

ISAIAH: Prophet in Perilous Times
FAITHFUL IN CRISIS

Friday, August 7

Reading: Isaiah 36-37

Isaiah 37:14 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. **15** And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: **16** "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. **17** Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

Ahaz's son Hezekiah was nothing like his father. The Scripture records that "there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow Him...and the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook" (2 Kings 18:5-7).

These were turbulent times. In the 6th year of Hezekiah's reign, after a 3-year struggle the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and taken captive out of the land. However, this turn of events did not make Hezekiah lose faith. Instead, he led his nation in a revival. He repaired the Temple and led the people back to the proper worship of God. He led his nation to celebrate the Passover in such a way that had not been done for centuries since the days of Solomon. And God blessed them (see 2 Chronicles 29-31; especially 30:23-27).

Despite his faithfulness to God and leading the people back to Him, in the 14th year of his reign the Assyrian army invaded Judah and captured most of its cities. Sennacherib's army then sieged Jerusalem and threatened to destroy it as they had done to so many other nations. Again, we see Hezekiah's great faith as he turns to God's Word through His prophet and to prayer during this time of crisis. God promises deliverance and soon 185,000 of the Assyrians troops are killed by the angel of the Lord. King Sennacherib returns home only to be assassinated by his own sons twenty years later.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. The teaching that those who are faithful to God will never experience troubles but will be "healthy, wealthy, and wise" is not true! Hezekiah was more faithful to God than any king of Judah, yet the Assyrians still came! Satan does not have to pay attention to believers who are not living for the Lord. He focuses on those who are making an impact for God's kingdom. Are you living for God in such a way that you would draw Satan's attention?
2. One Assyrian ploy was to get the people to doubt their trust in God. They misinterpreted Hezekiah's destruction of idols as destroying God's altars (36:7). They claimed that God Himself had sent them to destroy Jerusalem (36:10). They promise peace if the people will compromise and surrender to them (36:16-17). They tell them that Hezekiah is lying to them and that no nation's god has ever been able to save their people from Assyria (36:13-15; 18-20). How does society try to get us to doubt our faith in God and His Word? How do people try to mislead us to compromise our beliefs and give in to the world's way of thinking?
3. Hezekiah's answer to these threats is the same one we need today. He depended on God's Word and laid everything before the Lord in prayer. Is this how you handle crisis in your life? Why or why not?