–Save This Page as a PDF–

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.