

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL PROPHETS AND KINGS GOD THE REVEALER

God Reveals the Coming Victory

Today, we turn to what I call a ‘hidden jewel’ in the Bible since it is a Bible story not often repeated and I am not sure why since it chronicles such a glorious event revealing a miraculous victory by God alone.. The story includes the prophet Isaiah who lived during the reign of five kings of Judah. One of those kings, Hezekiah, was born the son of a wicked man. As a youth, Hezekiah turned to God when almost no one else did. In fact, no king since David had set his mind to follow God like Hezekiah. **2 Kings 18:3 (ESV)**³ *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.*

After his father, King Ahaz’s wicked reign ended, Hezekiah (age 25 at the time) immediately opened the temple doors that his father had nailed shut. We read in **2 Kings 18:4 (ESV)**⁴ *He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it....* Guess what happened when Hezekiah did all this? A revival came to the land! **2 Chronicles 30:18-21**

The ancient nation of Assyria was a fierce and cruel nation who showed little mercy to those they conquered. They wanted to conquer Judah. They conquered an area that comprises what is now Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Nineveh was its capital. Since Assyria was such a cruel nation, Jonah, a prophet to Israel, felt justified in his hesitation to bring them God’s message of repentance. Although the Ninevites did repent, their repentance was undoubted short-lived.

About ten years before Hezekiah led his nation in a revival, the Assyrian kings Shalmaneser and Sargon had defeated and taken captive the northern kingdom, the 10 tribes of Israel. Judah was sandwiched between two world powers, Egypt and Assyria. Both wanted to control Judah because the land was a vital land bridge for all ancient Near Eastern trade. The Assyrians were the dominant power at the time Hezekiah became king and Hezekiah chose to rebel against Assyria. In the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign, in 701 BC, the Assyrians under Sennacherib took 46 of Judah’s fortified cities (**Isaiah 36:1**) setting the stage for a showdown at Jerusalem. With the Assyrian monarch’s forces on his doorstep, Hezekiah tried to buy his way out of danger. He presented Sennacherib with all the silver from the temple and national treasuries. He even stripped the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple..

Then they laid siege to Jerusalem. The Rabshakeh (an Assyrian title for a position similar to an ambassador) began to threaten Judah and King Hezekiah.

Hezekiah determined to consult the LORD's prophet and sent advisors to Isaiah. They received this Word from the LORD. **2 Kings 19:6-7 (ESV)** 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 servants 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.'"* This word from the LORD was about to be countered by the Assyrians' evil threats.

The kingdoms of this world continually rise up and oppose God's people.

Read 2 Kings 19:8-13 (ESV) ⁸ *The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria [Sennacherib] fighting against Libnah...⁹ Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has set out to fight against you." So he sent messengers again 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...or the king of Ivvah?'"*

Thinking that additional treasure was just waiting to be plundered behind the walls of Jerusalem, Sennacherib broke his agreement with King Hezekiah and surrounded Jerusalem. Sennacherib's envoys threatened the Jews in their own language, trying to persuade them to lay down their arms and accept exile to a foreign land over certain death. After all, the Assyrians boasted, history showed that resistance would be futile.

Tirhakah was the Egyptian Pharaoh at the time. Cush was the land south of Egypt. And Egypt probably for their own motives was helping Judah. Of course, the Assyrian King Sennacherib did not like that. So he sent Hezekiah his threats hoping for their surrender. In the midst of his threats to Hezekiah, the enemy maligned the LORD God when he said: *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.* Hezekiah knew in his heart that the God of Glory was NOT a deceiver. **Numbers 23:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* The only God true God keeps His promises.

God's people ask God to save them and exalt His name.

Read 2 Kings 19:14-19 (ESV) 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 before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the 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.¹⁶ Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock*

the living God. ¹⁷ Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands ¹⁸ and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. ¹⁹ So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."

The chief purpose of many great events in the Old Testament was to exalt the name of the LORD before all the nations such as the Israelites' miraculous exodus from Egypt and their crossing of the Red Sea on dry ground; the conquest of Canaan beginning with the Israelites' entrance into the land as the River Jordan parted accompanied by their first conquest with the supernatural fall of the walls of Jericho. Hezekiah knew of the marvelous and miraculous power of God. He knew what His God could do!

Instead of fretting and consulting others, Hezekiah immediately chose to take his 'hate mail' and spread it out before the LORD in the temple. We see the heart of Hezekiah in the fact that his first concern was that Sennacherib was mocking the living God. Hezekiah knew that the other countries who had fallen to Assyria did not worship a true and living God. And Hezekiah reasoned with the LORD that if He would save His people the *kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone.*

God is victorious for the sake of His name and His people.

Read 2 Kings 19:20 (ESV) ²⁰ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your prayer to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.
2 Kings 19:32-37 (ESV) ³² "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. ³³ By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. ³⁴ For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

It must have been so encouraging to Hezekiah for Isaiah to come with the answer to His prayer – *Thus says the LORD!!!* Doubting the Word of the LORD was Satan's first tool when he questioned Eve – *did God really say?* We should never doubt the Word of the LORD. The answer to Hezekiah's prayer was threefold: (1) God would deliver Jerusalem, (2) God would defeat the Assyrian army and they would depart, and (3) God would care for the people and they would not starve.

But God also had a message of rebuke to Sennacherib because of his pride and blasphemy. God had used Assyria to chasten the northern kingdom of Israel, and the LORD had given Sennacherib victory over other nations, but the Assyrian king had never given God the glory. In fact, his field commander had reproached the name of the LORD unknowing that it was actually the LORD who enabled Assyria to succeed. The Assyrians were liars in their boasting and God knew it!

Read 2 Kings 19:35-37 (ESV) ³⁵ And that night 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.³⁶ Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh.³⁷ And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

We are most familiar with the night in Egypt when death came to every first born in the land who were not covered by the blood of the lamb. In this victory 185,000 men of the evil Assyrian army who were about to besiege God's children behind the walls of Jerusalem were struck down in one single night by the Angel of the LORD. We can only imagine how Hezekiah and all of Judah felt as they looked over the walls to find nothing but silence in the tents of the men who had been on the verge on killing them. Most likely the Rabshakeh who had so eloquently served as Sennacherib's mouthpiece was dead amidst all the other bodies outside the gate. King Sennacherib would later experience the dubious 'honor' of being murdered by his own sons.

In this one silent night when God prevailed for His children we see an event that solemnly reflects the power of God. It is one more proof that the LORD keeps His promises. He had promised that the Messiah – the Savior of the world would come through the bloodline of David of the tribe of Judah and He would do whatever it took to preserve that bloodline. Jesus who was born of a virgin in the City of David would fulfill that long-awaited promise of God. The same God who had the power to take the lives of that 185,000 man army had the power to raise Jesus the descendent of the tribe of Judah from the dead.

The glory of God is not only a revelation of His power but also a reflection of His unwavering character and trustworthiness. Glory is a word that cannot be communicated just because we say it. His glory is something we need to see. When Isaiah had his glimpse into heaven we are told in *Isaiah 6:3 (ESV)*³ *And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 19:1 (ESV)*¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

Did you know that you and I were created for His glory? *Isaiah 43:7 (ESV)*⁷ *everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

Hezekiah was created for God's glory in his lifetime and his confidence in the LORD during a trying time in his life and his nation reflected God's glory across the centuries to our time. Each of us is called to reflect God's glory. As the modern day lyrics say, Let the glory of the Lord rise among us – let the praises of the King rise among us – let it rise. Don't squelch God's glory. Just trust that He will do as He has promised.