

**King Hezekiah
The Struggle with the Flesh
2 Kings 18, 2 Chronicles 28:1 – 32:19, Isaiah 36:1 – 6**

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Proverbs 3:5–6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (ESV)

Does Proverbs 3:5-6 allow for any wiggle room? Is negotiation possible with God for straight paths, to know what His will is and to be in it?

For God’s people, by the way, if you have given your life to Christ, you are God’s people. But for His people, when He says to trust Him and not anyone else, is that really that exclusive?

Judah lived like it was not, Hezekiah did as well, we do to.

We have reached the historical section of Isaiah. Up to this point, it has been prophecy. Who has the prophecy been addressed to...pretty much everyone at one time or other.

As we started off in Isaiah there was still hope for repentance and change with the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel had already moved away from “You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.” (Deuteronomy 10:20, ESV)

They had moved deep into the land of the cursing which Moses clearly predicted would be in store for those who rejected YAHWEH.

Deuteronomy 28:36–50

“The LORD will exile you and your king to a nation unknown to you and your ancestors. There in exile you will worship gods of wood and stone! You will become an object of horror, ridicule, and mockery among all the nations to which the LORD sends you. You will plant much but harvest little, for locusts will eat your crops. You will plant vineyards and care for them, but you will not drink the wine or eat the grapes, for worms will destroy the vines. You will grow olive trees throughout your land, but you will never use the olive oil, for the fruit will drop before it ripens. You will have sons and daughters, but you will lose them,

for they will be led away into captivity. Swarms of insects will destroy your trees and crops. The foreigners living among you will become stronger and stronger, while you become weaker and weaker. They will lend money to you, but you will not lend to them. They will be the head, and you will be the tail! If you refuse to listen to the LORD your God and to obey the commands and decrees he has given you, all these curses will pursue and overtake you until you are destroyed. These horrors will serve as a sign and warning among you and your descendants forever. If you do not serve the LORD your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. The LORD will put an iron yoke on your neck, oppressing you harshly until he has destroyed you. The LORD will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like a vulture. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young.” (NLT)

The northern kingdom of Israel has arrived at that destination. But there is still hope for Judah.

As we follow along in Isaiah though, that hope and the offer to Judah that went with it from Isaiah 1:18-20 has changed.

First there was the abject rejection of YAHWEH by King Ahaz. He rejected the offer of YAHWEH for himself, the nation, and the upcoming Kings from the Davidic line in Isaiah 7. And he torqued off Isaiah too.

The message changed.

Isaiah 7:17

“The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.” (NASB95)

Since then, we have seen warning after warning to the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem. The warnings clearly articulated YAHWEH’s intent to destroy the Assyrian army when they move on the city of Jerusalem. The warnings were ignored by Ahaz and all of those who worked for him as well as by Hezekiah and those who worked for him. Geopolitics are simply not something YAHWEH would be involved in, right? Wrong!

This is also a real-life picture of our struggle with the flesh. We listen to the lies of Satan as he whispers to us that God is not really all that interested in our day-to-day life at work, just Church

Isaiah clearly stated that much of Judah would wind up like Israel.

There were multiple warnings issued to the administration of King Hezekiah, who was a good King, not to engage in negotiations with the nations. Our takeaway, believers are not supposed to go to the world and unbelievers for solutions to their problems. See Proverbs 3:5-6.

Isaiah 30:1–3

““Woe to the rebellious children,” declares the LORD, “Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin; Who proceed down to Egypt Without consulting Me, To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.”” (NASB95)

God has not changed His mind either.

2 Corinthians 6:14 “Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?” (NET)

Isaiah 8:7–8

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. “Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck; And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” (NASB95)

A rather clear warning of what is coming up soon. The nation is not seeking the Lord for protection, even King Hezekiah is guilty of this. As believers in the 21st century, we must be constantly on guard for this exact same thing.

Looking to everything and everyone other than the Lord to resolve our predicament. Perhaps the Lord allowed the situation to arise in our life solely to see if we trust Him rather than ourselves and our woefully inadequate capabilities. Compartmentalizing life is not what God wants.

James 1:2–5 “My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything. But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.” (NET)

Trials are one thing, but when we are tempted to look to someone other than the Lord for a solution to the trial, or we think this is an area God isn't interested in; then we are short circuiting the spiritual growth opportunity we have in front of us.

James 1:12–14 “Happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.” (NET)

We are going to spend a little time getting to know who King Hezekiah is. This way, we can understand a bit more about what is going on in this section of Isaiah. Yes, it is a validation of Isaiah the prophet; but there is a lot for us to learn from this.

Hezekiah had his failings, but remember, he inherited those who worked for him from his dad. Overall, though, he was a good Godly king who was struggling with man's way of doing things versus YAHWEH's way.

The base of operations for the administration of King Hezekiah was in the City of David; today a small part of Jerusalem.



(Bolen, Temple Mount and Clty of David aerial from south 2012, Used with Permission)



(Bolen, City of David aerial from south 2012, Used with Permission)

Warning

Any similarity to any current political situations worldwide is Biblically intentional and not to be ignored.

King Hezekiah

King Hezekiah was the son of the worst King ever in the history of Judah, King Ahaz. Hezekiah's name "...is a theophoric compound using the root ḥzq, "Yahweh (is) my strength" or "Yahweh is strong," and has variant forms in the Old Testament (ḥizqiyyâ/-yâhû, yêḥizqiyyâ/-yâhû; Layton, 122–25)." (Arnold 2005, 407)

His dad, King Ahaz, is the same guy who rejected YAHWEH on behalf of the nation. Ahaz was serious bad news. He never repented of anything he did.

2 Chronicles 28:1–4

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done, but he walked in the

ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.” (ESV)

One bad ruler = trouble for the nation, because they followed him.

2 Chronicles 28:19

“For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made Judah act sinfully and had been very unfaithful to the LORD.” (ESV)

Nothing was holy to him as it pertained to God. First, he took money from the Temple, then he closed the Temple. He followed up on that and substituted his own brand worship. He imported gods and then made sure that his people knew and could also experience what he was doing by placing them in every city in Judah. At that time, that could have also been a requirement placed on him as a condition for an alliance, which he made with Assyria. The world always demands compromise which Ahaz was more than willing to do.

2 Chronicles 28:24–25

“The king took the various articles from the Temple of God and broke them into pieces. He shut the doors of the LORD’s Temple so that no one could worship there, and he set up altars to pagan gods in every corner of Jerusalem. He made pagan shrines in all the towns of Judah for offering sacrifices to other gods. In this way, he aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of his ancestors.” (NLT)

The thing Hezekiah must deal with first is the condition that Ahaz left the Kingdom in. Ahaz had brought about a lack of restraint in the nation. “Unfaithfulness of some sort had manifested itself in kings from the time of Saul on (1 Chr 10:13), but Ahaz hit a new low. Judah’s acting without restraint reminds the reader of Israel’s behavior in the story of the golden calf (Exod 32:25, where פָּרַע is used in the qal). Here it is used in the hiphil and translated “he made (Judah) act without restraint.”” (Klein 2012, 403-404)

Into that era of government enforced loose morals, child sacrifice, and the enforced toleration of other gods, comes King Hezekiah. His dad, Ahaz, was only 36 when he died, and the Ahaz administration was widely known in Judah for its encouragement of a debauched lifestyle. King Ahaz had closed the Temple and effectively banned the worship of YAHWEH. The Priests did nothing.

At one point in his reign, Ahaz went to Damascus to meet with his Assyrian overlord, it was while there he decided to build an altar to the same god worshipped in Damascus, so he sent the plans back to Jerusalem. The high priest was so compromised he built it.

2 Kings 16:11–13

“And Uriah the priest built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Uriah the priest made it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus. And when the king came from Damascus, the king viewed the altar. Then the king drew near to the altar and went up on it and burned his burnt offering and his grain offering and poured his drink offering and threw the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.” (ESV)

Ahaz effectively ended YAHWEH worship in the Temple and replaced YAHWEH with his own god.

And age 36 or 37, Ahaz dies; now his son of barely 25 takes over. His dad had been King since he was 8. He grew up in the middle of all of this.

The expectation in Judah was that the good times would continue to roll since Hezekiah was the son of a reprobate. The first sign of change in the wind may have been the decision as to where to bury King Ahaz, he was not buried with the other Davidic kings. “And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried

him in the city, in Jerusalem, for they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.” (2 Chronicles 28:27, ESV)

What is it that the new King had experienced while growing up? What shaped his decision making?

Around his 7th or 8th birthday, Hezekiah saw the northern kingdom ally with Syria and then try to take over Judah. He saw those two nations defeated by Assyria and taken into exile. He saw his young dad reject YAHWEH and everything that being a Jew stood for.

The fact that Hezekiah was not sacrificed to Molech, where his brothers and sisters were, is more than likely because of his age. His dad was 20 when he took the throne, so when Hezekiah was born, Ahaz was only a young man of 12 or 13. When Hezekiah was born, it simply was not politically correct to sacrifice your infant son or daughter.

He witnessed some of his younger brothers and sisters become victims of human sacrifice. He heard their screams and heard and felt the anguish of their mothers.

He witnessed the economic and military devastation that took place as well. He personally experienced the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Judean army with 120,000 dead. He experienced the death of his brother in combat. He also witnessed 200,000 of his friends and neighbors being taken captive by the northern Kingdom and then returned a few weeks later followed with the reintegration of the vast numbers of widows and orphans into Judean society.

2 Chronicles 28:6–8

“In one day King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel killed 120,000 warriors in Judah, because they had abandoned the LORD God of their ancestors. Zikri, an Ephraimite warrior, killed the king’s son Maaseiah, Azrikam, the supervisor of the palace, and Elkanah, the king’s second-in-command. The Israelites seized from their brothers 200,000 wives, sons, and daughters. They also carried off a huge amount of plunder and took it back to Samaria.” (NET)

King Hezekiah knew the horrors of siege warfare. He also knew the impact war would have on society, especially if you were on the losing side.

As Hezekiah became a young man, he saw his father cut a military deal with Assyria, fully embracing the world. It is unknown if he traveled with him to Damascus to meet with the Assyrian ruler.

At the same time, he was also listening to Isaiah and what he had to say on behalf of YAHWEH. And then there is his mother, who appears to have greatly influenced him as well. She was no slouch in raising him up, because he did not turn out like his daddy. Not at all. “Hezekiah is a living demonstration of the truths taught in chs. 13–35, which truths Isaiah attempted to get Ahaz to act upon but could not.” (Oswalt 1986, 630)

2 Chronicles 29:1–4

“Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old; and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them into the square on the east.” (NASB95)

As the new King of Judah, King Hezekiah expressed his authority by systematically undoing everything his dad had done.

He reopened the Temple, threw out all the altars his dad had put into it and cleansed it. He called the priests and the Levites to account for their lack of diligence during this time and reestablished the

priesthood. Within 16 days of becoming King, the Temple had been cleansed and the utensils recreated (2 Chronicles 29:17-19.)

He was determined to undo all that the previous administration had done and to do so as quickly as possible.

Before the end of his first month of King, the Temple was reopened, Temple worship was restarted, and the Temple reconsecrated (2 Chronicles 29:20 – 36.)

The northern kingdom was gone, off into exile, but that did not stop King Hezekiah from trying to reunite the country with those who were left up north.

The King wanted to celebrate Passover, and he invited everyone to come and celebrate with him. “Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month— for they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem—” (2 Chronicles 30:1–3, ESV)

King Hezekiah is a good King. He loves the Lord and is busy about doing what He wants. He not only cleansed the Temple, but he went throughout all of Judah in order to cleanse the entire land. True revival broke out among the people of Judah and suddenly all the Levites and priests wanted to be involved as well. They had become part of the problem with very few of them even living consecrated lives anymore. So, Hezekiah had them reconsecrated and then reorganized them.

He started a revival that resulted in a popular uprising to undo the evil in Judah.

2 Chronicles 31:1–2

“Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the Asherim and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each to his possession. And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites by their divisions, each according to his service, both the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister and to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD.” (NASB95)

Geopolitically, Assyria was busy elsewhere. His dad had ignored YAHWEH and allied with the Assyrian Empire and it was at a huge cost to Judah. So, he rebelled against Assyria. Doing so was politically the right thing to do as from a timing perspective, the northern kingdom which had been conquered was busy sucking up Assyria’s military resources in order to place the nation into exile. There was also an issue with Babylon that took the attention of Assyria as well.

Hezekiah made the decision to rebel but seriously prepared the Kingdom before he did so.

Gradually Hezekiah strengthened his position by extending his control over cities in the Philistine Plain (2 Kgs. 18:8). (Brisco 1998, 142)

In anticipation of an Assyrian attack, King Hezekiah of Judah fortified Jerusalem, repairing broken sections of the wall and redirecting the flow of water from the Gihon Spring into the city. He also outfitted his army with weapons and shields and appointed battle commanders over the people. Archaeological evidence suggests he also enclosed the western hill of the city with a new wall and built the Temple Mount around Solomon’s temple. (Crossway Bibles 2008, 788)

In Jerusalem, Hezekiah built a massive new wall to fortify the western suburbs of the city, and he secured the city's water supply by diverting the waters of the Gihon Spring through a 1,700-foot tunnel that led to a pool within the city fortifications (Isa. 22:8–11; 2 Kgs. 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:30). Hezekiah strengthened the army and apparently provided a supply system of stored goods designed to withstand Assyrian siege. (Brisco 1998, 142-144)

2 Kings 18:7–9

“So the LORD was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute. He also conquered the Philistines as far distant as Gaza and its territory, from their smallest outpost to their largest walled city. During the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked the city of Samaria and began a siege against it.” (NLT)

King Hezekiah knew that at some point in time, Assyria's issue with Babylon as well as the Northern Kingdom would be over and then it would be Judah's turn. This is one reason he sought help from Egypt.

We do know that he had some time. Shalmaneser / Sargon II made his final move against the Northern Kingdom in the fourth year of King Hezekiah. It took about three years, but we learn in 2 Kings 18:10, Assyria completed their siege of Samaria and the northern Kingdom in the sixth year of his reign. Then began the final removal into exile that had begun previously under King Ahaz.

In 714 B.C. Urartian pressure on Assyrian supply lines forced Sargon to lead a major northern campaign against the main Urartian army. Chronic Chaldean and Elamite pressure on Babylon combined with the Urartian problem gave vassals in the west opportunity to seek independence from Assyria, especially with the possibility of Egyptian assistance. (Brisco 1998, 142)

2 Kings 18:11–12

“The king of Assyria deported the people of Israel to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, along the Habor (the river of Gozan), and in the cities of the Medes. This happened because they did not obey the LORD their God and broke his agreement with them. They did not pay attention to and obey all that Moses, the LORD's servant, had commanded.” (NET)

To move all of those people and then integrate them into Assyrian culture, plus the transfer of peoples into Samaria, would keep the Assyrian army busy for a while. King Hezekiah knew that, and it was during this time he reinforced the walls, solved the problem with the Philistines, and completed his engineering projects.

Isaiah had spent years warning Judah. His latest set of warnings included the revelation to the nation that Hezekiah's regime was trying to cut a deal with Egypt for protection. Isaiah had made it clear that Judah was going to be overrun by Assyria. Most normal commercial operations would come to an end.

When Sennacherib ascended the throne of Assyria in 704 B.C., after the untimely death of his father Sargon II, he set upon a series of military campaigns to deal with the growing unrest in his kingdom. In the north, he faced barbarous horsemen who threaten to sweep down into Assur while in the south Merodach-Baladan reemerged as the contentious king of Babylon. To the east the Elamites and the Kassites supported Babylonian aggression and to the west the Mitanni and the Amurru grew increasingly restless. Among these western vassal states a new threat began to develop.

Hezekiah the king of Judah conspired with Sidka the king of Ashkelon in order to throw off the yoke of Assyria. Only Padi remained loyal to Sennacherib and he was soon put in chains and thrown into Hezekiah's dungeon by the governor and nobles of Ekron. This growing rebellion was the impetus for Sennacherib's third campaign, which would bring Hezekiah into a nearly disastrous encounter with the Assyrian King. (Bates 1999, 39-40)

2 Chronicles 32:1–8

“After these faithful deeds were accomplished, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah. He besieged the fortified cities, intending to seize them. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had invaded and intended to attack Jerusalem, he consulted with his advisers and military officers about stopping up the springs outside the city, and they supported him. A large number of people gathered together and stopped up all the springs and the stream that flowed through the district. They reasoned, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?” Hezekiah energetically rebuilt every broken wall. He erected towers and an outer wall, and fortified the terrace of the City of David. He made many weapons and shields. He appointed military officers over the army and assembled them in the square at the city gate. He encouraged them, saying, “Be strong and brave! Don’t be afraid and don’t panic because of the king of Assyria and this huge army that is with him! We have with us one who is stronger than those who are with him. He has with him mere human strength, but the LORD our God is with us to help us and fight our battles!” The army was encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.” (NET)

Sennacherib’s modus operandi for dealing with rebellious vassals can be described as follows: 1) Intimidate through the fear of a mighty army; 2) Surround the capital city and cut it off from its outlying territories; 3) Attack and destroy major cities; 4) Attack and destroy minor cities; 5) Intimidate the rebellious king into surrender; 6) Execute rebels, deport criminals, and pardon the innocent; and 7) Establish a new king and impose a heavy tribute. It was not Sennacherib’s intent to allow any rebels to escape his wrath in order that he might prevent them from returning to the throne to incite further rebellion. His primary goal was to capture and to execute rebellious kings. (Bates 1999, 47)

Sennacherib began his assault. “First, Sennacherib moved against Sidon, replacing its rebellious kings and receiving tribute from subjugated Phoenician cities. Next, Sennacherib moved south against Ashkelon and removed its king, Sidqia. He subdued cities in the northern Philistine Plain (Joppa, Beneberak, Azor, and Beth-dagon) formerly controlled by Sidqia and then proceeded into the Shephelah. Sennacherib’s annals mention the capture of Ekron and Timnah, both located in the strategic Sorek Valley. Assyrian pressure forced Hezekiah to release Padi, who was reinstated as king of Ekron.” (Brisco 1998, 143)

Isaiah 36:1

“Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.” (NASB95)

Moving from the north, Assyrian forces began with Tyre and Sidon “At the terrifying splendor” of Sennacherib’s sovereignty, Lule, king of Sidon, was overcome and fled to Cyprus “in the midst of the sea.” (Bates 1999, 46)

The first phase of attack for the Assyrian army was to move, in large coordinated numbers, through the countryside. Terror and intimidation were a normal function for them. “Sennacherib (early 7c) 208,000. One provincial governor reportedly commanded 1,500 cavalry and 20,000 archers, suggesting that the entire army from more than a score of provinces could potentially number in the hundreds of thousands, though a king rarely summoned all available troops at one time.” (Seevers 2013, 225)

According to Sennacherib’s annals, the Assyrian army struck the coast at Sidon and from that point worked its way southward, devouring opponent after opponent until the Egyptian army finally made a stand at Eltekeh about twenty miles west of Jerusalem at the edge of the hill country. There Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the foolishness of dependence upon Egypt (20:1–6; 30:1–5; 31:1–3) proved painfully true as the Egyptians were routed and the Assyrians continued on to Lachish, Judah’s last hope for stemming the tide. (Oswalt 1986, 632)

When conquering a region, Assyria often practiced a form of psychological warfare by using a limited amount of actual force but threatening much more. Once they targeted a region, they used diplomacy and threats to try to motivate surrender. If these didn’t work, they sent in the army, selected the easiest target from among several small cities, and conquered it. Then they subjected the place to extreme acts of

cruelty, including looting, burning, murdering, raping, flaying, mutilating, and enslaving the population. They then broadcast news of these acts to nearby cities to convince them to surrender without further attack. (Seevers 2013, 241)

Isaiah 36:2

“And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller’s field.” (NASB95)

Intimidation and terror all at once. Lachish was under siege and was to become the object lesson for Hezekiah to try and enforce submission without a battle.

The location selected by Rabshakeh appears to be random, but not as far as the Lord is concerned. YAHWEH led him there. It is the exact same location where Ahaz refused to trust YAHWEH. The contrast is deliberate.

Isaiah 7:3–4

“Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller’s field, and say to him, ‘Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.’” (NASB95)

One of the most striking of these is that the place where the Rabshakeh stood to blaspheme God (36:2) is the same place where Isaiah stood to urge Ahaz to trust God (7:3). It is because of Ahaz’s refusal to trust in that place that the Rabshakeh would stand there (8:5–8). Furthermore, it is not just any nation which threatens to engulf Hezekiah, but Assyria, the very nation Ahaz chose to trust in place of God. (Oswalt 1986, 630)

They have come from Lachish.



(Bolen, Lachish aerial from south 2012, Used with Permission)

It would not be unheard of for the Assyrians to also have some “examples” on display as well when they arrived. They preferred to conquer using psychological warfare rather than attacking. That was usually a last resort. This is also consistent with what we see about the Assyrian at the end of the age, where he begins initially conquering without having to resort to warfare (Revelation 6: 1 – 4.)

Rabshakeh is not a name, but it is a title. Because things were going well in Lachish, it was time to turn up the heat on Jerusalem. So here come the highest officials traveling with the Assyrian army.

Prior to this visit King Hezekiah had received intelligence reports about how things were going in Lachish. Not well. Still operating in the flesh, he made a decision. This decision was made without seeking the Lord or even praying about it. He is still relying on Egypt for support, his preparations, and his guile. He is trying to see if he can make the problem go away without turning to the Lord.

2 Kings 18:13–17

“During the fourteenth year of the reign of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria approached all of the walled cities of Judah and seized them. So Hezekiah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: “I have offended you. Withdraw from me, and I’ll accept whatever tribute you impose.” So the king of Assyria required Hezekiah to pay him 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. Hezekiah gave him all the silver that could be removed from the LORD’s Temple and from the treasuries in the king’s palace. At that time, Hezekiah removed the doors to the LORD’s Temple and the doorposts that King Hezekiah had overlaid with gold, and gave the gold to the king of Assyria. Sometime later, the king of Assyria sent Tartan, Rab-saris, and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem, accompanied with a large army.” (ISV)

Seeing that the battle at Lachish was going poorly, and prior to the visit from the Assyrian army, Hezekiah makes a decision and does so without seeking any guidance from the Lord, he decides to undo his rebellion. He will ultimately lose over 200,000 people to Assyria as prisoners, but he is trying to at least, preserve Jerusalem and the Temple. Note, at this point he has not sought the Lord. He has operated in the geopolitical world as if YAHWEH did not operate there at all. He has compartmentalized life.

Hezekiah is given terms and must go to great lengths get the money. Three hundred talents of silver is eleven tons of silver, or approximately \$9.7 million. Thirty talents of gold is one ton of gold or approximately \$57.8 million. A lot of money for that time and place. It took some time to put all of that together and then send 12 tons of precious metals to Lachish.

King Hezekiah thought he had resolved the problem using his wisdom and the resources he had at his disposal, no, not really. He was trying make a deal with the world. The world took everything he had and then came back for more. Not a real surprise here.

But tribute had been paid. Why would Assyria want even more? This had been an expensive proposition for them. They had already conquered forty-six walled cities and a bunch of smaller towns. They had also taken pains to block exit points out of Jerusalem effectively placing the city under siege.

There was still some mopping up to in Lachish, in the aftermath of their conquest. “They impaled some captives on poles, killed or dismembered others, apparently flayed still others, and deported the surviving inhabitants before looting and burning the city. (SeEVERS 2013, 241)

It is entirely possible that some of this took place just outside the walls of Jerusalem too. The stories though have already floated up to the palace. “Lachish was thirty miles south-west of Jerusalem. Archaeologists have discovered a pit there with the remains of about 1,500 casualties of Sennacherib’s attack.” (Guzik 2000, Is 36:1-3)

Sennacherib is confident that King Hezekiah will surrender. There literally is nothing left of Judah except Jerusalem. He sends the B team to get it done for him.

Rabshakeh is also confident of this as well. He shows up with troops and puts on a show. Then walks right up to the city wall as if he already owns the place. The officials from Hezekiah’s government come out to meet him. The attempt to buy their way out has failed. Lachish is gone and so are any chances of support coming from any other Judean city, they all belong to Assyria now.

Things look very dim for Jerusalem. But there is still hope, the alliance with Egypt, right? Listen to the conversation.

Isaiah 36:3–6

“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him. Then Rabshakeh said to them, “Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, “What is this confidence that you have? “I say, ‘Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.’ Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? “Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.” (NASB95)

They know about the alliance. They know about the secret talks. The potential for rescue is slim to none. Remember, YAHWEH wanted them to have no confidence in Egypt. That got said more than once (Isaiah 19:11-17, 20:1-6, 30:1-7) yet King Hezekiah and his staff still went ahead and cut the deal. Now Rabshakeh is saying pretty much the same thing Isaiah has been saying for the past few years.

There is no one who can save them from the world. Geopolitics is dead. They are truly up against the wall and the Assyrians know it. Why take money when you can get total capitulation, a city and can move the manpower to Nineveh and resettle someone else here.

This truly is a win-win for Sennacherib. He already has the money headed home, soon to be followed with even more. He is building a nice palace back home and some more slave labor would be nice these days.

The tactic being used is one straight from the fallen ones who are behind what is going on. The goal is to demoralize the believer, there is no way out, our sin has put us in a hole, and we cannot get out. He wants us to despair. And if we have been relying on the world for the solution to our problems, he is that much closer to seeing us become totally ineffective for the Lord.

When we get sucked in, the first thing Satan is he begins to question how we could have done that? What kind of Christian does what we did? Condemnation is his go to tactic after sucking us in.

Paul talked about this in Romans 8:1 “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1, NASB95)

For Judah, they are now in the exact place where YAHWEH can now do something for them. They are beyond themselves. When we get there, we need to remember this.

Romans 8:31–39

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NASB95)

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