

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 254 – Assyria Invading Judah (Isaiah 36:1-22)

1. Was Sennacherib successful in invading much of Judah?

Yes: *“Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them” (Isaiah 36:1; cf. II Kings 18:13).*

- As we will discuss soon, this is God’s doing (**Isaiah 36:10**).
- At the time Isaiah was a prophet, the land of Judah was in bad shape (**Isaiah 1:7-8**) because of the Assyrians (**Isaiah 7:17** and **Isaiah 8:7-8**).

2. Were the Assyrians fearful of Judah’s alliance with Egypt?

No: *“And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah’s son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph’s son, the recorder. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him” (Isaiah 36:2-6; cf. II Kings 18:17-21).*

- The upper pool had been a place of meetings during times such as these (**Isaiah 7:1-4**).
- Hezekiah refused to serve the Assyrians (**II Kings 18:7**).
- Judah’s problem, they trusted in the strength of men rather than of God (**Psalms 118:8-9, Proverbs 21:30-31, Psalms 118:8-9, Isaiah 2:22, and Isaiah 30:1-3**).
- Egypt could not overcome Assyria, for God was going to use Assyria to punish Egypt (**Isaiah 20:1-6**).
- Sadly, Judah will do this all over again when it comes to Babylon (**Jeremiah 37:1-9** and **Ezekiel 17:12-19**).

3. Were the Assyrians afraid that God would defend Jerusalem?

They were not afraid for two reasons. They thought Hezekiah had destroyed the Lord’s altars erringly and they knew that they were invading because God sent them to do so: *“But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master’s servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? And am I now come*

*up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? the Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it” (Isaiah 36:7-10; cf. **II Kings 18:22-25**).*

- Hezekiah did take down high places, but did so rightfully (**II Kings 18:1-6** and **II Chronicles 30:1-31:21**). Thus, this charge by the Assyrians is false.
- Judah did right in refusing to sell themselves for horses (**Psalms 20:7-9**) and to serve men (**Galatians 1:10** and **Colossians 3:22**).
- As we addressed, trusting in Egypt was foolish (**Isaiah 36:6**).
- The Lord did send the Assyrians (**II Kings 18:25** and **Isaiah 10:5-11**).

4. Did Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah want the people at the wall of Jerusalem hearing what the Assyrians were saying?

*No: “Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall” (Isaiah 36:11; cf. **II Kings 18:26**).*

- Words can be discouraging (**Deuteronomy 1:28**).
- The Assyrians are using psychological warfare tactics here to weaken the hearts of the people in Jerusalem.
- Fear, in times of battle, is a huge weakness that can spread (**Deuteronomy 20:8**).

5. What were the Assyrians trying to accomplish with those sitting on the wall hearing their threats?

*“But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you” (Isaiah 36:12; cf. **II Kings 18:27**)?*

- To a point wherein men would eat and drink of human waste is the threat of great famine (**II Chronicles 32:9-11**).
- When a city is besieged, famine causes some wild consequences (**II Kings 6:24-30** and **Lamentations 4:9-10**; cf. **Ezekiel 4:16-17**).

6. Whom did the Assyrians warn the Jews not to believe?

Their king, Hezekiah saying God would deliver: “Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Harken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Beware

lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria” (Isaiah 36:13-18; cf. **II Kings 18:28-32**)?

- Misconception of who the “great king” by the Assyrians (**Psalms 47:2** and **Psalms 95:3**).
- Again, physiological warfare is going on. More in the next two verses.

7. What arrogant mistake did Rabshakeh make?

He challenged ANY god, saying none could stop them from doing what they set out to do: “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand” (Isaiah 36:19-20; cf. **II Kings 18:33-35**)?

- He was stupid to blaspheme God (**Isaiah 37:3-7**).
- For this arrogance, they were punished (**Isaiah 10:12-19**).
- Enemies of God’s people did challenge where God was (**Psalms 42:10** and **Psalms 71:10-13**).
- Think of the difficult position that put God in. When His people erred He removed Himself from them (**Deuteronomy 32:17-20**, **Isaiah 5:1-3**, and **Jeremiah 5:25**). This left them defenseless (**Joshua 7:11-12**).
- However, God was not inclined to allow heathens to challenge Him without consequences (**Ezekiel 25:1-17**).

8. What response did the men on the wall give to Rabshakeh?

Silence: “But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not” (Isaiah 36:21; cf. **II Kings 18:36**).

- **Psalms 39:1** and **Colossians 4:5**.

9. What is suggested by the appearance of Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah when they came to Hezekiah to report the words of Rabshakeh?

They came with rent clothes which can carry several implications and therefore cannot be specifically drawn out unless the context tells us: “Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh” (Isaiah 36:22; cf. **II Kings 18:37**).

- Rent clothes can suggest mourning (**Genesis 37:34** and **II Samuel 1:1-12**).
- Rent clothes can also suggest shame (**Leviticus 13:45**).
- Rent clothes can also suggest regret (**Judges 11:30-35**).
- Rent clothes can also suggest humility tied to repentance (**I Kings 21:20-29**).
- Rent clothes can also suggest astonishment and heaviness (**Ezra 9:1-5**).
- Rent clothes can also suggest anger (**Matthew 26:64-66**).