

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 86

October 11, 2020



Jerusalem Delivered from Sennacherib, Cir. 1883 by Gustave Dore

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Eighty-Six

THE ASSYRIANS ATTEMPT TO INVADE JERUSALEM Pt. III

October 11, 2020

Daniel E. Woodhead

INTRODUCTION

This very long, two-chapter story tells about a time of imminent danger concluding with an awesome miracle, the invasion of Sennacherib and the overnight decimation of his army. The basic story about this event is found in the Books of II Kings 18-19 and II Chronicles 32:1-33. These events are told in the Book of the Kings as part of the story of the reign of the Judean King Hezekiah, and explained here from the perspective of God as told through His prophet Isaiah. The Books of the Kings testifies to the truth of Isaiah's prophecy. Hezekiah's faith and righteousness were impeccable. God permitted the Assyrians to invade his kingdom and humble him because of the shortcomings of the people of Judah, not of Hezekiah. Although he succeeded in ending the spiritual atrocities of his father, King Ahaz, the nation as a whole did not rise to his level, and his personal merit was not immediately sufficient to shield them from Assyrian attack. He placed all his trust in God for his circumstances after consultation with Isaiah.

In Hezekiah's fourteenth year reigning over the Southern Kingdom of Judah (701 B.C.), the Assyrian Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.) invaded against all the fortified cities of Judah (II Kings 18:13-27). There were forty-six according to the Assyrian's count, and Sennacherib seized them.

The major doctrines of this story shows us what is important to God.

1. Trust in Him in all things.
2. Blasphemy
3. Pride
4. Arrogance
5. Blackmail
6. Lying
7. Physiological warfare
8. God's power and judgment
9. Awareness of the world's sin and the culture

When Jesus sent out the first evangelists He said:

Matthew 10:16

¹⁶Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (KJV).

In other words, we are in the world but we are not of the world. We must understand its nature, not be like them, and pray that we can continue to practice our faith without interruption or persecution. Those in Western Democracies have the luxury of choosing Godly leaders.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH ISAIAH

God has said that He always tells His servants the prophets what He is going to do.

Amos 3:7

⁷Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets (ASV, 1901).

Isaiah 37:5–7

⁵So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. ⁷Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

After having received their instructions Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth went to the prophet Isaiah to deliver Hezekiah's message to him. *And Isaiah said unto them, thus shall you say unto your master, do not be terrified by them, they are but words, and no more, and will never become facts: wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me*, by representing Him as no better than the gods of the Gentiles, and as unable to deliver out of the hands of the king of Assyria the city of Jerusalem, when He had said He would. The Hebrew word for servants (*naharay*) here should translate as mere boys and not men, as Rabshakeh and his two companions, Rabsaris and Tartan, are called. This is God's way of showing contempt, for the way they were acting, which was weak, childish, and wickedly toward God and His holy city Jerusalem. Then God says *Behold, I will put a spirit in him*, that is, the king of Assyria, a spirit of fear and dread, which will force him to stop from his purposes, and flee. Upon returning to his own land, *and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land*; as he did, being slain by his own sons.

SENNACHERIB'S SERVANTS RETURN TO HIM

Isaiah 37:8–13

⁸So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. ⁹And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. ¹¹Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? ¹²Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Telassar? ¹³Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?

Hezekiah's refusal of Sennacherib's demands had been conveyed to Rabshakeh. He went to Libnah, for he learned that Sennacherib had decamped from Lachish where Sennacherib had set up base camp for his invasions of Judah. Libnah was a village mentioned several times in the Old Testament (Joshua 10:29, 12:15; 15:42; Jeremiah 52:1). So, after his unsuccessful attempt to intimidate Hezekiah, Rabshakeh went to Lachish to report to Sennacherib, but the king had already heard about Tirhakah's (The Egyptian nee, Ethiopian) invasion, and had gone to Libnah to defend his kingdom. Sennacherib when told of Hezekiah's refusal repeats his blasphemy. Although Sennacherib had abandoned his siege to fight against Cush (Ethiopia), quickly sent another insolent message to Hezekiah warning him that he and his kingdom were doomed. Sennacherib mentions Hezekiah as king of Judah, thus paying a certain amount of respect, for his intention now was not to destroy the nation's confidence in Hezekiah but rather Hezekiah's confidence in God. Sennacherib then calls attention to defeats that Hezekiah would know about. What reason would there then be for Hezekiah to think that he could be delivered, when all these other lands had been destroyed? Implied in this question is also the thought that the God of Hezekiah was not as powerful as the gods who were with Sennacherib. The Assyrian king is perfectly willing to regard this as a contest of the gods, a warfare between the Lord and his own deities.

HEZEKIAH GOES BEFORE THE LORD

Isaiah 37:14–20

¹⁴And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah. ¹⁵And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying, ¹⁶O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. ¹⁷Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God. ¹⁸Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land, ¹⁹and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore, they have destroyed them. ²⁰Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only (ASV, 1901).

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it, which was the blasphemy against God. This he read over carefully to himself, observed the contents of it, and then did with it as follows: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of God; the temple, to the outward court of it, and spread it before the Lord; not to read it, as he had done, he laid it before Him, that he might take notice of it, and vindicate himself, and avenge his own cause; he brought it as proof of what he had to say to Him in prayer. And Hezekiah laid it before the Lord, and prayed to Him so as expecting an answer. Who was most blasphemed in it? O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim, which are over the mercy-seat, the residence of the Shechinah, or Majesty of God, the symbol of the divine presence in the holy of holies. Hezekiah asks that He would be gracious and merciful, and hear and help: thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. This is opposed to the conceit of Sennacherib, that He was only the God of the Jews, and had no concern with other kingdoms and nations; however, the entire earth belongs

to Him, and Him only. It is all under His jurisdiction and dominion, and at His will and control: *thou hast made heaven and earth*; and so has an indisputable right to the government of the whole world, and to the disposal of all things in it. This is a truth, that the king of Assyria has said, that his ancestors have destroyed all lands, or at least have attempted to do it, and have purposed to do it: *the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries; or all the lands, and their land.*

And have cast their gods into the fire, And burnt them; so then where are they now? for they were no gods, but the works of men's hands, wood and stone; they were made of wood or of stone, and therefore could not be called gods; nor could they save the nations that worshipped them, nor themselves, from the fire. The Assyrian kings were able to do it, and did do it, because they were idols of wood or stone; but it did not therefore follow, that they were a match for the God of Israel, the true and the living God. The Lord had promised that he would save them and Hezekiah believed he would. If therefore the God of Israel saved his people from them, this would be a proof to all the world that He only is God, and there is none besides him.

THE LORD REBUKES SENNACHERIB

Isaiah 37:21–29

²¹Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, ²²this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. ²³Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. ²⁴By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field; ²⁵I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt. ²⁶Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. ²⁷Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as a field of grain before it is grown up. ²⁸But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. ²⁹Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

As the Lord again speaks through Isaiah, He sends the message to Hezekiah. The first thing this of which this passage speaks, and it speaks very strongly, is how the intoxicating worldly unholy success is. The tone of this Assyrian monarch was one of insolent arrogance. His military achievements had given him the notion that he had done much greater things than he had actually accomplished, and had exerted the idea that he could achieve other things which were wholly out

of his power. He magnifies his victories and over-estimates his capacity (verses 23–25). This is the common consequence of success, even of success which is not unholy. It is sometimes the unhappy result of success in Church ministries too. Then how much more it is found to be, the result in the case of those who “fear not God, nor regard man”! Unholy success intoxicates. It makes men imagine that they have done far greater things than they have achieved, and that they have become far greater people than they are. It often provides much pride as with Sennacherib, which his arrogance passed into blaspheming. The entire passage, demonstrates God’s stern disapproval. Those who do these things don’t seem to understand that it is God in Whose hand their breath is, and to whom they are accountable for everything they do. He regards them with deep, Divine displeasure. His awful anger rests upon them. God always provides to those whom He has to punish with penalties *suited to their sins*. The haughty are humbled and those who partake of unlawful pleasure will suffer corresponding pain, and they who rob others of their reputation will fall into utter disrepute, and the rogue that preys on society will be impoverished. The Assyrian power was an instrument in Jehovah’s hand. God will make sinful men’s lives serve as examples to others if they cannot be used in a useful, wholesome, and more acceptable way.

THE LORD WILL PERFORM A MIRACLE

Isaiah 37:30–35

³⁰And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. ³¹And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. ³²For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

³³Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. ³⁴By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah. ³⁵For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake (ASV, 1901).

The miracle, that Hezekiah’s people will experience will be great prosperity in the wake of Sennacherib’s defeat. The Assyrian siege had prevented the people from farming, and the Assyrians had threatened a scorched earth policy, by chopping down fruit trees, which meant that that there would be a wholesale famine. But God is promising that in the current year there would be abundant wild crops to feed the people. In the following year there will be fruit growing from the remaining tree stumps. In the third year the people would be able to resume normal farming and the survivors of the House of Judah will flourish like a fruit tree planted in fertile soil. Roots will spread out below and produce abundant fruit. Isaiah ends his prophecy by telling Hezekiah that he nothing to fear from Sennacherib. Although the Assyrian would return to complete his conquest of Jerusalem, he would indeed bring his massive army back to the Holy City, but would not shoot a single arrow or pour a ramp to its walls. God Himself says that for the sake of My servant King David, God Himself will judge Sennacherib and his agents who had profaned Him. Hezekiah was worthy of that promise.

THE PROPHECY REALIZED

Isaiah 37:36–38

³⁶ Then the angel of Jehovah went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁷So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. ³⁸And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead (ASV, 1901).

Then the angel of Jehovah went forth, from Heaven, at the command of the Lord, being one of His ministering spirits, sent forth by Him, as for the protection of His people. He was sent for the destruction of their enemies, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand men (II Kings 19:35). This just demonstrates the power and strength of an angel. and when they arose early in the morning; those of the army that survived, which were Sennacherib, and his servants as well as the Jews saw they were all dead corpses; the whole army, excepting a few who went back to Nineveh. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went, and returned to Nineveh. After being told of the destruction of his army in this miraculous manner, departed at once into his own country. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adramelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; the former of these had his name from an idol so called, (II Kings 17:31) which signifies a glorious king; and the other may signify a prince of treasure. Adramelech and Sharezer, laid in wait for him, and killed him with the sword (Isaiah 37:7), at the time he went in to pray before Dagon his god: and they escaped into the land of Armenia; or Ararat; on the mountains of which the ark rested, (Genesis 8:4). Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead. By killing 185,000 Assyrian troops without any human intervention, God put fear in the hearts of the Assyrians, for they realized that they were not fighting against an enemy that they could defeat. The Assyrians were smart enough and superstitious enough to figure out that this was an act of a divine power. The Lord God of the entire Cosmos had destroyed a major portion of their army, and there was no way for the few soldiers who were still alive in the morning to fight against him. The terror of seeing thousands of dead soldiers and friends must have been overwhelming.

This teaches us that God resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this narrative which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered does and will deliver.

Next message: HEZEKIAH'S HEALING

E-mail: Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org Call: 877-706-2479