



ISAIAH 37

## HEZEKIAH SEEKS GOD'S HELP ~ HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER ~ ISAIAH'S PROPHECY TO HEZEKIAH ~ GOD'S MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE

Isaiah 36 and 37 are one amazing story of God's power to deliver. Tonight, we look at "Part 2," which feels a lot like an epic Hollywood movie. There is drama galore. The end of the story is stunning in its decisiveness. There is no doubt who the victor in this story. If only God would come through for us as we confront our enemies like he did with Hezekiah as God's people faced the threats of Assyria's advancing army.

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 37:1 As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.’”</p> <p><sup>5</sup> When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah,  <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.’”</p>	<p>a 37:3 See Isa. 66:8; Rom. 8:19–21.</p> <p>b 37:7 Or “I will put a spirit (attitude) in him.”</p>	<p><b>Hezekiah Seeks God's Help</b></p> <p>Isaiah 37:1 When Hezekiah heard what the commander had said, he tore his robe, put on sackcloth, and went to the temple of Yahweh. <sup>2</sup> And he sent Eliakim, the palace administrator; Shebna, the royal scribe; and the leading priests—all clothed in sackcloth—to the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup> They told him, “Here is Hezekiah’s message: ‘This is a day of great anguish, rebuke, and humiliation. We are desperate, as in the day a woman is in heavy labor but has no strength left to give birth. <sup>a</sup> <sup>4</sup> Perhaps Lord Yahweh, your God, will take note of all the blasphemous words of the Assyrian commander who was sent by his master, the king of Assyria, to ridicule the living God. And may Lord Yahweh, your God, rebuke him for the words he heard him speak. So therefore, we come to ask you to pray for us, the remnant that still survives.’”</p> <p><sup>5-6</sup> Isaiah answered the king’s delegation, saying, “Tell your master these words: ‘Here is what Lord Yahweh says about this matter: “Don’t fear or be frightened by the blasphemous words of the servants of the king of Assyria. <sup>7</sup> I will put in him a mind-set <sup>b</sup> that will cause him, when he hears a certain rumor, to flee back to his own country. And when he returns I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”’”</p>

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<p><sup>8</sup> The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. <sup>9</sup> Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "He has set out to fight against you." And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup> "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. <sup>11</sup> Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? <sup>12</sup> 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? <sup>13</sup> 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?"</p> <p><sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:</p> <p><sup>16</sup> "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. <sup>17</sup> 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.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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."</p> <p><sup>21</sup> Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, <sup>22</sup> this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: "She despises you, she scorns you— the virgin daughter of Zion; she wags her head behind you— the daughter of Jerusalem.</p> <p><sup>23</sup> 'Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel!"</p>	<p><b>c</b> 37:8 Libnah was one of the thirteen cities allotted to the priests in Israel. See Josh. 21:13–21.</p> <p><b>d</b> 37:12 These are cities of northern Mesopotamia located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.</p> <p><b>e</b> 37:13 These are cities of Syria.</p>	<p><sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the Assyrian commander returned to the king, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish to lay siege against the city of Libnah. <b>c</b> <sup>9</sup> Now, King Sennacherib had heard a report that the king of Ethiopia, Tirhakah, had allied with Hezekiah and was coming to fight against him. So when he heard it he sent messengers to Hezekiah with this message: <sup>10</sup> Don't let this God in whom you trust mislead you into thinking that Jerusalem will not fall and be delivered into the hand of the mighty king of Assyria. <sup>11</sup> Certainly you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them all. Do you really think you'll be delivered? <sup>12</sup> Did any of their gods come to their rescue? Where were the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden, who were in Tel Azzar when my predecessors destroyed their lands? <b>d</b> <sup>13</sup> Tell me, where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah?" <b>e</b></p> <h3>Hezekiah's Prayer</h3> <p><sup>14</sup> When the messengers delivered Sennacherib's message to Hezekiah, he read it and immediately went into the temple of Yahweh and spread it out before the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And he prayed:</p> <p><sup>16</sup> "O Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, the God of Israel, you are enthroned between the wings of the cherubim and you reign supreme as God over all the kingdoms of the world, for you alone are Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup> Please lean down to hear my prayer. Yahweh, open your eyes and see me here calling out to you. Listen carefully to every blasphemous word Sennacherib has sent to ridicule and insult you, the living God.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> "Lord Yahweh, truly the Assyrian kings have annihilated all these nations and conquered their lands. <sup>19</sup> They smashed and burned their gods, for they're not truly gods but mere idols made by human hands shaped from wood and stone. That's why they could be destroyed. <sup>20</sup> So now, our loving God, Yahweh, save us from the Assyrians so that the whole world will know that you alone are Yahweh, Lord God Almighty."</p> <h3>Isaiah's Prophecy to Hezekiah</h3> <p><sup>21</sup> Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah: "Hear the words of Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'Because you prayed to me about the taunts of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, <sup>22</sup> this is what I, Yahweh, decree concerning him: "The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and ridicules you. My daughter, Jerusalem, tosses her head back and makes fun of you!"</p> <p><sup>23</sup> Who do you think you're mocking and blaspheming? Against whom do you raise your voice? And who have you looked down upon in your arrogance? None other than me, the Holy One of Israel!"</p>

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<p><sup>24</sup> “By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon, to cut down its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses, to come to its remotest height, its most fruitful forest. <sup>25</sup> I dug wells and drank waters, to dry up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.</p> <p><sup>26</sup> ‘Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, <sup>27</sup> while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.</p> <p><sup>28</sup> ‘I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. <sup>29</sup> Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.’</p> <p><sup>30</sup> “And this shall be the sign for you: this year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup> And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. <sup>32</sup> For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.</p> <p><sup>33</sup> “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. <sup>34</sup> By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup> For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”</p> <p><sup>36</sup> And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. <sup>37</sup> Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. <sup>38</sup> And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place. (Is. 37:23–38 ESV)</p>	<p><b>f</b> 37:25 As translated from the Dead Sea scroll 1QIsaa. See also 2 Kings 19:24.</p> <p><b>g</b> 37:27 As translated from the Dead Sea scroll 1QIsaa.</p> <p><b>h</b> 37:38 See 2 Kings 19:35–37; 2 Chron. 32:21–22.</p>	<p><sup>24</sup> You sent your messengers to mock the Lord. You boast, ‘My vast number of chariots has taken me up the highest mountains, to the heights of Lebanon’s forests. I cut down its loftiest cedars, its choicest cypresses. I ascended its highest peak and claimed its great forests. <sup>25</sup> I dug wells and drank foreign water. <b>f</b> The feet of my armies trampled the Nile delta dry.’</p> <p><sup>26</sup> “Have you not learned that I planned all this long ago? Yes, from ages past I planned it, and now I fulfill it, that you would conquer fortified cities and turn them into piles of stones. <sup>27</sup> The inhabitants were frightened and ashamed. They became as fragile as weeds and tender grass, as short-lived as the grass that grows on the rooftop and is scorched before the east wind. <b>g</b></p> <p><sup>28</sup> I know where you live, every movement you make, all that you do, and your rage against me. <sup>29</sup> I have heard your arrogant words, and because you rage against me, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.”</p> <p><sup>30</sup> “Hezekiah, this will be a sign for you: This year you will eat only grain that grows of itself. Next year you will eat what comes of that. Then, in the third year, life will be normal again. You will sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup> Judah’s remnant will flourish again, sending deep roots into the ground and bearing luscious fruit above, <sup>32</sup> for a remnant will go out from Mount Zion and Jerusalem. The fiery passion of Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, will accomplish this!</p> <p><sup>33</sup> “Therefore, here is what I, Yahweh, have to say about the king of Assyria: He will neither enter this city, nor shoot even one arrow here, nor raise a warrior’s shield, nor build a siege ramp against Jerusalem. <sup>34</sup> I declare that by the way he came, by that same way he will leave. He will not set foot in the city. <sup>35</sup> I promise to defend this city and protect it, for the sake of my own honor and for the sake of David, my loving servant.”</p> <p><b>God’s Miraculous Deliverance</b></p> <p><sup>36</sup> That night the angel of Yahweh came into the Assyrian camp and slaughtered 185,000 soldiers. When morning dawned, there were only dead bodies in the enemy’s camp! <sup>37</sup> Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, left, returning the same way he came, and retreated to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. <sup>38</sup> Then one day, as he was worshiping in the temple of his god, Nisroch, his sons, Adram-melech and Sharezer, entered the temple and killed him with swords. They escaped into the land of Ararat and the king’s son Esar-haddon succeeded him. <b>h</b></p>

## BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY

JOHN A. MARTIN

### - GOD'S SUPERIORITY TO ASSYRIA (CHAPS. 36-37)

- **Hezekiah's Faith** (37:1-4).
  - **37:1-2.** Like the envoys, Hezekiah in distress tore his clothes. He was disturbed because of the Assyrian threat and also because the name of the Lord had been profaned. Putting on sackcloth was another act of mourning (see comments on 3:24). In trust and dependence on God Hezekiah went into the temple of the LORD, showing symbolically that the nation now could do nothing on their own—their destiny was completely up to God. He also sent his top leaders Eliakim and Shebna along with the leading priests ... to ... Isaiah. Why Joah (cf. 36:3, 11, 22) is not mentioned is not known.
  - **37:3-4.** The men informed Isaiah of the situation, asked for a word from the LORD to rebuke the Assyrians, and then asked the prophet to pray for them. Hezekiah was thereby acknowledging that the Lord spoke through Isaiah. This contrasts with Ahaz's attitude (chap. 7) when he was confronted by a national calamity 33 years earlier, 734 B.C. In the leaders' report to Isaiah they picked up [Vol. 1, p. 1088] his imagery of distress (from 26:17-18) about a woman who is about to deliver a baby but has no strength and would die in the process.
- **Isaiah's response from the Lord** (37:5-7)
  - **37:5-7.** In Isaiah's brief word to the messengers from the LORD he first told them not to be afraid of the Assyrians. God had heard that they had blasphemed Him (cf. v. 4). Then the prophet said that the Assyrian king would return home and would be killed there (the fulfillment of this is recorded in vv. 36-38).
- **God's defeat of Assyria** (37:8-38)
  - **37:8-13.** Sennacherib had left Lachish and was at Libnah, about five miles north of Lachish. Word had come that Tirhakah was coming to assist Judah in her fight against Assyria. Tirhakah was called the Cushite king of Egypt. He was from Cush, south of Egypt, and ruled Egypt at that time. In 701 Tirhakah was an army commander; he actually did not become king of Cush until 690; but since he was king when Isaiah wrote this account, Isaiah called him the king.
    - Again Sennacherib told Hezekiah that other nations' gods had not been able to help them against the Assyrian advance (cf. 36:18-20). Gozan, a city on the Habor River, was conquered about 100 years earlier by the Assyrians. Haran, a city in Aram, was at that time an Assyrian stronghold. Rezeph, also an Aramean city, was captured about 100 years earlier by the Assyrians. Eden was probably in northern Mesopotamia, and may refer to a territory in which Tel Assar was a city. (See comments on Hamath ... Arpad, and Sepharvaim in 36:19.) The location of Hena is not known. The site of Ivvah is also unknown but it may have been in the Babylonian region.
  - **37:14-20.** Receiving the communication (a letter) from Sennacherib, Hezekiah prayed a great prayer of faith in the temple (cf. v. 1). By placing the matter in God's hands (v. 14), he was calling God's attention to it (though of course he believed that God already knew). The king began his prayer with praise (vv. 15-16). Referring to Him as the God of Israel, the king recalled the special covenant position Israel had with the LORD. God's being enthroned

between the cherubim refers to His presence in the Jerusalem temple and thus with His people (1 Kings 8:10-13). (On the cherubim see comments on 1 Kings 6:23.) Besides being the God of Israel, the LORD is also over all the kingdoms of the earth, including Assyria! Hezekiah also stated that God is the Creator.

- Then Hezekiah asked God to intervene for His glory, so that the other nations would know that He, the LORD of Israel, is the true God (Isa. 37:17-20). Hezekiah requested deliverance from the Assyrians so that nations everywhere would acknowledge God's sovereignty.
- **37:21-35.** Responding to Hezekiah's prayer, the Lord sent a message to him through Isaiah that Assyria would be defeated (cf. God's first reply, vv. 6-7). That message included three parts.
  - First, the Assyrians would be driven back (vv. 21-29). Deliverance would come to Jerusalem (the Virgin Daughter of Zion; see comments on 1:8; and comments on 47:1) for Assyria would flee (cf. 37:7). The tables would be turned and Zion would mock Assyria (v. 22). This would come about as an answer to Hezekiah's prayer (v. 21) and as punishment on the Assyrians for their blasphemy (vv. 23-24; cf. 36:20; 37:4, 17) and pride (I and my occur seven times in vv. 24-25). Sennacherib claimed to have felled the choicest tall cedars and pines in the heights (mountains and hills) of Lebanon (cf. 10:34). This may refer to his overrunning Lebanon or it may be a figurative way of saying he conquered leading nations. He also claimed to have conquered Egypt though it is questionable that he ever entered Egypt. However, he did defeat the Egyptians in Philistia. Those successes came only because the Lord allowed them, for He ordained them all. The nations Sennacherib conquered were weak and like grass on flat housetops (cf. Ps. 129:6) readily scorched by the sun. But now the Lord, knowing Sennacherib's rage, would cause him to go back to his land as if he were being led like an animal (Isa. 37:29), that is, in disgrace. This is fitting because the Assyrians were known for leading their captives by hooks in their noses.
  - Second, God assured Hezekiah that a remnant would remain (vv. 30-32) and that life would go on as usual. For the next two years life would be difficult as they sought to get their crops back to [Vol. 1, p. 1089] normal, but in the third year (the normal time it takes for a vineyard to begin producing grapes) there would be a bountiful harvest. The LORD would do this because of his zeal for Judah.
  - Third, the message again addressed the king of Assyria (vv. 33-35). God told him that he would not set foot inside the city of Jerusalem or even build a siege ramp against its walls. He would have to return home because God Himself would defend the city of David.
- **37:36-38.** The account of the destruction of the Assyrian army (predicted by Isaiah in 30:27-33; 31:8-9; 33:1, 18-19) is almost anticlimactic, occupying only three verses. The overnight slaughter did not come from the hand of an enemy but by the Angel of the LORD, who killed 185,000 soldiers. This angel may have been the preincarnate Christ (see comments on Gen. 16:7) though not all scholars agree on this. Sennacherib was assassinated 20 years later (681 B.C.) by two of his sons.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take another look at Hezekiah's prayer in verses 14-20. When you are praying to God for help, is this the way you pray? What do you see are the differences between Hezekiah's prayer and the way you approach God for help?

2. There is no doubt of God's love for the city of Jerusalem. In fact, in verse 22, God calls the city of Jerusalem his "daughter." What does this tell you about God's love for cities? Why so much affection for a geographical location? Why so much love for this city in particular?
3. Has God given you a love for your city? If yes, when and how did that love manifest to you?
4. Is it possible that the Father is waiting for us to "love what he loves and hate what he hates" before he shows up with power in our city? What do you think he loves in our city and what does he hate?