

Review

Isaiah chapters 36 through 39 are quite a departure, consisting of historic narrative, rather than the prophetic writings we've seen so far in our study of Isaiah. They focus on events in the reign of King Hezekiah, who was a good king. The Bible tells us that he did right in the sight of the Lord (2Chr. 29:2), and restored worship in the temple after having it cleansed (2Chr. 29:3-36). He called for Passover to be celebrated, which hadn't been done in years. He removed the high place, altars, pillars, and Asherah poles (2Kings 18:4), and ordered the people to fulfill their biblical duty to tithe, so that the priests and Levites would be supported (2Chr. 31:3-4).

2Chr. 31:20-21 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right and true before the LORD his God. Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered.

36:1-2 Assyria Attacks Judah

The year was 715BC, and the Assyrians had completely overtaken the northern kingdom of Israel. But they weren't done yet. The kingdom of Judah lay to the south, and the Assyrian King Sennacherib desired to possess Judah's lands as well.

He succeeded in seizing all but of the cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was next on his list. This was exactly what Isaiah had prophesied:

Is. 8:7-8 "Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, it will reach even to the neck"

The Assyrian flood had drowned everything but the head of Judah: Jerusalem.

Hezekiah's Attempt

The book of 2Kings gives us a piece of information not available here:

2Kings 18:14-16 ...Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house. At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

But once Sennacherib had the silver and gold, there was really nothing to stop him from taking Jerusalem anyway, was there?

This is the fallacy that mankind has never understood: When you "give the devil his due," he simply demands more.

- Did giving the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank settlements in September, 2005 stop Palestinian attacks against Israelis?

- Will supporting Iran's nuclear energy program with economic concessions prevent them from creating nuclear weapons?

- Has giving money to a bully ever stopped the bully?

Saints, when we compromise our beliefs and our position to try to placate our enemies, it simply strengthens our enemies.

Sennacherib Sends Rabshakeh

Of course, he did prefer that Jerusalem would simply surrender, rather than try to attack the city, or - as would most likely happen - have to put it to siege for months or even years. And so, he sent a commander, Rab-shaw-KAY, along with a large army, to offer surrender - rather than destruction - to King Hezekiah.

36:3-7 What Is This Confidence That You Have?

El-yaw-KAEEM was Hezekiah's chief of staff. He, Sheb-NAW the

scribe, and Yo-AWKH came to find out what message Sennacherib's commander might be bringing.

Rab-shaw-KAY told them to tell Hezekiah that the Judean king had no hope to be delivered, even with the recent alliance they'd made with Egypt, as we saw in our study of Isaiah 30.

Certainly, the king would be expected to reply, "I'm not relying on Egypt, I'm relying upon the Lord God." In anticipation of that response, Rab-shaw-KAY counters with, "Isn't your God upset with you? After all, you've just torn down all of the high places in Judah!"

Of course, Rab-shaw-KAY had misunderstood the reports describing the destruction of the high places. These altars had been an abomination to Hezekiah's God.

Often, our decisions to please God will confuse onlookers and lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

- When a Christian decides that certain forms of entertainment aren't glorifying to God, their family will often start accusing God of not allowing anything "fun."

- When a Christian makes a commitment to tithe, their friends will often accuse God of "begging for money," or the Christian of being "duped."

- When a Christian gets fired up about Bible study and starts making church a priority, their coworkers will often accuse them of being "brainwashed."

36:8-10 An Offer Of Horses

The Jews had been relying upon Egypt for horses, as well as riders for them. Rab-shaw-KAY mockingly says, "If I gave you 2,000 horses, you couldn't put anybody on them, could you? And since you can't, then how do you think you're going to win this conflict?"

36:11-21 Your God Will Not Deliver

El-yaw-KAEEM, Sheb-NAW, and Yo-AWKH became very self-conscious that this mockery was being spoken in front of the soldiers who were stationed on the wall around Jerusalem. They asked Rab-shaw-KAY

to speak in Aramaic instead of Hebrew, so that their conversation would remain private. But he had no intention of doing so. He responded, "We are going to put this city under siege, and everyone inside will be thirsty and hungry to the point of desperation. Why shouldn't I speak this for everyone to hear?"

Then he yelled that their King Hezekiah was not going to be able to deliver them. And if they thought that their God could, they should consider that every other land which the Assyrians had attacked also had god, but every one of those land had fallen to the Assyrians. Why should they think that their God was any different?

This is where faith is really tested: When it can't be determined with sight. Common sense says, "Every other nation has fallen. We will, too." But faith says, "I have put my trust in God, and He is able to deliver."

The psalmist wrote,

Psa. 91:7-10 A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made the LORD, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent

Does your faith stand the visual test? When all odds are stacked against you, does your faith remain?

36:22-37:7 Reassurance From Isaiah

The three men relayed the message to Hezekiah. The king was distressed and went into the temple to pray, while he sent men to give Isaiah a report on what had happened. Isaiah's response was encouraging. "Tell Hezekiah that God said He heard the blasphemy of Rab-shaw-KAY, and that Sennacherib, the king of Assyria will soon be leaving, and will die back in Assyria."

37:8-13 Sennacherib's Message

After having delivered his message, Rab-shaw-KAY left Jerusalem

and returned to Sennacherib. The king was currently attacking Lib-NAW, which seems to have been about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Sennacherib then heard that King Teer -HAW-kaw of Cush was bringing his army up to fight against the Assyrians, and moved offensively to meet them. In the meantime, Sennacherib had a letter delivered to Hezekiah in Jerusalem. In it, he said largely the same thing his commander had said: "The gods of other nations haven't been able to stand before me, so don't think that your God will either."

37:14-20 Spreading Out The Letter

I have come to really despise letters, because people most often encourage me verbally, but attack me in writing. Nine times out of ten, if somebody mails me something, it's because they're upset. They have decided that I'm evil, or determined that I'm doing everything wrong.

What do you do with letters of accusation or threats? I believe that Hezekiah's example is the best one to follow: get before the presence of God and spread it out before Him. "Look what they're saying, Lord! See what they're accusing? Lord, I'm turning to You for help!"

This was a situation over which Hezekiah had no control. His only choices were to pray or panic. He chose to pray, and we should learn the lesson from him. Are you dealing with threats? Spread them out before the Lord and pray. Are you facing difficulties? Lay them before the Lord and pray. Are you encountering opposition? Put it before the Lord and pray. Why do we choose to suffer through the sleepless nights, upset stomachs, and high blood pressure, when we should just be spreading the situation out before the Lord and praying?

37:21-35 God's Answer

God had heard Hezekiah's prayer. And He promised deliverance, not because of Hezekiah's flawless righteousness, but to defend His own Name.

Saints, this is so important to notice: God will often thwart your enemy not because of who you are, but because of Who your Father is. Many times, we walk with a cloud of condemnation hanging over our

heads, thinking, "I've fallen short. I've messed up one too many times. God has washed His hands of me." But He hasn't. When people attack God's children, He takes it personally. We are His adopted sons and daughters. He loves us and has vowed to protect us, to never leave nor forsake us.

God's promise to Hezekiah was that not an arrow would be shot, and the enemy would be leaving. God Himself was going to defend Jerusalem.

37:36 An Angel Against Authoritative Assyrians

During the night, while the Assyrians were sleeping, the Lord sent an angel to kill many of them. The Chronicler gives us the additional detail that those who were killed that night:

2Chr. 32:21 ...the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria.

The enlisted guys didn't wake up until the next morning, and what they found must have terrified them: almost two hundred thousand men in their midst were dead! That was enough of that!

37:37-38 Sennacherib's Death

Just as Isaiah had said, not an arrow was shot into the city, and not a siege ramp was built against it. Sennacherib left and returned home to Nineveh.

And also in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, while Sennacherib was worshipping in the temple of the false god Nis-ROKE, his sons Ad-ram-MEH-lek and Shar-EH-tser killed him, and their brother Ay-SAR Chad-DOHN became king of Assyria.