

13735

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP, 1981

HEZEKIAH - A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #1

Introduction and background to his life

Reading: Isaiah 8

My beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, and our dear young people.

I don't think any of us would have had any problems, b&s, in saying a very fervent 'amen' to our bro. Andrew's prayer as he opened this meeting on our behalf. We are extremely grateful to our Heavenly Father for such wonderful circumstances that are here today, that as a group of brethren and sisters widely dispersed in this country, we should be able to come together in a common bond and ideal, to study the Words of scripture. We are thankful, b&s, to Him and to those that God inspires, that let the group at Glenlock make this possible for us, and bro. Murray whose property it is, he knows it belongs to Yahweh and he's lent it to us, we are extremely thankful that these facilities are made available that we may come here to concentrate upon this book and nothing else. And there's one thing about the Glenlock camp, b&s, that always impresses me, and that's not the facilities but the lack of them; and I think that's wonderful because you see, there are two things that level human kind, and I'm not joking when I say this, I'm serious about this matter. There are two things that level human kind, you look at the scriptures of truth and you'll find them very clearly portrayed there; first and foremost there is the greatness, the majesty, the awe-inspiring greatness of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And to look into their faces through the pages of the Word, can cause us all to be reduced to a common level, for there is no status, no dignity, no national barriers in the sight of our Heavenly Father before whom we have to do. And the second thing that levels man to a common level, b&s, is coming to circumstances like this, that despite all the comforts of life that we may be use to, in varying degrees according to our means, we've all got to live here on one common level because there's no choice, and consequently there is a tendency in this atmosphere, for everyone to forget who they are, where they come from, what ecclesia they belong to, or what rank in life they hold according to this world's standards. We are here as a group of people, whose existence upon the earth and in the truth, rests solely upon nothing else, but the enormous grace and mercy of our loving Heavenly Father, Who condescends to bear with us! And that's a marvellous thing, and if we can all keep that in mind as we plunge ourselves into this record, then we shall have a wonderful week

together, a remarkable weekend together, because we've got a remarkable story! It's a wide and a big story; it's full of excitement, b&s, and not only excitement but it's full of wonderful exposition because it's so wide in the field and so endless, as we search through the life of Hezekiah. A man who arranged some of the Proverbs, wrote some of the Psalms, collected the Songs of Degree, a man whose life sweeps through almost the whole of the prophecy of Isaiah, and of course, the book of Micah. An enormous life, and a man of whom it was said, as our bro. Andrew has intimated in 2 Kings chapter 18 and verses 5 and 6, this outstanding testimony was left of him. I want you to read this with me, this is the man we've come to have a look at during the course of these few days together. Look at the testimony to him, b&s, concerning Hezekiah it is said, 'He trusted in Yahweh Elohim of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to Yahweh and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which Yahweh commanded Moses'. Now they're not loose words, and you know, when you read of the commendation of certain biblical individuals like this, b&s, very often there is packed into that verse, a singular virtue. Certain men were, of course, outstanding for certain virtues, David was a man after God's own heart, Joshua was a man of outstanding courage, Abraham of faith, and so we can go on, that these individuals though they had a string of virtues, there were particular virtues in their lives which they showed; there was nobody like Hezekiah who trusted in Yahweh! and my word, b&s, there was nobody more severely tried than him in that respect. He trusted in Yahweh, and do you know something else? that when Isaiah the prophet finally called upon him to trust Yahweh, he wasn't called upon to trust Yahweh, b&s, in the moment of truth, when Sennacherib commence his advance towards Jerusalem, nor was his trust to discontinue when 185,000 of the Assyrians were found dead in the morning, he was to trust in Yahweh, b&s, for the rest of his life, because the sign that Isaiah gave him was not that the Assyrian would depart out of his sight, he promised him that the Land would shake with the feet of the Assyrians; that Jerusalem's walls would echo with the sound of war, but he would never see him again. And Hezekiah was in that city for more than 15 months; 15 months before he could get out, and all around him raged the wars in which Assyria was always triumphant, and a more cruel and rapacious enemy that world has never seen until the Russian gog shall be seen upon the face of the globe. Cruel to the extreme and brutal and the ground shook with his presence, and Isaiah said, 'you'll never see him again'. And all around him was wars and rumors of wars, and the rest of Hezekiah's life, b&s, was lived like that, and for 88 years, from the death of those 185,000, 88 years more the world was under the heel of the Assyrians, and Jerusalem never saw him again! but they had to wait all that time, until the Babylonians finally overthrew him.

Eighty odd years he went on and on, and Isaiah's words were ringing around the walls of Jerusalem, 'he'll never come here again'; and when I read that story for myself, and this is a new study for me, I've learned a tremendous lot about this story. It's not as straight forward as I imagined that it was, and when I looked at this prophecy of Isaiah particularly, who was the contemporary prophet, I can see more than ever before, b&s, what that verse means when it says, 'he trusted in Yahweh like no one before and after him ever among the kings of Judah', because he had to, and the circumstances of his life were absolutely appalling as far as the test of faith was concerned in trusting in

Yahweh. And that's the man we've come to study, the greatest king of the divided kingdom, since the times of David when the kingdom afterwards became divided, the kingdom saw no greater, no greater at all, than this man we've come to consider during the course of this weekend. Therefore, let us give the most diligent attention to what we have to say, because it is interesting and it's a grand opportunity for us all, to enter into the spirit of this man's life; and again I say, that the circumstances at Glenlock are outstanding for this purpose, that we might forget our environment as it were, that we've come out of; we're here now, the troubles of life are not with us, just forget them, and come with me and plunge yourself into this record. Plunge yourself right into the history and live this history, I've already done it, I can truthfully say that; I don't know how many times I've fallen on my desk with my head, in prayer to my Heavenly Father, for the thrill of it!, b&s, to be able to plunge myself into that record. It's an incredible story!

You know, we have a tremendous background; did you know, for the background of Hezekiah's life, we have 73 chapters of scripture! 73, there are 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah and 7 in the book of Micah, and nearly the whole of both books are written around the life of this man! So we have a glowing picture of the times and seasons which rolled around Hezekiah and the circumstances of his life. Now, we not only have the greatest king of the divided kingdom according to that testimony, but I would say this on the basis of scripture also, that we wouldn't have in the divided kingdom a greater type of our Lord Jesus Christ. David perhaps was greater but as far as the divided kingdom was concerned, Hezekiah stands head and shoulders above any of them, as being a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we're going to read prophecies, old prophecies that we can recite backwards; we're going to read them in a new light, we're going to read about the coming of the Emmanuel; a son is born among Israel, we know who that is, but we're going to see that in the light of Hezekiah's life. We're going to read Isaiah 53, 'a man despised and rejected of men' sick unto death, and we're going to see that in Hezekiah's life. We're going to read about the baby boy born in Bethlehem of whom Micah said, 'this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian tread in our land'. That wasn't the baby boy born in Bethlehem, that was Hezekiah! and the language is interwoven, the wonderful prophetic overtones which rolled on to be fulfilled, and yet to be fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, but which rang in the ears of the men of Judah and they could only point to one man because there was no other to whom they could apply, and it wasn't a question of looking around and saying, 'I wonder who the prophet is talking about, there was only one man he could be talking about because he stood alone; he stood up like a lighthouse among that nation. And consequently, these prophecies are so easy to apply to Hezekiah because they can be set upon him so readily, and when we look at the times in which he lived, and relate those times, we can see how much more they would have meant to that people!

Well, look where he came from; we're going to commence our studies with a very powerful exhortation. We're going to get rid of a criticism immediately that very often comes to our ears; this has got to be gone once and for all in the light of this man's life, because often brethren and sisters come up and they say, 'they're in problems; they've got this characteristic or that characteristic, and they have these habitual things they do, and they say , 'ah, well, you know, I suppose it's also wrong, but of course, you've got to

consider my background, look at where I came from, look at my mom, look at my dad'. Well, look at his dad! and if he was the best king of the divided kingdom, he was the son of the worst! There was no worse king than Ahaz and he was his dad; let's read concerning him in 2 Chronicles 28, you may know this but I want now to again go over it. Never mind about what we may know and what we may not know, let's relive these things, let's get this fixed in our minds as to where Hezekiah came from; and hereditary factors played no part in his makeup. And this is what it says concerning his father, in verse 19 of 2 Chronicles 28, 'For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against Yahweh'. How about that! How about that for a testimony of your father, 'for Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, he wasn't king of Israel, he was king of Judah, but he was characteristically king of Israel; he was like all his neighbours up in the north, he differed not one whit from them and he was worse than all of them. And he stripped Judah stark naked before their Creator, he left them, b&s, without a cover for their sin. He made them to walk in open shame and the Creator could look down upon them and there wasn't a single thing that He could do for them in that state in which they were found. And Ahaz did that to them! and he brought them low and he transgressed sore against Yahweh. He was an evil man, a very evil man!

Look at verses 22 to 24, 'In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against Yahweh: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and he shut up the doors of the house of Yahweh, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem'. Now there is Hezekiah's background, b&s, his family background and it's been plainly stated to me, on several occasions by brethren in travel, 'yes, but you can't expect me to do very well, can you? because look at my background!'. Well, look at his background! and you know, b&s, we have before us a book, and that book knows nothing about family relationships as far as the effective force that that Word is concerned. I don't care less who your dad or my dad is; the book, b&s, can change the course of lives, there's only one thing stands in our way, and that's you or me! that book can change the whole course of our life despite our father's or our great grandfather's background. It doesn't matter, and he was the son of the worst king in Judah, never let us forget that!

And he grew up in incredible circumstances, and if ever you see the difference between father and son, it was here; that when Ahaz went and closed the doors of that temple, as it were the final insult that he offered to his Creator, the very first thing that Hezekiah did was to open them. We read in 2 Chronicles 29 and verse 3, 'He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Yahweh and repaired them'. And there, b&s, was graphically portrayed in the physical fact of closing and opening doors, the complete and utter difference between father and son. What a remarkable testimony that is! How did he do it? why did he do it? What were the factors that governed his life? Those factors, b&s, are very broadly hinted at in the very little information we get as to where he came from, apart from his father.

His name for example, 'the strength of Yahweh'; there, b&s, lay his secret. The strength of Yahweh, and in 2 Chronicles 29 and verse 1, we read that 'he began to reign when he was 25 years old, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Abijah', the daughter of Zechariah'. Nothing at all said about his father in that verse of scripture, why? Because the scriptures are about to launch into the arena of Hezekiah's great zeal for the temple of God, and his father had nothing whatever to do with that zeal, but his mother did! And his mother's name 'Abijah', b&s, is a caption which should be written over the top of Hezekiah's life, because her name means 'my father is Yahweh', now that's what her name means and you know, b&s, his father was Yahweh! in a very wonderful way.

He was born in remarkable circumstances; Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign over Judah. He reigned 16 years, that makes him 36; Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to reign after his father was taken off the throne. That means, b&s, by a simple computation, that Hezekiah was born when his father was 11 years old. About 11! and it is fairly obvious that when Hezekiah was born, Ahaz was in very great immaturity and had little or nothing whatsoever to do with that boy. His father was Yahweh and the record mentioning his mother in that context is clear in its implication as to where his education came from, because she was the daughter of Zechariah. It's unfortunate that we're not told which Zechariah he was, but back in the days of Uzziah, which was not long back, there was a Zechariah who could be well and truly the one that is mentioned there, he would be old enough now to still be alive. And if that was his grandfather, then his grandfather was an outstanding prophet in the days of Uzziah and he kept that king on the straight and narrow, and was an enormous influence in Judah; if that's his grandfather, no doubt that's why he's mentioned there, and if that is the case, we have no doubt whatever why it is that Ahaz is not in that record. His origins go back further than Ahaz, the influence upon that man goes back further than Ahaz; and Ahaz had little or nothing to do obviously with Hezekiah's upbringing because Hezekiah didn't change slowly or gradually, in the first year in the first month he went straight into the temple and opened the doors, and by doing that, b&s, he was publicly proclaiming his policy was completely and utterly opposite to his father, and that would have taken a good deal of courage from a 25 year old, especially with 16 years of that nation being under the rulership of his father and a lot would have resented that. And yet he's opening the doors for all to see, I'M NOTHING LIKE MY DAD! MY FATHER IS YAHWEH!

And there were more remarkable circumstances than that! you know, Hezekiah once said, (and we're going to see his words a little later) when he was lying on his death bed from whence he was saved, when he had no children and he prayed to Yahweh for an extension of life, that he might have children and he says, 'the father to the children shall make known the truth', and he promised Yahweh that he would teach his children the truth. And he wasn't saying that a father ought to do this, he was quoting a proverb in Israel, 'that the father to the children should make known the truth'; well, who made it known to him? Certainly not his earthly father, no way in the world would Ahaz make known the truth to him, but as the record says in 2 Chronicles 29 and verse 2, 'And he

did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh according to all that David his father had done'. You see his fatherhood reached back and back and back; through his mother to Zechariah back to David. There was his fatherhood, b&s, and who was David's father but God, a man after God's own heart and we're going to see a repetition in Hezekiah's life, not only of the actions but of the very words of David, as Hezekiah takes David as his ideal and models his life upon that of David, and deliberately so, and prays to Yahweh in the very terms that David did, that he might show to Yahweh that he was like David his father. And when finally the message came to Hezekiah of the ultimate deliverance of that city, He said 'I will deliver this city for my sake, for your sake, and for David your father's sake', because He saw in Hezekiah, b&s, the modeling of that life and the repetition of that life in Hezekiah's life. And Hezekiah disregarded his immediate father and set his ideals higher than that, and followed the example of men that went before him, and patterned his life in such a way, b&s, that he became an outstanding man, despite his family background.

Now the times were turbulent and evil, they were graphic, b&s, there was a rare time in Israel like this one, not only for the extreme wickedness, but of danger! Danger was everywhere, and the exciting part about the dangers of those days was this, they are the dangers of today! We're going to see in our last study, I want to bring this right into the middle of this arena; we're going to take the words of the book of Kings and we're going to see them quoted word for word in Ezekiel 38. And if we don't know what that means well, that will give a fair indication of how many Christadelphian lectures we've attended. Ezekiel 38, about 4 quotations in that prophecy from the life of Hezekiah, telling us quite plainly that the Russian gog is the Assyrian manifested in the plenitude of his power, b&s, in the plenitude of his power the Russian gog is the Assyrian, and consequently the times that we're now going to talk about, are our times; more than ever they were Hezekiah's. And if they were dramatic then, they are more than dramatic now! if Hezekiah was the greatest king of Judah to that point of time of the divided kingdom, then the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than him and David put together. And therefore, if the drama of those times was high, today it's ultra high! We don't know what we're doing, look, you and I haven't got any conception whatever, how blessed we are. There are rare moments in my life in the quietude of my study or on my bed at night in the dark, that I suddenly realize that we are living in dramatic times; we are on the brink of destiny. We're all going to stand, b&s, and look into the blue eyes of divinity very shortly; you and I are, we're going to see our Lord Jesus Christ, and we're going to see Him up there on the great throne, with all the angels of His power. You and I are going to see that very shortly, b&s, and this story has told me that very dramatically, and as I've lived with Hezekiah and listened to the marching boot of the Assyrian, I can hear the Russian in the background. And the turbulent flood of Russia that is building up into a great swirling flood, b&s, is going to make the Assyrian pale into insignificance for might and power! And those are the issues of life, therefore, when we plunge into this background let's understand all we're really doing is relating it, to what we know to be a fact today, but which in this country, of course, in the far, far confines of Australia on the perimeter of the world, we don't comprehend what's going on, like a lot of other people do, who are close to those warnings. Let's try!

Now, what were the characteristics of the times? It's B.C. 736 for us, and the two dominant powers are Assyria and Egypt. And you know, b&s, I marvelled when you look at the history of those two nations, and you just take your history book and take your daily press and put them alongside of each other, I absolutely marvelled at the, not the similarity almost the exactitude, of Assyria for Russia and Egypt for America. Assyria, brutal and ruthless to the extreme, triumphant in the field. It's chariots and arms and power, b&s, invincible, and the world stood and trembled before Assyria. And Nahum the prophet prophesied that when Assyria would fall, he said, 'all nations will stand on their feet and clap'. They would stand and clap at the fall of Assyria, because everyone would be relieved from the oppression of the Assyrian; there's the great Russia building up, b&s. And Egypt, Egypt, Isaiah paints the picture of Egypt, loud in its promises, and always a failure to perform, but ever ready to sell you, the arms for you to fight its battles. Loud in its promises, never there in a crisis, but always ready to sell you the arms that you need to keep it safe! USA to a tea! and that's not coincidental. And the Assyrian stands in that record in Ezekiel 38 as being Gog, or God is it? and we've got no doubt whatever, the situation that faces us and we see that situation, and here we are today, you and I watching the Russians; in our country we feel immune from his power, but what if his ships did come into the Indian ocean in a far greater way?; what if he did infiltrate down into Southeast Asia, what if Australia were threatened? We would be looking to America and Ronald Reagan would be loud in his promises, he'd fail to perform and he'd sell us what we wanted to defend ourselves. And that's easiest, ever has been easy, and when Isaiah wrote about Egypt, which we're going to have a look at very shortly, he set down on record and he says, 'what I've said about Egypt is forever', forever because there will always be a power to whom the saints could look if they wanted to, to put their trust in, who would be loud in its promise and would always fail to perform. And these things were indelibly stamped with eternity as eternal principles which would be seen in these two great powers in the earth, who would prefigure all those other powers to come along with the characteristics of the times.

Now what was happening in the days of Ahaz from whence we'll take up our story, Isaiah chapter 7 was this; and it's important, b&s, that we connect the history at this point, because if we miss this connection, and of course, much of Isaiah's life is meaningless, and in the 7th chapter of Isaiah we commence this history. In verse 1 and 2, 'And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah king of Judah, that Resin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel went up towards Jerusalem to make war against it; but they could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind'. And you know, what a tremendous sight that must have been! Just to the north of Judah, Israel, their brothers in the truth, they should have been a brotherhood in the truth, but Israel now degenerated to nothing more than a heathen nation. That's all they were, basically a heathen kingdom as we'll see in the prophecy of Isaiah shortly, a heathen kingdom, that's all they were and they had now joined with another heathen kingdom, Syria, and they'd formed this coalition and the coalition was threatening Judah. And their purpose was to dethrone the son of David and to put the son of Tabeal (whoever that was) to put him upon the throne and to bring to an end the purpose of

God in Judah. And when Judah heard that, their hearts melted before them and their hearts were moved like the trees of the wood. But, b&s, how stupid were they! look, Isaiah went out and said, 'never mind about Resin, or Pekah the son of Remaliah, look, I'll tell you what they are, they are the tails of two smoking fire brands, and that of course, is rope that is woven tight together, soaked in some combustible material and then lit to form some light or to get some light from it to light other fires. But he said, they're almost gone out; they're burnt right down and they're just a little glowing coal at the end, they're ready to be quenched. They're nothing to worry about! but I'm going to tell you, over and above them is a flood coming'. And to the north of Syria there was a flood, b&s, that when it came, those two tails of smoking firebrands would be quenched like that!, and that's who they had to worry about. And this was the message of Isaiah, they knew nothing of the problem that was coming, and they couldn't see the problem coming because they were blind to the signs of the times!

And so Isaiah worked with his son; he only had one son and he took him with him to bring this message home to Ahaz in the 7th chapter and the 3rd verse, 'Then said Yahweh unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field', and that became, b&s, an historical marker for Hezekiah. A monument to his faith, and just outside the walls of Jerusalem, in the valley of the Kedron on the eastern side of Jerusalem, just up past the stairway which led to David's house, there was an underground spring, called the spring of Gihon, which means to 'gush out' and the Hebrew expression meaning 'to gush out' having a connotation that the water was coming from nowhere, just nowhere, it was a subterranean channel of which the Psalms said, 'there is a subterranean stream the waters thereof shall make glad the city of our God', and that became a monument to Isaiah and to Hezekiah's faith, that there was somebody underneath Jerusalem. Above and below it, in heaven and in earth, b&s, Who had supreme control of the universe, and Who would come forth out of Zion, out of a hidden place and gush forth, unknown to the nation, and it would supply sustenance for that city. And as Isaiah stood there with his boy, Shear-jashub, 'a remnant shall return'; there was a message standing on the top of that spring. Isaiah, the salvation of Yahweh will cause a remnant to return on the basis of something that you people don't comprehend! The powerful, mighty God came into the affairs of mankind mysteriously as it were, and yet that very symbol became a power in the life of Hezekiah who saw the issue; and it was at a highway, b&s, a highway went past that place.

And of course, the spring of Gihon, later on, was taken by Hezekiah and brought down inside the walls, and right down low to the pool of Siloam, almost to the bottom of Zion's slope, and it was conducted down there that it might supply the city in a time of siege; down to Siloam, 'one that is sent' and He who gushed forth from God was One that was sent, Who came, b&s, by the power of the Spirit of God. We don't know how, we can't describe it, but that holy thing that was born of that woman, was the Son of God and is the Son of God and it's He, b&s, Who came from heaven and yet came out of the bowels of his mother, out of the earth as it were, in that wonderful fashion, upon Whom we stand today and defy the world, because we know that there is God's power! And that's what Isaiah was going to tell them, and that's why he said to Ahaz, 'Ask thee a

sign in heaven or in earth?' and where was he standing? Right over the top of that piece of earth that spoke of God's intervention in that mysterious way in the affairs of mankind. But they didn't see that for one minute; they never saw that issue at all, and the highway which lead up past that place to the fuller's field. A fuller's field, just up in the northern section somewhere, we're not told exactly where, but that highway was going up to the fuller's field. And up there to the north tradition has it, there was a field where the fullers went, the laundrymen, to wash their clothes. It was their trade and they took the loads of clothing, the filthy garments of the daughter of Zion, and washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion in the fuller's field; and there was a highway going up there, b&s. It wasn't difficult! if people wanted to go to the fuller's field there was a highway leading to it, and the highway lead through the spring of Gihon on to the cleansing power of God who could wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion; if only Ahaz would come and wash himself clean, he could have that highway!

And there was no obstruction for him, and there was a wonderful message, and what a power that became in the life of Hezekiah as he watched Rabshakeah come up to offer his blasphemous feats before the king, and he stood right on that very spot, and Hezekiah saw the issue very clearly, and defied him on the basis of the very area of ground upon which he was standing, because he saw the issue of that sign, which we will look at more minutely as we come to it. It was a remarkable sign, b&s, and in the 7th chapter of Isaiah, Ahaz was asked to accept this sign. God offered it to him, verse 10, 'Moreover Yahweh spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of Yahweh thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahweh'. The hypocrite! of course, he wouldn't ask, b&s, he wouldn't want to ask for a sign anymore than a brother living two lives in the truth, wants to do his daily readings, because he knows full well when he does them, they will condemn him! No half-hearted Christadelphian wants to go to all the meetings or read the works of the pioneers because they know full well why, because it will condemn them! and only a full-blooded man can go to God and say, 'yes, I want a sign' and be confident that at least he had some opportunity to take the benefit out of that sign; no hypocrite would dare ask because it would reveal him for what he was. And he refused it, and Isaiah said, 'when you refuse the sign then he refused the waters of Shiloah that went softly' and he's talking about that spring of Gihon. So you only have to make the connection in your own mind, what was the sign?

'A virgin would conceive', the waters of Shiloah, there's you're connection, so the virgin conceiving is the waters of Shiloah coming out of the bowels of the earth in a mysterious way, was the strength of Almighty God. And he refused it as Israel after him refused the signs, when the spring gave forth into the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. And they refused that sign too! and didn't comprehend where He came from, and you know, as we move over to the 8th chapter, Isaiah warned them of a greater trouble than the coalition of Syria and Israel. And these words, b&s, were never to be forgotten by Hezekiah and those that follow afterwards, and so in verse 5 of chapter 8, 'Yahweh spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; Now, therefore, behold, Yahweh bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king

of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel'.

And there was the problem, b&s, the mighty problem of Assyria, but do you know something? there was the beginnings in that verse (and this is where it all started from) the promise of deliverance is in those verses. And it was something that Hezekiah was never to forget; and even in the condemnation of Ahaz in the warning of the coming flood, there were words used there, b&s, which were high in hope!

'He shall reach to the neck', in other words, He wouldn't drown them altogether; God would keep their head above water, He would reach for the neck, and as Isaiah unwound his prophecy about the Assyrians, sometimes in plain language, very often in language clouded with ambiguity so that it took a good man to work it out; he worked it out in folds, as he unfolded the revelation of God's deliverance from the Assyrian, and word after word is used, crisis after crisis comes and goes, and always there's that hope! And b&s, I marvelled as I followed this prophecy through, that Isaiah wasn't always specific; he used cloudy language, spiritual language and Hezekiah had a terrific lot to work out, and he worked it out! He prayed to God in certain words, Isaiah picked up his words, took them back to God and said, 'look, he's understood me'. And God said, 'go and tell him this' and He gave him His answer, and you follow it through carefully to see the power of faith in that man's life. It's like studies we're doing today; you don't just sit down and it shoots out at you, you've got to work at them. Work at them for months on end and look at them analytically and carefully as you study the life of this man, to get the benefit out of it. And the revelation comes slowly and painstakingly and beautifully in the finish, and that's what happened to Isaiah. 'He shall reach to the neck' to the neck only; you know, Isaiah, (later on as we shall see, and I'm trying now to just bring it in a broad way so you'll get the excitement of it all), later on Isaiah says 'that when Yahweh brings the Assyrian down in my land, I will take him down to the midst of the neck', and the word in the Hebrew means 'to divide' in other words, I'll cut his head off! He will reach to Judah's neck, but I'll cut his head off, says God, and He did! And he lopped his head off down in the south of Jerusalem somewhere, lopped his head off and the cream of his army were taken overnight but he'd only wash against the walls of Jerusalem, and you know, he did, b&s, and the flood came and inundated the whole land, and 46 cities of Judah fell beneath it, and up the water came. And 46 cities disappeared beneath the water and it came up and slapped against the walls of Jerusalem, receded and was never seen again. And Isaiah was right, he shall reach to the neck! and they were wonderful words of hope, as I say, later on repeated in another context, that Yahweh's judgments wouldn't reach the neck, I'll cut his head off!

Wonderful words, b&s, and if only they could get over those words, and why was it that he could only reach to the neck? What would stop him? what would cause the flood to recede? Verse 10, 'Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word,

and it shall not stand; for Immanuel, El is with us', you see, he can't inundate Judah, there's no power on earth, b&s, that can inundate Judah to the point of drowning, because of Immanuel, and when the great Assyrian, the Russian gog, comes down to the land of Israel which Isaiah and Micah both testify that he will, and we'll show you, b&s, words that say exactly that, that he'll come down into that land, that he'll be the anti-type of this Assyrian, when he comes to inundate, he'll wash his great power against the walls of Jerusalem; the city may be taken for awhile, but he will not drown Israel! Why? because Immanuel, Jesus Christ, will be there, b&s, that's why! and so when the Assyrian was dashing his waters against the walls, who was the man that was going to stop him?

Look what Micah said in his 5th chapter which we've already alluded to, and there was only one man in the primary sense that this prophecy could apply to, and there of course, it only applies to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was this man? We read in the 5th chapter of Micah and verse 5, that when the great Assyrian was to come Micah said, 'And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men' (of whom we'll have something to say at the end of this first study). But for the moment, who do you think they thought he was referring to? Micah the Morasthite who stood up in the days of Hezekiah, b&s, who do you think the people thought he was talking about? This man, and there's only one man to whom that could apply, and that was Hezekiah and there was no other, that could have withstood that Assyrian the way that Hezekiah did!

Now there is the background of the times, that was the buildup that was coming. And then comes the year 732, four years from the time that I've been talking about, and Damascus the capital of Syria fell before Tiglath-pileser the great ruler of the Syrian empire of that age. And Tiglath-pileser moved down from Damascus in Syria and he blotted out the parts of northern Galilee and harassed northern Galilee around Hulah and those areas, and brought tremendous pain and suffering upon the northern kingdom, just north of Samaria. The time now, b&s, is now in the 3rd year of Hoshea king of Israel, the last king of Israel to come upon the throne, Hoshea is up there and he's been reigning three years and now Ahaz is dead and Hezekiah comes to the throne. And there's the background!

And now we'll all take a walk through the countryside of Judah and into the city of Jerusalem through the eyes of Isaiah and Micah. This is what Hezekiah inherited from his father, and you know, b&s, it is absolutely a spine-chilling thing to go through the record of Isaiah like I did, and list down all the things that were going on in the land and in the city at that time after sixteen years of abject apostasy. And Hezekiah inherited the lot! What I intend to do now is give you a word picture, every single word of it is based upon the prophecy of Isaiah and Micah; it will take too long to turn all the references up, I'll try to quote them the best that I know how, but I want you to concentrate and see what sort of country it was, and as we make our way through the hills of Judah towards Jerusalem, whether it be north or south, this is what we see, and this is how the prophets describe it.

We see large country estates, we see several prominent men who've got the country together, and built house to house, joined land to land, says Isaiah, so there was none left, and they walk alone in the middle of the earth. They're able to accumulate the little estates, the little farmlands into vast country estates, and they stood in the centre of that estate, pushed all the other inhabitants out, and they were alone in the world. They had their own kingdom, they were lord of all they surveyed. How did they get it? Isaiah was telling us this from the city; there was a man out in the country that knew more than Isaiah what was going on, and he spoke eloquently, b&s, on how they got that. Not that Isaiah didn't know either, but there was a man out there who suffered from these kings, and these lords and nobles who had bought up the land, and Micah describes what they were doing. He said, at night they lay down on their beds and they weaved the web of intrigue in their mind of iniquity. And they worked out in their beds at night, what they could do tomorrow. In the morning, it is in the power of their hand to accomplish; and why was it in the power of their hand to accomplish? because as Micah points out, they had bribed the nation from head to foot. The judges were bribed, the lawgiver was bribed, the priests were bribed, they were bribed to the hilt, and so they went into the countries, filched the land off the poor folk, dragged them into the city before the land reform committee and they were treated to a shocking injustice, tore up their deeds, bought their country and joined them to their own and so they lived further alone on the earth. That was going on out in the country! and poor Micah, the country prophet so much unlike Isaiah, the city-dweller, the aristocrat; Isaiah the eloquent prophet who dwelt on the other side of the Parathian valley in one of the better parts of the city. A man who, of course, was seen in temples and palaces, a wonderful man, b&s, who understood the powers that be, and there was poor Micah his contemporary, and yet they joined hand in glove. And there was Micah roughly clothed with a very coarse voice as the words of the prophet indicates, and he lived among the common folk and he felt the burden of all that, and he moaned and complained, and there was Isaiah supporting him in the city, and there was an aristocrat and a country dweller, hand in glove, trying to bring about some reform of that situation and that couldn't even dent it.

And Isaiah condemned them, 'woe to them, that inscribe, he says, oppression, that inscribe oppression', they were rhyming out these false deeds, false statements, false legalities, the small print which robbed a man of his land and heritage; this is what was going on out in the country, so that when you passed through the country you went past these vast country estates, and on the perimeters there were folk crowded together in abject poverty. Under the circumstances that was tragic, and there were festering problems there, b&s, because of that, and Ahaz did nothing about that. And as you looked over the hills, on almost every high hill there were green trees, and under every green tree they enflamed themselves with their idols. I'm describing by the way, Isaiah's times or am I? And under every green tree in all the high places of the world, they enflamed themselves with the sexual immoralities of the age, absolute debauchery; that was going on everywhere! They had these abominable feasts where they ate everything they could eat in defiance of Yahweh, the abomination, swine flesh and the mouse. And here are people flaunting, utterly flaunting the ten commandments, because it was great to defy laws! and they were doing it, b&s, to their absolute nth degree, and whilst they're

doing that, the parents are under every green tree enflaming themselves in their permissive society, in defying the Creator, in doing everything opposite to what He said, there were the screams of their children down in the valleys, suffering and being burnt to Molech. This is what was going on, this is what Hezekiah inherited! and in our day and generation, in all the high places of our society, what are the parents doing today? Drinking and making merry, swapping partners, breaking up homes, and the world is full of miserable children, screaming in agony because of the stupidity of parents. That's what is going on in Israel, they're no different, b&s, that's what he inherited!

And you go to the priest for help and Isaiah opens the doors in his 28th chapter (and I don't want you to turn it up, I want you to listen to me, because I'm quoting) he opens the doors, and there's a priest to look at; he staggers out and you look at his table, and he's vomited all over it, drunk as a fool, and you try and teach him a lesson and say, 'look, there are certain morals!' 'Ahah, hah! who do you think you're going to teach? Line upon line, here a little, there a little, who do you think he's teaching?' And you can hear those words, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, they're not words indicating how we learned the bible bit by bit, but they are a drunken ditty, b&s, in the Hebrew, a stammered drunken ditty of men saying, we don't want to do anything else but the milk of the Word. Do you think you're going to teach us to eat meat? We're not interested in the deep things of God; I got to get back to me bottle of wine, and booze everywhere and vomit all over his table. That's the priesthood! that's how Isaiah described it and if you think that description is extravagant, read it for yourself, I'm repeating no more than what he is saying, but I've just put it in terms that you might understand.

And we enter into the city of Jerusalem. And how does Isaiah see that? We're coming out of the country, we walk in the city of Jerusalem, what would you expect to see in the streets? I'll tell you what you'll see in the streets, rows upon rows of pretty girls with their necks stretched up high, and their noses straight up in the air. Hawking in their beauty, flamboyant in their attitude, absolutely arrogant! and clothed from head to foot (about 4 or 5 verses to describe the ornaments they wore) with ornaments, so that when they walked says Isaiah, 'they tingled like a band' and they were the daughters of the rich. The daughters of Zion, he calls them, the daughters of Zion he called them. The daughters of Zion, b&s, and absolutely dressed to the height of the fashion, mincing as they go and deceiving with their eyes. And the streets of Jerusalem were filled with them, and he says, 'I'll strip you naked and stand you out before all men with not a stitch on you'; he warned them, b&s. And look at our world! this is what Hezekiah inherited from his dad, I tell you, it's absolutely incredible.

We'll go in a shop through Micah's words; well it's to buy something and if we look over the counter and underneath the counter where the shopkeeper was, as Micah describes him, underneath there he's got all these weights, b&s, and they're all weighted against you. He's got a bag of weights, everyone of them is deceitful; he's a crook! and he's taking you down, lock, stock and barrel with his crook dealings. And every storekeeper in the city was like that, says Micah. He was a terrific guy!

We look up a dark alley through Isaiah the prophet, and up in the dark alley where the shadows of the buildings fell together, we listen and we here the chirping of a bird, a whistle, a peep, a low mourn, a mutter. They're heathens, heathens practicing inside God's temple; as far as the Law and the testimony was concerned, who needs the Law and testimony? who needs the scriptures when we've got psychiatrists to do it for us, who needs....when we can go to a psychologist who'd talk absolute dribble and yet that's where they were going. Wizards, and you know, b&s, because iniquity abounded, the love of many waxed cold. And Micah takes us not into the kingdom, not into the country, not into the priests, but he opens the door unto a farmhouse. And he says, 'there's a father in there, a husband and his wife, they don't even talk to each other in bed; but when his wife lies in bed with a heavy bosom, he dared not say too much to her, for she will betray him; that was family life in Israel! And he says, a man kept his mouth shut in his own home because it was shot through with intrigue; and he says a father betrays the son, and the son the father. And he said, 'A man's enemies were those of his own house'; ever seen a home like that? where suspicion hangs in the air like a fog that you can almost feel it? Where there's fire and sparks ready to go, b&s, when the least word is picked up and taken wrong, perverted, twisted, pointed, sharpened, clash, bang? where you dare not open your mouth in case you're misunderstood? That's family life! that's how Micah saw family life in Israel and that's what Hezekiah inherited!

And our journey in the city brings us at last to the climatic point, to the temple! We go through the outer court, (these are through the words of Isaiah and the book of Kings) and what do we see? We look straight ahead of us, and standing in the court was an object that was obviously not made in Israel, it's got a foreign nature marked all over it; it's weird, it's wonderful, it doesn't make any sense, there's no significance to it, it's one of those modern sculptures, b&s, that you absolutely abhor and shudder at, and it's standing in the place of God's altar, and where's God's altar? Shoved out of sight almost into the northeastern corner, covered in dust! And this weird and wonderful object imported from Syria standing in the front of God's temple, right inside the main gate. And we look a bit further to our left, and we see an amazing sight! for there's the great sea, the great laver that Solomon made, upon the backs of the 12 oxen of Israel, it's been taken off the backs of the oxen and dumped on the ground; and the oxen are gone! And there lying on the ground, b&s, grotesquely out of proportion to the original building, was the glorious laver that Yahweh commanded Israel to 'wash and be clean', that they might cause the oxen of God's tribes to work in His service, clean and right and proper, and it's been dumped on the ground and the oxen of Israel have gone out, and they've gone wild. That's what greets you on the left hand side! And if you want to look into the temple, you've got to get a ladder, because the doors are locked; and if we got a ladder, to go to Isaiah's eyes and look into that temple, and peered over the top of one of the windows, we'd see inside Yahweh's vessels sliced up and scattered all over the place. Ducks and filth all over the place, utter filth covering the floors and splashed on the walls and desecrating all the glorious curtains. And that's what Hezekiah inherited from his dad! And when he came upon the throne, that's what confronted him. How would you deal with it?

You know, he didn't know what to do, and you know, b&s, it wasn't Hezekiah who started the cleanup. Do you know who it was? Well, it wasn't Isaiah either, one day, it wasn't long in the first year of his reign, perhaps on the very first day of his reign, very early because he started on the first day, Hezekiah had no sooner been installed as king, than bursting into the city came this ragged, unkempt, hard prophet, Micah the Morasthite, and he comes tramping into that city, and indites the whole nation. And the king stands aghast at him, listening to him; and this is what he's saying, he said 'this place is absolutely doomed; the priests aren't priests in God's name, they do it for hire'. The judges are bribed, all the riches of this city wherever it is, inside of individual pockets have been put there at the cost of the blood of the poor. Well, he says, what have you done? You've filched all the land from our people, they're out there with no where to plow! So you know what Yahweh's going to do? (And you can see the Hezekiah looking at him) What's Yahweh going to do? well, Yahweh's going to use this city as a field. You've taken my fields, He wants this one! For your sakes, Jerusalem shall be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall be made heaps, and become as the high places of the forest.' Micah walked out of the city!

Hezekiah was absolutely transfixed; he knew, b&s, that Micah was right and he took the words to heart and he set to work and cleaned the whole mess up. And do you know, that within 16 days he the temple looking like a new pin, and by the seventh month of that year he had the whole of Judah reorganized. All because of the voice of the country prophet! And how do we know that it was Micah that did it? because Jeremiah said that in his 26th chapter, what an amazing thing, that it took the country prophet, b&s, to bring the whole nation to order! It was Micah's words which not only caused Hezekiah to get going but it saved the life of Jeremiah himself. In verse 17 of Jeremiah 26, 'Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Yahweh of armies, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear Yahweh, and besought Yahweh, and Yahweh repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls'. Did Hezekiah reject him? said the men of Jeremiah's day, did he reject him? NO, HE DID NOT! Did he take ordering? YES HE DID, b&s, and he went and fell before his God and he prayed earnestly that God might forgive the whole nation, the voice of the country prophet, not Isaiah's eloquent voice, b&s, not the golden voice of the aristocrat who dwelt in the secular part of the city, no, but the rough coarse voice of that prophet out of the country, who shook the foundations of the earth that day and the great king was charged upon a course of reform by that voice, and the voice which said, 'I want this city for a field because you've ripped off mine', and he went to work and reformed the whole nation on the basis of that.

You know, Isaiah had said, 'lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their sins', and Micah did! In his 3rd chapter, I believe the very words indicate a collaboration between the two prophets. Isaiah had said, 'lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their sins and Jacob his transgression' and Micah takes up that very phrase

in the 3rd chapter and in verse 8, he says, 'I truly am full of power by the spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin'. So that's the very words of Isaiah, and they clearly indicate a collaboration between the two prophets and he adds to the call of Isaiah; and Isaiah's eloquence, b&s, as powerful as it was before and after Micah, couldn't effect what Micah effected because of the stark reality that he presented to the king. And standing before the king, was a representative of all those people who had suffered the wrong at the hands of the heads of Judah. You know, my heart goes out to Micah and Hezekiah on this occasion, as the king stood there in his regalia no doubt, looking at this rough prophet and the very words he was using, Hezekiah could see the tears streaming from his eyes, he would see the heartache, b&s, written all over his face, 'you've filched our lands, we've lost everything we've got, well, Yahweh's going to take yours and He's going to make it into a farm, that we've been losing'. And watching him and knowing the pathos that that man presented, representing his people as he stood there in all his poverty; the king responded as ever he did, b&s, to a humble appeal from anyone, and responded in a most remarkable fashion.

And all I want to do now, is take the first few verses of 2 Chronicles 29, which will bring us to a climatic point, that we may complete the overall look of the times and the way in which this reformation got underway. In 2 Chronicles 29 we read verse 3, 'He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Yahweh and repaired them'. And if you look at verse 17, 'they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Yahweh: so they sanctified the house of Yahweh in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end'. So you see, b&s, Hezekiah's reign must have started either on or just before the first day of the year, the religious year! the year of the Passover, the month Abib. Isn't that wonderful? it's as if a chapter had closed, as if a chapter of darkness, a history of darkness had come to an end, and the first day, a brand new year, Hezekiah charged into that reform; in 16 days it was all over. He repaired the doors of the temple, do you know what he did to the temple? We know what he did! The word 'repair' means 'to seize with strength' he went and got those doors, opened them and then strengthened them, do you know how he did it? It says in 2 Kings 18 (which we won't turn to now) he covered them with gold, and the reason he did that, b&s, was because they originally were covered with gold and Ahaz had stripped the gold off them. And doors covered with gold were now the doors of faith, and he opened the doors of faith for Judah. That's what he did! he strengthened the doors of faith. He got all the priests and Levites, in verse 4, and he spoke to them, he didn't get a response from the priests like he got from the Levites; verse 34 of this chapter tells us, 'the priests were too few so they could not flay all the burnt offerings; wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them until the work was ended and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests'. And it was true, b&s, and why was it true? because it was Urijah the priest who helped Ahaz bring in that Syrian altar and replace Yahweh's altar. He helped him do that, and it was evident that Ahaz had penetrated the priesthood, but the Levites were not penetrated, b&s, and do you know the difference between the Levites and the priests? It wasn't that the Levite was lesser so much, (so he was), but that's not the

point of difference that I mean. The difference between the Levite and the priest was this, that if you went to Jerusalem to make a sacrifice and when you got there, the priest was ready to greet you and to make your sacrifice for you; but before you ever came to Jerusalem to make that sacrifice, you had to understand what it means. And that was taught you in your hometown by the Levites, they were the students of the Word, called in the book of Chronicles 'teaching priests'. Hezekiah knew their value, and they were the ones, when they saw a good lead, followed it, because they were the students of the Word. And they were more upright than the priests; and he got them all together and he got them into the east street as we read in verse 4, which is a great open square before the temple. A scene of great and tragic events, b&s, Hezekiah knew what he was doing! and he brought all the Levites and priests into the great open square before the temple. Do you know what that square had seen in previous history? it had seen Ezra stand up there, it had seen him stand up there weeping over the apostasy in Israel. It had witnessed him come back there, b&s, and saw him stand up and read the book of God before all the people in the open square, so that when Ezra opened the book, the whole congregation stood to their feet because he was the book, he was a living manifestation of it! It was that square that saw Nehemiah organizing great feats of the tabernacle; Hezekiah knew what he was doing, and when he stood them there, there was history under their feet! and they were surrounded by it, and they were the centre of that temple. And he said, 'we've got to do something about this!' and the Levites' hearts burned within them, and they got the words (and now we'll have to be very broad in what we do here) but what they did was this, they divided into their two groups, the Levites and the priests; the priests went into the temple for 8 days where the Levites were not permitted to go; they brought all the filth out, gave it to the Levites in the court, they carried it further out and dumped it in the brook Kedron. And that's how the work went on for 8 days, filth pouring out of that temple, giving it to the Levites who poured it into the brook Kedron, and they combined together in the court, and came out of the doors of the house into the court, and together they cleaned the outer court. Sixteen days and it was all over; too late!

There were two principles of circumcision, they cut the filth off that place and the 8th day as always, b&s, always stood in the Law for a new beginning. The 8th day of a baby's life, a baby boy's life was a new beginning, there was a sharp cut in his life, and filth went by the board and he stood there, symbolically set before God as one whose life would be a walk in cleanliness; and there were two lots of 8, and they cut that filth out of God's house and flung it into the valley of the Kedron, a valley which means 'ashy and dark and gloomy'. And it's a word used for 'mourning' and all that sort of things, and the wonderful part about it is this, b&s, the very word which is used here in verse 5 for 'filthiness', (now this is a very interesting matter), when they carried forth the 'filthiness' out of the holy place, you know that very word is used almost exclusively in the Law for 'personal hygiene and uncleanness'. Matters of personal uncleanness, not used so much of material matter but of personal matter; and what they carried out of that temple was the personal filthiness of the men of Judah under Ahaz. The apostle Paul tells us, doesn't he, that 'we are the temple of the living God' and you know, when they carried that filthiness out of that temple, we read in verse 6, 'that they did so because of the habitation of Yahweh'. Yahweh dwelt there and Paul again tells the Ephesians 'that we're built upon the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, that we

might form a habitation with the Spirit', and it's the personal uncleanness in our lives, b&s, that's got to be sliced out sharply and thrown into a dark place, that God might dwell with us through the power of His spirit Word. You know, they weren't really cleansing brick and mortar, they were slicing hearts and washing souls; they were getting ready for Yahweh to come back and live with His people.

And in verse 7, notice what it says, 'that Ahaz had shut the doors, put out the lamps, cease to offer incense and burnt offerings unto the God of Israel'. Notice what he'd done, he shut the doors, put out the lamps, not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings; what's so peculiar about those four things? B&S, those 4 things in Israel were daily occurrences, every morning they opened the doors of the temple, every morning they lit the lamps, every morning they burnt incense, and every morning and evening they burnt offerings upon the altar. They were daily occurrences in Israel and they had ceased to be the practice of the nation; every morning of our life we've got to open the doors of our hearts, light the lamps of desire of the truth through the power of His Word, offer unto God prayer and dedicate ourselves to the truth, everyday of our life it should happen. And they were the daily occurrences in Israel, all mentioned in one verse, put together there, and they had ceased to offer to the God of Israel, because there was a Syrian altar there.

And the God of Israel, b&s, was forgotten, and Hezekiah is going to change it all, and he appeals in verse 8, 'Wherefore the wrath of Yahweh was upon Judah and Jerusalem; and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes', and you go back to the tragic circumstances which I've just related, but Hezekiah is not referring to them, (we haven't got time now, but in 2 Chronicles 28 verses 5, 6, 8 and 17 there are 4 great tragedies which are described which overtook Ahaz and his people). They were dragged off to captivity by Syria, they were dragged off to captivity by their own brethren, 200,000 of them, they were dragged off to captivity by the Edomites, they were dragged off to captivity by the Assyrians; those things had already happened in Judah. The warnings were coming thick and fast, and Hezekiah says, 'look, I'm making an appeal to you, brethren, you brethren who study the Word of God, look, the signs of the times are more than signs, they're with us! Look with your eyes, open your eyes, b&s, they're here! we don't have to read the Word of God, we know full well the circumstances of our lives, we can see what's going on in the high places under the green trees. We know that there are wizards amongst us, we know that there are problems everywhere, we can see family life under the battering ram, we can see all of these things. We can see all of these things, it's not a question of reading the bible and saying Jesus Christ said; it's here! And he told them, 'open your eyes' and there was the tragic circumstances for all to see, and he appealed to those brethren, and he said, 'as for me' in verse 10, 'it is in my heart to make a covenant with Yahweh Elohim of Israel!'; whose words are they? They're David's words, 'it was in my heart, David said to all Israel, to build a house for Yahweh my God'; it was in my heart to do this, in was in my heart to do that; he's quoting David's words, see, there's his father! He's the son of David, it was in my heart, a wonderful expression, to build a house for Yahweh Elohim of Israel. You wait till we come to chapter 30, and watch the repetition of that! Yahweh Elohim of our fathers, Yahweh Elohim of Israel, Yahweh Elohim, and it

goes on about 8 or 9 times in a few verses, b&s, because Hezekiah was setting before them, the foundations of that nation; what he's saying to the brethren is this, 'we've had enough of this rubbish; we've had enough of the filth, of the frivolities, the ecclesia is sick to death of frivolity, we want the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith which speaks about the promises made to the fathers, and the good old wholesome sound simple profound doctrines of the Christadelphian brotherhood, and we want nothing else!' That's what he was telling them, Yahweh Elohim of Israel; and that conjured up for them, b&s, all over that nation, all it stood for, and that was repeated over and over and over again, as he went through that reformation. Look, it's remarkable how that's repeated because it was the truth and nothing but the truth that he wanted.

And you know, in encouraging those brethren he called them in verse 11, 'my sons'. He's 25, he's 25 years old, 'my sons', and you know, I believe, they accepted him as their father; 25, is there a brother in our meeting here at Glenlock at the age of 25, who could call responsible brethren together in an ecclesia and appeal to them as 'their father'? What are brethren doing at the age of 25? My observation tells me, a lot of them, precious little! Robert Roberts at the age of 14 had read and understood Elpis Israel, when he was 25 that would have been 9 years later, right, 11 years later, he could have gone to brethren at the age of 25 and called them 'my sons'. We live in a different age, are we? You know, there's a fantastic exhortation in that, 'my sons', and I'll tell you something, b&s, he's 25 years old but he knows his bible through and through and through, because I want to show you what he did to the Levites, I want to show you the basis of his appeal. Listen, he says 'my sons, be not now negligent: for Yahweh hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him and that ye should minister unto Him, and burn incense'. Now I'll read that again, 'my sons, be not now (the margin) deceived: for Yahweh hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him and that ye should minister unto Him, and burn incense'. Now if you look at verse 5 you'll see he's been talking to the Levites, wherever did you read in the bible that Levites burn incense? They don't! that's the prerogative of the priests alone; he is certainly their father because he's talking to them, b&s, about privileges that they've been given over and above what they started with. And I'll tell you something, he's not telling them privileges because he feels authorized to do it; do you know what he's doing? he is quoting almost verbatim the words of Moses. This is not a man, b&s, who is just overcome with a zeal without knowledge; we're going to learn about Hezekiah later on and the people quoting him and saying, 'oh, you know, Hezekiah, he did things other than the letter of the Law!' I'll tell you something, b&s, there was not a king in Israel that I laid my eyes on ever, that kept the Law meticulously like he did; and here he's quoting the words of Moses and he's quoting them very carefully. In the 10th chapter of Deuteronomy, you look at it, and here's the context of his words, and the Levites would have seen the issue, I believe, at what he was getting at, and he was quoting these words to them as their father. 'Be not deceived, he told them, now before I read these words to you, b&s, just bear those words in mind, 'be not deceived'.

Now what would that have done to a Levite? When was the occasion when Levi was not deceived? See, I want you to appreciate what we've got before us in Hezekiah, I've never appreciated him like I do today, I never did! I have a towering admiration for him

because not only the big things that which we all know so well, but so many little things have come to my attention, that show that this man had a fantastic understanding; you see, he knew full well that there was a place in history where the Levites were not deceived. When was that? The golden calf, remember? And they were not deceived on that occasion, and as a result of that they got their great privilege. Now Moses reiterates that in the 10th chapter of Deuteronomy and verse 8, and speaking about the incident of the golden calf, he says, 'at that time Yahweh separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh,(and here's the words of Hezekiah) to stand before Yahweh to minister unto Him (and then said Moses) to bless in His name', and that wasn't the prerogative of Levi either, because the priests alone blessed in Yahweh's name. And Hezekiah quotes the words of Moses and instead of saying 'bless in His name', he said, 'burn incense', because he saw the relationship of those two privileges. And you know, b&s, as the Levites grew up before God, and the priests degenerated, you find when you come to 2 Chronicles and the life of Hezekiah and on to Josiah, the Levites are taking more, and more and more of the responsibilities of the priests. And there is Hezekiah standing up and quoting the words of Moses which show the Levites stepping on to higher levels, and he said, 'don't be deceived'. You see, there's an intelligent appeal, an appeal to those that knew the Word, knew the circumstances, knew the privileges, and that would have had a tremendous impact upon those students of the Word, and they would have seen what he was saying there, the words of a very wise man!

And finally in 2 Chronicles 29, b&s, in verses 12 to 14, we come to the last point I want to make, which I hope will set the whole background to our study of the life of Hezekiah. From verses 12 to 14 we have 7 men (I'm not going to take them one by one, I'm just going to talk about them in general) 7 men that Hezekiah appointed to help him in the work that was before him, and it was a massive work! Do you know who they were? There were 6 men first of all, and they were chosen from the great families of Levi, Kohath, Merari and Gershon; they were the three great divisions of Levi, the three families. There's two out of each division and because they were heads of their families, he called them 'my sons'; and by so doing, I believe b&s, he linked himself with those 6 Levites, making 7 in all.

Then he took 8 men, 4 pairs of twos, and they were principal men out of the big families among the families of the Levites. Out of Heman, Asaph and Elizaphan and Jeduthun and they were the big important families in the Levitical tribe and he took two men and they were principal men out of the four families of the Levites. He had before him 14 men, himself making the 15th, and there were there 7 shepherds and 8 principal men, and Micah the prophet when the whole nation trembled in terror before the Assyrians said, 'this man shall be the peace' when the Assyrians were in our land and we were laid up against him, 7 seven shepherds and 8 principal men' and then they asked. And do you know what, b&s, those 15 men forming a tight little group in the middle of that nation, branched out, grabbed hold of the doors and seized them with strength, clothed them with gold, opened them up for the nation to come through the doors of faith; cleansed the whole temple, stood resolutely behind the walls of Jerusalem to fight the Assyrian, and became the ambassadors of peace throughout the whole earth. That's

what they did! and they carried it out until Hezekiah's name was honoured in the recognized world for those 15 men. And Micah saw them as the core of the nation. If only we had 15 men like that, with Hezekiah at the helm, b&s, wouldn't we be able to withstand all the fiery darts of the wicked, and change the course of history? 'Who trusted in Yahweh like no other king before or after him'.