



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

To Download this lesson go to:

<http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/Isaiah/Isaiah.htm>

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/ernest-meissonier/isaiah>

# Outline of the Book of Isaiah

## I. Isaiah's Warning of Judgment on Israel (1-39)

A. Judgement and Hope for Jerusalem (1-12)

B. Judgement and Hope for the Nations (13-27)

C. True Deliverance Is Found, Not in Egypt, But in the Lord (28-35)

### D. The Lessons of History (36-39)

A. The Deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria (36-37)

B. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery (38)

C. A Visit From the Envoys of Babylon (39)

## II. The Promise of Future Hope in the New Jerusalem (40-66)

# The Deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria (36-37)

- This section unfolds as follows:
  - The Assyrian Chief Adviser Addresses Hezekiah Through His Envoys (36:1-10)
  - The Assyrian Chief Adviser Appeals to the People of Jerusalem Sitting on the Wall (36:11-20)
  - Reactions to the Assyrian Ultimatum (36:21-37:7)
  - The King of Assyria's Letter to Hezekiah (37:8-13)
  - Hezekiah's Prayer (37:14-20)
  - The LORD's Response to the Prayer of Hezekiah (37:21-38)

# The LORD's Response to the Prayer of Hezekiah (37:21-38)

- The LORD responds to Hezekiah's prayer:
  - First *by speaking* to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah
  - Then by *taking action*
- The LORD's response can be logically divided into three parts:
  - The LORD Mocks Sennacherib (37:22-29)
  - The LORD makes *two* promises to Hezekiah:
    - Normal Sowing and Reaping Resumed By the Third Year (37:30-32)
    - Jerusalem Will Not Be Attacked (37:33-35)
  - An Abrupt End to the Assyrian Attack; the Death of Sennacherib (37:36-38)

# The LORD Mocks Sennacherib (37:21-29)

*37:21 Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD God of Israel has said: ‘As to what you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria, <sup>22</sup> this is what the LORD says about him: “‘The virgin daughter Zion despises you—she makes fun of you; daughter Jerusalem shakes her head after you. <sup>23</sup> “‘Whom have you taunted and hurled insults at? At whom have you shouted and looked so arrogantly? At the Holy One of Israel! <sup>24</sup> Through your messengers you taunted the Lord, “With my many chariots I climbed up the high mountains, the slopes of Lebanon. I cut down its tall cedars and its best evergreens. I invaded its remotest regions, its thickest woods. <sup>25</sup> I dug wells and drank water. With the soles of my feet I dried up all the rivers of Egypt.”’”*



# The LORD Mocks Sennacherib (37:21-29)

*37:26 “Certainly you must have heard! Long ago I worked it out, in ancient times I planned it, and now I am bringing it to pass. The plan is this: Fortified cities will crash into heaps of ruins.<sup>27</sup> Their residents are powerless; they are terrified and ashamed. They are as short-lived as plants in the field or green vegetation. They are as short-lived as grass on the rooftops when it is scorched by the east wind.<sup>28</sup> I know where you live and everything you do and how you rage against me.<sup>29</sup> Because you rage against me and the uproar you create has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, and my bit between your lips, and I will lead you back the way you came.*

37:21 **Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah:** “This is what the LORD God of Israel has said: ‘As to what you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria...

- The LORD sends a reply to Hezekiah’s prayer through the prophet Isaiah.
- Oftentimes a prophet went directly to the person concerned to convey his message, but *here* we see that Isaiah chooses to send the LORD’s reply to Hezekiah by a *messenger*.
- Most likely this reply was given in writing.
- It may be that Isaiah chose this approach so that the written Word of God would stand in *contrast* to the blasphemous written word of the Assyrian king.

<sup>37:22</sup> *this is what the LORD says about him [i.e. King Sennacherib]: “The virgin daughter Zion despises you—she makes fun of you; daughter Jerusalem shakes her head after you.*

- Although the LORD’s word is a reply **to Hezekiah**, the first “*you*” to whom the LORD speaks is, in fact, **Sennacherib**.
- Sennacherib is described here as being despised and made fun of by the “*virgin daughter Zion*” and “*daughter Jerusalem*”.
- It was not unusual in the Old Testament to refer to a city as a “*daughter*”:
  - In Ps 45:12 it refers to the “*daughter of Tyre*”
  - In Ps 137:8; Jer 50:42; 51:33 – “*daughter of Babylon*”
  - In Lam 4:21 – “*daughter of Edom*”
- This idiom arises from the fact that the Hebrew words for “city” and “land” are both feminine and lead naturally to this kind of personification.



*37:22 this is what the LORD says about him: “The **virgin** daughter Zion despises you—she makes fun of you; daughter Jerusalem **shakes her head after you**.”*

- The term “*virgin*” probably emphasizes that the city had never succumbed to a enemy attack.
- “*shakes her head*” was a gesture of scorn, which is said to take place “*after you*” because Sennacherib is envisioned as removing his troops from Jerusalem and in retreat from Judah.
- Sennacherib will have to withdraw in frustration, not having achieved his objectives, and be subjected to the derisive comments of those he thought he could easily defeat.

37:23 “*Whom have you taunted and hurled insults at? At whom have you shouted and looked so arrogantly? At **the Holy One of Israel!***”

- When Sennacherib mocked the people of Israel, he was *actually* mocking the LORD, “*the Holy One of Israel!*” who *protects* Israel.
- Sennacherib had mocked “*the Holy One of Israel*” and spoken proud words in defiance of the LORD, assuming that the LORD was impotent and unable to defend his people.

37:24 *Through your **messengers** you taunted the Lord, “With my many **chariots** I climbed up the high mountains, the slopes of Lebanon. I cut down its tall cedars and its best evergreens. I invaded its remotest regions, its thickest woods.*

- Not only did Sennacherib *himself* adopt a mocking and defiant attitude towards the LORD, but he had compelled his “*messengers*” to do so as well.
- “*Chariots*”, like tanks or jet fighters today, were a prestigious piece of military equipment in that day.
- Though chariots were really only useful when fighting in a flat open area, the Assyrians considered it a point of honor to take their chariots everywhere they went – even over difficult terrain.

37:24 *Through your messengers you taunted the Lord, “With my many chariots I climbed up the **high mountains**, the slopes of Lebanon. I cut down its tall cedars and its best evergreens. I invaded its remotest regions, its thickest woods.*

- Sennacherib brags that **nothing** can stop him: neither “**high mountains**” in the north with their dense forests, nor the remote deserts of Sinai, nor the swamps of the Nile Delta in the south.
- This is not to say that Sennacherib had actually **done** all of these things, but he’s saying he **could** do these things if he wanted to.

37:24 *Through your messengers you taunted the Lord, "With my many chariots I climbed up the high mountains, the slopes of Lebanon. I cut down its tall cedars and its best evergreens. I invaded its remotest regions, its thickest woods.*

- One thing Sennacherib *did* do – like previous and subsequent conquerors of Lebanon, he felt free to exploit its vast timber resources.
- These trees were used to build military equipment for siege works and also shipped back to Mesopotamia as material for construction projects there.

37:25 *I dug wells and drank water. With the soles of my feet I dried up all the rivers of Egypt.”*

- Here the Assyrian king continues boasting about all the great things he was able to do.
- He boasts that no natural obstacle was able to hinder the advance of his armies.
- If they needed water as they advanced through the wilderness, then he just “*dug wells and drank water*”.
- Though he had not yet reached Egypt – and Sennacherib himself never did – he was certain that if he ever *did*, he was fully capable of conquering the delta region.
- Just as a farmer could stop the flow of an irrigation channel by using his “*feet*” to form mud into a miniature dam, so on a grander scale, Sennacherib could block up and control “*all the rivers of Egypt*” if he chose to do so.



37:26 *“Certainly you must have heard! Long ago I worked it out, in ancient times I planned it, and now I am bringing it to pass. The plan is this: Fortified cities will crash into heaps of ruins.*

- Here the LORD interrupts Assyria’s pompous bragging with the phrase, *“Certainly you must have heard!”*.
- In his eagerness to take credit for all that he had accomplished, Sennacherib *missed* the fact that it was the **LORD** who *“Long ago...worked it out”*
- The egocentric emperor is confronted by the fact that his accomplishments, of which he is so proud, are nothing more than the outworking of the LORD’s prior sovereign decree!
- The LORD’s action is not a stop-gap intervention to meet an unexpected turn of events.
- He tells us here: *“in ancient times I planned it”*.

<sup>37:26</sup> *“Certainly you must have heard! Long ago I worked it out, **in ancient times I planned it, and now I am bringing it to pass.** The plan is this: **Fortified cities will crash into heaps of ruins.**”*

- The LORD, the creator and master craftsman, has decisively determined *all* that comes to pass.
- Here Sennacherib is shown that all these things he attributed to his own power and decision making was *ultimately* determined and brought about in accordance with the LORD’s age-long plan: *“in ancient times I planned it... now I am bringing it to pass”*.
- What had *actually* happened was that the LORD had resolved to punish his people for their sins, and had used the proud king as an *instrument* to bring it about so that *“Fortified [Judean] cities will crash into heaps of ruins”* before the Assyrians.
- The reality of the situation leaves Sennacherib without any grounds for bragging.

<sup>37:27</sup> Their **residents are powerless**; they are terrified and ashamed. They are as short-lived as plants in the field or green vegetation. They are as short-lived as grass on the rooftops when it is scorched by the east wind.

- Further details are given here as to how the cities of Judah and elsewhere had been overthrown.
- Again, by the predetermined purpose of the LORD, their “**residents are powerless**”, lacking physical and mental resources to resist attack.
- It was the **LORD** who had determined that they would be humiliated by the Assyrians.
- When the king of Assyria went about conquering these cities, he was efficiently and effectively carrying out the **LORD’s plan**.

37:27 *Their residents are powerless; they are terrified and ashamed. They are as short-lived as **plants in the field or green vegetation**. They are as short-lived as **grass on the rooftops** when it is scorched by the east wind.*

- These conquered people are compared here to wild “*plants in the field or green vegetation*”, fresh and ready to be used by anyone who passed by.
- They are then compared to “*grass on the rooftops*” shriveling up in the heat (cf. Ps 129:6).
- In Palestine the roofs of simpler houses were made of wood with branches thrown across them and covered with a layer of soil which was then trampled flat.
- On this surface grass and weeds could readily grow, but lack of water and exposure to the sun would soon cause them to wither.
- So too, the people lacked the resilience to repel the Assyrian onslaught.

37:28 *I know where you live and everything you do **and how you rage against me.***

- We see here that the LORD is **fully acquainted** with **all** that Sennacherib does.<sup>1</sup>
- **Nothing** that the Assyrian king does can come as a surprise to God, for God himself has **decreed** the actions of the king.<sup>1</sup>
- Then he adds, “**and [I know] how you rage against me**”.<sup>1</sup>
- Here we see that God also knows the **purposes** of Sennacherib’s actions.<sup>1</sup>
- The king is pictured as shaking with emotion as he sets himself against the true God and his decrees.<sup>2</sup>
- But, like the rulers who took their stand against the LORD and his anointed one, he too will discover the futility of such opposition to the LORD. (Ps 2:1-7)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; p. 495

<sup>2</sup> Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (pp.746-747)

37:29 *Because you rage against me and the uproar you create has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, and my bit between your lips, and I will lead you back the way you came.*

- Therefore, because of Sennacherib's insolence, God will lead him back to Assyria the same way he came: *"I will put my hook in your nose, and my bit between your lips"*
- The Assyrians placed hooks in the cartilage of the nose or in the lower lip of their captives to physically subdue them and lead them into exile (see Amos 4:2-3), similar to rings used to lead oxen.
- Here these images portray God bringing the unruly country of Assyria into submission, leading its ruler Sennacherib back to his own land.



# Normal Sowing and Reaping Resumed By the Third Year (37:30-32)

*37:30 “This will be your reminder that I have spoken the truth: This year you will eat what grows wild, and next year what grows on its own. But the year after that you will plant seed and harvest crops; you will plant vines and consume their produce.<sup>31</sup> Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit.<sup>32</sup> “For a remnant will leave Jerusalem; survivors will come out of Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies will accomplish this.*

# Normal Sowing and Reaping Resumed By the Third Year (37:30-32)

- God provides a sign so that Hezekiah will know the *timing* of the deliverance that the LORD has promised.
- *This year* they will eat what grows by itself which implies that they will not have time to plant crops.
- The *second year* they will eat what springs from that.
- This sign means that they will not be able to plant because the battle rages across the crop cycles of two years.
- But in the *third year* they can resume the usual sow–reap crop cycle.
- The implication of this sign is that Israel will soon be able to resume normal life because the Assyrians will no longer be a threat.

# Normal Sowing and Reaping Resumed By the Third Year (37:30-32)

- According to Sennacherib's annals, his siege of Jerusalem lasted for only one year.
- So, if it began in the spring as is normal for battles, the Israelites would not have been able to plant crops in *that* year.
- Then the battle lasted for one year into the next spring so that they could not plant crops in *that* year either.
- But in the *third year* they could freely sow and harvest once again (as promised in verse 30).

# Normal Sowing and Reaping Resumed By the Third Year (37:30-32)

- But in God's mind, the more important point is that he will preserve a harvest for *himself* from among his people (37:32).
- The Assyrian king intended to devastate God's "field" and take all the crop for himself.
- But although God has permitted a large measure of devastation to take place, he will not allow total destruction to occur.
- He has too great a passion ("*zeal*") for his people to allow that to happen.
- He will preserve a "*remnant*" for himself.

# Jerusalem Will Not Be Attacked (37:33-35)

*37:33 “So this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city, nor will he shoot an arrow here. He will not attack it with his shielded warriors, nor will he build siege works against it. <sup>34</sup> He will go back the way he came—he will not enter this city,’ says the LORD. <sup>35</sup> I will shield this city and rescue it for the sake of my reputation and because of my promise to David my servant.”*

# Jerusalem Will Not Be Attacked (37:33-35)

- Sennacherib's annals claim: "*[Hezekiah] I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthworks in order to molest those who were leaving his gate*".
- Earthworks (mounds of earth surrounding a city) were erected to block provisions and supplies from entering the city and to hinder people from leaving it.
- So, Sennacherib appears to have taken the **first** step in the process of conquering the city by building earthworks but he did **not** reach the **next** step of building siege ramps.
- This supports the biblical account in verse 33: "*He will **not enter** this city, nor will he shoot an arrow here. He will not attack it with his shielded warriors, **nor** will he **build siege works** against it.*".



# Jerusalem Will Not Be Attacked (37:33-35)

- God then reiterates that he will send Sennacherib home by the way that he came, adding that Sennacherib will not even *enter* Jerusalem (v. 34).
- God will protect Jerusalem for his own sake and for David's sake.
- Notice he does not say for *Hezekiah's* sake; this promise of deliverance goes back *much further*, to its foundation in God's promise to *David*.

# An Abrupt End to the Assyrian Attack; the Death of Sennacherib (37:36-38)

*37:36 The angel of the LORD went out and killed 185,000 troops in the Assyrian camp. When they got up early the next morning, there were all the corpses! <sup>37</sup> So King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and went on his way. He went home and stayed in Nineveh. <sup>38</sup> One day, as he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword. They ran away to the land of Ararat; his son Esarhaddon replaced him as king.*

# Abrupt End of Assyrian Attack; the Death of Sennacherib (37:36-38)

- Here we have a brief, almost matter-of-fact report that God did what he *said* he would do.
- He broke the morale of the Assyrian force with a single blow, whereupon Sennacherib obediently broke camp and headed for home, and eventually met *precisely* the fate that the LORD had *said* he would (cf. 37:7).
- The towering tyrant is dispatched in just three verses!
- All Hezekiah had to do, like his fathers of old, was to “*Stand firm and see the salvation of the LORD*” (Exo 14:13).

# Next Time

I plan to begin looking at Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery in **Isaiah 38**

# Class Discussion Time





# Class Discussion Time

- Most Christians are happy to affirm that God ordains and brings about the good things that happen in this world.
- But *many* Christians are squeamish about acknowledging that God *also* ordains and decrees even the evil acts of men in order to accomplish his ultimate sovereign purposes.
- This passage is a clear illustration of that: God ordains the destructive power of an evil Assyrian king to reap havoc on many people in order to bring about the discipline of his people.
- Have you ever struggled with the idea that God ordains evil?



# Class Discussion Time

- The LORD held Sennacherib, a pagan ruler, accountable to recognize that his abilities and accomplishments as a world conqueror were not something that he had any right to boast about, since those things were given to him as a part of God's sovereign decree.
- It seems that pagans aren't the only ones who need to be reminded of the fact that things which we are most proud of about ourselves were given to us by God and are no cause for boasting.
- Paul in writing to the believers at Corinth had this to say:  
*“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”* (1Cor 4:7 NIV)
- Do you sometimes find yourself forgetting this as you think about your talents abilities and/or accomplishments?