

• Assyria left Jerusalem to fight elsewhere

The field commander of the Assyrian armies had to leave Jerusalem. Assyria has got involved in fighting against Libnah. Sennacherib has left Lachish¹; he had received a report of another crisis elsewhere². Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him. Israel was rescued; Sennacherib never came back.

1 37:8
2 37:9a

• The field commander still threatens Hezekiah

But the field commander goes on threatening Jerusalem even when he has been defeated. He sends messengers to Hezekiah, still hoping he might surrender¹. 'Don't trust in God', he says. 'Jerusalem will fall². Assyria is too powerful for you³. All other gods have failed [that was true!] and so will your God Yahweh'⁴.

1 37:9b
2 37:10
3 37:11
4 37:12-13

Hezekiah rediscovers prayer – and so may we

Hezekiah rediscovered prayer – and so may we¹. Hezekiah had been going through a time of unbelief, but now he is recovering, and he is rediscovering prayer! He goes to a good place to pray (the temple). He literally spreads the letter out before the Lord². Have you ever done that? It is a good thing to do, to lay out the very piece of paper and ask God to look at it! Then he prays³. He addresses God in his greatness, and in his power as Creator⁴. He asks God to hear and see and act. His own honour is involved⁵. All other gods have been defeated by the Assyrians⁶ but they were only idols⁷. Surely God will show that he alone is Yahweh, the living God⁸. It is a great prayer. It is not complicated but it is real and honest and direct. That is how we should pray all the time.

1 37:14-20
2 37:14
3 37:15
4 37:16
5 37:17
6 37:18
7 37:19
8 37:20

• Real, honest and direct prayer

True prayer is answered

True prayer is answered. Isaiah sends a message to Hezekiah (37:21) and gives him a prophetic poem about Sennacherib. Jerusalem will triumph over Assyria.

• Isaiah's message to Hezekiah predicts Jerusalem's triumph

22 'The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises and mocks you [Sennacherib]. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as she watches you go.'

Sennacherib's great mistake was to ridicule the character of God.

• Sennacherib should not have ridiculed God

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.'

• He spoke with pride against God

He had spoken with pride against God.

'And you have said, "With my many chariots I myself have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon, that I might 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 and drunk water. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt."

• Sennacherib must learn that God is King

Sennacherib must learn God is the King – not Sennacherib. He shapes the future.

²⁶ *'Have you not heard?
Long ago I did it.
In days of old I shaped it;
now I have brought it to pass,
that you have turned fortified cities
into piles of stone.'*

• He was controlling Sennacherib

He was controlling Sennacherib all the time.

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,
like a field before it grows up*
²⁸ *But I know where you stay
and when you come and go
and how you rage against me.'*

• Sennacherib must now face God's judgement

Now it is the time for Sennacherib to face the judgement of God.

²⁹ *'Because you rage against me
and because your complacency 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.'*

• Hezekiah's prayer is answered

Hezekiah's prayer is answered!

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 Yahweh Almighty
will accomplish this.'*

• Judah will recover

Judah will recover. The land will plant its seed and its agriculture will prosper. No Assyrians will return to destroy the land.

³³ *'Therefore this is what Yahweh says concerning
the king of Assyria:
He will not come to 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 Yahweh.*
³⁵ *'I will surround this city and save it,
for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!'*

• God is committed because of solemn promises

• God's promise to Hezekiah came true

• God's people will be kept safe

The reason why God is so committed to Judah is that he gave solemn promises to David. The reason why God is committed to us is that he has given solemn promises to Jesus, David's son.

Another piece of historical record is presented next. It reminds us that God's promise to Hezekiah came true. Thousands of Assyrian soldiers died^{□1}. Sennacherib withdrew^{□2}. Some time later he was murdered^{□3}. God may use Assyria to chastise his people and get them back to where he wants them. But God's people will be kept safe eventually. Their oppressors will perish. The threats of Satan are always useless and powerless. He may be a roaring lion, but he is caged and restrained. When God is angry with his people the lion may seem very strong. But the roars do not last long. Satan's threats come to nothing. We have but to stand still and we shall see the salvation of our God.

□1 37:36
 □2 37:37
 □3 37:38



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