

Title: “Hezekiah, Man of metal OR Man of mush - Part 1 of 3”

Purpose: For us to see how we should and should not respond to those occasions when God allows some INVASION to enter our lives.

INTRODUCTION

You might not feel you want to admit to this – but I’m going to ask anyway:

Q. Who here had either a Barbie Doll or an Action Man when they were younger?

Well, yes, some of us did – and today and for the coming couple of weeks we are going to be seeing whether this man Hezekiah that we meet in Isaiah 36 is:

“A Man of Metal OR a Man of Mush”

And over these three weeks we are going to come across 3 tests that Hezekiah had to face and we’re going to assess how well he did, whether he passed the test or failed and naturally we will consider how well we fare as well.

The moment of truth

What is abundantly clear, as we come to Isaiah 36 & 37, is that we have come to the moment of truth.

No doubt Hezekiah had secretly hoped that somehow he would not have to face INVASION by Assyria, but I suspect that deep down he knew that was not really very likely.

What do we know of Hezekiah

Q. So what do we know of this man Hezekiah?

Well, if you want to get a complete picture of this King of Judah, you have to go essentially to three places:

- to the book of **Second Kings Chapter 18**
- to **Second Chronicles Chapter 32**
- and also to this major prophet – to **the book of Isaiah**, here between **Chapters 36-39** (which are historical rather than more prophetic in nature)

And in all these places you reach the same point where Sennacherib, King of Assyria, arrives at the border of Judah and proceeds to INVADE.

And what we are going to do, in order to properly assess Hezekiah and the way he reacts to this unparalleled crisis, we are going to seek to blend the three accounts and draw lessons from all of them to get a more rounded picture.

A quick resume of Hezekiah up to this point

Now so we have a bit more background and really a better feel for who we are dealing with in Hezekiah, let me just give a “flying resume” of his life, his career to date – so this is kind of a quick peek into his personal CV (this might be the equivalent of seeing what has been pasted on his Facebook page or perhaps his LinkedIn profile – for the social media savvy amongst us):

- **FIRST** - we have to recognise that he is **one of the distinguished Kings of Judah**.

We read of him that he: **“DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD, just as his father David had done.”** (2 Kings 18 verse 3)

Only 7 kings of Israel, out of 43, get this description placed against them and only 3 of these get the even better version where they are likened back to King David (who was a man after God’s own heart) (ASA, HEZEKIAH and JOSIAH).

- **SECOND** – we see that he had a very comprehensive record of **RELIGIOUS REFORMS** to his name.

He removed the high places (not many kings achieved this), he smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles, he destroyed the bronze snake (called Nehushtan) that Moses had made at God’s command (Numbers 21) which had ended up becoming a snare to Israel since they turned it into an object of worship.

With regard to the worship of the LORD:

- he **re-opened the doors of the temple** (King Ahaz, his wicked predecessor had closed the temple up)
- he **repaired the temple structurally**
- he **re-consecrated the priests and Levites**
- he **re-instituted the regular sacrifices and offerings**
- he **re-enacted the Passover festival after many long years**
- finally he **re-established the practice of the people giving a tithe** so that the upkeep of the temple and the priesthood would be provided for

So I think you can see with a little bit of background, the sort of man that we are dealing with here in King Hezekiah, son of the weak and wicked king Ahaz.

Continuity with our passage (from 2 Chronicles 31-32)

Just to round this off – let me connect it up with the passages and the events which we are concerned with this morning – and for this I’ll just read **the last 2 verses of 2 Chronicles 31 through to the opening verse of 2 Chronicles 32:**

2 Chronicles 31 verse 20ff “This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right

and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.

AFTER ALL THAT HEZEKIAH HAD SO FAITHFULLY DONE, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah....”

Sounds strange!!

I'm sure you'll agree that it does sound a bit strange the way the Chronicler puts the start of this episode that we are considering today:

AFTER ALL THAT HEZEKIAH HAD SO FAITHFULLY DONE, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah....”

But, of course, it is *NOT* accidental, God is ENTIRELY A PURPOSEFUL and INTENTIONAL GOD and He always works to further us and develop us and very frequently that happens through TESTS & TRIALS that God allows or even designs for our benefit.

The next 3 weeks – 3 tests

Over these **next 3 weeks** we are going to have, if you like, a **mini-series on Hezekiah** which I am labelling:

“HEZEKIAH – Man of Metal or Man of Mush”

And **each week** we will see **how he handles a test that comes his way** and so we will get three opportunities to see how he fares and by comparison, of course, how we would fare in this whole aspect.

And so **today is Part 1** of that and we are covering Isaiah chapters 36 and 37 whilst dipping into 2 Chronicles 32 and also 2 Kings 18.

Handling a lot of verses

Now because we have a lot of material that we are going to be traversing, in order to stop us getting lost or sunk in too many verses, I am going to summarize some large sections so that we are able to focus in on the sections that are more salient and which help to bring out the lessons.

So in summary we are going to be taking a more heavily focussed approach.

Our structure

Today's test comes under the simple heading of INVASION and here of course we are talking of a military invasion – though there are many parallels for us:

- when, for example, we feel as though we are surrounded in some sense and don't seem to have any easy way of escape

- when we feel that someone or something seems to be almost waging war against us, threatening to take us down completely
- or when we are trying to hold out over something, trying to do the right thing, but it is as though we are in some war of attrition being progressively worn down

So let's make a start and I have three heading which show three different sides to how Hezekiah meets this challenge of INVASION in his life:

The FIRST is what I'm calling:

1] "active ACTION" and is based on the account from **2 Chronicles 32 verses 1-8**

Johnny Cash sang a song called "No earthly good" which had the opening lines as follows:

*"Come heed me, my brothers, come heed, one and all
Don't brag about standing or you'll surely fall
You're shining your light and shine it you should
But you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good."*

And I'm sure you've heard people complain about some Christians that they are just so caught up with God and with things in the heavenly realms that they are essentially useless for living down here.

And it is easy to chime in with that and say AMEN.

Of course we should bear in mind what the Apostle Paul said in, for example, Colossians chapter 3 and the opening verses:

(Colossians 3 verses 1&2) "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**"

I think the real reality should be that:

"Unless you are thoroughly heavenly minded, you'll never be any earthly good."

It is a proper understanding and reception of the gospel that provides both the understanding AND the impetus to serve people and seek that God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Q. What about Hezekiah?

Q. So what about Hezekiah?

Q. Was he so heavenly minded that he was no earthly use?

He certainly had a heart after God and the things of God – he was definitely a seeker after God's wisdom with all his energy.

Let me read the opening verses of 2 Chronicles 32 from Verse 1 thru to 8 and then we can assess his EARTHLY USE:

*** READ 2 Chronicles 32 verses 1-8 ***

A man of METAL

I think that what we see in these verses is going to confirm that Hezekiah, in the face of this INVASION, is a man of "ACTIVE ACTION" – he is a man of metal:

- FIRST – he **BUILDS UP THE PLACE:**

he is a remarkably able leader – he doesn't just go around shouting orders – to be honest that would be a lost opportunity – he consults with the people and makes appointments and sets about constructing **2 THINGS:**

- the **FIRST is a TUNNEL** – we read of the fact that Hezekiah blocked off the spring outside the walls of Jerusalem – **Verse 30** expands on this a little and tells us:

"It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon Spring and channelled the water down to the West side of the city of David."

2 Kings 20 Verse 20 makes it even clearer it says: "he made the pool (that is the pool of Siloam) and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city".

It was in the year 1838 that the Biblical scholar and archaeologist Edward Robinson made the discovery of that tunnel. It is half a mile long just over 2 foot wide and the height of a man. In the middle they found a plaque written in Hebrew which indicated that this was the point at which the two teams of diggers met when the tunnel was completed.

Now a days you can take a tour through the tunnels, apparently the water is at some places ankle deep at others waist deep – and definitely not for the claustrophobic!!

- the **SECOND is a WALL** – we read that he repaired the main wall and built another one outside the first one.

This wall was unearthed in the 1970s by [Israeli](#) architect [Nahman Avigad](#)

- SECOND – he **BUILDS UP THE PEOPLE:**

See what he says to them there in Verses 7&8.

Q. Now is this just an inspiring pep-talk?

Q. A more ancient version of Winston Churchill: "**We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on**

the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...”?

Not at all!! This isn't mere posturing and bravado – **Hezekiah is being true to his name** – which means: **“Yahweh (or the LORD) is my strength”**.

Hezekiah has within him, at the level of deep conviction, that even with the best of men, even with the strongest of men and their armies – **WITH THEM IS ONLY THE ARM OF FLESH.**

Hezekiah knew what Elisha knew before him, when he was surrounded by a massive army, holed up in that city of Dothan – he says to his panicking servant –

(2 Kings 6 verse 16) **“Don't be afraid', the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them'”**.

So then the first thing we very clearly see about King Hezekiah is that he is a man of metal because he is a godly man of **“ACTIVE ACTION”** not instead of trusting in God but **PRECISELY BECAUSE** he trusts in God – therefore he takes appropriate action **AS FAR AS IT IS IN HIS HANDS TO DO** – he takes his Godly responsibility seriously.

So the question for us is: Q. What do we tend to do when find ourselves, in some manner or another, subject to what you might call an **INVASION**?

Ok – let's go on to the 2nd aspect what I'm calling ***NOT*** “active ACTION” but rather:

2] “reactive ACTION” and this is from the account in **2 Kings 18 verses 13-16**

It was **JC Ryle** in his commentary on Matthew's gospel who wrote:

“The best of men are only men at their very best. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, – martyrs, fathers, reformers, puritans, – all are sinners, who need a Saviour: holy, useful, honourable in their place – but sinners after all.”

Ryle was responding to the statement of God the Father about His Son at the Transfiguration in Matthew 17 where he says:

(Matthew 17 verse 5) “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

The only man that we can ever totally trust, the only One we can ever fully pin our hopes upon – is the Jesus, son of man and son of God.

Hezekiah – clay feet

And Scripture gives us a balanced picture of Hezekiah – both the good aspects and the bad.

Amazing to think – but even Hezekiah had up days and down days.

Let me read 4 verses in 2 Kings 18 starting at Verse 13:

2 Kings 18 verse 13-16 “In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: ‘I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me.’ The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria.”

I don’t know about you but it doesn’t exactly seem to breathe that same spirit of God-dependence and total trust.

And inevitably he was under a lot of pressure from others to do the compromise thing, to cover all bases –
Q. But what did he gain?

Absolutely nothing!! It was definitely a lose-lose situation as it turned out! It showed the King of Assyria that Hezekiah no longer felt that he could win, he was submitting and selling-out to God’s enemies.

The word of God through Isaiah was being put aside and what was prevailing was:

- SHEER PRAGMATISM
- and the SHEER POWER OF “REACTION”

Action or Reaction

I think there is a distinction that we do well to draw and think about – and that is the difference that exists between ACTING and REACTING.

It is quite easy to allow much of our lives to be lived at the level of REACTION – just reacting to events and people that are operating upon us.

Another way of expressing this distinction is by asking ourselves the question:

Q. Am I RESPONDING to something or am I REACTING to something?

Q. What of us?

So I guess the question we have to ask in the light of this side of Hezekiah is:

Q. Do I also, have this tendency to be a man or a woman of MUSH – because all too-often I am REACTIVE?

I don’t operate solidly on the basis of my convictions and my faith and total trust in God to see me through.

Let's go on to the third and last side:

- Hezekiah operating well – displaying “active ACTION”
- Hezekiah performing not so well – displaying instead “reactive ACTION”
- lastly #3

3] “passive ACTION” and this is what we find in **Isaiah chapters 36 & 37**

(And let me say – as I indicated earlier – we are going to be somewhat focussed here and so **Isaiah 36** I’m really only going to mention in passing).

When I talk in this last section about “passive ACTION” what I am meaning here is not that Hezekiah simply sits in some lotus position and tries to empty his mind of all thoughts.

Rather what I have in mind is that this is the domain where Hezekiah is looking essentially beyond the realm of that which is in his power to do.

Isaiah 36 summary

What **Isaiah 36** shows us in summary is that Sennacherib has INVADED the land of Judah and that he has literally breezed through conquering all the fortified cities and now it’s the turn of Jerusalem herself.

The Assyrian army commander taunts Israel and speaks many insulting words to the God of Israel who he says will not fare any better than any of the other gods who were swept away by them.

The means of grace

One thing that is clear from Isaiah 37 is that Hezekiah did have a pretty clear grasp of where to turn when his own God-given resources were no longer enough.

We sometimes talk of the “means of grace” and by these I mean those classic channels that God provides so that we can experience and know God’s typical blessing.

And here we see three of those means that he clings to very instinctively:

- FIRST – he uses what I’ll call the PLACE OF GOD:

Notice that twice in **Chapter 37** at **Verse 1 and Verse 14** – Hezekiah heads straight for the TEMPLE.

No I know we don’t have a TEMPLE anymore – but really it is what the TEMPLE represented that we copy. We too should make a bee-line to wherever the people of God come together, because it is there that God promises to be in the midst when we meet in the Name of the Lord.

- SECOND – he uses what I’ll call the PREACHING OF GOD:

This is apparent in the fact that he seeks out this man Isaiah – in many ways Isaiah represented the word of God being proclaimed and clearly spoken forth.

So frequently this is a powerful means of grace whereby God speaks. It is something we should always be praying for in our church that God would be pleased to use the expository preaching of

this place to not merely **TEACH US** but also to **REACH US!!**

- THIRD – he uses not just the PLACE OF GOD & the PREACHING OF GOD, but also PRAYER TO GOD:

In [Verse 4](#) Hezekiah calls upon Isaiah to pray so that God just might be pleased to respond to the insults of the King of Assyria and rebuke him.

What transpires after the initial visit of the army commander is that God acts and causes the King of Assyria to return to his own country due to a report of Tirhakah, the Cushite King of Egypt, setting out to fight him. (It's there in [Verse 9](#)).

Before Sennacherib leaves he sends his army commander once again to reiterate that Israel is doomed and should give up.

Well from [Verse 15-20](#) we then get treated to a tremendous prayer from Hezekiah as he once again avails himself of going to the PLACE OF GOD and PRAYING.

Notice that he takes the letter that he has received and lays it out before the LORD – what an excellent practice.

I can remember one time when we were living in Swindon and it was house-moving time and we were having to decide upon which property out of a few that was the right one for us to seek to purchase and I remember one Saturday morning before we were going to need to take a decision – laying out all the prospective estate agents house details before us on the bedroom floor before the Lord and praying. The Lord very quickly undertook for us and we knew the right house.

So let's look at that prayer for a moment.

Hezekiah's prayer

Let me just read the verses

[Isaiah 37 verses 15-20](#) "And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: 'O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

'It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, **for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands.**

Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God.”

Three things worth spotting and emulating:

- FIRST see how he completely focussed on God first – and describes all that He is.

This really allows Hezekiah to shape his prayer correctly in the light of all that God is and also to shape his expectation similarly in that same light.

- SECOND he calls upon God to respond to the wicked and insulting words that Sennacherib has uttered in reference to God.

So Hezekiah is *NOT* taking these words personally – they are not a personal insult – instead he sees them for what they really are – words spoken against the LIVING GOD!

- THIRD he notes the history of things – “It is true...” he says

But then he puts those events into perspective – he interprets the history in the light of a God informed reality.

- FINALLY he frames his actual PRAYER REQUEST only now in the light of the preceding – and notice that the VINDICATION he seeks is again *NOT* a PERSONAL VINDICATION but that God’s name would be VINDICATED.

We should always do a reality check on the motivations behind and underneath our prayers.

CONCLUSION

So then – here we are KING HEZEKIAH seen from 3 different sections of the OLD TESTAMENT and each has divulged a different aspect.

Q. Was Hezekiah really true to his name “The LORD is my strength”?

Well I suppose if this was “Jeux Sans Frontier” – and we were totting up the scores on the doors – then perhaps it would be HUIT POINTS – (8 points out of 10).

Q. What of us?

But as always – we must ask:

Q. What of us?

Q. How would I fare when God sends some sort of INVASION into my life?

Q. Are you a man a woman of METAL or of MUSH?

- Q. Do you display a true Godly “active ACTION” – or are you actually too disconnected and no earthly use?
- Q. Do you display a true Godly “passive ACTION” – whereby you buy up every MEANS OF GRACE that God put at all of our disposal:
 - that PLACE OF GOD
 - that PREACHING OF GOD
 - that PRAYING TO GOD
- Q. And what of “reactive ACTION”? It is a bit too easy to just let events sweep us along down PRAGMATIC and godless avenues – selling ourselves out to godless advice.

Let’s pray that God will help us to learn from this man who, at least for me, PASSED the test of INVASION that God chose to bowl in his direction.

AMEN