

Isaiah Lesson 37

Isaiah Chapter 37

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Introduction: Last week in chapter 36, it described the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Record was made of one of his top generals, a man by the name of Rabshekah, who was sent to Jerusalem to threaten and intimidate Hezekiah to try and cause him to surrender.

Chapter 37 of Isaiah records the consternation of Hezekiah over the threats of Rabshekah, emissary of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Hezekiah sends messengers to Isaiah instructing him to intercede in prayer to God for the nation. God answers Hezekiah through Isaiah saying that He would destroy the Assyrians and deliver Judah. The chapter concludes with the great record of God's deliverance of Jerusalem by way of the death angel, slaying 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.

I. Hezekiah Seeks Isaiah's Help

Isa 37:1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

Isa 37:2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

The chapter opens with the response of Hezekiah to Rabshakeh's threat. Because of the blasphemy of the Assyrian general and because of the straits they were in, Hezekiah humbled himself before Jehovah God by ripping his clothing (a middle-eastern symbol of great distress) and putting on sackcloth. Sackcloth was a coarse, rough material similar to a modern 'gunny' sack (or, seed bag).

Not only was it uncomfortable, but it again was a symbol of great humiliation and distress. The king's cabinet, as it were—his top officials—were sent to the prophet Isaiah. Hezekiah sought word from the Lord from the man of God for direction in this hour of crisis.

Isa 37:3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

Isa 37:4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

Isa 37:5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

The officials sent by Hezekiah came to Isaiah and said, “Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.” As the very existence of the nation of Judah was at stake, indeed, it was a day of trouble, rebuke, and blasphemy against God. Hezekiah used the analogy of a pregnant woman in labor, but without strength to deliver the child. Implicit was death for both. The situation facing Judah truly was a crisis of life-and-death proportions.

Hezekiah speculated that perhaps Jehovah God would take note of what Rabshakeh had said and would rebuke him. Hezekiah directed Isaiah to “lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.” The remnant spoken of undoubtedly was the two remaining tribes of Israel: Judah and Benjamin, which comprised the nation of Judah. . Realizing the crisis they faced, Hezekiah knew their only help was through prayer. He sent word for Isaiah to pray.

Isa 37:6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Isa 37:7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

It appears that Isaiah wasted no time in replying to Hezekiah. It may be that he was waiting with an answer when they arrived. If so, it would be illustrative of Isaiah 65:24. Appearing once again is the encouragement from God to be not afraid. God had heard the blasphemy and threats of the Assyrians. He sent word thru Isaiah, “Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” Of interest is the word translated as blast (xwr ruwach). It is the common Hebrew word for ‘spirit.’ It also is routinely translated as ‘breath’ or ‘wind.’

Though some commentators apply this to the coming victory over Assyria by God in verses 35-37, the context seems to indicate that God sent word, causing the king of Assyria to hear a rumor (or, a report) which distracted him from Judah.

This in turn caused him to return home to tend to trouble there. Upon returning to Nineveh, Sennacherib was assassinated there.

Isa 37:8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

Isa 37:9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

Isa 37:10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Whether the message from God to Hezekiah regarding the Assyrians found its way to Rabshakeh is not clear. However, after delivering his threats to Hezekiah, the Assyrian general Rabshakeh departed. Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. Lachish (pronounced LaKEESH) was a fortified city atop a hill in southwestern Judah. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, apparently could not prevail against it, or at least had moved on to attack another city in Judah about nine miles north called Libnah.

In verse 9, we see that meanwhile, as foretold by God through Isaiah, Sennacherib heard a foreboding rumor. Sennacherib received a report that the king of Ethiopia named Tirhakah was on his way to attack him. Lest Hezekiah should think that God had delivered him as He said He would, Sennacherib sent a threatening letter back to him. In that letter, Sennacherib with blasphemy informed Hezekiah that Jehovah God in whom he trusted would not be able to deliver him. In short order, Sennacherib would return to Jerusalem and destroy it.

Isa 37:11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

Isa 37:12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?

Isa 37:13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

Once again implying that Jehovah God was no different than the pagan idols of the region, Sennacherib taunted Hezekiah by asking, "Have the gods of the

nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezep, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? With insolence, Sennacherib asked Hezekiah what had happened to other kings of the regions which had resisted the might of Assyria.

II. Hezekiah's Prayer for Deliverance

Isa 37:14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

Once again, Hezekiah was faced with a renewed threat from Assyria. Moreover, it seemed that Sennacherib was more intent than ever in making an example out of a nation so disdainful as Judah which had ignored his demands to surrender. Hezekiah knew he had thumbed his nose at the most powerful king on the face of the earth of that day. He knew the Assyrians would return with vengeance against such an impudent rejection. Hezekiah knew he was in deep trouble. Therefore, he did the best thing he could do. After reading the threatening letter from Sennacherib, Hezekiah went into the Temple of God and spread the letter out before Jehovah Himself.

Isa 37:15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

Isa 37:16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

Isa 37:17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

Isa 37:18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

Isa 37:19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

Hezekiah did the only thing he could do. He prayed. Notice how his prayer of desperation began by praising God. He acknowledged God's sovereignty over all nations. He acknowledged God was the very Creator of heaven and earth.

Hezekiah pled with God to take note of what Sennacherib had said and written. This pagan king had in fact taunted and defied the living God. Hezekiah reminded God of that. Hezekiah reminded God how that the Assyrians had conquered and destroyed other nations of the region. Moreover, they had destroyed the pagan idols of those same nations.

Implicit was that the testimony of Jehovah was at stake if He allowed the Assyrians to overrun Judah. The king of Judah pled with God to deliver them. In so doing, God would make clear to all other nations that He alone was, is and always will be God.

Isa 37:20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

It once again appears that God wasted no time in answering Hezekiah's prayer. God answered Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah. He acknowledged that He had heard the prayer.

III. Sennacherib's Fall

Isa 37:21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

Isa 37:22 This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

God sent word to Sennacherib that Jerusalem had in fact held his threats in contempt. The Jews had in effect shaken their heads in contempt at the threats of the Assyrian king. The virgin daughter of Zion likely refers to Jerusalem or perhaps to Judah itself. God made clear in His message to Sennacherib that this pagan king had in fact taunted and blasphemed the God of Israel. The Assyrians would soon find out with whom they were dealing.

Isa 37:23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

Isa 37:24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall

cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel.

Isa 37:25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

Isa 37:26 Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.

God reminded Sennacherib of his foolish threats by rehearsing the very threats he had made against Judah. In verse 25, God continued to remind Sennacherib of his taunts. Though Sennacherib made powerful boasts, they were of no effect. God was about to bring to pass the very same threats Sennacherib spoke of in Assyria.

Isa 37:27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

Isa 37:28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

God delivered His own warning to Sennacherib. God in effect said, "I know who you are and where you live." Additionally, He informed the Assyrian king that He was quite aware of his forays against other nations. God let this pompous king know that He was aware of his blasphemy against Him.

He also reminded this arrogant pagan king of his blasphemous taunts and tumult. Tumult is translated from the Hebrew word (Nnav) sha'anana and in this context has the sense of 'arrogance.' God informed Sennacherib that he would put a hook in his nose and a bridle over his lips to shut his mouth and he would be turned back in the way he had come. In other words, God would ignominiously defeat him.

IV. God Promises to Defeat Sennacherib

Isa 37:29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

Isa 37:30 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year

such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

Isa 37:31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

The focus of God's message through Isaiah now turns back to Hezekiah. God informed Hezekiah that as a sign, he and Judah would eat whatever the land brought forth in the wake of the destructive Assyrian siege. In the next year, they would eat what grew up from those trampled crops. However, in the following season, they would be able to return to planting crops in the normal fashion. The implication is that God would deliver them.

Though the Assyrians had devoured their crops by foraging them for themselves, Judah would find enough to live upon in what was left and a year and one-half later, they would enjoy the harvest of their own crops once again. It was a sign given by Jehovah to them. Furthermore, God promised Hezekiah that not only would the crops of Judah once again bear fruit, but also the remnant of the nation itself would again take root downward and bring forth fruit upward. God further promised that a remnant of his people would escape by His hand. The remnant spoken of here undoubtedly refers to the nation of Judah itself. God would preserve His people who had remained faithful to Him.

Isa 37:32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

Isa 37:33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

Isa 37:34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

Regarding the impending Assyrian threat, God had further good news. "thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it." The context implies that Sennacherib and the Assyrian army were not far from Jerusalem. II Chronicles 32 implies the same. Hezekiah's fears were certainly real. However, God promised him that the Assyrians would not enter the city. They would not even get close enough to shoot an arrow against it or undertake any other military operations against it.

By the same route by which Sennacherib had approached Jerusalem would he return in defeat. For God's own purposes, He would defend Jerusalem. Furthermore, God would keep His promise which He had made to David

centuries earlier. He had promised that He would maintain a posterity of David's seed upon the throne of Judah. God always keeps His Word.

V. God Promises to Defend Jerusalem

Isa 37:35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

In one of the most poignant verses in the entire Bible, the sacred writer records, "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." By dawn's light, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers lay dead in their tents, slain by the angel of the Lord.

If not read carefully, the text in an almost humorous fashion reads as if when the Assyrians arose, they were all dead. The thought is that when the Jews arose the next morning, the main force of their enemies were dead. God had delivered His people. He had heard the blasphemy and taunts of Sennacherib and his subordinates. There was never any reason to question what would happen. When one defies God to do something, be assured He will recompense such behavior.

Isa 37:36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

Isa 37:37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

Isa 37:38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

As foretold by God through Isaiah, the prophet, So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and returned to Nineveh. Implicit is that Sennacherib was not in the actual camp of his army which was slain by God. By the route he had invaded Judah, he and what was left of his forces limped back to Nineveh.

While in a pagan Temple in Nineveh, the elder sons of Sennacherib murdered their own father. They then fled to Armenia for refuge. Afterward, another son of

Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, assumed rule over Assyria. . As God had said in 19:7, Sennacherib came to an untimely end. God's Word always comes true because God's Word is true.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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