Hezekiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah. His special distinction was that “He trusted in Jehovah, God of Israel.” (2 Kings 18:5) From his weak and unprincipled father Ahaz, he inherited not only a disorganized realm, but a grievous burden of Assyrian dominance and tribute. When he came to the throne, he instituted the following reforms:

1. The opening and cleansing of the Temple which his father had left closed and desecrated.
2. Appointed a Passover observance, on a scale unknown since Solomon.
3. Designed a religious reunion of the devout minded in all Israel.
4. Effected the demolition of the high places, and breaking down of the pillars, and the fell of sacred groves which were symbols of a debasing nature cult.
5. His reign marked with a steadfast trust in Jehovah alone, and of abstinence from revolt and entangling alliances with foreign powers.
6. His zeal for pure worship and just domestic administration made him a wise and sagacious prince over the whole realm.

The Sickness of Hezekiah

He was “Sick unto death...” i.e. he was very sick and he would die without divine intervention. He was told to “set thin house in order”, i.e. get ready to die. The message was delivered by Isaiah. When he received it, he turned his face to the wall and prayed. This may be an indication that he was too sick to leave his bed. He reminded the Lord of his faithfulness and begged for his life. Isaiah had scarcely reached the center of the city after delivering the message, when God stopped him, telling him to return. Verse 6 seems to imply that his illness occurred in the course of the disturbances from Assyria. The exact date is not clear. At any rate, God assures him of 15 more years. He was suffering from a boil or inflammatory ulcer. It could have been the plague, cancer, or some such illness. He was instructed to place a clump of figs on the boil. Perhaps there are some medical qualities in figs, yet they alone would not have cured a malignant infection. Here we have God combining human and superhuman means to effect a result. This should be a lesson for us
today, when praying for an incurable illness. We pray and use the means available and trust God for the outcome. He asked Isaiah, “what is the sign that the Lord will heal me?” The prophet replied, the sign is: “shall the shadow go forward 10 degrees or backward 10 degrees?” The reference here is to a sun dial of sorts. The word literally refers to a “stair”, “step”, or “story”. Smith’s Bible Dictionary says, “An instrument for showing the time of day from the shadow or a style or gnomon on a graduated arc or surface. It is probably that the dial of Ahaz was really a series of steps or stairs, and that the shadow (perhaps of some column or obelisk on the top) fell on a greater or smaller number of them according as the sun was low or high. For the shadow to go suddenly in either direction would require a miracle. Yet, Hezekiah was told to suggest which direction. He said it is a “light thing” which means an easy thing for the shadow to go downward. That would indicate the hastening onward of time. The going backward would be the retracing of time, which Hezekiah thought would be the greater miracle. So that is what he asked for, “that the shadow go backward ten steps.” In answer to the prayer of Isaiah, the shadow went back 10 steps or degrees, a miracle with no logical explanation.

A. Hezekiah’s House Was Out of Order.

The fact that he was told to put his house in order is evidence that it was out of order. So long as there is sin in our lives, they are out of order. “All have sinned.” (Romans 3:23) “The scripture hath confined all under sin” (Galatians 3:22) “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:10) Sin separates from God. (Isaiah 59:1-2) “your sins have separated between you and God.” “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” (Proverbs 5:22) The very nature of sin causes our lives to exist in a state of disorder. Because of this, people need to rearrange their lives by getting rid of sin. One can never be what he/she should be so long as sin is there. All the blocks can be neatly arranged, i.e. education, job, money, houses, land, fane, etc., but with sin present, the life cannot be complete.

B. Hezekiah Was Personally Responsible to Set His House in Order.

Isaiah could not do it for him. He alone was responsible. Each of us are personally responsible for our own sins. (Ezekiel 18:4) “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” We can’t blame our parents, spouse, government or job. We are each responsible. (Romans 14:12) “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” This passage emphasizes personal responsibility in view of personal accountability. (Romans 2:6) “God will render to every man according to his deeds.” One can never set his house in order unless he accepts personal responsibility for his conduct. I cannot control what others do to me, but I can control how I react to what they do.
C. In View of Death, Hezekiah Needed to Set His House in Order.

“Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.” As sure as Hezekiah would die, so will we all. Death is inevitable. It’s a fact that cannot be denied, an event that cannot be avoided. In 2 Samuel 14:14, the woman of Tekoah said, “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” (Ecclesiastes 3:2) “A time to be born, and time to die”… “For all the living know that they shall die.” (Hebrews 9:27) “And it is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment.” We cannot set our houses in order after we die. (Ecclesiastes 11:3) “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be.” We cannot change our state after death. Our destiny is sealed at that time.

D. One’s House Must Be Set in Order Before He Dies.

All that we do in this life must be done before death. After death, we cannot learn the truth. If you don’t know what is right, you need to learn now. Many don’t seem to care. They are not interested in study or learning the truth. After death, we cannot obey the gospel; no invitation songs on the other side of the river; no gospel meetings. You must take the steps that put you into Christ today, while you are alive. After death, you cannot assemble with the saints to break bread. Many are careless and negligent in this regard. They let little things keep them away from the services of the church. (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7) After death, you cannot “give as you have been prospered.” Some today try and cheat God. They rob him by failing to give back to Him. (Malachi 3:8) “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me, But you say In what way have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings.” We are to give liberally, cheerfully, as prospered. Some need to set their house in order in this regard. After death, you cannot seek first the kingdom. (Matthew 6:33) With some, the church is an afterthought, a step-child. Far too many let things come between them and the church – jobs, recreation, vacations, worldly friends, appointments with men and things of this nature. These should be secondary, not primary in our lives. After death, you cannot visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty. Note what Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-46. Are you doing these things today? Is your house in order? After death, you cannot be an example of the believers, in word (the things you say – “let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt that ye may know how to answer every man…” (Colossians 4:6) In conversation or manner of life, in charity or manifestation of love toward all men, in spirit, do you possess a meek and quiet spirit, an attitude of kindness and benevolence? In faith, do you have a strong, devout, unshakable faith? In purity, a life that is pure thoughts, desires and motivations? Many need to set their houses in order in these areas.

After death, we cannot set our homes in order. Husbands, do you govern your house according to the will of God? “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and unblamably, we behaved
ourselves toward you that believe, as ye know how we dealt with each of you as a Father with his own children: exhorting and encouraging you and testifying to the end that ye walk worthily of God who calleth you into his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:10-11) Are you a partner with your wife in living the Christian life and rearing your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do you lead your children in the right path? Wives, do you submit to your husband? (Ephesians 5:22) (1 Timothy 5:14) “I will therefore, that younger women (widows) marry, bear children, guide the house.” Christian mothers, are you guiding the house? Do you take charge of the work of the home, exercising discipline over the children and thus being a good home maker, and in the process being in subjection to your husband? (Titus 2:5) “To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Children, do you honor and obey your parents? (Ephesians 6:1) Are you old enough to be a Christian? Do you understand your duty to God? Is your house in order? We should set our houses in order NOW because life is so uncertain and very brief at the longest. (1 Chronicles 29:15) “our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” (Job 7:6) “my days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.” (Job 14:1-2) “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” (James 4:14) “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Death is not an end. We live after death. The dead will be raised. (John 5:28-29 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-22) Then comes the resurrection and judgment. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Set your house in order today.