23-27; Ecclesiastes 11:1-6) and (c) to practice good diet, exercise and sleep habits to support good health and resulting workplace productivity, 1 Timothy 5:23.

(4) On trials in the workplace, (a) **God is warning us** to follow **His** lead in **acquiring** the job **He** indicates is the **right job for us** (James 4:13-17), what eliminates many needless trials in the workplace. (b) When we enter the right job situation, **God** promises to reward **us** with income that fits our workmanship in that job, Psalm 62:11-12.

(5) On Brannon S. Howse's word that we should **not** get all our theology from any one evangelical leader, even himself, **God is warning us** to apply the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, "Scripture only," the belief that "the church should not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary to the written Scriptures of the biblical canon." (John H. Armstrong, "Introduction: Two Vital Truths," p. 19 in Armstrong, gen. ed., The Coming Evangelical Crisis, 1996) Isaiah 8:20 and 2 Timothy 3:13-4:1 teach this truth, so we must rely on **Scripture above men** for our **beliefs!**

(6) On the trial of being dismayed at today's widespread corruption, *prior to* the Revelation 4:1-2 *rapture*, at Revelation 3:21 for **our** era, **God** promises to **enthron**e in *great influence* believers in **our** era who *overcome worldliness!* The dismay we sense over wide corruption in today's world is thus *God's warning* that we *overcome worldliness* in our *personal* lives so He might make us a *significant, positive influence* to a needy church and world!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we use the lessons learned from *current* trials in *future* trials!