

A BETTER KING, SERVANT, CONQUEROR

The Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 36—39

Verse to Remember

Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God.

Isaiah 37:20

Day 1 — Read Isaiah 36.

Historical Context

The reign of Hezekiah and the events in this lesson are also told in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 29-32.

Jerusalem hadn't had a good king that honored the Lord in a long time. Hezekiah restored true worship to Israel by leading the people in a Passover celebration like Moses (2 Chr. 30:1), worshipping the LORD with psalms like King David (2 Chr. 29:30), and collecting proverbs like King Solomon (Pr. 25:1). Hezekiah also restored the kingdom by repairing the walls and water supply.

God blessed him with wealth and respect (2 Chr. 32:27-30).

In this week's lesson look for Hezekiah's strength during a time of national distress. But also notice his weakness during a time of peace and prosperity. Even for all the good Hezekiah did, he still left God's people longing for "a better King, Servant, Conqueror."

1. The Assyrian field commander and a great army come to Jerusalem with a message. The commander speaks in Hebrew, the language that all the people of Judah understood.

- a. What important question does he ask Hezekiah's men? (Is. 36:5)

- b. What does he think of Judah's hope in the LORD? (Is. 36:14-15, 18-20)

- c. What does he offer as an alternative to the people of Jerusalem? (Is. 36:8, 16-17)

2. The commander continues his confident verbal onslaught (Is. 36:12-20).

- a. How does he portray the king of Assyria?

- b. How does he portray Judah's king, Hezekiah?

Altars and High Places

In the years before Hezekiah, the people of Judah had sinfully mixed their faith in the one true God with the worship of pagan deities. As a result, they had set up many "high places" - pagan altars and sites of idolatrous worship. When Hezekiah became king, he removed many of these high places from the land. The King of Assyria, erroneously thinking these high places were sacred to the true God, concluded that God would be angry with Hezekiah for tearing them down. In reality, Hezekiah's actions pleased the Lord because the people were to worship God alone and because God had ordained that their worship take place at the temple in Jerusalem.¹

3. What do you think makes this attack so dangerous?


Day 2 — Read Isaiah 37.

1. During a time of great fear in Jerusalem, Hezekiah leads God's people well.

- a. How does Hezekiah respond to the events of chapter 36?
(Is. 37:1-4)

"Torn clothes"
are an outward sign
of mourning.
The ripped shirt symbolizes
a heart broken in two.

"Sackcloth" is a coarse,
uncomfortable cloth
worn to show repentance
and humility.

- b. Hezekiah shows his beliefs about God in his actions and prayers. What does he believe? (Is. 37:3-4; 14-20,  Ps. 46)

- c. How does this challenge you as you consider your own prayer life?

Jerusalem

is a profoundly important city and rich symbol in both the Old and New Testaments. Previously called Mt. Moriah, where Abraham offered his son Isaac, it became the capital of Israel under King David. The Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem and the Temple was built there and became the place of worship for the nation.

Prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem speak of God's judgment of his people but promises of the restoration show God's mercy and his desire to make her a glorious light to the nations. Mt. Sinai is contrasted with Jerusalem to explain the difference between the old and new covenant. But ultimately, it is the new Jerusalem that is meant to capture our imagination. This city is has been beautifully prepared and will come down out of heaven. In this city God dwells with his people and they with him. All suffering and sin is done away with, there is healing and refreshment and joy, and finally God is given the worship he has always deserved.²

2. In his pride, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, has shaken his fist at the God of Israel (Is. 37:21-25). How does God show He is still in control? (Is. 37:26-35)

3. Read the end of the story of King Sennacherib in Isaiah 37:36-38 and 2 Chronicles 32:20-21. What parts of his downfall strike you as especially appropriate and why?

Isaiah's Bridge from Assyria to Babylon: Chapters 36-39 consist of historical narratives that mark a turning point in the book of Isaiah. It is generally accepted that chapters 38-39 actually came before chapters 36-37 chronologically. "The prophet arranged the accounts as a 'bridge' between the two parts of his book. Chapters 36 and 37 end the first part of the book with its emphasis on Assyria, and chapters 38 and 39 introduce the second part of the book, with its emphasis on Babylon."³

Day 3 — Read Isaiah 38.

1. Hezekiah learns from Isaiah that his illness will end in death (Is. 38:1), but in response to Hezekiah's prayer God promises to add 15 years to his life. Having given his word, why do you think God provides a sign as well?

2. Hezekiah uses four images to describe how he felt when he was under the sentence of death: tent, weaver, lion, bird (Is. 38:12-14). Choose one of these images and explain it in your own words, perhaps describing how it relates to a time in your own life.

3. What value is Hezekiah able to see in his illness? (Is. 38:15-20)

Day 4 — Read Isaiah 39.

1. After Hezekiah's recovery, envoys from Babylon come bearing "letters and a gift" (Is. 39:1).
 - a. What does Hezekiah do when they come? (Is. 39:2, 4)


 - b. What do you think is his motivation for doing this?

 - c. What will happen to everything Hezekiah treasures? (Is. 39:5-7)

2. Isaiah is again given bad news to deliver to Hezekiah.
 - a. How does the bad news in this chapter differ from the bad news in chapter 38? (Compare Is. 38:1 with Is. 39:6-8.)
 - b. How do the king's responses differ? (Compare Is. 38:2-3 with Is. 39:8.)
3. Second Kings records that “There was no one like [Hezekiah] among all the kings of Judah either before him or after him” because he trusted in the Lord (2 Kgs. 18:5). And yet, after reading today’s passage, how are you left feeling?

Day 5 — Review Isaiah 36—39.

Consider the challenges Hezekiah faced. What has God taught you about faith, prayer, or pride from this section of Isaiah that you can apply to your life?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ Adapted from the note on Isaiah 36:7 in the *NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 1133.

² Gen. 22:1-2; 2 Sam. 5:6-10, 28:2-6; Is. 3:8, 62:1-7; Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21-22

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Comforted: Feeling Secure in the Arms of God* (Colorado Springs, CO.: David C. Cook, 1992), 110.