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Sermon Notes

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## **God Vindicates His Honor Over an Arrogant Foe**

### **Isaiah 37:1-37**

The most spectacular actions of God in the Old Testament

- 1) Creation
- 2) The Flood
- 3) The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- 4) The Plagues on Egypt
- 5) The Red Sea Crossing
- 6) The Descent in Fire and Cloud on Mt. Sinai
- 7) The Crossing of the Jordan River
- 8) The Fall of the Walls of Jericho
- 9) The Igniting of Elijah's Sacrifice by Fire from Heaven
- 10) The Destruction of the Assyrian Army

Amazing, isn't it... all these most spectacular displays of the power and presence of God; all but one are directly related to the judgment of God on sinners... God puts His awesome power on display by drowning the whole world for their sins, for raining down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, for judging Egypt in ten different ways.

As we come to Isaiah 37, we come to a pinnacle moment in Redemptive History... a breathtaking display of the power of God. The circumstances could hardly have been more dramatic... after decades of warnings by the prophet Isaiah, after the sinful northern Kingdom of Israel had been deported by the Assyrians... now at last the time had come.

### **I. Hezekiah's Humility: Disgraced, In Sackcloth, Seeking Answers (vs. 1-4)**

#### **A. Context: Isaiah 36... and all the preceding chapters**

King Hezekiah of Judah had joined in a widespread rebellion against the King of Assyria, Sennacherib. Sennacherib had responded by crushing the Babylonian rebels, and then systematically crushing one small kingdom after another, working his way down the Mediterranean Coastline. No nation could stand against the terrifying Assyrian army... their whole lives were built on military excellence, focused on conquest, total domination. They were astonishingly cruel... their own artwork, unearthed by modern-day archaeologists, depict their victorious army humiliating conquered foes... impaling them alive on sharpened logs, decapitating them after they'd suffered, leaving piles of heads next to large piles of corpses. Nahum mentions their "endless cruelty"...

They invaded the little kingdom of Judah and destroyed one small city and town after another... 46 in all. In Isaiah 36, Sennacherib was assaulting Lachish, perhaps the second most important city in Judah. He sent his field commander with a large army to intimidate King Hezekiah and the small band of survivors huddled up with him in the walls of Jerusalem...

Isaiah 36 is a record of the bluster and intimidation of the Field Commander

Perhaps the key statement he made was to denigrate the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to liken Him to all the other gods of the nations:

***Isaiah 36:18-20 "Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? <sup>19</sup> Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? <sup>20</sup> Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"***

#### B. Hezekiah Stripped at Last of All Other Refuges

1. Faithful concerning his religion... especially seen in his removing of the High Places and the purification of the worship patterns of Judah

BUT...

2. Unfaithful concerning his politics
  - a. Though never mentioned by name in Isaiah 30 and 31, it seems he was little different from his father, Ahaz, when it came to his international politics
  - b. He trusted in his alliances and his scheming
  - c. Especially he sent emissaries to Egypt with gold and silver to ask help from the Egyptians
  - d. Again and again, Isaiah the prophet had warned Judah not to trust in Egypt, forgetting the power of God

***Isaiah 30:1-3 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; <sup>2</sup> who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge. <sup>3</sup> But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace.***

***Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.***

### 3. Perhaps not a good relationship with Isaiah

- a. Isaiah was the mouthpiece of God, warning Hezekiah and his officials from trusting in politics, trusting in Egypt
- b. Isaiah was a goad, poking and prodding at Hezekiah to turn fully to the Lord, to embrace fully the Lord's power
- c. So, though I am arguing from silence, it is quite possible that Hezekiah and Isaiah were not particularly close

BUT NOW... step by step, God was teaching Hezekiah that he must put ALL HIS TRUST in the Lord ALONE

In Isaiah 33:8, Hezekiah's emissaries have returned with the news that Assyria had taken all the gold and silver Sennacherib had demanded, and they were still going to crush Jerusalem anyway

the Field Commander has come; also it seems like Sennacherib had defeated an early detachment of Egyptian troops, though the main battle with Egypt was yet to come

It had become obvious now that Egypt would not save them from Assyria

Hezekiah had NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN!!!

By the end of Isaiah 37, Sennacherib himself would come with a vast, undefeated army and encircle the walls of Jerusalem itself

#### C. Hezekiah's Humiliation... and His Faith

***Isaiah 37:1 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD.***

1. Some people are humiliated, but refuse to turn to the Lord
2. Hezekiah had a genuine faith, but he needed to be trained
3. With nowhere else to turn, he humbles himself completely
4. He tore his royal robes, and put on sackcloth... signs of extreme grief and mourning
5. He went into the temple of the Lord to focus his mind totally on the power and existence of God

#### D. Seeks Guidance Humbly

***Isaiah 37:2 He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.***

1. This is the first time in this book of Isaiah that Isaiah son of Amoz is called a "Prophet"
2. Perhaps it was difficult for King Hezekiah to humble himself and seek guidance from the Prophet Isaiah, who had spoken so many convicting and even harsh messages of judgment and warning
3. BUT Hezekiah was stripped of all pride
4. He was ready to hear whatever God had to say

#### E. Hezekiah's Assessment of the Emergency

***Isaiah 37:3-4 They told him, "This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them."***

1. A day of "distress and rebuke and disgrace"... this was God's message to His sinful people... these words are appropriate for humbled sinners who are submitting to what God is doing

WE DESERVE THIS!!! WE ARE BEING PUNISHED JUSTLY FOR OUR SINS!!

2. Total humiliation... no strength, no power, no ability to change the situation... like a woman who is in agony as the time has come for the baby to be born; the pain is immense, but the woman is completely depleted, she can't push the child out, she can't deliver the baby... they may well both die together

#### F. Hezekiah's ONE HOPE

***Isaiah 37:4 It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives."***

1. The Field Commander had gone TOO FAR... He had blasphemed, he had ridiculed the Lord
2. In this, he represented the arrogant attitude of his master, the King of Assyria
3. The ONE HOPE is that God will be motivated by His zeal for His own glory, and will move out in POWER to VINDICATE HIS NAME
4. Note the humility of a broken-hearted sinner: IT MAY BE that God will hear and will act...but MAYBE NOT...
  - a. We are truly sinners, and God is free to deliver us or not

- b. We deserve what we're getting, and God is not at all bound to save us from this disaster
- c. Ironically, this was the same as the repentant King of Assyria in Nineveh only fifty years before this when the Prophet Jonah went and warned him that the wrath of God was about to fall on Nineveh
- d. The King of Nineveh repented in sackcloth

***Jonah 3:6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.***

He issued a proclamation:

***Jonah 3:8-9 let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."***

WHO KNOWS???? God MAY RELENT... but our repentance does not OBLIGATE God to forgive us or deliver us

#### G. The Request for Prayer

***"Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives."***

1. This is clear indication that many of the people of Judah had already died under God's judgments
2. All that was left now was a REMNANT... a small percentage of Israel that still breathed
3. This is God's way, over and over with Israel... the remnant was mentioned at the beginning of this Book:

***Isaiah 1:9 Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.***

4. So also the remnant was mentioned in Isaiah's call to the prophetic ministry

***Isaiah 6:11-13 Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, <sup>12</sup> until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. <sup>13</sup> And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."***

5. The remnant is mentioned in Isaiah 10, in which God predicted the events of this chapter

***Isaiah 10:21-23 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. <sup>22</sup> Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. <sup>23</sup> The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land.***

6. So also the remnant would be mentioned in Romans as a picture of God's electing grace among the Jews

***Romans 11:5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.***

Hezekiah begged for Isaiah to pray for God to rise up and protect the honor and glory of His blasphemed name, and to protect the remnant of Israel that still remained

## II. God's First Answer: Fear Not... the Blasphemer Will Die (vs. 5-7)

***Isaiah 37:5-7 When King Hezekiah's officials came to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup> Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard-- those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. <sup>7</sup> Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.'"***

### A. An IMMEDIATE ANSWER!!

1. The word of the Lord had already come to Isaiah
2. There was no time to waste, and God wanted to speak a word of comfort and courage to the leader of His remnant

### B. Do Not Be Afraid of these Words!!

1. Again and again, the word of the Lord to God's people is FEAR NOT
2. Faith and fear are opposites
3. God is giving Hezekiah the same message as He had given decades ago to Hezekiah's father, Ahaz... DO NOT BE AFRAID, ONLY BELIEVE

### C. The Words of the "Underlings"

1. God humbles the Field Commander directly
2. The real human foe is the King of Assyria, but each person is responsible for their own words and actions

3. These words of blasphemy are charged against the account of the Field Commander

#### D. Blasphemy

1. The exact opposite of worship
2. God created us in the image and God and gave us the ability to speak
3. In Isaiah 36, we see the blasphemy of the Field Commander... comparing God to all the gods of the nations and saying openly:

***Isaiah 36:20 Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"***

4. In a moment, we will also see the blasphemy of the King of Assyria himself
5. Jesus addressed the issue of blasphemy in Matthew 12

***Matthew 12:34-37 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. <sup>36</sup> But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."***

#### E. God's Early Verdict on the King of Assyria

***Isaiah 37:7 Behold! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword."***

1. "Behold": just watch what I am going to do to this man!!! An awesome display of the sovereignty of God over the smallest movements of the mightiest men on earth
2. God says He has power to "put a spirit" in Sennacherib... to MOVE HIM to do what God wants him to do

***Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.***

***Exodus 7:3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt,***

3. God has the right to enter our minds and make us think what He wants us to think, to do what He wants us to do

4. So, His plan is to direct Sennacherib's heart so that WHEN HE HEARS A CERTAIN REPORT, he will return to his own country

a. Ironic, isn't it?

b. The Field Commander said to Hezekiah,

*ESV Isaiah 36:5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?*

c. And yet, it would be MERE WORDS that, in the end, would move Sennacherib to leave Judah and go home

5. God's sovereignty over ALL NATIONS...

***"... and there (in his home country) I will have him cut down with the sword."***

a. God rules every single square inch of this world

b. God is not what the Assyrians thought... the "God of the Jews" alone

c. God's power extends to the ends of the earth

d. God rules even in the temple of Sennacherib's god, Nisroch, as we will find out at the end of the chapter... for it was there that God had him cut down

e. God even rules over Sennacherib's own family, for it was his own sons who would kill him

So... God has immediately given His answer to Hezekiah concerning the Field Commander's speech... but more drama is yet to come:

The Sennacherib's Final Warning to King Hezekiah:

III. The King of Assyria's Blasphemy: "Your 'God' Is No Different!" (vs. 8-13)

A. Circumstances

***Isaiah 37:8-9 When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah. <sup>9</sup> Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him.***

1. The Field Commander failed in his mission to intimidate Hezekiah and the Jews into surrendering Jerusalem

2. So, he withdraws to rejoin his master, Sennacherib, who was now done conquering Lachish and was polishing off Libnah

3. At last, Tirhakah, the Cushite King of Egypt comes marching against Assyria
4. Sennacherib hears about it and decides to keep the psychological heat on Hezekiah...
5. He sends him a letter
6. Four possible reasons
  - a. Having heard from the Field Commander that Hezekiah did not surrender, he wants to give Hezekiah one final opportunity to change his mind
  - b. Sennacherib especially wanted to strip Hezekiah of any confidence that this news about the King of Egypt might have given him
  - c. This letter would come with the personal stamp of the Great King, the King of Assyria himself... not merely the words of a messenger
  - d. Sennacherib wanted to zero in especially on the central remaining pillar in Hezekiah's hope: God's power to deliver

#### B. Sennacherib's Blasphemous Letter

***Isaiah 37:10-13 "Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, 'Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.' <sup>11</sup> Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? <sup>12</sup> Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them-- the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? <sup>13</sup> Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah?"***

#### C. The Incredible Blasphemy of the Human Heart

1. Don't let the God you are depending upon DECEIVE YOU
2. Don't let God trick you or lie to you about what He can do...
3. Is your God saying, "Jerusalem will not be handed over to the King of Assyria"???

  - a. Perhaps he had spies in Hezekiah's inner circle who had reported what Isaiah the prophet had just said to Hezekiah
  - b. He wants to strip Hezekiah of all hope

#### D. Powerful Argument Based on Past History

1. There was overwhelming evidence based on past history that Jerusalem would soon be nothing but a pile of rubble and all her people slain
2. The whole nation of Assyria lived for war
3. Assyrian kings, one after the other, had totally dominated that region of the world for nearly fifty years
  - a. Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmanassar V, Sargon II had repeatedly decimated and terrorized the cities of the Ancient Near East
  - b. These were not minor victories, nor were they some weird fluke
  - c. And recent history—that very campaign led by Sennacherib—had proven that Assyria was still the most powerful nation in that region
  - d. Those kings, those people all relied on their gods too... and look where it got them!!!
  - e. Why would you be any different?
  - f. Why would the god you rely on be any different?
4. Hezekiah had to make a life or death decision... Is God truly able? Is He truly willing? Does God truly exist? Does He live? Or is He really no different than the gods of all the other nations

#### E. Sennacherib: Right Facts, Wrong Conclusion!!

1. All that history was true...
2. BUT Sennacherib had drawn the wrong conclusion, as we shall see
3. The drama has reached its peak
4. Somewhere between the sending of this blasphemous letter and the answer God would give, Sennacherib quickly defeated the Egyptian army and came right up to the walls of Jerusalem
5. The time had come for a decision from Almighty God

#### IV. Hezekiah's Prayer: "Defend Your Glorious Name, O Lord!" (vs. 14-20)

***Isaiah 37:14-15 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD***

#### A. Hezekiah Takes the Letter to God in Prayer

1. His faith is growing stronger and stronger
2. His prayer here is one of the greatest moments in the history of faith
3. He had nowhere else to turn... and he NEEDED nowhere else to turn
4. God would be sufficient
5. Prayer would be sufficient
6. He “spread out” the letter before the Lord, not because God didn’t know what it said, but to underscore the issue of the prayer in Hezekiah’s own mind
7. This symbol of spreading out a matter before God in prayer is a powerful image

Puritan Pastor Thomas Manton: One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, **show Him His handwriting; God is tender of His Word.**

Here, Hezekiah shows God the Assyrian king’s handwriting... LOOK AT THIS, O LORD!!!

And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord... this is a great moment

#### B. Beginning with Worship

***Isaiah 37:16 "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.***

1. Five statements about God, all of them directed to the issue of God’s position in the universe and in human history
2. **“Lord Almighty”** = “YAHWEH OF HOSTS”... the God who rules the armies of heaven
3. **“God of Israel”**: the covenant-keeping God, who chose Israel as His treasured possession, out of all the nations on earth
4. **“Enthroned between the cherubim”**: “God is a KING on a mighty throne; the cherubim are the mighty angels of heaven, depicted on the ark of the covenant, where God specially meets with Israel in the blood of the sacrifice and by the glory cloud
5. **“You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth”**: The repeated lessons of Isaiah 13-35... God is the God of all the earth and all the nations are merely a drop in the bucket and dust on the scales

6. **“You have made heaven and earth”**: This mighty God is the God of the universe, the creator of everything that exists
7. These words are not merely some correct catechism answer for Hezekiah... they are his LIFE

C. Request #1: Five Imperative Verbs

***Isaiah 37:17 Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.***

1. He wants God to focus His attention on the words that Sennacherib has written
2. He does not focus on his own righteousness or worthiness, because he knows he has none!!!
3. The focus here is entirely on the glory of God and His reputation
  - a. Just like Moses interceding for God not to destroy Israel after the Golden Calf
  - b. Just like Daniel, interceding for God to reestablish Israel in the Promised Land after the exile as God had promised

***Daniel 9:18-19 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. <sup>19</sup> O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.***

D. Recite Recent Facts... Understanding them Theologically

***Isaiah 37:18-19 "It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. <sup>19</sup> They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands.***

E. Request #2

***Isaiah 37:20 Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God.***

1. Total focus on the glory of God and His name
2. Hezekiah is concerned about the reputation of God among the nations of the earth
3. Fundamentally, God is zealous for His name and His glory so that all nations will hear of that great name and call on the name of the Lord and be saved

4. God works that same concern into the hearts of His praying people

## V. The Verdict Comes Down from the King of the Universe (vs. 21-38)

***Isaiah 37:21-22 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, <sup>22</sup> this is the word the LORD has spoken against him***

### A. Words, then Actions

1. Words (vs. 21-35)

2. Actions (vs. 36-38)

3. Notice: God specifically mentions Hezekiah's prayer... BECAUSE YOU HAVE PRAYED to me...

- a. We should understand the complexities of divine sovereignty and human responsibility
- b. Hezekiah's prayer was intimately part of God's sovereign purpose here
- c. BUT we should not say it was ULTIMATELY because of Hezekiah's prayer
- d. Rather, the praying man or woman is merely escorted into the plans God had already made, and their prayers in a mysterious way become a secondary CAUSE of the miraculous deliverance
- e. In other words, "Because you prayed, I will let you in on what I am planning to do..."

***John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.***

***John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."***

So... God gives WORDS first, then REALITY second... but God's words are instrumental powers in His plan

Four parts to this answer in words:

- 1) God promises to Judge the Blasphemer (vs. 22-29)
- 2) God Promises to Save His Remnant (vs. 30-32)
- 3) God Promises to Deliver Jerusalem (vs. 33-35)

4) God Makes It Clear: He Does All of this For His Own Glory (vs. 35)

B. God Promises to Judge the Blasphemer (vs. 22-29)

***Isaiah 37:22-29 "The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises and mocks you. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. <sup>23</sup> Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! <sup>24</sup> By your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord. And you have said, 'With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of its forests. <sup>25</sup> I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.' <sup>26</sup> "Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. <sup>27</sup> Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. <sup>28</sup> "But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. <sup>29</sup> Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.***

1. The people of Judah are pictured as the “Virgin Daughter of Zion”

- a. A picture of vulnerability, a young woman needing to be protected by her powerful father, the King
- b. She is portrayed as a Virgin because Sennacherib intended to come and violate her, to rape her and take everything from her
- c. Also, often women or daughters are the ones who celebrate great victories in the bible, often with taunting, mocking songs... like Deborah and the women of Israel singing after the Red Sea had destroyed Pharaoh's army; and David's desire that the daughters of the Philistines not mock the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:20)
- d. So here, the Virgin daughter of Zion TOSSES HER HEAD AND MOCKS as you flee!!!!

2. Next: WHO HAVE YOU MOCKED???

- a. The King of Assyria basically said to Hezekiah, “Don't you know who I am? Don't you know what I have done? Why aren't you afraid of me???”
- b. God completely turns the tables on that theme... no, you tiny little man... don't you know who I AM???. Who have you mocked? Who have you

raised your voice against and blasphemed? Do you have any idea how powerful I am, how awesome is my glory?"

3. Next: God discussed the centerpiece of Sennacherib's argument: their recent history of success
  - a. He captures the soaring blasphemous arrogance of his heart attitude
  - b. The language is the language of deity... like the "King of Babylon" in Isaiah 14

***Isaiah 14:13-14 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. <sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."***

- c. It's that soaring pride of the builder of the Tower of Babel
- d. Look at the ridiculous claims...

***Isaiah 37:24-25 you have said, 'With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of its forests. <sup>25</sup> I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.'***

4. Let's Get This Straight: Apart from Me, You Have Done NOTHING!!!

***Isaiah 37:26-27 "Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. <sup>27</sup> Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up."***

5. The terror of God's omniscience and the threat of God's omnipotence comes down on you PERSONALLY

***Isaiah 37:28 "But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me."***

6. The prediction restated

***Isaiah 37:29 Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.***

- a. Sennacherib is like a BEAST

- b. Amazingly, some Assyrian drawing have shown the atrocities they did to conquered kings... Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, tortured and humiliated a rebellious vassal king by boring a hole into his jawbone, putting a rope through the hole, and attaching it to a dog-leash, putting him in a cage to be mocked in Nineveh
- c. Sennacherib, like a beast, will be drawn by the power of God to go back to his own country

### C. God Promises to Save His Remnant (vs. 30-32)

***Isaiah 37:30-32 "This will be the sign for you, O Hezekiah: "This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup> Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. <sup>32</sup> For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.***

#### 1. God will give Hezekiah a SIGN

- a. This is a “sign after the fact”... just like the “sign” God said He would give Moses concerning the Exodus... when all the nation came out and worshiped at Mt. Sinai
  - b. Here also, the sign will be the amazing restoration of the land to be able to provide for the needs of the people
  - c. The land was laid waste by the Assyrian army... there would be very little left
  - d. The first year would be hard, but God would provide enough
  - e. The second year would be similar
  - f. But in the third year, SOW AND REAP, PLANT VINEYARDS AND EAT THEIR FRUIT
2. The Remnant of the House of Judah will remain... they will be like the land itself, taking root below and bearing fruit above
3. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD ALMIGHTY ALONE can accomplish this

### D. God Promises to Deliver Jerusalem (vs. 33-35)

***Isaiah 37:33-35 "Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. <sup>34</sup> By the way that he came***

***he will return; he will not enter this city," declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup> "I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!"***

1. Final verdict... coming down from the King of the Universe
2. He says NO, NO, NO, NO, and NO... five times NO!!!!
  - a. Each of the clauses in vss. 33-34 begins with no or not
  - b. NO, you will NOT enter this city
  - c. NO, you will NOT shoot an arrow here
  - d. NO, you will NOT come against the city with shield
  - e. NO, you will NOT build a siege ramp against it
  - f. NO, you will NOT even enter this city!!!!
3. Instead, BY THE WAY THAT YOU CAME YOU WILL RETURN
4. God Himself will fight for this city and defend it
  - a. Often God raises up people to fight
  - b. Or causes confusion to reign among the enemy
  - c. Or gives courage to his own people to fight
  - d. Here... God does it ALL HIMSELF

***Isaiah 31:8 "Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man; a sword, not of mortals, will devour them.***

E. God Makes It Clear: He Does All of this For His Own Glory (vs. 35)

***Isaiah 37:35 "I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!"***

1. As we just said, it is NOT AT ALL because of Hezekiah's righteousness
2. It is simply for the display of His own glory that God does it
3. A moment ago, He said,

***The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.***

4. God's zeal is for His own glory

5. "David" = God's ultimate purposes in Jesus
  - a. Because Jesus was a physical descendent of Hezekiah, God allowed his line to survive
  - b. God had made a promise to David that one of His own descendants would sit on his throne and rule forever... amazingly, the same ZEAL achieves that

***Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.***

Having spoken all these words, God now makes them come true:

F. God Kills the Assyrian Army (vs. 36)

***Isaiah 37:36-37 Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning-- there were all the dead bodies! <sup>37</sup> So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.***

1. A terrifying display of the power of God...
2. I can hardly imagine what it was like for the survivors, those who investigated the tents the next morning... dead person after dead person
3. The number is staggering: 185,000 soldiers... that is about the total number soldiers ON BOTH SIDES that fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. Imagine if Robert E. Lee of the South and George Meade of the North went out on the morning of July 1, 1863 to fight the first day of Gettysburg and found that their entire armies BOTH SIDES were dead.
4. And no explanation... they're just all dead
5. What must Sennacherib have thought???
6. Notice: God left him alive... He brought the story back himself
7. BUT he never told it in the official annals of Assyrian history
  - a. He DOES mention in history that he surrounded Jerusalem and had King Hezekiah caged in his palace like a bird
  - b. But the official Assyrian records are silent about this slaughter

- c. But a simple question: if you had Hezekiah caged like a bird, and if you conquered and destroyed all the other cities, WHY NOT JERUSALEM??

G. God Kills the Assyrian King (vs. 37-38)

***Isaiah 37:37-38 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. <sup>38</sup> One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer cut him down with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.***

1. Astonishing irony: Sennacherib had mocked Hezekiah's God and said "He can't save you!" BUT look where Sennacherib died... in the temple of his own false god, Nisroch
2. He who digs a pit will fall into it!!
3. He mocked the gods of the other nations... "Where are the gods of ..."? So, Sennacherib, WHERE IS YOUR GOD NOW??
4. The very same words he used came back on his head
5. BUT you should know this didn't happen right away... actually the deliverance of Jerusalem happened in 701 B.C. Sennacherib died in 681 B.C. TWENTY YEARS LATER
  - a. Sennacherib had chosen his YOUNGEST SON Esarhaddon to succeed him
  - b. His older sons were jealous and plotted against Esarhaddon, who fled and hid from them
  - c. They then assassinated Sennacherib as this text describes and tried to take over the Empire
  - d. Esarhaddon came back and put them to flight and ruled

Thomas Hardy, poem, 1912, about the sinking of the Titanic, "The Convergence of the Twain"

"And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace, and hue  
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

Alien they seemed to be:  
No mortal eye could see  
The intimate welding of their later history"

***Proverbs 16:4 The LORD works out everything for his own ends-- even the wicked for a day of disaster.***

***Romans 2:4-5 do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.***

## VI. Glorious Lessons Listed Briefly... But One Probing Question Asked

- A. God's Glory is Uppermost in His Own Affections
- B. Therefore, God's Actions Are First For His Name, Second for Human Salvation
- C. God's Power and Knowledge Are Awesome
- D. God Is Sovereign Over the Nations
- E. God Rules Over the Hearts of Kings
- F. Behold the Arrogance of the Human Heart
- G. God Opposes the Proud, But Gives Grace to the Humble
- H. God Answers Humble Prayer
- I. God's Wrath is Terrifying
- J. God's Mercy to Sinners is Amazing
- K. BUT: If God Can Do This Anytime He Wants, Then Why So Much Suffering??

## VII. How this Chapter Preaches Christ

- A. The True, Arrogant, Seemingly Undefeatable Foe is Sin/Death
- B. Christ's Victory Over Sin and Death is Infinitely Greater

## VIII. Applications

- A. Flee to Christ!
- B. Understand: God Cannot Be Mocked!
- C. Understand God's Zeal for His Own Glory, His Own Name
- D. Imitate the Faith of Hezekiah...

1. Humility
  2. Seeking God's will in the Word of the Lord
  3. Praying in the midst of trial
- E. Understand God's Patience Toward the Wicked