

**Is. 36:1** 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.

This section of Isaiah is a report of historical events that corresponds to 2Kings 18 and 2Chronicles 32. One commentary dates these events to 701 BC. According to the account in 2Kings, Hezekiah had paid a tribute of 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold to the king of Assyria. He had taken off the gold doors of the temple and used the silver objects from the temple to make this payment in order to appease the Assyrian king.

Evidently, this only whetted Sennacherib's appetite for more, because he invaded Judah anyway. Hezekiah realized that he would not be satisfied until he took Jerusalem, so he began to make preparations for siege (see 2Chronicles). He prepared the water sources, repaired the walls of the city, made darts and shields, organized his military and reassured the people of the city throughout the process. He reminded them "there be more with us than with him....with us is the Lord our God." (2Chron 32:7-8)

In the face of danger, Hezekiah is both practical and strong in his faith. He doesn't hesitate to use common sense and get prepared, but his faith/confidence is focused on the fact that God is with them. I think that is an important principle to live by. God expects us to equip ourselves for spiritual battle as listed in Ephesians, but our faith is to be in His working in and through us to achieve victory.

*Ephesians 6:11-17* Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God....

**Is. 36:2** 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.

**Is. 36:3** 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.

**Is. 36:4** 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?

**Is. 36:5** 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?

**Is. 36:6** 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.

**Is. 36:7** 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?

Lachish – southwest of Jerusalem, an important fortress city of Judah that guarded the road to Egypt.

The enemy uses a familiar game plan to try to weaken the faith of the people. He tries to instill doubt and/or fear. The Assyrians point out that even the Pharaoh and his armies are like a broken reed in comparison to the might of the Assyrian forces. They declare that God is against Jerusalem. For some reason they think that Hezekiah had rebelled against the Lord by removing the high places, which they mistakenly thought were in honor of Him.

I liked Calvin's observation on this point: "But we need not wonder that wicked men cannot distinguish between the true God and the false, between superstition, and religion.... Hezekiah was fully acquitted by this single defense, that he undertook nothing but by the word of God; and therefore that he was satisfied with a single altar, because God had forbidden him to erect more, and that he had thrown down all images, because they had been unlawfully set up in opposition to the instructions of the Law."

**Is. 36:8** 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.

**Is. 36:9** 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?

**Is. 36:10** 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.

The Assyrians even offer to give Hezekiah 2000 horses to come out and face them—if they can even mount that many riders. This is an act of intimidation; they are making the point that their army is far greater in number than that available to defend Jerusalem. They even claim that they have come up against Jerusalem according to God's command.

The enemy never hesitates to use any tactic that might cause us doubt. He especially loves to misuse the scripture to his advantage as he did against Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4). Or he makes us question if God has actually said what we have understood Him to say as he did with Eve (Genesis 3).

**Is. 36:11** 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.

**Is. 36:12** 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?

**Is. 36:13** 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.

**Is. 36:14** Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

**Is. 36:15** 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.

Syrian = Aramean. According to JFB, this was the language spoken north and east of Palestine. According to the NIV Commentary, it was the diplomatic language of the Fertile Crescent, but was not understood by the common people. Jews' language = Hebrew

Hezekiah's representatives ask the Assyrians to speak in the Syrian language; they don't want the people of Jerusalem to understand their conversation. Naturally, they fear that the people will lose faith and rebel against Hezekiah. The Assyrians make it clear that they want the people to hear and understand how desperate their situation is. They even anticipate that Hezekiah has told them that they can trust God for deliverance, and they are trying to undermine their faith. (Which seems to contradict their previous words, verse 7.)

**Is. 36:16** Hearken 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;

**Is. 36:17** 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.

**Is. 36:18** 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?

**Is. 36:19** Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

**Is. 36:20** 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?

The Assyrians then begin to share how the people won't have to suffer under Assyrian rule. Even if they are carried away to other lands, they will experience the good of the land similar to what they have enjoyed in Judah.

Those words of encouragement are followed by words of warning if they listen to Hezekiah and put their trust in God for their deliverance. They remind the people that other people have trusted their gods to no avail. No gods are able to deliver from the mighty hand of the Assyrians. This seems to contradict the assertion in verse 10 that the Assyrians were acting on behalf of God.

**Is. 36:21** But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

**Is. 36:22** 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.

Hezekiah's representatives acted in obedience to the king's command; they refused to answer the Assyrians. They did, however, rush to tell the king of the words of Rabshakeh, the Assyrian spokesman. The fact that they tore their clothes showed that the Assyrians were having some success; the leaders were afraid.