

A Trek Through Isaiah 42 - 36:1 - 37:7

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Prayer

Introduction

For today

- The sixth woe: Home at last 33:1 - 35:10 (part 2)

(9:35)

Overview

These chapters form the greatest of Isaiah's interim fulfillments.

He had prophesied one world, one people, one God. Now he answers the the question: Is it real?

The test case was the "Egyptian alliance" situation in the days of Hezekiah. Judah was under Assyria. Merodach-Baladan of Babylon was urging alliance against Assyria. Egypt was promising assistance for a revolt. Isaiah's job was to urge the way of faith, trusting in Yahweh rather than in politics.

Structure:

- 28 - 35 Six woes
- 36 - 37 Epilogue

Chronology

- 728 Hezekiah becomes co-regent with Ahaz
- 722 Merodach-Baladan gains independence from Assyria and becomes king of Babylon
- 715 Hezekiah becomes king
- 705 Sargon dies. Sennacherib becomes king of Assyria. Uprisings across the empire. Hezekiah makes a treaty with Egypt.
- 704-703 Sennacherib quells the Babylonian uprising.
- 702-701 Sennacherib moves against the Palestinian states
 - Three phases (Phoenicia, Philistia, Judah).
 - After Phoenicia and Philistia are subdued, Sennacherib moves against Judah. Forty-six Judean cities are taken.
 - Egypt attempts to intervene and is defeated at El Tekeh, north of Lachish.
 - After Lachish falls, Hezekiah seeks terms and sends tribute to Sennacherib (2 Ki 18:13-16). Sennacherib takes the tribute, and then continues his campaign against Judah. This is the Assyrian treachery recorded in Is 21:2, 24:16, 33:1.
 - From Lachish, Sennacherib sends the Rabshakeh with an army to Jerusalem to seek its surrender. Hezekiah consults Isaiah and is reassured (Is 36:1 - 37:7).
 - Having taken Lachish, Sennacherib moves against Libnah (ten miles north of Lachish).
 - Sennacherib hears a rumor that Tirhakah of Cush (6th Pharaoh in the Ethiopian dynasty of Egypt) is coming to fight against him. (Is 37:8-9)
 - In order to strengthen his position against Egypt, Sennacherib sends a second message to Hezekiah seeking his surrender. Hezekiah brings the letter before the LORD; Isaiah prophesies Assyria's defeat (Is 37:10-35).
 - The Assyrian army is destroyed, Sennacherib returns to Assyria (Is 37:36-38)
- 689 Manasseh becomes co-regent
- 687 Hezekiah dies
- 681 Sennacherib is assassinated by his sons

First Assyrian embassy 36:1 - 37:7

- 36:1-3 Background

1 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. 2 And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. 3 And there came out to him Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder.

- V1 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.
 - Chronology
 - Hezekiah had submitted to Assyria, sending tribute to buy peace. The king of Assyria had accepted the tribute, but immediately renewed his pressure on Hezekiah, conquering all of Judah's fortified cities and coming to the gates of Jerusalem. Now the strong world ruler was in direct confrontation with the weak Davidic king in the city of promise. In Is 14:25 the LORD had promised to break Assyria, so His honor was on the line. Now was the time for Him to demonstrate His mastery of history.
- V2 And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army.
 - Rabshakeh: Assyrian field commander
 - great army. For a show of strength. Not to take the city.
- V3 And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.
 - The same place where Ahaz refused the way of faith (Is 7:3), choosing Assyria over Yahweh.
 - Here are the consequences of Ahaz' choice. Hezekiah will make a different choice.
 - We will see how, given true faith, God can redeem prior disbelief.

- 36:4-10 First Assyrian speech

4 And the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours? 5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? 6 Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. 7 But if you say to me, "We trust in the Lord our God," is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, "You shall worship before this altar"? 8 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 9 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, "Go up against this land and destroy it." ' ' "

- V4 Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria
 - No title for Hezekiah but exalting his king.
- V4 On what do you rest this trust of yours?
 - You. Singular. As if speaking directly to Hezekiah.
 - Fulfilling Is 28:11-12 For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people, 12 to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear.
 - people of strange lips. The Assyrians
 - Trust. The very issue that Isaiah spoke of.
- Themes
 - V6 Egypt is no **help**.
 - Broken reed of a staff
 - Egypt had been defeated at El Tegeh near Lachish.
 - V7 You have **offended** Yahweh.
 - Playing to those who opposed Hezekiah's destruction of local shrines.
 - V8-9 Judah has no **resources**.
 - Noting that Judah has few horses.
 - Putting down the size of Judah's army; they must go to Egypt for help.
 - V10 Assyria's conquest is **authorized** by Yahweh.
 - Perhaps based on Isaiah's teaching in Is 10:5-7 Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! 6 Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

- 36:11-20 Second Assyrian speech

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 12 But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?" 13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! 14 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15 Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord by saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us. This city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." 16 Do not listen to Hezekiah. For thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, "The Lord will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?' "

- V11-12 Bypassing the diplomats
 - Speaking in Judean directly to the soldiers on the wall.
 - His words would be repeated in all the Judean families.
- Elements of the appeal
 - V13 Asserting the **greatness** of the king of Assyria.
 - In opposition to the King that Isaiah had seen in his vision (Is 6)
 - V14 Putting **down** Hezekiah. Seeking to separate the people from their king.
 - V15 Warning against **trusting** in the LORD. He was evidently acquainted with Isaiah's ministry.
 - v16 -17 Offering **peace** and **prosperity**. He cannot hide Assyria's policy of deportation but makes it look as good as possible.
 - v18 -19 **Scorning** Yahweh
 - Making Him equal to other gods.
 - Scorning His power to save.

- 36:21-22 Response of the Judeans.

21 But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." 22 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

- V21 Response of the people
 - they were silent
 - The envoys made no response.
 - The people remained loyal to Hezekiah.
 - Contrast the siege of Ekron, where King Padi was loyal to Assyria, but was taken prisoner by his people and turned over to Hezekiah in chains.
- V22 Delivery of the message.
 - came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn.
 - Because of the blasphemy.

- 37:1-4 Hezekiah's response

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. 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 your prayer for the remnant that is left.' "

- V1 Immediate response
 - As soon as King Hezekiah heard it. Immediately
 - he tore his clothes. In response to the blasphemy
 - covered himself with sackcloth. Humbling himself before the LORD.
 - went into the house of the Lord. Where The LORD was to be found.
- V2 A delegation is sent to Isaiah.
 - he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests
 - Top civil and religious leaders
 - covered with sackcloth,
 - Humbling themselves before the LORD.
 - To the prophet
 - Formally seeking a word from the LORD.
- V3-4 Hezekiah's message to Isaiah
 - V3 **Distress, rebuke, disgrace**
 - Admission of guilt and shame
 - Distress: Adversity
 - Rebuke: From the LORD as justly deserved
 - Disgrace: Public humiliation
 - V3 No **strength**
 - Picture of a woman unable to give birth: travail and helplessness
 - Well-intentioned plans have all failed.
 - Intervention is needed.
 - V4 Invoking the LORD's **honor**
 - It may be. In spite of Judah's failure.
 - Recognizing Assyria's mocking
 - Recognizing the LORD as the living God.
 - V4 **Prayer** for the remnant
 - Asking mercy for the LORD's people who have not been killed or deported as a result of Hezekiah's actions.

- V5-7 Isaiah's response

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 have reviled me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, 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.' "

- When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them
 - Isaiah does not pray. He believed what the LORD had already said.
- Three-part message
 - V6 **Encouragement**
 - Do not be afraid
 - V6 Recognition of the **blasphemy**
 - the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me.
 - Young men. Underlings. Deliberately putting them down.
 - V7 Promise of **deliverance**
 - The king of Assyria to return to his own land.
 - The king of Assyria to be assassinated.
 - No mention of the destruction of the Assyrian army.
- I will.
 - Here is real sovereignty over the mightiest nation on earth.

(10:00)

Discussion

We will break into three groups to discuss today's passage:

1. **The Rabshakeh sent 36:1-2**
 - a. **Reaping the consequences of past choices**
 - b. **All the fortified cities taken**
 - c. **Confronted with a great army**
 - d. **Making a different choice**
2. **The Assyrian challenge**
 - a. **To Hezekiah 36:4-10**
 - i. **In whom do you trust?**
 - ii. **Egypt cannot be depended upon**
 - iii. **You have offended the LORD**
 - iv. **You have no resources**
 - v. **The LORD told me to destroy this city**
 - b. **To the people 36:11-20**
 - i. **Bow to the great king**
 - ii. **Hezekiah cannot save you.**
 - iii. **With Assyria there is peace and prosperity**
 - iv. **The LORD cannot deliver you.**
3. **Hezekiah's prayer 37:3-4**
 - a. **A day of distress, rebuke, disgrace**
 - b. **No strength**
 - c. **Mocking the living God**
 - d. **Mercy for the remnant**

In your group, please discuss

- **See:** Something about God that you see in the passage
- **Know:** The effect that this view of God has upon you.
- **Respond:** A way to respond to what you have seen and come to know.

For next week: 37:8-38

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