

Last week we had ended with Hezekiah's godly reign in Judah as he sought and fought for the Lord in the power of the one true God. As a result God had blessed Hezekiah with peace and safety on all sides and along with that he was given great wealth and power.

2 Chronicles 32:27-31 ²⁷ Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles, ²⁸ storehouses also for the produce of grain, wine and oil, pens for all kinds of cattle and sheepfolds for the flocks. ²⁹ He made cities for himself and acquired flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great wealth. ³⁰ It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did. ³¹ Even *in the matter of* the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

And the verses that preceded these gave us the results of this test from God.

2 Chronicles 32:24-25 ²⁴ In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to the LORD, and the LORD spoke to him and gave him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.

Again, what was God testing of Hezekiah according to verse 31?

2 Chronicles 32:31 ³¹ *Even in the matter of* the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

And so, according to the end of verse 31 God left him alone, that is the Lord left him to himself and his proud heart, in order to know all that was in Hezekiah's heart, which raises an interesting question.

By testing Hezekiah, did God not already know what was in his heart or was God doing the testing in order to learn something about Hezekiah that He did not know?

God already knows the hearts of all men. This test was not for the sake of God learning something about Hezekiah. This test was to prove to Hezekiah what God already knew.

And so, for whose benefit was this test really?

Hezekiah.

Does this mean that there was nothing that benefitted God in doing this test?

It benefitted God only in the sense that it confirmed what God had already known about Hezekiah's heart and proved once more that God is totally omniscient.

Psalm 139:1-6 ^{NAU} For the choir director. A Psalm of David. O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. ³ You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. ⁵ You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. ⁶ *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.

When choosing the successor to Judas as one of the 12 apostles the others prayed to the Lord in this way.

Acts 1:23-25 ²³ So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

When the Lord told Samuel the prophet that He was going to choose David as king this is what He told Samuel.

^{NAU} **1 Samuel 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

To know that heart is to know all that a man is even when that man does not know himself. There is nothing that God does not know.

So, if God already knew the heart of Hezekiah, why the test?

Not simply to show Hezekiah his heart, but to show the heart of every person. Hezekiah was in a sense the best of the best when it came to the rulers of Judah or Israel as it related to following after God. And yet even the best had a heart that wandered.

Peter had this problem, Paul had this problem, Jonah, Job, Abraham, but in the final analysis all of them did what Hezekiah did and that is to repent when they wandered and to come back and seek the One true God who enabled them, by His Spirit, to keep them close, not only during their lifetimes but to keep them for the day of redemption.

It's all about God's hand on His people that they will be able to have eyes to see their own sin and turn from it. And this is what the Lord did with Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 32:26 ²⁶ However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 32:31 - 33 ³² Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of devotion, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ³³ So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. And his son Manasseh became king in his place.

And so, Manasseh becomes king and, like father like son, as the saying goes, but in this case, not so much. Manasseh was one who proved himself to be a rebel.

2 Chronicles 33:1-6 ^{NAU} Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ² He did evil in the sight of the LORD according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected altars for the Baals and made Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of the LORD of which the LORD had said, "My name shall be in Jerusalem forever." ⁵ For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him *to anger*.

And so ends the story of Manasseh, or so it would seem. Because again we need to remember that it is God who has called a people to Himself and sometimes those people are found in some strange places, living under strange circumstances and going in a direction anywhere but toward God.

Case in point: Rahab. We know that Rahab was a Canaanite. The Canaanites were those whom God was going to destroy as He led His people into the Promised land. We know the Promised land or the land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants was the land we know today as the Middle East from Eastern Egypt to present day Iraq.

God was going to give the land to His people Israel. And yet we know that even though Rahab was a Canaanite she would actually turn out to be an Israelite.

How do we know this?

Because she was of true Israel, spiritual Israel, the same Israel that Paul spoke of when addressing the true people of God.

Romans 9:6-8 ⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Romans 4:13 ¹³ For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 4:16-18 ¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

If Abraham is the father of faith in God, and all who have the faith of Abraham are children of Abraham, which is to say children of God, or true Israel, and if all who have the faith of Abraham are descendants of Abraham and therefore heirs of the world, then is Rahab a descendant of Abraham?

Absolutely.

We know of an Israelite by birth who was also going in a direction other than God and for all intents and purposes a Christian could look at this person and conclude, as we have with Manasseh, that Paul would never come to faith in Christ. Of course we would be wrong.

But a certain Ananias was certainly skeptical after being directed by God to attend unto Saul.

Acts 9:10-14 ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

Who in their right mind could not say the same about Manasseh who reinstated idol worship in Judah and erected altars to foreign gods and practiced witchcraft, sorcery, divination and much more evil in the sight of God?

But here's the beauty of God's grace. Even though Rahab is constantly addressed as a harlot; (go back and read the texts), they constantly address her as Rahab the harlot, she was given grace and mercy by God.

By the way, does anyone know what the name Rahab means?

It means storm. Without knowing Rahab I'm guessing her name probably described her accurately. She may very well have been a storm of a woman so that wherever she went a storm of activity surrounded her, from running a prostitution ring of at least one, being a shrewd negotiator as seen with the spies to negotiate her way out of harm, to having a name for herself in the city where thunder and lightning followed her all her days in Jericho, ending

with a storm of violence as God delivered her and her family from death.

She was probably a woman not many people wanted to mess with and yet she is the mother by physical extension of the Prince of Peace who came to save His people from their sins. Out of the storm comes the One who can calm the storm as He did with Rahab.

Paul deserved nothing from God as he participated in the murder of Christians and anyone looking at him would instinctively know God would never show mercy to such a man, but He did. And then we come back to Manasseh.

2 Chronicles 33:9-11 ⁹ Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel. ¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze *chains* and took him to Babylon.

And then we read this.

2 Chronicles 33:12-17 ¹² When he was in distress, he entreated the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD *was* God. ¹⁴ Now after this he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance of the Fish Gate; and he encircled the Ophel *with it* and made it very high. Then he put army commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. ¹⁵ He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw *them* outside the city. ¹⁶ He set up the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁷ Nevertheless the people still sacrificed in the high places, *although* only to the LORD their God.

I don't know about you but this gives me great hope and comfort, first and foremost for the love and grace God has extended to me a sinner who was a rebel and fled from God. And yet He pursued me and captured me and I will be eternally grateful that He violated

my will and gave me His will as He took my heart of stone and spiritually surgically gave me a heart of flesh which can and does beat for Him by His grace alone.

But it also gives me hope and comfort to know that God can do the same for others I love despite the fact that outwardly their lives, like the former lives of Rahab, Saul and Manasseh, are presently fleeing from God, He can turn their hearts and cause them to see their sin and repent and turn to Christ who gives life eternal.

Don't ever give up praying for loved ones. Don't ever give up giving them the truth of the gospel as opportunity arises and don't ever give up simply because the life you see in front of you looks more like one who loves pagan gods rather than the one true God.

2 Chronicles 33:18-20 ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh even his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are among the records of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹ His prayer also and *how God* was entreated by him, and all his sin, his unfaithfulness, and the sites on which he built high places and erected the Asherim and the carved images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the records of the Hozai. ²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. And Amon his son became king in his place.

That's not only the kind of epitaph we would want to leave behind in this world as we move to the next, but also the epitaph we want for our loved ones whose hearts can be changed by God.

We as believers in Christ Jesus are the true Israel of God, His chosen people from all tribes, tongues and nations, both Jew and Gentile.

Unfortunately, the son of Manasseh, Amon, lived his life out as a rebel to the end.

2 Chronicles 33:21-25 ²¹ Amon *was* twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. ²² He did evil in the sight of the LORD as Manasseh his father had done, and Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and he served them. ²³ Moreover, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had done, but Amon multiplied guilt. ²⁴ Finally his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his own house. ²⁵ But the

people of the land killed all the conspirators against King Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.

Josiah, as we'll see next week was a young boy when he became king of Judah. In fact, he was only 8 years old. If Amon was 24 when he was killed about how old was he when his son was born?

About 16 years old. But this young man is going to do some amazing things in Judah and unlike his father Amon who would not repent of his sin, this young Josiah will have God's hand on him.