

The Book of the Prophet ISAIAH

Chapter 36

Theme: Blasphemous threat of Sennacherib king of Assyria against king Hezekiah and Jerusalem's Jews.

Outline:

- 1 Sennacherib's Campaign into Judah
- 2-3 Ambassadors Meet to Avoid a Siege
- 4-10 Rabshakeh Seeks to Frighten Hezekiah
- 11-20 Rabshakeh Seeks to Frighten Jerusalem
- 21-22 Ambassadors Return Word to Hezekiah

Preparatory Reading: II Kings 18; II Chronicles 32; Isaiah 10,22,30,31.

Related Links:

- A. *King Hezekiah: His Life and Lessons* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/hezekiah-lessons.pdf>.
- B. *A Threatened Virgin: God vs. Sennacherib* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/virgin-daughter-of-zion.pdf>.
- C. *Comparative Table of Three* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/sennacherib-three-witnesses-compared.pdf>
- D. *Fulfilled Prophecy* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/prophecy/glory-of-fulfilled-prophecy/sermon.php>.
- E. *Exposition of Isaiah 7* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-7.pdf>.
- F. *Exposition of Isaiah 8* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-8.pdf>.
- G. *Exposition of Isaiah 9* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-9.pdf>.
- H. *Exposition of Isaiah 10* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-10.pdf>.
- I. *Exposition of Isaiah 17* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-17.pdf>.
- J. *Exposition of Isaiah 18* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-18.pdf>.
- K. *Exposition of Isaiah 20* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-20.pdf>.
- L. *Exposition of Isaiah 21* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-21.pdf>.
- M. *Exposition of Isaiah 22* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-22.pdf>.
- N. *Exposition of Isaiah 28* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-28.pdf>.
- O. *Exposition of Isaiah 29* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-29.pdf>.
- P. *Exposition of Isaiah 30* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-30.pdf>.
- Q. *Exposition of Isaiah 31* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-31.pdf>.
- R. *Exposition of Isaiah 32* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-32.pdf>.
- S. *Exposition of Isaiah 33* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/isaiah-33.pdf>.
- T. *Effective Prayer will Reason with God (pages 6-7)* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/effectual-prayer.pdf>.
- U. *Power in Prayer like Hezekiah* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/power-of-prayer.pdf>.
- V. *The Dominion of God* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/god/dominion-of-god/sermon.php>.
- W. *The Angels of God* ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/pdf/angels-of-god.pdf>.

Introduction:

- A. Isaiah chapters 36-37 are closely related as Sennacherib's threats and God's answers and vengeance.
 - 1. These two chapters should be combined for study and interpretation as a continuation of events.
 - 2. The next chapters are different events – Hezekiah's sickness (38) and Babylon's ambassadors (39).
- B. Isaiah at this point has four chapters of history, comparable to Kings and Chronicles, with additions.
 - 1. Before this chapter, the book contained prophecies, most of which were about Assyria or Babylon.
 - 2. After these four chapters, the book will emphasize Cyrus, the return of the Jews, and the Messiah.

3. There are three historical records of war with Sennacherib, and Isaiah has many prophecies of it.
 4. Kings and Isaiah are very similar; we do not know if Isaiah wrote the account for both or another.
 5. Comparative Table of Three ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/sennacherib-three-witnesses-compared.pdf>.
- C. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of God and supernatural revelation and builds our faith.
1. It should be clear to readers that God considered Sennacherib important to record the details thrice.
 2. With many preceding prophecies about Assyria, about 15 of 35 chapters, this history fulfilled them.
 3. With the book's first half and prophecies confirmed (1-39), the next section exalts it (Is 41:21-26).
 4. The detailed prophecies preceding the fulfillment glorify God, add details, and should cause joy.
 5. Fulfilled Prophecy ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/prophecy/glory-of-fulfilled-prophecy/sermon.php>.
- D. The Assyrian Empire and its kings were frequent enemies of Judah and its kings, especially Hezekiah.
1. The Assyrian Empire was a powerful and cruel combination of nations from Afghanistan to Egypt.
 2. Its history is traced to Asshur at division of nations after the Flood and before Babel (Gen 10:11).
 3. Sennacherib was one of their successful kings, though this expedition and his life do not end well.
 4. World history has little value unless one sees the God of history and His will among earth's nations.
 5. His church-state, Israel, is by far the only key nation to Him (Deut 32:8; Amos 3:2; Acts 17:26).
- E. Let us not duplicate dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, and chronologies to distract our hearts.
1. We could waste hours researching the Assyrian Empire, Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, and Esarhaddon.
 2. Let us rather find lessons of faith that will exalt God and teach us hope for any event (Rom 15:4).
 3. Neither intellectual curiosity nor scholastic inquiry is faith, but they both may undermine true faith.
 4. We will exalt efficiency and emphasis to build our faith in God and love for God and His jealousy.
 5. Fulfilled prophecy glorifies God and confirms the supernatural nature of the Bible above all books.
 6. Commentators attack the text, alter the text, quote buddies, multiply possibilities, and miss lessons.
 7. We will rejoice in fulfilled prophecy, laugh at the overthrow of Sennacherib, rejoice in what God did for Hezekiah, know how safe we are in Christ, and hunt diligently for life lessons God intended.
 8. Hezekiah trusted God more than any other king, which also emphasizes this history (II Kings 18:5).
 9. *King Hezekiah: His Life and Lessons* ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/hezekiah-lessons.pdf>.
- F. There are a variety of lessons to be taken from this repeated historical account of God's saving power.
1. Trials can come though you have set your heart right like Hezekiah's revival, Job, Jesus, Paul, etc.
 2. Things can get worse, as in fenced cities and broken covenant, like with Jacob or Israel in Egypt.
 3. Do not think about numbers, power, influence, or successes by enemies; God is more than enough.
 4. Go to the house of the LORD in humility and cost to get God's help like Hezekiah did twice here.
 5. God gets more glory when He allows circumstances to degenerate and the case becomes hopeless.
 6. It is wise to tell God the circumstances are impossible and you are helpless (Is 36:3; II Chr 20:12).
 7. Ignore ridicule of the world or enemies of your God and trust – they think they came from baboons.
 8. Ignore their challenges or dares, for they seek to undermine your faith. Challenge God in prayer.
 9. If they spread ridicule or dares to your friends or to others, trust in God over such foolish hearers.
 10. Ignore their appeals to your God, for they lie like Rabshakeh, or He does not hear them (Ps 18:41).
 11. God only cares about the righteous and hears their prayers, so live right and know He is your God.
 12. Remember always that God sees you and/or His church as His virgin daughter. He will tear them.
 13. Observe the various means of Rabshakeh's seduction and protect your own daughters from such.
 14. Ignore offers of goodness, for blasphemers have further evil in their minds (Pr 23:1-8; 26:24-26).
 15. Comparisons with other gods or religions is vain nonsense, for there is no other God but our Father.
 16. Do not discuss with blasphemers any more than Eve should have or Hezekiah allowed (Is 36:21).
 17. There is a world of angelic princes in national events, but our princes win (Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1).
 18. Angels mean there are more with us than with them (II Chr 32:7-8; II Kings 16:6; Heb 1:13-14).
 19. There are ways to pray that are more effective than other ways, and Hezekiah demonstrated them.
 20. Reason with God about His jealousy and glory as the best effective appeals in prayer over yourself.
 21. Appeal to Him as the Creator of the universe and totally able to deal with the situation (Is 37:16).
 22. Appeal to Him by scripture that bears on the event to hold Him accountable to it (Num 14:17-19).

23. Appeal to His sovereign government of the world and the situation you are facing (Acts 4:23-30).
24. Appeal to His love for His Son and promises in Him, ultimate leverage (Is 37:36; Jn 16:23-27).
25. God will protect His own, and you can count on it (Ps 18:6; 34:6; 105:13-15; Hebrews 13:5-6).
26. Do not care what other churches may do. Judah did not care what Israel did. Close peers may fall.
27. Man freely sins but his will is simply God's tool for God's own will e.g. Sennacherib (Isaiah 10).
28. Do your reasonable best to help yourself but trust God for the rest and sleep (Ps 127:1-2; Is 30:15).
29. God pities weak faith if mostly strong, for no man has perfect faith (Ps 27:13-14; I Kings 15:14).
30. Pray as if it all depends on God, no matter what measures you may have taken or will take yourself.
31. There is power in fervent, righteous, effectual praying, even for very imperfect men (Jas 5:16-18).
32. But sometimes more than prayer is needed, like here (sackcloth) or the lunatic's father (fasting).
33. If you know an intercessor like Isaiah, have him pray for you, but better yet, be an intercessor.
34. God can save in ways you cannot imagine, without you lifting a finger, so trust rather than think.
35. God laughs last and laughs best at His enemies and your enemies, so be excited about the outcome.
36. God loves His church and His people, so haters play with fire, for He will defend in vengeance.
37. God is jealous of His glory, so flirting with the world is spiritual adultery (Hosea 3:1; James 4:4).
38. Do not play games with God's church, lest you be like Achan, Ananias, Corinth (I Co 3:17; 11:30).
39. God will bring great trials to perfect you by more faith in Him, so rejoice (Rom 5:3-5; Jas 1:2-4).
40. The God of the Bible is different from the Sunday School god of most Christians. Learn it well.

***** *Sennacherib's Campaign into Judah – Verse 1* *****

1 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

- A. Shalmaneser besieged Samaria in his fourth and took it in his sixth (II Kings 18:9-10).
- B. Hezekiah had started a revival and stopped paying tribute (II Chr 30:26-27; II Kgs 18:7).
- C. There have been and there will be times in your life when temptations and trials arrive.
 1. They might come right after you have turned the corner and sought God zealously.
 2. They might involve difficulties or opposition that overwhelm and numb your mind.
 3. The adversaries might gain a great advantage – take all fenced cities – but recall this.
 4. God allows adversity to purge out dross and get Himself a greater name in victory.
 5. There is no adversity, enemy, or problem that even amounts to a gnat against God.

***** *Ambassadors Meet to Avoid a Siege – Verses 2-3* *****

2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

- A. The king of Assyria had laid siege to Lachish of the Philistines and eventually took it.
 1. This siege has historical evidence in the Middle East and in Sennacherib's palace.

2. Rabshakeh, general or ambassador, brought a great army, yet leaving the siege army.
 3. There is some evidence king of Assyria = Sargon and Rabshakeh = Sennacherib, but nothing of importance changes, and some things are difficult to prove with certainty.
- B. This particular location was for kings, for Isaiah has met king Ahaz there (Isaiah 7:3).
- C. There will be times you must face adversaries; there are two needful things for victory.
1. You must live righteously so you can be bold as a lion, or you will flee (Prov 28:1).
 2. You need God's word; it gives truth to embolden the fearful (Ps 119:6,23,46,161).

3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

- A. We have met Eliakim and Shebna before, but the roles are greatly reversed here. Amen!
1. Isaiah had prophesied a great reversal of the two princes of Hezekiah (Is 22:15-25).
 2. At that time, Shebna was over the house, but God would give it to Eliakim of Hilkiyah.
 3. The Power of a Righteous Life ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/power-of-a-righteous-life.pdf>.
- B. Rabshakeh had come to speak to Hezekiah or his representative as the first verse shows.
- C. For much more about outcomes of Shebna and Eliakim ... <http://letgodbetrue.com/pdf/isaiah-22.pdf>.

***** *Rabshakeh Seeks to Frighten Hezekiah – Verses 4-10* *****

4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

- A. Observe this is a personal confrontation of the king of Assyria to Hezekiah (Is 36:1-2).
- B. Men of this world love their titles, which do not go with them (Job 32:21-22; Ps 49:17).
- C. The king of Assyria, invincible in battle, did not understand Hezekiah's confidence.
1. Surely he knew by recon spies that Hezekiah was preparing to defend Jerusalem.
 2. The king mocked the two likely sources for Hezekiah's confidence – Egypt and God.
- D. Christians should have complete confidence in any situation by their trust in their God.
1. With God on your side, you hold the upper hand in all conflicts, even in brutal death.
 2. You have a life manual with wisdom and truth over any enemies (Ps 119:98-100).
 3. The Hall of Faith is filled with examples of men or women trusting God for exploits.

5 I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

- A. Rabshakeh mocked Hezekiah's defensive efforts as stating advice and strength for war.
- B. Hezekiah had not said the words – they are constructed words of the king by his actions.
- C. Christians have counsel and strength for war against any by the Spirit and word of God.

6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

- A. Sennacherib would not have brought up Egypt, unless there were Jewish efforts for it.
 - 1. He would not suggest allies, if indications were clearly Jerusalem would go it alone.
 - 2. There were Jews seeking to Egypt, which God had mocked (Isaiah 30:1-33; 31:1-9).
 - 3. Isaiah had prophesied the Egyptians and Ethiopians would be captives (Is 20:1-6).
- B. The mockery involves a staff, popular for men to carry, as nothing more than a weed.
- C. The mighty, power, reputation, and success of Assyria against Egypt is declared here.
- D. Sennacherib was right about Egypt, for Isaiah had confirmed it and history confirms it.
- E. Every Christian should have no ultimate trust anywhere else but in God for two reasons.
 - 1. First, there is no help in man, no matter how great the man or means (Ps 146:3-4).
 - 2. Second, God is offended when you trust any but Him only (Is 22:10; Deut 32:20).

7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

- A. Rabshakeh then mocked Hezekiah's trust in their God Jehovah, of which God He knew.
 - 1. Every nation has a deity or deities, and the Middle Eastern world knew of Jehovah.
 - 2. Recall, Shalmaneser had beaten the majority of the nation, Israel's ten tribes, earlier.
- B. The Assyrian reasoned thusly – Jehovah must be angry for Hezekiah shrinking worship.
 - 1. Part of Hezekiah's revival had eliminated the condemned corruptions (II Chr 31:1).
 - 2. Since their national deity was not worshipped as fully as before, they were doomed.
- C. Adversaries and opponents may mock our small size as if God cannot be with so few.
 - 1. These ignorant fools measure godliness by gain, which God mocks (I Tim 6:3-6).
 - 2. These ignorant fools forget Noah, Joshua and Caleb, Elijah, and 120 in Jerusalem.
 - 3. These ignorant fools see contemporary churches exploding and mock old churches.

8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

- A. The Assyrian mockery is creative, but it should never faze a person trusting in Jehovah.
 - 1. If the Jews would give security deposits, Assyria would provide them 2000 horses.
 - 2. Rabshakeh denied Hezekiah able to procure 2000 warriors or experienced horsemen.
- B. God denied Israel cavalry or many horses (Deut 17:16), and Hezekiah likely had none.
- C. Christians should never fear what they do or do not have, for God is more than enough.

9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

- A. If Hezekiah did not have 2000 fighting men for horses, he was inferior to mere captains.
- B. If Assyria had captains so great, in this but partial army, even Egypt was very inferior.
- C. How many of the martyrs had to hear such mockery against Rome, yet were its superior?
 - 1. Base, poor, foolish, and despised in the eyes of the world, they were jewels to God.
 - 2. As Tyndale had intended, they knew more than the pope and went straight to heaven.

10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

- A. This is the third mockery of Hezekiah, but still against the LORD, by claiming Him.
- B. Assyria's defeat of Israel (ten tribes) and ease taking Judah's fenced cities implied it.
- C. There is no reason to believe this presumptuous boast and ridicule of Hezekiah's faith.
 - 1. He used this mockery last, for it had no basis in fact, but was his attempt to frighten.
 - 2. It was never God's intention to destroy Jerusalem, but rather to destroy Sennacherib.
 - 3. The use of Jehovah's name proves nothing, for all area nations knew Israel's God.
 - 4. He resorted to ridiculing Jehovah as no different and not stronger than local idols.
 - 5. The rest of the claims and intentions of Rabshakeh are false and proven so by facts.
- D. Christians should not let claims of knowing God or knowing scripture intimidate them.
 - 1. Heretics of all kinds love to claim God is with them and they are at peace in Him.
 - 2. Never let their delusional minds or intentional lies alter the bare facts of God's word.

***** *Rabshakeh Seeks to Frighten Jerusalem – Verses 11-20* *****

11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

- A. The three ambassadors knew such threats would hurt morale, so they asked for Syriac.
 - 1. We assume the three had good intentions, though the request played into his hand.
 - 2. When they indicated the weakness of the populace, Rabshakeh quickly moved on it.
- B. Churches must educate the lowest members lest they be moved by heresy (I Cor 11:19).

12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

- A. Rabshakeh boldly threatened the men of Jerusalem with a siege and a terrible outcome.
- B. He addressed himself to the citizens rather than Hezekiah to undermine their morale.
- C. Recall a siege of Samaria that resulted in eating dove's dung, ass's heads, and children.
- D. For Americans in 2019, we have no concept of hunger, let alone starvation, or this here.

13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

- A. Since the ambassadors gave away the danger of city morale, Rabshakeh took advantage.
- B. This high prince warning them about the great king of Assyria would have intimidated.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

- A. He accused Hezekiah of deceiving them, and any logical calculation would have agreed.
- B. This first verbal assault was against Hezekiah himself and his preparations for war.
- C. Everything their heart and mind were suggesting was confirmed by Rabshakeh here.
- D. Never let any confirmation against God's word ever comfort your lying, deceitful heart.

15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

- A. This second verbal assault was against Hezekiah's trust in Israel's God for deliverance.
- B. Rabshakeh, by Satanic influence and simple reasoning, attacked the hopes of the Jews.

16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

- A. Rabshakeh first tried the negative (siege), ruled out deliverance, and then offered safety.
- B. You could hardly ask for a kinder gentleman than Rabshakeh's gift of life preservation.
- C. If they would surrender and pay the king of Assyria, they could go home from the city.

17 *Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.*

- A. Like Shalmaneser had done to Israel (ten tribes), Sennacherib would do to these Jews.
- B. But God had given them a commitment to Canaan, Judah, and Jerusalem for Messiah.
- C. They were to keep up the worship of God in one place and not voluntarily give it up.

18 *Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?*

- A. Rabshakeh returned to his basic argument: Jehovah was not better than the beaten gods.
- B. The blasphemer's words were true – no god of any nation had protected from Assyria.
- C. But our God is not like their gods at all, and they know it (Deut 32:30-31; Ps 115:1-8).

19 *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?*

- A. These places and their gods are quite irrelevant – the point was that none of them saved.
- B. His last appeal here is to cousins of the Jews – the ten tribes and their capital Samaria.
 - 1. This would move most Christians, for they do not grasp God's holy discrimination.
 - 2. These cousins may have been biologically related, but their religion was two calves.

20 *Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?*

- A. This kind of comparison is absurd on several levels that the wise should always know.
 - 1. As God mocked Sennacherib in Isaiah 10, God Himself had given him his successes.
 - 2. Those other lands were nothing to Jehovah. In fact, He had called for their ruin.
 - 3. Both Jerusalem (God's city) and Jehovah (the only God) made it totally different.
- B. The great error in any religious debate is that there are no gods but one, our Jehovah.

***** *Ambassadors Return Word to Hezekiah – Verses 21-22* *****

21 *But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.*

- A. Since they were merely ambassadors, they could not negotiate or speak for Hezekiah.
- B. There are times to speak and times not to speak, and wise know and obey the difference.

C. The emotion of conflict should never get under your skin to say things later regrettable.

22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

- A. Rent clothes showed the predicament and fear of the men for Rabshakeh's blasphemy.
- B. This closing verse introduces the next chapter and Hezekiah's response to the Assyrian.
- C. There are times for grieving, mourning, and fasting to get God's attention in trouble.