

**Wednesday, December 20, 2023 • Read Isaiah 36–37**

Questions from the Scripture text: To what sort of writing does Isaiah now (from prophetic prophecy) transition (v1)? To what date does he refer? Who came up? Against whom? And did what? Then whom did he send (v2)? With what/whom? From where? To whom/where? Where did the Rabshekah stand? Who came out to him (v3)? With what question does the Rabshekah begin (v4–5)? What hope does he attack first (v6)? And what hope in v7? What does he suggest has offended YHWH? What does he urge in v8? What does he say is the only deterrent from Assyria among them? What would this condition do to the “Egypt” plan (v9)? What has he heard, and does he now repeat, about why the rest of Judah has fallen (v10)? What do Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah request in v11? Why? But why does the Rabshekah say that the people need to understand what is being said (v12)? In Whom does he tell the people not to let Hezekiah get them to trust (v13–15)? In whom does he urge them to trust instead (v16–17)? To whom does he compare YHWH (v18–20)? How do the three men answer (v21)? Why? What do they do instead (v22)? How does Hezekiah respond in 37:1? Where does he go? Whom does he send to whom (v2)? How do they introduce the king’s message (v3)? What does he hope YHWH has heard (v4)? What does he ask Isaiah to do? When they arrive (v5), what does Isaiah already have to say (v6)? How, specifically, will this happen (v7, cf. 31:8–9, 37:36–38)? When the Rabshekah returns, what does he find (v8–9)? As he runs to deal with this, what challenge does he attempt to re-make (v10–13)? But why would this renewed threat sound weak and hollow (cf. v7)? What does Hezekiah do with this most recent threat/message (v14)? How does he praise (v15–16), in contradiction to what (v12–13)? How does He pray that the Lord would respond—in order to show what (v17–20)? How does the answer to the prayer come (v21)? Whom does YHWH choose to scorn Sennacherib (v22)? For, against Whom has he blasphemed (v23)? With what great prospective works has Sennacherib flattered himself through the Rabshekah (v24–25)? Of what greater works is he ignorant (v26a–c)? What should he have actually known/believed (v26d–27, cf. 36:10)? How will YHWH not only defeat but humiliate him (v28–29)? After the invasion, what are they currently able to eat (v30a–c)? But how much peace and safety is the Lord now promising them (v30d–e)? What will those who currently remain even be permitted to do (v31)? What else will the Lord do in the future (v32)? What does the Lord say that He will not permit (v33–35)? How does He end up doing this (v36–38)?

**What should we do when the opponents of true religion try to intimidate believers by mocking it?** Isaiah 36–37 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these sixty verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **those who mock true religion are provoking God against themselves, and believers must learn to provoke God’s deliverance by repentance and prayer.**

**Hope in man fails.** Ahaz’s reign has come and gone. In the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah, the futility of hoping in man comes crashing down upon Judah. Long gone is the favor of Tiglath-Pileser, which Ahaz thought he bought with tribute that he plundered from the temple. The nations all around have fallen. A last ditch effort to send envoys to Egypt has not found them able to help at all (cf. 30:1–7). And now Sennacherib’s lackey, the Rabshekah, comes and makes this point to Judah (36:5–6, 8–9).

**Hope in the Lord requires faith.** Manmade religion is a cruel hoax. Just ask the people of Hamath, Arpad, and Sepharvaim (36:20). Only a fool would believe that Nisroch (37:38) is any better. But there is one God Who is different than all the rest. YHWH, the one, true, and living God. Unbelievers can’t be expected to understand this anymore than the Rabshekah understood that the removal of the high places actually pleased the Lord (36:7).

Faith isn’t just to believe in the one true God; faith is to take Him at His Word, not our “spiritual” ideas. Faith refuses to multiply worship (36:7) by the designs and doings of men (37:19). And faith must stand firm before a world that can’t tell the difference between the religions of men and the religion of the one true God. They will constantly dissuade us from hoping in Him (36:15, 18).

Sometimes, a believer’s remaining fleshliness will even give rise in his heart to the idea that his hope is no different than the false hope of idolaters. The Lord forgive us such foolish (literally) thoughts, and the Lord protect us from listening to them. And the Lord act in such a way as to show all the kingdoms of the earth that He alone is God (37:20).

**Unbelief provokes the Lord.** Hezekiah knows this; even before he hopes that the Lord will hear Isaiah’s prayer (end of 37:4), he hopes that the living God has heard the reproaches of Assyria (37:4). And Isaiah doesn’t even need to pray, because he already has the message ready, when Eliakim, Shebna, and the elders arrive: YHWH has heard the words that blasphemed Him (37:5). When the Lord has already begun to deliver Israel (37:8–9), the Rabshekah tries again to dissuade him from hoping in God (37:10). But this becomes fodder for more prayer that the one, true God (37:16) would hear and respond to the reproaches of the Assyrians (37:17).

**Faith also provokes the Lord.** Whereas the Lord’s first response through Isaiah was a response to the words of the king of Assyria (37:6–7), the Lord’s second response is a response to the words of Hezekiah (37:21). He hears when they pray. It is not mighty believers who prevail, but believers in a mighty God. The young girls of Zion (37:22) far outclass the arrogant (37:24–25) of the world. Believers know that those who seem to be something are entirely dependent upon our own Lord for their very existence (37:23, 26–27).

**The Lord is merciful and faithful.** After all that Jerusalem has done, the Lord gives them not a momentary deliverance but an extended reprieve. The Assyrians had wiped out all the rest of Judah (36:1), such that there was no plowing or sowing. But the Lord would give them two years’ food from volunteer plants (37:30a–c) as a sign that it was He indeed Who had judged Assyria (v28–29). Indeed, the Lord would give them enough that they would have plenty for sowing the next year’s harvest (v30d), not to mention enough years that they may start vineyards and enjoy their fruit (v30e). Indeed, the sign would point forward, so that when exile did come, they would know that the Lord is yet saving a remnant out of zeal for Himself (v31–32). What the Lord said of Assyria (v33–35) came true (v36–38)—as did His promise of a remnant emerging from the exile. But even that remnant was a reminder that in what the Lord did in those moments of history, He was displaying what He is doing in history as a whole (cf. Rom 9:23–27).

Dear reader, hope in the God of the Bible. Know that He is as He describes Himself. Worship Him in the way that He says to do. Trust that He saves for His own glory, and that He hears both the reproaches of others and the prayers of His people. He is merciful and faithful, and hope that is placed in Him will not be put to shame.

Who currently reproach the Lord? How do they lump believing in Him with the false religions of the world? What manmade worship or religious ideas even enter the church? To Whom will you bring all of these things?

*Sample prayer: Lord, You are the one, true, and living God. As the world challenges You, like Assyria did, forgive us for whenever our faith wavers. Grant unto us to remember that a young girl who believes in You ranks above the greatest ones in the world, who don’t believe. Forgive us for being intimidated by those to whom the Lord has given a little power for a little while. Grant that we would be sure of Your faithfulness to complete Your plan of redemption in Christ, through Whom we ask it, Amen*

**Suggested songs: ARP46 “God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength” or TPH243 “How Firm a Foundation”**

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

Isaiah, 36 and 37. These are God’s words. Now, it came to pass in the 14th year of king Hezekiah. That’s an acrob. King of asria came up against all the fortified cities of judah. And took them. And the king of his area sent the rebseka. With a great army from lakes to king Hezekiah jerusalem.

And he stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool. On the way to the fullers field. And alia came son of a hillkea who was over the household shed. No, describe and yoga. The son of ASAP, the recorder came at to him. Then the rib shaker said to them, say no to Hezekiah.

Thus says the great king, the king of his area. What confidence is this in? Which you trust? I say you speak of having plans and power for war but they are mere words. Known. Whom do you trust that you rebell against me? Look, you’re trusting in the staff of this broken read egypt on which if a man leans it will go into his hand and pierce it.

So, is pharaoh king of egypt to all the trust in him? But if you say to me, we trust and yahweh. Our god, Is it not he whose high places and who’s alters hezekiah has taken away? And said to do, to, in jerusalem, you shall worship before this altar.

Now, therefore I urge you give a pledge to my master, the king of zyrta. And I will give you 2000 horses, if you're able on your part to put writers on them. Well then, will you repel one captain of the least of my master servants and put your trust in egypt for chariots and the horsemen?

Am I now come up with out? You always against this line to destroy it. You always has said to me, go up against this land and destroy it. Then alia came shabna and jealous head to the rebs shaker. Please speak to your servants. In Aramaic for we understand it.

Do not speak to us in Hebrew and the hearing of the people who are on the wall. But the rabshaka said, there's my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words and not to the men who sit on the wall who will eat and drink their own waste with you.

Then the rev check is stood and called out with a loud voice and hebrew and said here the words of the great king, the king of Israel. Thus says the king, do not let Hezekiah deceive you for he will not be able to deliver you. Noria Hezekiah. Make you trust in yahweh saying, yahai will surely deliver us.

This city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Do not listen to Hezekiah. For thus, says the king of assyria make peace with me by a present and commit to me, And every one of you eat from his own vine and everyone from his own fig tree.

And every one of you drink, the water of his own cistern. Until I come and take you away to a land, like, your own land. A land of grain and new wine. They'll end up fred vineyards. Beware lust, as a call you persuade, you saying you always will deliver us.

Has anyone of the gods of the nation? Delivered its land. From the hand of the king of his area. Where are the gods of hamath and our pad? Where are the gods of suffer by him? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand. Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand that he always should deliver jerusalem from my head?

But they held their peace and answered him. Not a word for the king's commandment was. Do not answer him. Then alia came son of Hilkia. Who's over the household shed? No describe and Joe, the son of asap. The recorder came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him, the words, Of the rabshaka.

And so it was when king has a key, I heard it that he tore his clothes covered himself, with sack cloth and went into the house of yahweh. And he sent to leakim who was over the household of the scribe, and the elders. The priests Covered with sacloth to isaiah the prophet, the son of amos.

And they said to him, thus says Hezekiah This day is a day of trouble on rebuke and blasphemy. For the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth. It may be that y'all. Let your god will hear the words. The rev shaka him his master.

The king of Assyria has sent to approach the living god. And will rebuke the words which Yahwe your god has hurt. Therefore, lift up your prayer for the remnant. That is left. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said to them, thus, you shall say to your master Thus says yahwe.

To not be afraid if the words which you have heard. With which the servants of the king of assyria have blasphemed me. Surely, I will send a spirit upon him and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And that will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

Then the rev shack, a returned and found the king of his area. Warring against Lebna. For, he heard that he had departed from a quiche. And the king heard concerning tear haca king of ethiopia, he has come out to make war with you. So, when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying, Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of judah?

Saying do not let your god in whom you trust to see. You saying jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Israel look. You've heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them, and shall you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered, those whom my fathers have destroyed goads in and haran and Resf and the people of Eden who are intellisar whereas the king of himath, the king of our pad, the king of the city of separate valley and hana and Eva.

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And as I call you, went up to the house of y'all by and spread it before y'all play. And has prayed to you always saying, oh, you all. Thank god of hosts. Oh, y'all have host, god of Israel.

The one who dwells between the cherubim, you are, God, you alone of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline. Your ear. Oh y'all land here. Open your eyes though. Your way and see. And here. All the words of zanakra, but she has sent to approach the living.

God, truly all by the kings of Assyria have laid waste, all the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire for. They were not gods, but the work of men's hands would and Or they destroy them. Now therefore oh y'all they are god save us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth.

May know that you are always. You alone. That Isaiah, the son of ammo is sent to Hezekiah essay. Thus, as your god of israel, Because you have prayed to me against an accurate king of Assyria. This is the word which you always has spoken concerning in. The virgin, the daughter of Zion has despised you laugh.

You to scorned. The daughter of jerusalem is shaken her head behind your back. Whom have you approached and blasphemed against him, if you raised your voice. And lift it up your eyes on high. Against the holy one. Of israel. By your servants, you have approached the lord and said by the multitude of my chariots, I have come up to the height of the mountains to the limits of lebanon.

I will cut down. It's tall cedars and it's choice cypress trees. I will enter its far this height to its fruitful forest. I have dog and drunk water. And with souls of my feet, I have dried up all the brooks of defense. Did you not hear long ago? How I made it from ancient times that I formed it.

Now, I have brought it to pass that you should be crushing for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins Therefore their inhabitants had little power, they were dismayed and confounded, there was grass of the field and the green herb as the grass on the house. Tops and grain blighted before it is grown.

But I know you're dwelling place. You're going out. And you're coming in. And, Your rage against me. Because your rage against me and your tumult have come up to my ears. Therefore, I will put my hook in your nose. And my bridal in your lips and I will turn you back by the way, which you came.

This will be assigned to you. You shall eat this here, such as grows of itself. And the second year, what springs from the same Also, in the third year. So and reap plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. And the remnant to have escaped of the house of judah.

Shall again, take root downward. And barefoot upward. For out of jerusalem, shall go a remnant. And those who escape from Mount Zion, The zeal of Yahweh hosts will do this. Therefore, thus says he always concerning the king of his area. He shall not come into this city. Nor should an arrow there.

Nor come before it with shield. Nor build a siege mound against it. By the way that he came. By the same, he shall return. He shall not come into this city, says

yahweh. For i will defend this city to save it. From my own sick. And for my servant david's sake, Then the angel of yahweh went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185 thousand.

And when people rose early in the morning, There were the corpses all dead. So it's an acronym king of his area departed and went away. Returned home and remained at Nineveh. Now, it came to pass as he was worshiping in the house of misrock as god. That his son's ed Ramelloch and cherries are struck him down with the sword.

And they escaped into the land of iraq. And then sr Haddon his son. Friend. In his place. I'm in the census, reading of god's. Inspired and inherent worked.

We see in this passage that hope and man fails. Most of the book of Isaiah. So far, has Taken place in prophecy during the rain of Ahas. Whom you remember had tried to make an alliance with Assyria. When tiggler with police are was the king of Assyria? To protect him from.

Ifrium and syria. And much good that did him. Because Judah ended up a vassal state. Trusting in Assyria to save them. And due to all the time claimed that they were worshiping yahweh. But they really they expose, they weren't truly worshiping. Y'all play because they were worshiping yahweh, according to their own ideas.

On the high places, with all these other alters, And so, whether in their Uh national life in which there were quite obviously trusting in a Syria not you know or in the religious life. In which they use the name of the lord. But they did not worship according to the word of the lord, and so they were not worshiping the lord himself.

Because they were worshiping according to their own ideas. They were hoping in, man. They were hoping in something other than the lord. And so it's a mercy when god makes that to fail. Uh, even when Hezekiah arose and he became king and Um, the lord gave him to bring reformation.

They stopped the worship at the high places and tore down all those altars. And made the worship only to be a jerusalem. Why? Because jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to put his name. In fact justice Hezekiah, praise Hezekiah, may have confidence that he is actually worshiping the true and living god because he is knowing God, according to his word and worshiping God according to his word.

And so, A little more than halfway through our reading. He's got a new letter from synrobe and he can go and he can take it to the temple and he can spread it before the temple. And even though he's not in the holy of holies, He knows all that.

God has ordained for the display of himself and the communication of his presence to his people and he can address him. You who dwell? Above the charabian. Not that he thought that the living god was localized. The way that's quite obviously the red shaker and all the other nations think the various gods are localized.

But that he trusts in the lord has given himself to men. And particular ways. Which is, of course why what is behind? What we call the regular principle worshiping god and only his way because a only god can determine what worship is and be. The great grace of god.

That he has given us particular actions by which we know. Not only that, we are rightly engaging in But through which he has promised to engage us. And so we may have hope. That we know and belong to and worship and will be delivered by the one. God. And so although it doesn't get that much ink here in isaiah 36 and 37.

I hope you do see. How the lord giving to Hezekiah the reformation of worship? Was a necessary precursor. To when The rab shaker would come as the servant of senacrib and basically say, Your god is just like all the other gods, why are you hoping in him? They weren't able to deliver them.

Religion is just a crutch for the week and we are going around knocking the crutches out from under all the week. Well, if you know, The one true god. And, you know, That he has redeemed you to himself. And, you know, By his own word. That you are engaging him in worshiping that he is engaging, you in the worship because you are worshiping in the way that he has given.

In his word. Then that prepares you not to be shaken. When the skeptic of the world, tries to intimidate, you By saying all religions are the same. And you can say, well, we have a religion that is not the same. Because our god created the way by which we come to him.

And that way is even through the righteousness and sacrifice of our god himself. And how much more, When god, the son has already come and become flesh and dwelt among us and we'd be held his glory and he'll obeyed in our place and he paid for our sins and he rose again from the dead.

We know our god. And we worship him only. Through his righteousness, through his sacrifice as communicated to us, in those actions of worship, that he has commanded. So the regular principle actually enables you to stand up in a pluralistic society and have some backbone. Because you don't have to.

Give wait to the words. With which the people attack you, with which the unbeliever attacks, you Although you may tremble at their threats, You give weight to god's word. And so, the king not only goes into the temple but he sends word to the prophet. Who is the human embodiment of god's words to them?

And he prepares his servants with his speech, they don't get to say their speech though. Because, Where when it says, so the servants of king has Hezekiah came to isaiah In the ordinary flow of a narrative, what you expect is and they told him blah blah blah blah. As king has said or sometimes it actually repeats, what king has a guy had said, but here it's not they told him.

It's and isaiah said to that. God heard the words of the rap shaker. God hears the words of those who approach and blasphemers. Now in the name of their own, god, who just slaughtered millions of them a few years ago. So-called science but not science. Because it is the trusting of the expertise of men and the expertise of men killed so many.

Just like senacrib, didn't really believe that. There's nothing to put his trust and he trusted in his rock. And what happened with that? Well, the lord Who is not just lord. In judah, like senacrum thought. But as lord everywhere. He? Sarcastically said, you know, did i not come up with yahweh?

According to the word of yahweh? Maybe he knew that Uh, what Assyria would do had been prophesied by Yahweh? But, He thought that, you know, there's different gods and different places and the place with The biggest best god is going to end up winning. No, you always god, in judah.

And yahweh is god in Assyria. And he causes him to be slaughtered by his own sons. And the temple of his thought. So, do not be intimidated. When people blaspheme the god to whom you come, For his own righteousness, through his own sacrifice in the worship, that is conducted only in the way that he commands.

Not only do you know him, But he hears that. And he hears, you, He has provoked to wrath. Against Assyria by the words of the Assyrians. And notice that he is pleased also to be. Provoked to deliverance. By the prayers of his people. Which he also listens to, and here's So that This wonderful.

Uh, word. That he speaks about synaprab. The first time. In chapter 37, he says the virgin, the daughter of Zion has despised, you left you to scorn the daughter of jerusalem. Has shaken her head behind your back. And so, he says, A little girl. A young lady. Is greater.

Then the king of assyria. If she has, yahua The greatness of the king of this area. May seem great to him. But it can only come. In the providence of the lord. And so, he flattered himself about how by his The multitude of his chariots, he has come up and he has dugged him.

Drunk quarters of the souls of his feet. He dried up rivers. Etc. I'm sure the Assyrian war machine was very impressive as far as Human impressiveness goes. But god forbid that we should ever be self-impressed. And the lord. Reminds really reminds us. That he is the one. In his providence, even the wicked are able to do anything.

And they should tremble. For their sin, not become hardened and Puffed up in it. And so he gives Uh, he gives Judah, he gives jerusalem really. It's just jerusalem at this point. The rest of judah has been taken. Assigned. That. As they gather the volunteer plants. Out in the fields.

And they're able to eat with that from them one year. And then the volunteer plants are somehow even stronger. The second year Not weeds, not, they replant themselves to such an extent. That in the second year, not only are they able to eat what springs from the volunteer plants there and verse 30?

But they're able to sow fields for the third year. The third year, it's back to normal agriculture. They had enough volunteer grain the year before to feed them all and to replant the land. And he gives them hope. That they will have many years. Of safety and security in this land because he tells them, you can replant your vineyards.

And they will become fruitful again and you will be able to take vintage from them. And so as they would do that, not only would they know. Obviously, when they get up the next morning and there's 185 thousand dead Assyrians, Whom the king of Assyria left behind. Uh, while he said, i got a I gotta run home for a minute.

I've got multiple wars starting on multiple fronts. I got a reorganize the The entire imperial effort. He's like, but don't think that the lord is saving you. Except for that, what he has to leave for is exactly what the lord said he would have to leave for in advance.

But it wasn't just that synachrome had to run home. The way the lord said he would and it wasn't just that the lord killed 185 thousand in a day that they didn't have to do a thing. They just had a prayer meeting one night, and then they got up the next morning and the Assyrian army is dead all around the city.

But every time they ate from those volunteer plants for the next two years, And as they planted the fields in the third year and as they planted the vineyards. And ate from what they harvested from their fields in the third year and eighth grapes and drank wine. And then the years to come from the vineyards.

Every time they did that they would remember The lord is the one true God. None of the gods of the nations are real. They are just wooden stone. The syria is not the great power in the world. The lord is the great power. And the lord would give them a sign.

And that sign of course didn't just apply to the remnant. That when the rib shaker came had been hold up in jerusalem. But even the remnant to, Uh, would return from the exile and ultimately these remnants in history. Are reminders of how the lord is saving a remnant, from all the nations.

Just as that comparison. Among the jews and the gentiles. And god's providence, to us, we've just come through The end of romans nine. Where he's saving a remnant from israel. And he's saving a remnant from the nations. And the apostles saying, don't you see That he's been telling us all the time.

That this is how we you would save. We can see by the fact that it's a remnant. That it is god, who is saving? And that he is real, and that his salvation is real. Because he's the one who said. That it would be this way. And so, we praise god.

Who keeps his word. And who has merciful to us? Because he is faithful. To his promise. And to his prophecy. Hey man. Let's pray. Lord, we do live in and age. In which they mock. Those who trust in you. And mark, their hope. And seek to intimidate us. But we thank you that you have taken your us to yourself in christ and even that you have given us, the right way of worshipping you.

So that we may know that you hear us. So that when we pray and that it is you who addresses us, when we read and hear your word preached and that it is with christ. And who the Virtue and benefit of his. Body and human soul even That we have benefit at the table.

And that you not only receive our praise and song but admonish us with your word and make it to penetrate and take root in our hearts. Filling us with your spirit, making the word of christ to dwellness richly. And so we pray that you would help us in the worship time, so god To know the reality.

Of your gathering us to yourself. And of our Engaging you and being engaged by you. So that when we tremble at the threats of the world or when our hearts are tempted to doubt, We may know that you alone. Oh lord. Who have revealed yourself and christ and redeemed us in christ.

That you alone are the one true god. Who made the heavens? And the earth. Stir up our faith in you, we ask In jesus name. Amen.