

**The End of Spin
God is Not Mocked**
Isaiah 37:1 – 38, 2 Kings 18:13 – 19:37, 2 Chronicles 32:1 – 23

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We are right in the middle of the Assyrian Empire and their diplomatic attempts to force an unconditional surrender from the King of Judah, King Hezekiah. Round one ended with the King putting on sackcloth and going to the Temple while sending his aides, also in sackcloth, the Prophet Isaiah. The same Prophet who has warned about this and who was summarily ignored by the King.

Once again, where we are so far.

Isaiah 37:1–7

“And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, ‘This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.’” So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. Isaiah said to them, “Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of

Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land." ' ' "" (NASB95)

Isaiah has already prophesied about all of this. He knows what YAHWEH is going to do and although the King and his staff are in mourning, Isaiah has never ceased to be in mourning for the people.

We see some of the general attitude of YAHWEH towards the Assyrian officials reflected in His Hebrew word choice. In our Bibles we read....“Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the King of Assyria has blasphemed me.”

The word used for servants is the Hebrew word נַעֲרִי (naare). “ A boy, lad, youth...of infant...to be born...just born...not weaned...also of lad just weaned.” (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 654)

What YAHWEH is really saying is intentionally derogatory.“Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the little boys of the King of Assyria has blasphemed me.” “The word for servants signifies boys, lads, young men; so Rabshakeh and his two companions, Rabsaris and Tartan, are called, by way of contempt, they acting a weak and childish part as well as a wicked one.” (Gill 1810, 207)

When YAHWEH makes light of someone's position, you know He heard what was said.

Isaiah knows the why behind what is going on. God is going to protect Judah but He is not going to lose the teaching points for the King that are here. King Hezekiah loves YAHWEH, but he has not allowed Him to truly be involved in all aspects of his life. He is now learning that God wants a complete relationship, not just one that takes place once a week in another building designated specifically for that.

After making the ultimatum to the King of Judah and not obtaining the immediate and unconditional surrender he thought he would get, the Rabshakeh sends word and receives a reinforcement call.

Isaiah 37:8

“Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.” (NASB95)

It is unknown if that meant the entire army traveling with the Rabshakeh goes with him or he takes some and leaves a smaller force outside Jerusalem to keep the pressure on.

Lachish



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

The siege of Lachish is over.

Libnah



(Bolen, Tel Burna, possible Libnah, from northwest 2012, Used with Permission)

The Assyrian army moved a few more miles to the north towards Jerusalem and attacked Libnah.

Jerusalem now has a smaller Assyrian force sitting outside the gates while the Rabshakeh is following up with his boss. What we do know though is he is reading the various intelligence messages coming through his headquarters because when he catches wind of one that might be a force coming up to help Jerusalem, he takes some action. He is not in or near Jerusalem, so he is going to write out an ultimatum reiterating his demand for the immediate and unconditional surrender of the King of Judah. After all, he received no response at all the first time around.

Isaiah 37:9

“When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, “He has come out to fight against you,” and when he heard it he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,” (NASB95)

The Rabshakeh receives actionable intelligence that the King of Ethiopia, not Egypt, was moving north to either attack the Assyrians where they were currently, or they were intending to march past them to Nineveh proper while they are busily engaged with Judah.

From a geopolitical viewpoint, Sennacherib needed to wrap up business in Judah quickly as there are still rumblings at this time from Babylon going into rebellion again as well as the army moving north.

By the way, is the King of Ethiopia really moving north or is this simply a rumor. It is the kind of intelligence you would want verification of. But when you are stretched out like Sennacherib is at this point, you do not have time to verify, so you listen to the rumor. This means he is now in hurry up mode and has little to no patience with a possible long-term siege of Jerusalem. He needs immediate capitulation because he needs to get back to Nineveh. He has a logistics problem that he cannot let be circumvented. If an army moves north, they will be able to cut off the forces in Judah from their supply train. Again, verse 7.

Isaiah 37:7

“Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.” (NASB95)

Talk about a quick turnaround on a prophecy. At this point though, King Hezekiah does not know any of this. He is hunkered down in Jerusalem seeking the Lord in the Temple when he receives the final ultimatum from the Assyrians. He and his staff are still wearing sackcloth.

Isaiah 37:10–13

“Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, “Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” ‘Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, even Gozan and Haran and Rezepth and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?’ ” (NASB95)

The intent of this letter is to move things along and obtain total capitulation from Judah. The Assyrian's must pass through on their way home and it would help if Hezekiah would cooperate and surrender. When we examine the verbal and written ultimatums as presented in 2 Chronicles 32:10 – 17, there is a word that pops out – deliver.

The key question for Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem is this, will YAHWEH save or deliver His people. Isaiah has already prophesied that He will indeed do so (Isaiah 14:24-27, 29:5-8, 30:27-33, 31:5-9.)

2 Chronicles 32:10–17

“Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, ‘On what are you trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, “The LORD our God will **deliver us** from the hand of the king of Assyria”? Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, “Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices”? Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to **deliver** their lands out of my hand? Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to **deliver** his people from my hand, that your God should be able to **deliver** you from my hand? Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to **deliver** his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God **deliver** you out of my hand!’ ” And his servants said still more against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah. And he wrote letters to cast contempt on the LORD, the God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, “Like the gods of the nations of the lands who have not **delivered** their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not **deliver** his people from my hand.” (ESV)

...the Assyrians constantly challenging any deity to counteract the apparently superior power of the Assyrian army. Yahweh is assumed to be a god just like any other, and the Assyrians attempt to undermine the Israelites' confidence (v. 10) by casting doubt on his effectiveness. (Selman 1994, 529)

The Assyrians are telling the people of Jerusalem that YAHWEH cannot deliver them. He cannot save them. They need to surrender to the might and power of “the” world power because their God is unable to protect or save them.

Does that ultimatum sound familiar? This is Satanic advice. We hear that voice over and over again these days. As the devil lies to us, we need to remember this “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:4–6, ESV)

The world today believes that we, as believers in the 21st century, fight from an indefensible losing position. God cannot and will not deliver us. I pity them, I really do. The world believes we are extremists.

Do you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven? Extremist. Prayed for someone you don't know? Extremist. Believe marriage is meant to be between one man and one woman? Extremist. Would you give up a good-paying job to do mission work? Extremist. Do you believe Christians have a responsibility to talk about Jesus with nonbelievers, even with strangers? Extremist. (Kinnaman and Lyons 2016, 11)

Romans 8:28–39

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NLT)

You see, we are not on the losing side but are on the side of the one who has already secured the victory. He already has won. We are kids of the King and need to remember that. “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.” (Colossians 2:13–15, NLT)

Judah had promises from God that He was going to deal with the Assyrians, personally. But did they live in the light of that promise? We have even more promises than they had but do we live like we are aware of them? Do we do life day to day in the light of just the simple facts that because of Jesus, we are holy and blameless, we have as a current possession every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, that we are the adopted sons and daughters of the God of the universe? (Ephesians 1:3-12)
We tend to forget God's promises, just like Judah.

Here is what the Rabshakeh wrote to Hezekiah

- God has deceived you
- God cannot stop the King of Assyria
- The stories about our brutality are all true
- We will not spare you
- Other nation's gods could not protect them or save them
- Your God will not protect you from us

The argument still depends on the belief that God cannot save the city. How can 'you be (so) deluded by your god?' (Wiseman 1993, 299)

This is blasphemy and now it is in writing. For a Jew, this is incredibly offensive, especially when YAHWEH is being compared to Baal or Molech or any other of the gods of the nations. They are all fallen divine beings who were made by Him and are to be judged by Him.

The language being used is intentional and brings back memories of the wars fought to secure the promised land. There were certain cities that were devoted to destruction, they were to be totally destroyed because there was a problem with giants in the land. Assyria had a similar practice. What Hezekiah is being told is that unless you surrender and do so right now, we will devote all of Jerusalem to destruction.

The world powers want to keep us off balance. The powers of darkness lie constantly trying to get you and me to believe that we are losing a desperate war against them. Over and over they issue the same ultimatum, just like the Rabshakeh does to Judah. The bottom line, they have already lost the war, and we have authority over them in Christ.

Ephesians 1:18–23

“Then, with the eyes of your hearts enlightened, you will know the confidence that is produced by God having called you, the rich glory that is his inheritance among the saints, and the unlimited greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his mighty strength, which he brought about in the Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm. **He is far above every ruler, authority, power, dominion, and every name that can be named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. God has put everything under the Messiah’s feet and has made him the head of everything for the good of the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills everything in every way.**” (ISV)

Ephesians 2:1–5

“**You used to be dead** because of your offenses and sins, that you once practiced as you lived according to the ways of this present world and according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now active in those who are disobedient. Indeed, all of us once behaved like them in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and senses. By nature we were destined for wrath, just like everyone else. **But God**, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us even when we were dead because of our offenses, **made us alive together with the Messiah** (by grace you have been saved),” (ISV)

What is Paul teaching? That when Christ arose, we believers arose with Him. When Christ ascended, we believers ascended with Him. When Christ was seated at the Father’s right hand, we believers were seated with Jesus Christ. And when God gave the Son authority over the angelic realm and over the realm of Satan, He gave us that authority because we are in Christ Jesus. Now the believer has an authority over Satan that he did not have as a natural man. He was under the angels by the fact of his creation, but by virtue of his new creation in Jesus Christ he is elevated to a position above angels. He is seated with Christ in the heavenlies, and he has the authority that belongs to Jesus Christ conferred upon him by God the Father.

The believer, then, has been given the authority of Christ over Satan. (Pentecost 1997, 161-162)

The only authority the fallen ones have over us is that which we give them when we believe their lies and threats. The only power they have is deception. This is no different than what is transpiring in Judah. A promise of deliverance has already been made (Isaiah 31:5-9.)

So, what can Hezekiah do? The Assyrian army and the reputation that goes with it is true. The assessment that Judah can do nothing to defend themselves is also true. But YAHWEH deceiving King Hezekiah, that is a false statement. Just as his father had a choice to make, give in to Assyria or listen to the voice of the Lord, Hezekiah now has the same choice.

Sennacherib is now facing the God of the universe; He is the one who can indeed stop Assyria and Hezekiah believes that. He does not ignore the letter, he does not burn it, he walks right into the Temple and lays it out before YAHWEH. Then he prays.

Isaiah 37:14–20

“Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, “O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God.”” (NASB95)

This is a different Hezekiah than we saw in round one with the Rabshakeh. He now believes the Lord. Unlike the first time, he has not involved Isaiah at all this time. He remembers the prophecies that were made. He now is placing his trust in the Lord and in His word.

He unscrolls the letters before the Lord. Full disclosure, full transparency, nothing hidden, and there is more than one.

In any age it is a good idea to do this. Today by the same essential principle one can lay out a missionary report telling of need, open a prayer journal list, or spread out a letter expressing some matter that provokes concerned prayer. (Rosscup 2008, 709)

As we roll out the need, you can almost feel the hand come on your shoulder as He leans over to read what it is that has you concerned. He loves us and He wants fellowship with us.

Genesis 5:21–24

“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God for 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. The entire lifetime of Enoch was 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and then he disappeared because God took him away.” (NET)

Isaiah 41:8 “You, my servant Israel, Jacob whom I have chosen, offspring of Abraham my friend,” (NET)

As believers, we are friends of Jesus Christ. He loves us so much that he made a way for us to be with Him forever.

John 15:15

“I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.” (NET)

There is no response to the ultimatum. None at all. Hezekiah is resting in the Lord and he is resting in the word of God that Isaiah has already prophesied. This is a different Hezekiah from the first round.

I can see the messenger returning to Sennacherib and being asked what the answer was. Assyria wants and needs this to be resolved. No answer though means bringing everything into play for a drawn-out siege of Jerusalem. This will be expensive...yes it will be.

Hezekiah’s prayer is a prayer of faith. He has received multiple letters, ultimatums and threats actually and after reading one, took them all into the Lord to share with Him and look to Him for an answer. Hezekiah is outraged. He is deeply offended over the blasphemy in the letter. As he begins to pray, he

places his plea solely and completely on the character and identity of YAHWEH. This is the one who the Assyrians have slandered and called into question.

First, he praises God. He extols Him as enthroned above the cherubim in the most holy place, the all-powerful God, God alone, creator of heaven and earth (15). Second, he petitions for God's ear to hear, His eyes to see, and His mind to take this as a challenge against Him, for it reproaches Him, the living God (16). Then he affirms the Assyrians' wreckage of nations and false gods, and the truth that the gods were helpless no gods, merely the work of men's hands, of wood and stone. They were unworthy of trust, and so they have been destroyed (17, 18). (Rosscup 2008, 710)

As Hezekiah wraps up his prayer, he again petitions God. So far, he has not prayed for himself, his family, even for the nation. He has prayed for the Lord to hear, see and comprehend the slander that has taken place. As the final petition of his prayer, Hezekiah now asks God to deliver His people, but his petition is in complete alignment with the purpose of God for the nation of Israel to exist, to point the nations to the living God. He asks that they be delivered in a way that the nations will know that it was done by YAHWEH and only could have been done by the true God.

God answers prayer. Yes, no or not just yet. He answers Hezekiah.

Isaiah 37:21–35

“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: “She has despised you and mocked you, The virgin daughter of Zion; She has shaken her head behind you, The daughter of Jerusalem! Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised your voice And haughtily lifted up your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! Through your servants you have reproached the Lord, And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, To the remotest parts of Lebanon; And I cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypresses. And I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest. I dug wells and drank waters, And with the sole of my feet I dried up All the rivers of Egypt.’ Have you not heard? Long ago I did it, From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength, They were dismayed and put to shame; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up. But I know your sitting down And your going out and your coming in And your raging against Me. Because of your raging against Me And because your arrogance has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came. Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” ’ “Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, ‘He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield, or throw up a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he will not come to this city,’ declares the LORD. ‘For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’ ”” (NASB95)

Wouldn't you like to get a note from the Lord like that? Actually, we have a book and as we read it through the lens of the Holy Spirit, our answers to prayer are just as direct and specific.

God sees clearly the hubris of Sennacherib. He has a pride problem which is about to be corrected. “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3, ESV). God meant what He said back in Genesis. “The Assyrians’ challenge is ultimately a reproach against Him. The invaders’ ego has seduced them to boast of military conquests, but they actually do so only because God has permitted them the opportunity. He is provoked by their haughty raging that drags His glory in the dust.” (Rosscup 2008, 710)

Hezekiah believes what it is the Lord has said through Isaiah and he prays. “The oracle that follows tells that the whole problem is solved. Thus the way of believing prayer is the truly practical way of dealing with the harsh realities of life in this world. What neither armaments (36:9) nor diplomacy (30:1–2) nor money (2 Kgs 18:13–14) could do, prayer has done. But what the Lord is about to do he had already planned of old (26–29).” (Motyer 1999, 255)

I absolutely love what God has in store for Assyria. This is a nation that uses terror to enforce it’s will to include putting hooks in the noses of their captives and bridles to completely demean them. Here is what God has in store for Assyria.

Isaiah 37:29 “Because of your raging against Me And because your arrogance has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came.” (NASB95)

Sowing and reaping defined.

God then turns back to His people and lets them know what to expect. He gives them a sign that they will not starve to death, but the fields will once again produce. The remnant that has sought refuge in Jerusalem, and it is filled with refugees at this point from the surrounding countryside, will all be able to return home.

God’s promise to Hezekiah is simple, the Assyrian army will not be able to set up a proper siege. No siege ramps, no arrow barrages, nothing. God is promising to deal with them before they can set up to do any of that.

Why is God doing this?

Isaiah 37:35

“For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.” (NASB95)

Jerusalem deserved judgement. God had made that clear more than once through Isaiah. But God also said He would personally deal with the Assyrian army, both in the present day of Hezekiah, and in the future at the end of the age.

God’s reputation has been called into question by the Assyrian high command, so it is because of that reputation that God will act.

Why does God defend the city? For My own sake. God will defend His own glory. Often, we unnecessarily think that we must defend the glory of the LORD. But that isn’t really the case. God is more than able to defend His own glory. (Guzik 2000, Is 37:22-35)

The ultimatum stated that God would not deliver Jerusalem from the power of the Assyrian army, that God was incapable of delivering from the power of the world, God’s response is simple, I am the one who is going to do this.

This of course meant that, without even the secondary help of man, He would in a supernatural way defend it, and that for His own sake. Rabshakeh had defied God and put contempt upon His name, while boasting his own prowess, or that of his king. God would vindicate His name and save His city by such a demonstration of supernatural power, without the immediate agency of man, as would leave no doubt in the mind of the Assyrian as to the fact that the Lord was God indeed. (Exell n.d., 105)

I wonder how it felt to be on the receiving end of the response. We are not told this was delivered to the King of Assyria, I believe it was as the response was directed to him. His response was clear, he prepared to send his troops up to Jerusalem to begin preparations for a siege. We are not told that the

army has come to Jerusalem yet, all that is there is a small garrison left by Rabshakeh earlier. The army is somewhere between Libnah and Jerusalem. Time to move on Jerusalem.

God has other plans.

Isaiah 37:36–38

“Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.” (NASB95)

If the figures we looked at a few weeks ago are correct, the 205,000 troops that arrived, less than 10% go home.

2 Kings 19:35

“And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.” (ESV)

The army bedded down for the evening leaving a guard surrounding their camp. The guard did not see this coming. The next morning, everyone is dead. Suddenly, Assyria is vastly outnumbered by the military of Judah defending Jerusalem.

The solution was leave and leave now. So, they did. They left everything else behind and the garrison quietly left.

It must have been an awful humiliation for this proud king to take his march over the same route by which he had approached Jerusalem, not laden with the spoil of the captured city, leading thousands of the chief men and princes, and King Hezekiah himself in his triumphal captive train, but with his shattered army to be the gazing stock of the countries he had subdued, and a by-word among his own people. (Exell n.d., 105-106)

Sennacherib though did try and spin this into a victory. The enemy does this all the time.

What was true reason for retreat? “He went home, says the prophet, because of the upshot of two issues: Sennacherib had asserted that human glory was superior to God’s, and Hezekiah had dared to trust God. Because of these God intervened in natural events and decimated a significant number of the Assyrian army.” (Oswalt 1986, 668)

The spin.

Political Spin in 701 BC

This clay prism is one of several that are inscribed with accounts of Sennacherib’s military campaigns. In general these royal annals are propagandistic and full of political spin. Understandably Sennacherib does not mention the disastrous defeat at Jerusalem, but he does not claim to have captured Jerusalem either. He only mentions his victories over the surrounding cities, and then of Hezekiah in Jerusalem, the prism states, “Himself [Hezekiah] I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. (Hays and Duvall 2011, 324)

Spin from Sennacherib

But Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to my yoke: forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses, and innumerable small towns of their environs, by laying low the ramparts and by an attack of my battering-rams (?), by an assault of the light-armed soldiers (?), by breaches (?), by slaughter (?) and by axes (?) I besieged, I took. Two hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty men, young, old, male and female,

horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number, from their midst I brought forth and counted as spoil. As for himself, like a caged bird within Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut him up. The towers against him I fortified and whosoever came forth from the gates of his city I turned back. His cities which I had plundered, I cut off from his land, and to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, to Padi, king of Ekron, and to Tsil-Bal, king of Gaza, I gave them, and I reduced the size of his land. In addition to the former tribute, the yield of their land, the tribute due to my lordship I added and laid upon them. As for Hezekiah himself the fear of the splendor of my lordship overwhelmed him and he sent after me the Urbi and his other faithful warriors whom as a defence for Jerusalem, his royal city he had brought in and to whom he had granted pay (?), together with thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones, brilliant daggassi (?), large lapis lazuli, couches of ivory, stationary thrones of ivory, elephants' skin, terebinth (?), wood, oak (?) wood, of every kind, a heavy treasure, and his daughters, the women of his palace, the male musicians (?) and female musicians (?), to Nineveh, the city of my lordship. He sent his ambassador to give tribute and do obeisance. (Kellner 1900, 23-25)

What about Sennacherib? He was indeed murdered by his two sons. All apparently as the result of a younger son being named the heir to the throne over the older sons. "Sennacherib, who had been mocking Yahweh as being powerless, was murdered while worshiping his god. His own god was unable to save him from being murdered by his sons!" (Ogden and Sterk 2011, 999)

Sennacherib was murdered by two of his sons, and was succeeded by another, namely, Esarhaddon. This is so; the Assyrian sources (including from Esarhaddon himself) and the Babylonian Chronicle plus later sources confirm the putsch. They mention murder by a son (Babylonian Chronicle) and by sons in the plural (Esarhaddon, Nineveh records); the biblical Adrammelek is a form of Arda-mulissi (the name of Sennacherib's murderous eldest son in contemporary documents), and is the Adramelos of Berossus and Ardamuzan of others; "Shar-ezer" is an abbreviation of the name type (Deity)-shar-usur. So, in one form or another, this sad affair became all too well known in various streams of tradition. (Kitchen 2006, 42)

Our takeaway from this is simple, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:7-8, ESV)

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