

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem
7 - Broad Wall - Part II

Hezekiah's pride rears its ugly head again.

Hezekiah the Boaster: Scripture pictures the Devil as a serpent and as a lion. He usually comes first as a serpent to deceive us. If that doesn't work, he will be back as the lion to devour us. This was Hezekiah's experience. Merodah Baladan, the King of Babylon, an astrologer, had to his great astonishment observed that God had halted the course of the sun for the sake of Hezekiah. He was deeply impressed by this event, and wanted to learn more about the pious king of Judah. He sent a delegation from Babylon, bearing expensive gifts and personal letters, to Hezekiah to congratulate him on his recovery and to express his admiration for the miracle God had wrought on his behalf. The Babylonian ambassadors came to Jerusalem (the same year as his recovery from his near fatal illness) with a two-fold purpose: (1) to learn how wealthy and strong Judah was (2) Influence Hezekiah to unite with Babylon in opposing Assyria.

Currently, Assyria is the strongest empire. Why should he worry about Babylon?

He does not realize that Babylon will soon be the strongest empire and will invade Judah, destroy Jerusalem, the temple and take the nation into captivity. Babylon's ambassadors have come now as the serpent to deceive. They will return as the lion to devour.

They entice him with false praise and his flesh willingly responds. Foolishly, he gives them the grand tour and shows them his treasures and weapons. As soon as they departed, the prophet Isaiah appeared before the king and told him in the name of God that he had committed an unpardonable sin. Instead of using the occasion to sanctify God's name, you boasted of your riches. The prophet said: "Behold, the days shall come when all that is in thy house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store for thee to this day shall be carried to Babylon!" However, Hezekiah was promised that this calamity would not come to pass in his own lifetime.

A century after Hezekiah's death, Babylon will destroy Jerusalem and the temple, some of Hezekiah's descendants will go into captivity, and his wealth will be carried off to Babylon.

Truth: Pride makes us rob God of the glory that belongs to Him alone.

Pride gives us a feeling of false security and this leads us into sin and defeat.

Spurgeon: "Be not proud of race, face, place, or grace."

Hezekiah humbles himself before God once again. He has learned some valuable lessons from his illness and his mishandling of the Babylonian envoys which will now be needed as another great trial is about to begin - Assyria's assault against Jerusalem. Hezekiah still needs to learn that he is second in command and God alone is sovereign. Truth: When we allow God to have His way, our trials work for us, not against us. They bring great glory to the LORD.

Hezekiah the Commander

II Chron. 32:1 After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah. The invasion began in 701 BC. Hezekiah has 14 more years to live.

Tiny Jerusalem vs Mighty Assyria: Hezekiah has at least 3 major preparations to resist conquest by Assyria.

1. II Chron. 32:2-4 "When Sennacherib had come, intent on making war against Jerusalem, Hezekiah consulted with his officers and warriors about stopping the flow of the springs outside the city ... for otherwise, they thought, the King of Assyria would come and find water in abundance."

Construction of Hezekiah's Tunnel > Hezekiah blocks the water supply outside the city.

This prevents the invaders from having ample supplies of fresh water. All the food and water-wells outside of Jerusalem were destroyed in order to deprive the enemy of supplies. He dug the tunnel between the Gihon spring and Jerusalem so the inhabitants of the city would not die of thirst in the event of siege or the closing of the gates.

Hezekiah was unwilling to go quietly. He refused to throw open the gates of the city to Sennacherib, or even allow the enemy horses to drink the city's water.

2. Hezekiah understood very well that Sennacherib would not rest till Judah was completely destroyed. He meets and works with leaders and take steps to strengthen and fortify the entire country. He organized the army and gave them weapons. Jerusalem was well stocked with provisions, and its walls and fortifications greatly strengthened.

3. He repairs and strengthens the wall of Jerusalem and adds extra towers. He strengthened the Millo, the terraces and retaining walls that butted up against the walls. The Millo, part of the City of David, is the rampart built by the Jebusites before David conquered the city. The massive construction of the Broad Wall was begun to prepare for the invasion by Assyria. The city was enlarged to accommodate a large influx, and population increased in Jerusalem up to 25,000, "five times the population under Solomon." Jews from the northern tribes of Israel, who had been overrun by the Assyrians in 721 BC, had migrated south to Judah and the city of Jerusalem for protection. They settled outside the city walls to the west on the Western Hill. They required an ever larger and massive wall defense to protect it and withstand a coming siege.

After finishing the tunnel and as the Assyrians began making their presence felt all around Jerusalem, Hezekiah cried out to the people,

II Chron. 32:7-8 "Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles." His trust was not in his own preparations; it was in the Lord.

Be of good courage because the Lord is greater than the king of Assyria.

Our trust is never misplaced when it is placed in the Lord.

Ps. 56:3-4 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?

God would stand for Israel. Hezekiah trusted in the LORD. He KNOWS that if he consecrates his heart to the LORD, people would follow. If the people follow, God would preserve His people so that they could stand as a witnessing presence among the pagan nations that surrounded them. That was the whole point (see. Ex. 19:5-6).

Remember: Isaiah's Prophecy to Hezekiah: God will deliver Judah and defend Jerusalem for the sake of King David. He had a great promise from God to believe in.

Truth: God's people should not live on explanations; we should live on His promises.

The Confrontation: It is not long until Sennacherib and the Assyrians had taken 46 fortified cities in Judah. They settled in Lachish (30 miles southwest) to plan the siege and capture of Jerusalem. They besieged Jerusalem (so much for the treaty and payment to the enemy). Assyrians to Hezekiah: Send out 3 of your officers (Eliakim, Shebna and Joah) to meet with 3 of ours (field commander, supreme commander and chief officer) to arrange for the terms of surrender.

Sennacherib sent his Rabshakeh (field commander) to the walls as a messenger.

- a. The conversation was not quiet because the Assyrians wanted the people on the wall to hear so they would be frightened.
- b. The Rabshakeh addressed the soldiers manning the city wall in Hebrew in a loud voice to frighten them. (Enemy learned the Hebrew language to better wage war against them.)

1st Speech:

- a. Field commander speaks to Hezekiah and the Jews. He belittled Hezekiah and blasphemed Jehovah. Promotes distrust of Yahweh and Hezekiah
- b. Who will deliver you from us?
- c. Are you placing your trust in Egypt? Your military resources? Your God? Your wall?
- d. We have come here in obedience to the commandment of the Lord.

He used us to destroy Israel - now you.

- e. If Hezekiah will make a bargain with Assyria, we will stop the siege and spare your lives. You can live in peace until we deport you to Assyria, a land much like Judah.
- f. If you don't surrender, the day will come you will be so thirsty and hungry, you will eat and drink your own excrement.
- g. No god has been able to defeat us; yours will not either >like the other dead idols

People's Response: In obedience to Hezekiah's command, the people on the wall said nothing. Hezekiah and his 3 officers tear their clothes at the blasphemous words of the Rabshekah. Hezekiah goes to the Temple to seek God; he sends 3 officers to get a word from Isaiah.

Words from Isaiah: a. He strengthened Hezekiah with the Divine assurance that no nation would be able to do harm to the land as long as the people obeyed God.
b. He suggested > Judah should completely throw off the yoke of Assyria which it had suffered since King Ahaz's unfortunate reign by having to pay regular tribute in recognition of Assyrian supremacy.
c. Hezekiah's faith in God's help was so great that he did not doubt the prophet's word that even Assyria, then the greatest and mightiest military power, would be unable to punish Judah for her defiance. He made definite plans to stop the tribute payments, and to prepare against the certain attack. Though Sennacherib is outside Jerusalem and preparing to lay siege on the city, the Lord assures Hezekiah that Sennacherib will not lay siege on the city.

God's Intervention: Sennacherib hears a report > God GIVES him a spirit of FEAR > He temporarily abandoned the siege, and returned to Lachish to prepare for war.

Problem: The field commander sent one last message to Hezekiah in a letter.

Isa. 37:9-10 When [the King of Assyria heard that Hezekiah was not backing down] he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying, '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...'

Response: Hezekiah tears his clothes, covers his head in ashes, and carries his cold and trembling heart into the burning presence of the LORD, lays the letter from Sennacherib before the LORD, and prays an honest and selfless prayer: "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."

Solution: Hezekiah looked beyond the problem and focused on the throne of God.

Hezekiah became lost in his worship of God and His greatness.

Truth: When we focus on the Lord and realize how great He is, it helps put our problems in perspective.

Hezekiah's expressed desire: The God of Israel be glorified before the nations of the earth - Save the people of Judah for Your name's sake.

Isaiah's Response: God's Promise

1. God will deliver Jerusalem.
2. God will defeat the Assyrian army and they will leave.
3. God will care for the people. They will not starve.
4. God also sent a rebuke for Sennacherib.

Sennacherib's Rebuke: God had used Assyria to chasten Israel for their disobedience.

However, Sennacherib never gave God any credit; in fact, he and his leaders blasphemed God. He raged against God and exalted himself above the God of heaven. God will now treat the Assyrians like cattle with hooks in their noses and lead them away > the Victims.

"Because of your raging against Me, and your tumult that has come to Mine ears, will I put My hook into your nose, and My bridle, between your lips, and I will make you turn back on the way by which you came..."

God's Provision for Jerusalem: With the Assyrians in the land and Jerusalem under siege, the people could not work their farms. God promised when the Assyrians left, food would grow of itself until the men could work. God would not let His people starve.

Miraculous Liberation -Isa. 37:33-35 "Therefore, he shall not come into this city, and he shall not shoot an arrow thereon; nor come before it with shields, nor cast up an embankment against it. On the same way by which he came, shall he return, and into this city shall he not come, says the Lord. I will shield this city to save it for My own sake, and for the sake of David, my servant!"

That very night an angel of God killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers in the Assyrian camp. Crushed with defeat and shame, Sennacherib returned to his capital Nineveh where he was slain by his own sons while worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch.

Why? What did Hezekiah do that sent the hand of God to move against the Assyrians so violently for His glory? Isaiah tells him, "Because you prayed..." (37:21).

Food for thought: Scripture tells us Hezekiah sought the blessing and will of God at all times; this gave him power in prayer. He didn't just seek God when he needed Him for a problem.

If Hezekiah was placing his trust in God, *why did he build the broad wall?* He believed that God would protect the city. His anticipation of God's faithfulness meant building a wall to keep the Assyrians out, even while acknowledging God as the true protector.

If Hezekiah did not prepare and move the city behind the walls, the Assyrians would waltz right in and have their way with the city. The wall is an outward expression of Hezekiah's faith. It is not a reach for salvation in his own power; rather, it demonstrates his confidence in God's ability to save. God is on the move, and so Hezekiah moves with God.

God moves to set people free. Do we anticipate God's victory in our own lives to the extent that we prepare accordingly? If we believe that the Spirit of God can and will free us from our bondage to sin, have the walls begun to go up that will protect our souls? These walls are neither legalistic nor works-based; rather, they are founded on a deep devotional life, and they are built through a timeworn determination to say "Yes" to Christ. These walls protect our hearts as we face an enemy who wants to destroy us and as we encounter a world that hurts and doubts.

Spiritual walls relate to: 1.) The strength and stability of my Christian testimony 2.) My capability to defend my faith. 3.) My moral strength in time of temptation. 4.) My ability to separate from the unbiblical values and attitudes of this world's system.

Compare a walled city with an unwalled city back in the days before modern warfare.

The walled city was much stronger and more easily defended. It was known and established because walled cities were not "flash in the pan" settlements. It was plainly visible for miles around. The wall clearly set the city apart from the surrounding countryside.

God wants to see strong, solid believers with a testimony that is plainly visible in this dark world. He wants to see Christians with a consistent lifestyle that is distinctly Biblical even if it means painful separation from the values and the attitudes of the surrounding world system. Are we committed to a strong and solid wall policy or are we complacently satisfied with living in Rubble City?

How broad is your wall to protect you from the enemy that seeks to deceive and devour you?