



*Resurrection - even when the world seems to be spiraling out of control ...*

When we look at the events unfolding around us—the war in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, armed conflicts on nearly every continent, economic upheavals, the energy crisis, spiraling prices, and, not to mention, the climate crisis with all its negative consequences—how can we possibly celebrate Resurrection? What gives us hope in the face of all this?

So I decided not to focus this time on the traditional story of Jesus’ resurrection, which is, of course, central to the Easter celebrations, but rather to look a little deeper into the Bible for a comparable situation. In doing so, I came across the story of Hezekiah, whom we encounter in the Old Testament, in the

Second Book of Kings and the First Book of Chronicles. Hezekiah was king of the small state of Judah around 700 B.C. The picture that emerges is similar to today’s, for everything around him indicates that the world has been thrown into chaos. The upheavals make what his predecessors on the throne of Jerusalem had to contend with seem like child’s play. Judah and the other states in the region see a steamroller bearing down on them, threatening to flatten everything that had endured for centuries.

What happened? The Assyrians established an empire in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). There, their cruelty (what we now recognize as the first form of terrorist propaganda) struck terror into the hearts of the entire region. They launched an advance toward the southwest. The army of the Assyrian Great King not only forced tribute payments from the subjugated neighbors but also deported a large portion of the population of the defeated states and settled foreigners in their place. This fate had already befallen the state of Israel, which borders Judah to the north (see 2 Kings, chapter 17). The fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. resulted in thousands of Israelites fleeing from the Northern Kingdom toward Judah.



Judah, situated in the hill country around Jerusalem, is significantly smaller than Israel. But how could Hezekiah possibly stop this onslaught? He hopes that Egypt, the powerful neighbor to the south, will stand up to the aggressor. Yet the people of Judah know that their king, Hezekiah, while forced to navigate between the great powers, always places his trust in Yahweh. He clings to the God of the Israelites, who brought glory to his ancestors David and Solomon and stability to the land. And he does so with unwavering consistency: Hezekiah has carried out a religious reform in which the high places were abolished and the maseboth (stone monuments) and asheroth (cultic poles) were destroyed. Even the “bronze serpent” Neḥushtan ([Num](#) 21:4–9), which can be traced back to Moses, was smashed to pieces. Thus, space is made solely for the

worship of Yahweh in the central sanctuary in Jerusalem, and his commandments serve as the guiding principle for politics.

Refugees from the neighboring country are swelling Jerusalem’s population. But the city’s golden age is over. After a decade on the throne, Hezekiah dares to reject the Assyrians’ audacious demands. In doing so, he provokes a punitive campaign. The Assyrian king Sennacherib sends troops; they conquer and plunder the fortified cities of Judah. And then the noose tightens.

Hezekiah hands over all his reserves of gold and silver—even the fittings of the newly renovated temple. Yet this does not prevent the Assyrians from demonstrating their power. Sennacherib challenges Hezekiah, claiming he could not even field 2,000 horsemen even if he were given that many horses. “Trust in your god Yahweh will bring Hezekiah no success,” a high official sneers in the local language before Jerusalem’s city walls, demanding the city’s surrender.

So what is to be done? When Hezekiah hears of the insults and the contempt he has been shown, he tears his clothes, puts on a mourning garment (a sackcloth), and prays to God. The prophet Isaiah, when consulted by him, encourages him not to be afraid and to trust in Yahweh even in this seemingly hopeless situation. “Thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not enter this city... I will protect this city and save it” (2 Kings 19:32–34). And this is indeed what happens: The following night—the Bible attributes this to the work of Yahweh’s angel—185,000 men die in the Assyrian camp. This biblical account is linked to Herodotus’s report, which blamed a plague of mice for the soldiers’ deaths. Some modern authors and scholars see this as an indication of a plague (the Black Death).

In any case, King Sennacherib is forced to abandon the siege and ends his campaign.

Hezekiah, however, impresses as a statesman through his integrity. From the beginning of his reign, he has remained faithful to God and, through his personal example, has guided his people to trust in Him. Nevertheless, he finds himself in a tight spot. In the midst of dire straits, he holds fast to his trust and does not falter. It is not a time for surrender, but for faith and hope. In the worst crisis, God stands behind Hezekiah and shows him: Trust is worth it. – This is true today as well, for precarious situations of every kind.

Like so many others, this Old Testament story shows that we can trust in God, no matter what may come. He gives us hope and instills confidence in us; however, we must not assume that this happens in the way we, out of short-sightedness—because we cannot help ourselves—hope and dream it will. We must surrender to His providence, which may not be immediately recognizable as such. One thing is certain: only through Him is resurrection possible and attainable for us.



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