

Fact Sheet for **“Sooner Rather Than Later”**
Isaiah 37:1-20

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02/15/2015

We sometimes hesitate in seeking God first. In this passage consider Hezekiah's hesitation. Remember that Hezekiah had earlier paid steep tribute to Sennacherib, king of Assyria (2 Kings 18:13-16). But now Sennacherib wanted complete surrender. The end of the line has come for Hezekiah. The Rabshakeh has just given Assyria's demand (Isaiah 36).

Isaiah 37:1-4

^{ESV} ¹ ¶ **As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD.** ² **And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz.** ³ **They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. (imagry of distress about a woman about deliver a baby but has no strength and would die in the process)** ⁴ **It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up ("you" singular) your prayer for the remnant that is left."**

Hezekiah had been brought *closer* to the end of his rope and could only trust in God. But notice that he sent word to Isaiah to pray.

Isaiah 37:5-7

⁵ ¶ **When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, ⁶ Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria (the Rabshakeh) have reviled me.** ⁷ **Behold, I will put a spirit in him (Sennacherib), so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."**

Consider the incident with the prophet Micah...

^{ESV} **1 Kings 22:23** Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you."

Hezekiah now had a word from the Lord, but there would be more.

Isaiah 37:8-13

⁸ ¶ **The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah' (לִבְנָה) (about five miles north of Lachish), for he had heard that the king had**

left Lachish. ⁹ Now the king (Sennacherib) heard concerning Tirhakah' (תִּרְחָקָה) king of Cush ("Tirhakah was called the Cushite king of Egypt. He was from Cush, south of Egypt, and ruled Egypt at the time."¹ As God was beginning to work with Sennacherib behind the scenes Sennacherib felt it was more urgent to deal with Jerusalem THEN. *Remember the Rabshakeh's taunt in Isaiah 36:6.* Hezekiah now had really been brought to the end of his rope. This message came directly from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria and not from his field commander. Now Hezekiah didn't just send a message to Isiah... he went to the temple himself.), "He has set out to fight against you." And when he (Sennacherib) heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ "Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' ¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? ¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar ? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?'"

What pride!!!

Isaiah 37:14-20

¹⁴ ¶ Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. ¹⁷ Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. ¹⁸ Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, ¹⁹ and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. ²⁰ So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."

NAU **Deuteronomy 6:4** "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

This verse could be translated, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!"

Concerning Hezekiah's prayer of God enthroned *above* the cherubim, the word "above" or the alternate translation "between" is not actually in the Hebrew text. Consider though Exodus 25:10-22; Numbers 7:89; and 1 Samuel 4:4.

Here's the point... seek God sooner rather than later!

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, p. 1088.