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Sermon Notes

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Lessons from a Miraculous Slaughter

Isaiah 37

I. The Astonishing Events of Isaiah 36-37

A. Assyria: The Nazis of the Ancient World

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? ¹⁹ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? 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?"

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

Isaiah 37:1-4 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. ² He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. ³ 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. 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."

C. 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, ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.'"

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

Isaiah 37:8-13 When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah. ⁹ Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him. When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word: ¹⁰ "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.' ¹¹ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? ¹² 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? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah?"

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

Isaiah 37:14-20 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. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: 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. 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. ¹⁸ "It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. ¹⁹ 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. 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."

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

1. Words, then actions
2. Words (vs. 21-35)
3. Actions (vs. 36-38)
4. Words

Isaiah 37:21-35 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, ²² this is the word the LORD has spoken against him: "The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises and mocks you. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. ²³ 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! ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.' ²⁶ "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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ "But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. 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. ³⁰ ¶ "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. ³¹ Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. ³² 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. ³³ ¶ "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. ³⁴ By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city," declares the LORD. ³⁵ "I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!"

5. Actions

Isaiah 37:36-38 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! ³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. ³⁸ 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.

II. Lessons from this Miraculous Slaughter

A. God's Glory is Uppermost in His Own Affections

1. What really motivates God here? What is it that is the ultimate end of God in this encounter?
2. In our man-centered world, with our self-centered way of looking at all things, we can easily make man the end of all things

Emerson Hall, Harvard University: Department of Philosophy, building completed in 1900; soliciting inquiries for the inscription that should go over the main entrance

One professor suggested this by the Greek philosopher Protagoras:

"MAN IS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS."

Harvard President C.W. Eliot wisely chose this instead:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4)

3. We are used to seeing everything from the human perspective... what it does to man
4. We are used to ignoring God; secularization is the process of marginalizing God more and more... reversing the quote

"What is GOD that we should be mindful of him???"

5. God's glory is uppermost in His own affections
6. God does everything ultimately for His own glory... for the honor of His holy name
7. Q: What is the "glory of God" A: It is the radiant display of His attributes, His nature, His qualities

8. Jonathan Edwards (“Dissertation on the End for Which God Created the World”) makes it plain that this is WHY God created the World... to give a forum, a theater in which God might put His various attributes on display:

Edwards: If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any exercise. The **power** of God, which is a sufficiency in him to produce great effects, must forever have been dormant and useless as to any effect. The divine **wisdom** and **prudence** would have had no exercise in any wise contrivance, any prudent proceeding, or disposal of things; for there would have been no objects of contrivance or disposal. The same might be observed of God’s **justice**, **goodness**, and **truth**. Indeed God might have known as perfectly that he possessed these attributes, if they never had been exerted or expressed in any effect. But then, if the attributes which consist in a sufficiency for correspondent effects, are in themselves excellent, the exercises of them must likewise be excellent.

9. Taking this same thought, God also orchestrates history to give Himself an even greater stage on which to display His attributes
- a. He raises up GREAT MONSTERS (like Rahab, the Sea Monster; or the beasts from the Sea in Daniel 7) and then unlooses His powerful sword to slaughter them
 - b. He raises up CHALLENGERS to His own power and glory, and then moves out to show how much greater He is than them
 - c. He hardens Pharaoh’s heart, so that He can display His power in Pharaoh

Exodus 9:16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

10. We must realize, the GREATEST FORCE MOTIVATING GOD AT ANY MOMENT IS HIS LOVE FOR HIS OWN GLORY
11. Look at this account: What is it that moves God here first and foremost? Is it not the DISHONOR done to His name by the Field Commander and by Sennacherib?

Isaiah 37:23 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!

12. Is it not the arrogance and pride of the Assyrians that causes God to move out and crush that pride... because they are seeking to take His place

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.

B. Therefore, God's Actions Are First For His Name, Second for Human Salvation

1. Human salvation is the GREATEST WORK on which God has ever embarked... when God saves Israel from Assyria, He is doing it first and foremost to display His own glory

Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 48:9-11 For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. ¹⁰ See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

2. AND even more, when God covers our sins in the blood of Christ, and when He redeems us from Satan's power, He does it FIRST AND FOREMOST to the praise of His glory

Ephesians 1:4-6 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:14 to the praise of his glory.

3. The greatest issue outside the walls of Jerusalem is not the salvation of Hezekiah and the remnant of Jews still alive; they are all sinners who have in some sense sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
4. The greatest issue with Assyria and Sennacherib is that GOD IS BEING ROBBED OF HIS GLORY by their arrogance and blasphemy
5. So also, when God saves us from our sins in Christ, the greatest motivator is that God will be put fully on display
 - a. God allowed the monstrous power of Satan and sin and death to threaten us
 - b. God raised up Christ as an awesome Savior
 - c. WHY? For the praise of His glory!!

C. God's Power and Knowledge Are Awesome

1. God's attributes of power and knowledge are fully on display here
2. He searches hearts and minds... He knows every thought and inclination of Sennachrib's mind

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. ²⁵ 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.'

3. He knows what Sennacherib has said against Him

Isaiah 37:29 ... you rage against me and ... your insolence has reached my ears

4. He also knows everything about Sennacherib

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

5. He knows the future as well

Isaiah 37:7 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."

Isaiah 37:33-34 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. ³⁴ By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city," declares the LORD.

6. God's sovereign power is on display as well...

D. God Is Sovereign Over the Nations, and Rules Over the Hearts of Kings

1. The nations are NOTHING compared to God

Isaiah 40:15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Isaiah 40:17 Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

Isaiah 40:22-24 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. ²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown,

no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

2. God raises one nation and lowers another

Psalm 75:6-7 No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. ⁷ But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

3. God says He planned all of Assyria's triumphs over smaller nations

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. ²⁷ 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.

4. God also effectively influences the hearts of kings

a. The teaching in Proverbs

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

b. Applied to Sennacherib

Isaiah 37:7 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."

NOTE: God influences Sennacherib EFFECTIVELY... He is able to PUT A SPIRIT in his mind... an attitude, a disposition (Hebrew is "ruach"... word for wind, spirit; also used for a mindset); he also orchestrates the report he hears... the internal disposition of mind is shaped by God, as is the external report that comes to him

c. ALSO applied to Hezekiah

i) Hezekiah had been only partially faithful to God

ii) Hezekiah had been trusting in Egypt up till the Assyrian invasion

iii) God orchestrated events to make Hezekiah rely totally on God

5. He is able to drag the Assyrian beast back to its home

Isaiah 37:29 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.

6. Back at home, God is sovereign over the ins and outs of Assyrian politics
7. TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE FACT, God orchestrates Sennacherib's assassination at the hands of his own sons

I WILL HAVE HIM CUT DOWN WITH THE SWORD...

Isaiah 37:38 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.

E. Behold the Arrogance of the Human Heart

1. This chapter puts on full display the wicked arrogance of the human heart
2. The arrogance of a created being like the Field Commander and Sennacherib saying blasphemous things against God

Isaiah 36:18 "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?

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?"

Isaiah 37:10-12 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.' ¹¹ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? ¹² Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them

3. Every single day, human sinners all over the earth speak these kinds of blasphemies against the living God, assuming that He doesn't really exist because He remains silent

Psalm 10:4-7 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. ⁵ His ways are always prosperous; he is haughty and your laws are far from him; he sneers at all his enemies. ⁶ He says to himself, "Nothing will shake me; I'll always be happy and never have trouble." ⁷ His mouth is full of curses and lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.

Psalm 14:1-3 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. ² The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. ³ All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

4. This blasphemy is in every human heart

Romans 3:11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

Romans 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes."

F. God Opposes the Proud, But Gives Grace to the Humble

1. This chapter is one of the plainest displays of this vital principle
2. Stated plainly twice in the New Testament

James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1 Peter 5:5 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

3. God opposes the proud... and what a terrifying OPPOSING this is!!!
 - a. God fights against Sennacherib with all His wisdom and power
 - b. God slaughters 185,000 Assyrian troops... killing them in one night
 - c. God plans and brings about twenty years later Sennacherib's own execution
4. God gives grace to the humble
 - a. Not merely this kind of deliverance in life, although this is exceptionally stunning
 - b. We can scarcely imagine the joy of the people of Jerusalem as they saw the evidence of God's awesome and terrifying power
 - c. Note the HUMBLING of Hezekiah

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

Isaiah 37:3 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.

- d. Note the grace God gave him... not treating him as his sins deserved
 - e. Note the grace God gave the sinful Jews that gathered with him in the walls of the city... not treating them as their sins deserved
 - f. God killed their enemies, and provided enough food for them to survive until the land could recover
5. Answer is plain to us... HUMBLE YOURSELF AND SEEK SALVATION IN CHRIST

Matthew 5:3 *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

G. God Answers Humble Prayer that's Focused on His Glory

1. Hezekiah is GOD-CENTERED in his reaction
2. He goes to the temple of the Lord to focus his mind on the greatness of God
3. Hezekiah spreads the matter before God in prayer

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. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD*

4. Hezekiah does not PRESUME on God... even with the blasphemy spoken and written, Hezekiah is still humble; God doesn't HAVE to do anything

Isaiah 37:4 *It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the field commander*

5. Hezekiah's life is directly threatened... He was a ringleader in the rebellion against the King of Assyria; it is likely that the overwhelming cruelty of the Assyrians would seek to torture him in exquisite ways... the Assyrian king and his army were a dagger held directly across his throat... he was going to DIE if God didn't deliver him; and not only that, but this small remnant that survived would die, and the city of Jerusalem would be burned
6. YET Hezekiah's prayer is ULTIMATELY FOCUSED on the glory of God alone; his desire for deliverance and the rescue of the city is there, but primary the focus is God's honor, God's glory, God's name

[In the message to Isaiah] *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."***

7. He recounts the theology of God's greatness

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.*

8. He reinterprets the Assyrian kings slanted view of history to make it God-centered

Isaiah 37:18-19 *"It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. ¹⁹ 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.

9. The ultimate end is God's name, God's fame among the nations

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.

10. God wants US to pray that way as well

a. God's glory is UPPERMOST in His own affections

b. God's glory should also be UPPERMOST in our own affections as well

i) Like Moses, interceding for Israel after the golden calf

Deuteronomy 9:25-29 I lay prostrate before the LORD those forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you. ²⁶ I prayed to the LORD and said, "O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. ²⁸ Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, 'Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the desert.' ²⁹ But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm."

ii) Like Moses, interceding for Israel after the rebellion with the ten spies

Numbers 14:11-20 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? ¹² I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they." ¹³ ¶ Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. ¹⁴ And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ¹⁶ 'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.' ¹⁷ "Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ¹⁸ 'The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.' ¹⁹ In accordance with your great love, forgive the

sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." ²⁰ ¶ The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked.

iii) Like Daniel, interceding for Israel

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. ¹⁹ 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."

iv) Like Jesus, who began the Lord's prayer with these words

Matthew 6:9-10 "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

v) Like Jesus, who sought God's glory even though it meant His death

John 12:27-28 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

H. God is Patient Toward the Wicked

Romans 9:22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?

1. Just because the wrath of God doesn't come immediately doesn't mean it will never come
2. God is very patient with sinners; key example, Sennacherib was LEFT ALIVE FOR TWENTY YEARS after this incident
3. BUT don't misunderstand: God cannot be mocked

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

4. God's patience toward sinners is for one purpose only: to give them time to repent
5. If instead of repenting, the sinner just keeps on sinning, God's wrath will be even greater:

Romans 2:4-6 do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? ⁵ 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. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

6. God has a day in store for the evening of the score

Isaiah 2:12 The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled)

I. God's Wrath is Terrifying

1. Instant death fell on 185,000 Assyrian soldiers

2. God has this kind of power every day of the year

a. Statistics show that approximately 155,000 people die EVERY DAY!!

b. Biblically, every single person dies when God takes their breath from them

Psalm 104:29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

3. Simply put, God displays His wrath against sin every day

Psalm 7:11-13 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. ¹² If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow. ¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows.

4. We should fear this pure and holy wrath, and flee to Christ!!!

Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

1 Thessalonians 1:10 Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

5. Far greater slaughter will come at the end of the world

a. The plagues

Revelation 9:18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths.

b. The Second Coming

Revelation 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

Revelation 19:21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

6. How much greater eternal punishment in hell:

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

J. God's Grace and Mercy to Sinners is Amazing

1. The sinners in Jerusalem were ultimately no better than the ones who died
2. The sins of Jerusalem were listed in detail by Isaiah
3. But by the blood of Christ, these sinners survived and were accepted by God and blessed by God

III. One Challenging Question

A. If God Can Do This Anytime He Wants, Then Why So Much Suffering??

1. At any time, God can kill the arrogant foe of His people
2. At any time, He can cause them simply to drop dead
3. Why, then, are there so many martyrs?
4. Why so many pastors in jail for the faith?
5. Why so many Christians slaughtered for the faith every year?
6. We cannot shrink back from these questions... the martyrs themselves ask it

Revelation 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

7. God's plan involves the suffering of many of His people

^{ESV} Romans 8:36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

8. We must acknowledge that, while also embracing that AT ANY TIME God can still do what He did in Isaiah 37
9. Just as God allowed (even planned) for His Son to be slaughtered and did not interfere, so God allows (even plans for) the slaughter of many of His people to advance the gospel
10. Furthermore, God also allows (plans for) other forms of suffering that He could clearly prevent... to sanctify us for His glory

B. Our Desire Captured by Habakkuk's Prayer

1. Habakkuk lived at the time of another invader... the Babylonians
2. This time, however, God would not will to destroy the Babylonians, but rather, the people of Israel
3. Habakkuk came to understand God's purposes
4. And yet, he prayed like this

Habakkuk 3:2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

C.

IV. How this Chapter Preaches Christ

- A. Is the "Angel of the Lord" the Preincarnate Christ?

Isaiah 37:36 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!

Genesis 22:11-12 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Exodus 3:2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

Judges 2:1 The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers.

- B. The True, Arrogant, Seemingly Undefeatable Foe is Sin/Death

1. Assyria is a TYPE of our true enemies: Satan, sin, death
2. Christ is the true Savior from those enemies!

C. Christ's Victory Over Sin and Death is Infinitely Greater

V. Applications

- A. Come to Christ
- B. Study these Lessons
- C. Understand the God-Centeredness of God
- D. Seek to Put God at the Center of Everything You Do
- E. Learn to Pray God-Centered Prayers Like Hezekiah
- F. Understand that God is as Sovereign Over the Nations Today as He Was Then
- G. Understand God's Patience Toward Sinners is for Repentance