

# ***The Story Adult Study Guide***

For the Week of January 26, 2020

## THE STORY

### Chapter 16: “The Beginning of the End (of the Kingdom of Israel)”



Key Events: the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah, Assyria threatens Judah, the ministry of the prophet Isaiah

Key Characters: Hoshea, Hezekiah, Isaiah (see page 491 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: 2 Kings 17-19; Isaiah 3, 6, 13-14, 49, 53

Note on page 219: The Assyrian Empire invaded the region during the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Assyrians were known for their massive well-equipped armies, siege methods and equipment, a ruthless style of warfare, and psychological terror.

1. Hezekiah became king of Judah during the final years of the northern kingdom of Israel. After witnessing the defeat of Israel when King Hoshea rebelled against Assyria, why did Hezekiah rebel (top of page 221)?
2. Consider the Assyrian officials' demand for Judah's surrender on pages 221-222. In what ways was Hezekiah's leadership severely tested?
3. Read about Hezekiah's reaction to Sennacherib's letter (bottom of page 222 "Hezekiah received the letter . . ." to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on page 223 ". . . you alone, Lord, are God"). What lessons can we learn from Hezekiah when dealing with threats and challenges in our lives?
4. Chapter 16 includes passages from the prophet Isaiah, who served as God's messenger to Judah prior to and during the reign of King Hezekiah. Through Isaiah, God warned Judah and predicted events that would take place after the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah. Identify these predictions.
  - Pages 225 (bottom) and 226 (Isaiah 3, 13) = God's judgment
  - Page 226 (bottom) to page 228 (Isaiah 14, 49) = God's mercy
  - Page 228 (bottom) to page 230 (Isaiah 53) = God's salvation promise fulfilled (Pick out and discuss details of this Messianic prophecy.)
5. How should we view God's discipline? How should we react to it? Read Hebrews 12.

<sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the

Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

6. Other thoughts and comments? Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 16.

### Prayer Suggestions

- Pray for an understanding and willing spirit to receive God’s correction and discipline.
- Praise and thank Jesus our Savior for bringing salvation and hope to a lost world.

### Study Guide Helps

1. Hezekiah’s courage to rebel came from the Lord; he put his entire trust in God to protect and deliver them. Rebellion also played a role in Hezekiah’s reform program in Judah to remove any and all forms of idolatry. As a vassal to Assyria, Judah was forced to recognize Assyrian deities. Refusing to pay tribute and severing ties with Assyria was a proclamation that Judah would serve God only and follow his commands. There was no compromise when it came to their allegiance to the true God of Israel.

2. Judah faced humanly impossible odds. Hezekiah likely experienced an internal battle between mind (human reason) and heart (trust in God). The Assyrian officials, speaking in Hebrew for all the people to hear, tried to drive a wedge between the king and his subjects. Hezekiah needed to display a resolve and commitment to the Lord in order to boost the morale and faith of his people. The Bible account does not describe any kind of mutiny or dissent among the people, which indicates that Hezekiah’s leadership had properly prepared the people to face this threat and remain faithful to God and his promises.

3. (Read the two paragraphs outloud.) Hezekiah faced incredible pressure, but the Lord empowered him to react as a child of God should: 1) He acknowledged the gravity of the situation, dealt with the challenge head-on, and didn’t shirk his duty; 2) in humbleness, he immediately turned to the Lord in prayer and poured himself out to God; 3) he expressed firm confidence that God would grant his almighty help; 4) he asked for a deliverance that would reveal God’s glory to all. What Hezekiah DIDN’T do is noteworthy: he didn’t complain against, blame, or criticize God for the situation.

4. Under Hezekiah’s leadership, Judah was faithful to God and God blessed them. Unfortunately, the kings that followed Hezekiah were evil and led the people into idolatry (with the exception of one faithful king, Josiah).

- Predictions on pages 225-226: Due to unfaithfulness and disobedience, Judah will fall and its leaders will be taken away by death or deportation (Is. 3); a foreign power (Babylon) will rise and serve as God’s instrument of judgment against Judah (Is. 13).
- Predictions on pages 226-228: After a period of captivity (in Babylon), God will have compassion on Judah and return them to their homeland to rebuild their nation; Babylon will fall to bring about this restoration (Is. 14); a Messianic prophecy – God will keep/fulfill his covenant and redeem Israel, bringing about “the day of salvation”; the Savior and Redeemer of the world will be revealed (Is. 49).
- Predictions on pages 226-228: Participants can discuss these famous prophecy statements from Is. 53. The Savior’s beginnings will be humble; nothing will mark him as the king. Words like *despised, rejected, pain, suffering, punished, afflicted, pierced, crushed,* and *wounds* describe the nature of his sacrifice, and the debt that had to be paid in order to atone for the sins of the world. *For the transgressions of my people he was punished and his life an offering for sin* = Jesus will be mankind’s substitute to carry their sin and take on their punishment. *After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied* = a resurrection prediction. *I will give him a portion among the great* = the Savior will be exalted and glorified through his suffering, death and resurrection.

5. God disciplines through the hardships, sufferings, and persecutions we experience in life. His discipline is done out of love to provide direction and correction, to lead us to rely on him and his Word – through God’s law and gospel we mature spiritually and build perseverance. Although painful, we are to accept God’s discipline submissively and humbly. When sin is involved, we yield to God’s rod and repent.

6. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 16 that relate to our daily walk of faith.