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I Will Defend This City and Save It

37: 21-35

I will defend this city and save it DIG: What is the intended impact of this woman taunting her attacker? How does this taunt song suit the occasion? What is Isaiah asserting about God's relationship to Jerusalem by portraying Him as the woman's defender. What insults have the Assyrians made against the LORD (see 36:18-20; 37:10-12)? How will they end up eating their own words? What sign does ADONAI give Hezekiah? Why give a sign that will be fulfilled only after the event it is meant to show? How does this sign relate to the promises of restoration (as in 10:20-23)? In what way is God saving Jerusalem for His sake?

REFLECT: When have you felt like Hezekiah - backed up against a wall with no recourse but to pray? What happened? How have you seen God's affirmation of His love for you? What is the difference between spiritual pride and a rightful sense of accomplishment? What are the indications of each? Since all we have comes from the LORD, what is the place for human planning, preparing, and hard work? How have you taken credit for something that was, in reality, far more than you could possibly have pulled off by yourself? What did it take to wake you up to that fact?

Responding to **Hezekiah's** prayer (**37:14-20**), **the LORD sent a message to him** through **Isaiah** that **Assyria** would be defeated. **That message included three parts.** Even as **he** was praying, **ADONAI** had been revealing **His** word to **Isaiah**, so that **the king** barely had time to rise from **his** knees before **he** received an answer. **God** said: **Because you have prayed to Me . . . this is the word the LORD has spoken against him (37:21).** We must not miss this, because it is part of the Bible's strong teaching about prayer. Because someone has prayed, **God** steps in and changes the course of history. It is a breathtaking truth, and at first sight a worrying one, because it appears to put humans, rather than **ADONAI**, in control. But this is an illusion. There is no conflict between **the LORD's** absolute sovereignty and the power of prayer, because, quite simply, this is the way **God** has chosen to work. Through prayer **He** draws us up into **His** purposes and involves us

in what **He** is doing. What a privilege! Even the desire to pray is a gift.¹³⁴

The LORD answers by means of **Isaiah, son of Amoz**. This is one more attempt by the prophet to let the reader know the authenticity of **his** statements (**1:1, 13:1, and 20:2**). Evidently, **the Spirit of God** wanted us to know the precise identity of the human author. **Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah, “This is what the LORD, the God of Isra’el says concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria” (37:21)**. The answer to **Hezekiah’s** prayer came at once, linking the response to the prayer. **The king** was very fortunate to have **God’s** messenger ministering to **him** at that time, a person who could convey **His** comforting words in a timely fashion. But it would not have happened if **Hezekiah** had not **prayed to ADONAI**.

This is the word the LORD has spoken against him (37:22a). Sennacherib had spoken to **Hezekiah** concerning **God**. **Hezekiah** had spoken to **God** concerning **Sennacherib**; now **God** speaks to **Hezekiah** concerning **Sennacherib**. **ADONAI** always has the last word. We can say what we want about **Him**; others can say what they want about us; but it is what **ADONAI** says about you and me that is what ultimately counts.¹³⁵



In the first of a three part message, the Assyrians would be driven back. **Isaiah** could look to a day when **the virgin daughter of Zion**, now prone and helpless before **the Assyrian** rapist, will mock **her** would-be assailant’s impotence. **Sennacherib** will fail to take **Jerusalem** and **she** will shake **her head** in contempt (**37:22b**). The reason for **the Assyrian** failure was the blasphemy of **God**. **Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? 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 (10:34), I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of forests. In a figurative way, **he** boasted that he had conquered mighty nations. **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 (37:23-25).** The **Egyptian** farmer ran water from the Nile through small irrigation channels into his fields. **He** could block the flow simply by making a little heap of soil with **his** foot. **Sennacherib** boasted that **his** foot could block the Nile. **His** confidence was based on **his** many chariots, and even **his** easy conquest of the Nile would not prove to be much of a barrier. Although it is questionable that **he** ever entered **Egypt**, **he** claimed to have conquered it (he did, however, defeat **the Egyptians** in Philistia). This was not surprising because it was common for **him** to embellish **his** accomplishments (**to see link click Gq - In the Fourteenth Year of Hezekiah's Reign**).

But **Sennacherib** did not realize that in reality, **ADONAI** was in total control. **Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it**, literally *I did it*, in Hebrew it is a perfect form of certainly. A past action with assured, continuing future results. **Now I have brought it to pass, you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone (37:26).** Whatever **Assyria** accomplished was merely the carrying out of **God's** own plan. **Sennacherib** could not do what **he** planned because **he** had mocked **the One** who is the maker of all plans (**James 4:13-16**).

Isaiah then agrees with **Sennacherib** that the results of **his** conquests have been impressive. **The people** that **he** had conquered had been **drained of all their power. They were dismayed and put to shame.** To **the Assyrian king people** were **like plants in the field, like tender green shoots**, no **people**, but crops to be harvested for **his** own use. **Like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up (37:27).** This phrase can easily be demonstrated on the roofs of Middle Eastern houses. The flat roofs of the houses in this region are constructed by laying, first, large beams at intervals of several feet; then, rude joist, on which, again, are arranged small poles close together, or brushwood, and upon this is spread earth or gravel rolled hard. This rolling is often repeated, especially after rain, for these roofs are apt to be weak. For this purpose a roller of stone is kept ready for use on the roof of every house. **Grass** is often seen growing on these roofs (**Second Kings 19:26; Psalms 129:6**).¹³⁶

But despite **his** many conquests, it was **ADONAI** who is in control of **Sennacherib**. And because of **his** boastings, **God** was going to punish **him**. **The LORD** would

break **him** as a man breaks a wild horse, and lead **him** home humiliated and exhausted. **But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against Me. 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 (37:28-29).** This message is for **Hezekiah** and not for **Sennacherib**. It is not meant to bring **Sennacherib** to repentance. **He** has gone too far and **the LORD** had already passed judgment on **him**. But it was important that **Hezekiah** understand that **he** had nothing more to fear from **the king of Assyria**.¹³⁷

An allusion is made here to the custom of inserting a ring in the **nose** of a headstrong animal for the purpose of subduing and leading **him**. The metaphor is a favorite one with the Arabian poets. The language used here, however, is not altogether metaphorical in its reference to human beings. In the sculptures taken from Khorsabad there are representations of prisoners brought before the king, each prisoner having an iron ring thrust through the lower lip. To these rings, cords are attached, which the king holds in his left hand, while in his right he holds a spear, which he thrusts into the eyes of the poor prisoners (**2 Kings 25:7, 19:28; Ezekiel 29:4, 38:4**).¹³⁸ Because of **Sennacherib's** blasphemies against **the LORD**, **he** will go back to **his** land a failure.

The first part of **Isaiah's** message from **God** concerned **Sennacherib**, but **now the prophet addresses Hezekiah. The second of this three part message concerned Judah; a faithful remnant** would remain and life would go on as usual. **This will be the sign for you, O Hezekiah. God offered Judah a sign** and it had to do with agricultural production: **This year you will eat what grows by itself (because of the Assyrian army), and the second year what springs from that (because the land would still be unsettled). But the third year, sow and reap (37:30), plant vineyards and eat their fruit (because by the third year normal conditions will return to the land and it will again yield its abundant produce).**

Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above (37:31). These metaphors remind us that **Isaiah** prophesied of a returning faithful **remnant**. **He** said that **he** and **his** two sons would be a **sign** to the nation and that **God** would choose **their** divinely appointed names for their significance to the nation. And only by heeding **the LORD's** word through **Isaiah**, reinforced by the **signs and symbols** that **Isaiah** and **his** sons represented, would the light dawn for **Isra'el**. In **7:3** **he** uses the name **Shear-Jashub, a remnant will**

return to illustrate that **a remnant** will indeed return (**10:20-21; 11:11** and **16**). **For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors (37:32a)**. And here, once again, **God** demonstrates that **He** is *the Promise Keeper*, and can be trusted.

The zeal of ADONAI of heaven's angelic armies (CJB) will accomplish this (37:32b). The concept of **the zeal of the LORD of heaven's angelic armies** appeared earlier where the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom was promised (**9:6-7**). Consequently, this temporary restoration promised here in **Chapter 37** is just a foretaste of what will happen in the final restoration made possible through **the Messiah**. If it were not for the unconditional love for **His** people, both Jew and Gentile, none of this would be possible. **He** would have long ago abandoned us to wallow in our sins (**1:9**).

Like spilled grain, the **remnant** will bear fruit again, like an old **root below** the ground, the **remnant** will send up its shoots again, like a field plowed and sown, the **remnant** will spread over the land once more. **God** loves **his people** and whenever there is the slightest spark of faith, trust, and belief, **He** is there to fan it into flame. When **they** realize that everything is back to normal, **they** will realize the truthfulness of **Isaiah's** prophecy. Once again **Isaiah** will confirm that **he** is indeed a prophet of **the LORD**.

In the third part of this three-part message, the king of Assyria would not set foot inside Jerusalem and would have to return home. He will not enter this City or shoot an arrow here (37:33a). If one of the **one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian** soldiers had shot **an arrow** over the walls of **Jerusalem**, **the LORD's word** would have been inaccurate! How wonderful are the promises of **ADONAI**! This is the logical conclusion of the two previous parts of **Isaiah's** message. If **Sennacherib's** arrogant blasphemy against **God** was to be punished, and if a remnant were to once again fill the land, then only one outcome would be possible. **Sennacherib** would not be allowed to enter the **City**, and **Jerusalem** would survive. **God** did exactly what **He** said **He** was going to do.

Not only would **the City** be delivered, it would not even be physically threatened. **God** told **Isaiah** that **Sennacherib** would **not come before it with shield**, would **not** set foot inside **Jerusalem** or even **build a siege ramp against it (37:33b)**. A **siege ramp** was an inclined plane, which the besiegers of a walled town built up to the walls so that they could bring their engines of war closer, and work them to greater advantage. It was made of all sorts of materials: earth, timber, boughs, and

stones, the sides being walled up with brick or stone, and the incline top made of layers of brick or stone, forming a paved road up which the war engines could be drawn. (See **Uzziah king of Judah; Second Chronicles 26:11-15**).¹³⁸

By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this City, declares the LORD. Sennacherib would return to Assyria and never see Jerusalem. God would defend His City and save it. For what reason? For **His sake** and **the sake of His servant David (37:34-35)**, meaning also for **the sake** of the Davidic Covenant (see the commentary on **the Life of David, to see link click Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David**). For all of **Hezekiah's** piety, the plans of **God** did not revolve around him, but around **God Himself**, and **His Servant Yeshua Messiah. Hezekiah** was saved, not for his own **sake**, but for the sake of Another. As the book moves on, of course, **David** will be dwarfed by a far greater **Servant of God (42:1-4)**, and the question of how, or on what basis, **God** saves **His people** will be explored in far greater detail later in the book.¹³⁹

How happy is the nation, city, or person who has **God** as a **shield**? How many times has **He** protected us against that which we could not **bear, but provided a way out so that we can stand up under it (First Corinthians 10:13b)**? When tragedy comes, how often do we ask why we have been singled out? Do we blame **God** or Satan? Rather, we ought to be thankful for all the tragedies that might have come our way, but did *not* because **God** was our **shield (Genesis 15:1; Psalms 13:3, 28:7 and 84:11)**.

*Isra'el has continued to be assaulted by Satan and the world until this very day. There are times when one could get very discouraged. But this these verses should be an encouragement to us all. Would **ADONAI** defend **His City** then and allow it to be destroyed today. Heaven forbid! **He is the Promise Keeper.***