

ISAIAH 36-37

Sunday, September 4, 2016

Ch. 36-37 – THE LORD DEFEATS SENNACHERIB & THE ASSYRIANS

Chapters 36-39 are parallel chapters with 2 Kings 18-19. The evidence indicates that Isaiah authored the material originally, and such was later incorporated into the book of Kings (Jackson, citing Young).

This historical interlude neatly separates the two major sections of Isaiah (1-35 and 40-66). Isa. 36-39 records three dramatic episodes in the continued relationship of Isaiah the prophet and the good king Hezekiah:

- (1) Jerusalem's deliverance from the Assyrian king Sennacherib (36-37)
- (2) Hezekiah's sickness and recovery (38)
- (3) The visit of the envoys of the Babylonian king to Jerusalem (39)

These events are treated in topical (not chronological) fashion since the latter two events happened prior to Sennacherib's invasion. As arranged, chapters 36-37 effectively round off the first half of the book (chapters 1-35) which emphasizes Isaiah's activity during the years of the increasing threat from Assyria, while chapters 38-39 introduce the second half of the book (chapters 40-66) in which the future exile in and deliverance from Babylon play a dominant role.

I. Sennacherib Threatens Judah & Challenges God (36:1-22)

A. Representatives from both sides meet (36:1-3)

1. 36:2 – "Lachish" – "This important fortress city of ancient Judah was located about 15 miles west of Hebron, hence about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. By besieging Lachish first Sennacherib apparently planned to cut Hezekiah off from his Egyptian ally, since Lachish guarded the major southern approach to Jerusalem" (Woods, 152).
2. "The successful siege of Lachish was later depicted on the walls of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh in reliefs which are now preserved in the British museum" (Woods, 152).

B. "In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me?" (36:4-20)

1. You can't defeat Assyria (36:4-5).
2. Egypt is powerless (36:6).
3. God won't protect you (36:7-10).
 - 36:10 – Woods: "Assyrian military intelligence had apparently supplied the propagandist well with information concerning Judah's internal affairs" (153).
4. Hezekiah's men plead with the Rabshekah to speak in Aramaic. He refuses (36:11-20).

C. Hezekiah's men mourn (36:21-22).

II. Isaiah Comforts Anguished Hezekiah (37:1-7)

- A. 37:7 – "Hear a rumor" – "Mostly likely, those tidings would be the news that he mysteriously had lost 185,000 soldiers overnight (v. 36). Moreover, upon

returning to his country, God, acting providentially, would cause him to die by the sword. This was remarkably fulfilled a few years later” (Jackson, 58).

III. Second Threat from Sennacherib (37:8-13)

IV. Hezekiah’s Prayer (37:14-20)

A. Hezekiah’s prayer began with a confession of Who God is:

1. The Lord of hosts
2. The God of Israel
3. The One who dwells between the cherubim
4. The only true God, the ruler of the kingdoms of earth (Dan. 2:21; 4:17)
5. The God of creation

B. Like a psalm of lemon, his prayer contained ...

1. An invocation (v. 16)
2. A complaint, in the form of a call upon the Lord to take note of the Assyrian’s mocking challenge (vv. 17-19)
3. A supplication for deliverance (v. 20)

V. God’s Decree Concerning Sennacherib (37:21-35)

A. The Lord’s response (through Isaiah) involved a taunt-song against Sennacherib (vv. 20-29) and a sign for the people of Judah (vv. 30-32) climaxed by the clear promise that the Lord would defend Jerusalem and frustrate Sennacherib’s invasion intent.

B. The sign to Hezekiah (37:30-33)

1. This is a non-miraculous sign, involving a promise concerning future developments. The theme of the sign is a return to normalcy in agriculture within three crop years.
2. In spite of Assyria’s invasion and the devastation of the land, within in three years conditions would be normal again.

C. 37:33 – “There are those who feel that the prophecy does not fit the facts of history, but as Ridderbos observed: ‘In the Assyrian inscriptions ... Sennacherib does refer to the encirclement of the city and to the siege works he built up, but not to a scaling of the walls. And that is precisely the point of this prophecy’” (Jackson, 59).

VI. Assyria’s Defeat & Sennacherib’s Death (37:36-38)

Concluding Observations:

1. God’s sovereignty is on grand display against Assyria and Judah.
2. We should be careful to whom we listen.
3. Sometimes the best answer is silence.
4. The Lord will provide for the faithful.
5. The Lord always wins.