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Then the Angel of the LORD Put to Death a Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp

37: 36-38

Then the Angel of the LORD put to death a hundred and eighty five thousand men in the Assyrian camp DIG: Other ancient writings speak of Sennacherib's army being decimated by fear and panic because of a plague. How does this fulfill the earlier prophecies (see 10:33-34; 29:5-8; 30:31)? If you were living in Jerusalem, how would you react when you heard that 185,000 Assyrians had died? Would you be more likely to respond like those described in 33:14-15, or in 35:10? Why? Isaiah 37:38 records an event that occurred twenty years after the events of 37:36-37. What irony do you see in Sennacherib's death as he enters his temple (see 37:1, 14-17 where Hezekiah goes into his Temple)?

REFLECT: When have you reaped the unintended consequences of sin in your life? Have you, or do you know someone who reaped the consequences in a single day? How long had their sin been building to the point where the dam broke and the flood of sin overtook them? What happens when sins build up over a long period of time?

701 BC



The sudden destruction of **the Assyrian** army by divine intervention is almost anticlimactic, occupying only three verses. It is, however, the crux of the entire account. Although **Sennacherib** captured forty-six cities, the biblical and secular records both show that as **he** was preparing to move against **Jerusalem** with **his** entire army **he** had to temporarily divert its attention to **Egypt** because of the military threat posed by **Judah's** ally, King Tirhakah. After **the Egyptian**-Ethiopian submission, **Sennacherib** returned to **Jerusalem** where **his** army was **annihilated (Second Chronicles 32:21)**. **That night the Angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp (to see link click [Gp - The Timeline of Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah](#))**. **When the people in Jerusalem got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies in front of them (37:37)**. They were not killed by the sword, but by means of **the Angel of the LORD**. Whenever the phrase: **the Angel of the LORD** is seen in the TaNaKh, it is always **the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ (Genesis 16:7; Exodus 3:2)**. It is never a common, ordinary, run of the mill angel. So what **Isaiah** said *did* come true; **Sennacherib** did not **set foot in Jerusalem**, nor was he able to besiege it (**Second Kings 19:36**). **God was indeed sovereign over the nations and He certainly could be trusted.**

In the past, **ADONAI** has sent **the Angel of the LORD** to bring **death** to sinful people. In **Genesis 19:24**, **the LORD** rained down burning sulfur on **Sodom and Gomorrah** and destroyed **all those living in those cities in one day**. In **Exodus 12:29**, on the first Passover **the LORD** struck down **all the first born in Egypt in one night**. In **Second Samuel 24:15-16**, **the LORD** sent a plague on Israel that **killed 70,000 in one day, from that morning until** the evening sacrifice was offered. And in **Revelation 18:8** **Commercial/Political Babylon** will fall **in one day** (see the commentary on **Revelation Eo - In One Day Her Plagues Will Overtake Her**). Therefore, it is not surprising for the same to happen here. The slaughter did not come from the hands of the Cushite army, but by **the Angel of the LORD**, who killed **185,000** soldiers as **Isaiah** had prophesied earlier in **10:17**. **In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone (17:14a)!**

Earlier **Isaiah** had spoken in general terms of the destruction of **the Assyrian** army (**30:27-33; 31:8-9; 33:1 and 18-19**). **But in 10:16, he prophesied very specifically that ADONAI-Tzva'ot would send a wasting disease upon the Assyrian enemy. Here then, is the fulfillment of that prophecy.** In the Fifth Century BC a Greek historian named Herodotus traveled all over the Middle East looking for historical records. **He** documented that **the Assyrian** army was infected by a **plague** spread by mice. When **Sennacherib** arrived in **Egypt**, an army of field mice or rats chewed through the leather fittings of the soldiers' weapons. But not to worry, **the Egyptians** had submitted to them

without a fight. It may well be that Herodotus' rodents actually were carriers of a powerful disease - like a septicemic **plague**, for example, which often causes its victims to become comatose and die within twenty-four hours.¹⁴⁰ The Bible simply states that the destruction came from **the angle of the LORD** and does not mention the specifics.

In addition to the Greek historian Herodotus, we also have the account of Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian. **He** also mentions **Sennacherib's** defeat, explaining that it was caused by a **plague**. **He** cites an earlier historian who had written: "Now when **Sennacherib** was returning from **his Egyptian** war to **Jerusalem**, **he** found **his** army in danger by a **plague**, for **God** had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army; and on **the very first night** of the siege (of Jerusalem), a hundred fourscore and five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book X, Chapter 1, Section 5).

It is interesting that the element of **rats** or mice saved **Jerusalem** from **Sennacherib** because there is a corollary to this in the TaNaKh. There is a story about **ADONAI's** judgment, an account about **rats** or mice in **First Samuel 4: 1 to 7:1**. The Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and the people were afflicted with an outbreak of disease. It is likely that the **rats** or mice were carriers of the disease, which may have been a form of the **plague**. And part of **their** repentance for taking the Ark of the Covenant was to offer **Isra'el five golden tumors and five golden rats** (or mice) to take it back. So this element of **rats** in **God's** judgment has one account in Herodotus and another account in Scripture. Therefore, we see that sometimes **ADONAI** used a plague spread by **rats** or mice to destroy the enemy. So we have three separate accounts of what happened to **the Assyrian** army *that all agree*; the biblical account (**Isaiah 37:36-37; Second Kings 19:35-36**, and **Second Chronicles 32:21**), the Fifth Century BC account by the Greek historian Herodotus, and the First Century AD account by the Jewish historian Josephus.

So many of **his** soldiers had **died** of the **plague** that was spread by mice that **Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there (37:37)**. Twenty years later **he** was assassinated. **One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, an idol of Nineveh, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer cut him down with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king (37:38)**. This was extremely ironic. Who did **Sennacherib** say would not help **Hezekiah**? **The LORD**. Where did **Hezekiah** go to get help? **He** went into the Temple and prayed to **the LORD his God**. Where did **Sennacherib** go to pray? In **his** temple, to **his** god. Did **his** god help **him**? No, not even against **his** own two sons. **Hezekiah prayed in his Temple to his God and was delivered. Sennacherib**

prayed in his temple to his god and was assassinated. This **man** who thought of **himself** as a **god** was as mortal as any other. And like **his** father Sargon II before **him**, **Sennacherib** was to prove that great wealth is no security against an untimely death. In fact, according to **Yeshua**, it is no security at all. **But God said to him: You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself (Luke 12:20).** It is a principle of **God's** moral universe that evil should return, sooner or later, on those who practice it.