

King Hezekiah's Prayer

When the Assyrian army surrounds Jerusalem, King Hezekiah spreads the threatening letter before the Lord and prays. God sends an angel who destroys 185,000 enemy soldiers.

2 Kings 18:1-19:37 • Isaiah 37:1-38

CHARACTERS: Hezekiah, Isaiah, Sennacherib, The Angel of the Lord

THEMES: Prayer, Trust in God, Deliverance, God's Power Over Nations

HEZEKIAH WAS ONE of Judah's godliest kings. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles. He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. The Assyrian empire was the most powerful military force in the world. They had already conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and carried its people into exile. Now they surrounded Jerusalem.

Sennacherib sent his field commander with a large army to Jerusalem. Standing outside the walls, the commander shouted in Hebrew so all could hear: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord. Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Did they rescue Samaria?'

When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord. He sent word to the prophet Isaiah, who replied, 'Do not be afraid of what you have heard. I

am going to put a spirit in the king of Assyria so that he will return to his own country.'

But then Sennacherib sent messengers with a letter to Hezekiah: 'Do not let the god you depend on deceive you. Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered?'

Hezekiah received the letter, read it, and went up to the temple of the Lord. He spread the letter out before the Lord and prayed: 'Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear. It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God.'

Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah: 'This is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. By the way he came he will return. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.'

That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh, where his own sons struck him down with the sword.

Hezekiah's response to crisis—spreading the problem before the Lord in prayer—demonstrated that true security comes not from military might but from trust in God.