Kings and Prophets 15-10-01

This is Thursday, the 1st of October, 2015. We only have one quarter of the year remaining to us, and another one will be in the can, down the tubes, never to return. I'm glad to see everybody survived the blood moon and the eclipse and the disappearance of so many people.

Luckily for us, there was no New Age rapture or any other strange predicted happening. But we will continue our study of kings and prophets tonight. We're looking at the final phase of the time of King Hezekiah.

You have a handout there, which those who are joining us either chronologically after the fact or remotely, if you want to see what this handout has, it is in the MP3 folder for this study on the website. It's called Summary of Assyrian Attack, and you can find it there. It's a Word document file.

But we'll be talking about that momentarily. Let's prepare ourselves for our time of fellowship in God's Word by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for preserving us, providing for us, blessing us, and bringing us once again to this opportunity to enjoy fellowship, to receive encouragement and ministry from believers of like mind.

We recognize what a privilege it is, what a blessing it is, to know and have fellowship with believers who love you and who recognize the importance of regular reflection on your Word, seeking and asking and knocking for understanding, the basis of our faith, the substance of our hope, the encouragement as we walk in this life toward that day when the Lord Jesus collects us, brings us to himself, and presents us before you. We pray that even as we look at these Old Testament happenings and these long-ago days, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, that it will be meaningful, that it will be motivating, that it will be an encouragement and a source of strength and guidance for each one of us in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, over the past several weeks, we've really slowed down because the Bible devotes a lot of space, more so than any other single part of our entire Kings and Chronicles study, our Kings and Prophets study in those two books. This is really the most detailed, the most verbose, the most looked at, three, yay, four perspectives on it, even going over to Micah.

So we are taking our time and trying to be sure we give it the attention that it is due, that God encourages by devoting this much coverage in his word to it. And as we have seen, we know that in the early days of Hezekiah, the first six years of his reign, he devotes to refurbishing the temple, restoring worship, recommissioning the priests, getting everything cleansed, cleaned up, functional. He has a delayed Passover and a delayed celebration.

They have to fudge some of the rules, to put it loosely, in order to get everyone to participate in that first year, but they do it. And they are off to a great start. But in the sixth year of his reign, the Assyrians come down.

This would be in circa 722, 721, and take out the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom is gone. Those people are deported.

The land is sown with foreigners. And this is the origin of the people who will later be the Samaritans in Jesus' day. But for reasons that are a bit obscure, the Assyrians do not extend the attack on down into Judah, nor do they take it at that time.

It is later, another eight years later, when the forces of Sennacherib come down to roll up the land. And what is interesting is that we have Assyrian records for this campaign. Sennacherib had this stuff written down.

And we've got stela, and we have inscriptionary evidence for this. So it's interesting, knowing that these kings have a tendency, to put it bluntly, to lie, to exaggerate, to do fan dances, and to put the best face on their efforts. So their accounts are not, shall we say, graven in stone in the sense of truth.

Even though they are graven in stone, just because they are graven in stone doesn't mean that they are necessarily trustworthy. But they are indicative, they are a clue, and a helpful testimony that something happened. The nature of it, the extent of it, and so on, is questionable.

And there are illustrations, history is replete with examples of fudging, right down to the present day. Well, as we look at the... You saw me just kind of slip that in, because I'm not going political at all. Not in an election run-up or anything.

But just be aware, everything you hear is not necessarily true. Not that I have to tell you that. So, we are at the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign.

And as I mentioned before, a lot takes place. Now let me just fill in a little bit of background here, because there are two camps, in the same way that there is the camp of Hezekiah inside the walls of Jerusalem, and there is the camp of the Assyrians outside. There are two camps in terms of belief or conviction about what happened in this period of history.

It's a bit unclear, and the evidence can be construed more than one way. So these two camps are this. Sennacherib either invaded Judah once or twice.

And with that, each of those is subdivided into two views, depending on what he did with regards to Egypt. We have a reference to Terhaka, king of Ethiopia, here. And that creates a vexed question.

Let me just give you, I'm not going to belabor this, it's not that pertinent to our study, but you do need the background just in case you run across a commentary that takes a different view, and you say, wait a minute, that isn't what we saw in our study. This guy is all wet. Well, no, there are, I mean, it could be me or it could be him.

I don't know who this guy is who's wet. You'll have to figure that out. But here's the story.

Here's the background. Terhaka is documented in extra-biblical, or what I like to call extraneous history. We've got some Egyptian records.

There's a funerary inscription of an apis bull and all kinds of stuff that they triangulate to figure out. Because Terhaka took over the throne from his older brother Shabaka or Chewbacca or somebody down there. I'm a little fuzzy on the details myself because it's just not pertinent.

I don't really care what a bunch of dead, dusty old Ethiopians did way back when. However, it is peripheral to our time. And here's the thing in a nutshell.

Terhaka doesn't come to the throne of Egypt, which during these days is actually ruled by the Ethiopians. Down to the 25th dynasty or 26th dynasty, something like that. And Ethiopians have taken over.

Things are in a real bad way down in Egypt. That's why they're not a big force and why the Assyrians think that they can lick them just like they've licked everybody else. Because they're weak.

And there's trouble and turmoil down there. So here's the thing, though. Terhaka coming to the throne of Egypt by everybody's best reconstruction, and it is piecemeal and fragmentary, he's ten years too late.

If there were any kind of a second campaign of the Assyrians coming down through Judah, encountering Terhaka at Libna and all the rest of that, this would have been in the year, basically, of Hezekiah's death, his real death, his actual death. Ten, 15 years after the time we're looking at. And there is no indication in Assyrian records of a second campaign in this part of the ancient Near East.

However, there are no records of any kind for the last six or eight years of Sennacherib's reign. Seems like things kind of soured for him. Not even sure he was there.

But suffice it to say that I have chosen, based on my amateur investigations and comparing and contrasting the evidence, but first and foremost, looking at the biblical account, I side with the somewhat less favored view these days that there was a single campaign. The Bible mentions one campaign. The Assyrian records mention one campaign.

And the difficulties that they find with this in reconciling various bits and pieces of evidence, I think, are answerable. But all of that's beside the point. What we want to know is, so what? I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm here living my life in whatever time God has left to me. So what should I bring from the biblical account, God's record of what happened? Why is it here? Why does God want me to know this? All these things have been written for our instruction. It's profitable for doctrine,

reproof, correction, instruction, unlike stuff you dig out of the ground.

It's interesting. I love archaeology as much or more than anyone. But when it comes to traction in our spiritual life, this book is it, and there is nothing else.

There are popular Bible studies circulating now that people are encouraged to get the book and have a small group. And churches, large and small, are going through these programs. And one of the things that many of them have in common is that they are concerned about people spiritualizing Scripture.

You go to a passage, and you just see in it whatever strikes your fancy. And this has become popular because of our education system where there is no one right answer. You go to history, and well, you know, the Indians had a point.

The settlers had a point. The Nazis had a point. The Confederates didn't have a point.

But almost everybody, except anybody we sympathize with, had a point. Everybody has a point religiously except Christians. Everybody had a point politically and economically except the South.

It's as much as your life is worth to come out and say you still grieve that the South lost the Civil War. It's as much as your life is worth. They're taking that.

Nobody can put up a Confederate battle flag because it's a big deal. All you have to do is label something racist. It doesn't even have to have anything to do with race.

It can have to do with religion. It can have to do with politics. It can have to do with economics.

It can have to do with anything. Somebody says you're a racist. Well, that shuts down all argument and all opposition.

And you just get steamrolled out of the conversation. Oh, well, you're just a big bigot. We're not listening to anything you have to say.

Well, this has happened with the cause of the South. Was there slavery? Were there bad things that happened? Yes. Was there slavery and bad things that happened in the North? Yes.

And, by the way, there was a whole lot more than African-American folks that were enslaved. Have you ever gone back and looked at all the other groups that were enslaved in this country, like Native Americans? Look at what happened to them. Have you looked at what happened to the Chinese during the days of the railroad and out in California? Where's the day for some Chinese guy that died on the rail line? It's imbalanced.

It is just serving various agendas. Well, this was going on in Hezekiah's day. And, sadly, with the melee and the mishmash, it's even reflected in the historical records.

So, if you will bring your handout before you, let me quickly suggest to you a construction of events that explains the Assyrian records, explains the biblical records, and has, as a more important benefit, applicational value. Not enough to sort the history. There should be some spiritual benefit, or why are we talking about it in Bible class? You will notice I put the 2 Kings account first.

2 Kings, and remember the three perspectives we talked about that Isaiah, as God's prophet, seems to bring down for us the heavenly perspective, the way God looks at things in the throne room. Kings is more the palace point of view. This is what we understand because we're staff, we are insiders, we're in the cabinet.

These are the king's thoughts and reflections and actions. And then Chronicles, this is the newspaper with a godly editor providing editorial commentary. Editorial page is included in Chronicles.

This happened because, right? So, keeping that in mind, we look at the king's account, and the only account of the three to include 2 Kings 18-14-16 is Kings. The content that is there is only there. It is not in Chronicles, it is not in Isaiah.

And so, what we want to do is put this into perspective. So, when we look at 2 Kings 18, after the account of Hezekiah beginning his reign in Judah, removing the high places, trusting the Lord God of Israel, fixing up the temple, the Lord was with him. In verse 7, he prospered wherever he went.

He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 2 Kings 18, verse 7. He rebelled and did not serve him. This is part of the reason for the military campaign.

Sennacherib says, I'm tired of these recalcitrant and rebellious people. I will go down and smash them. In the meantime, Hezekiah has some successes.

Now, it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, seventh year of Hosea, that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria, besieged it. At the end of three years, they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hosea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

In the sixth year of Hezekiah, Samaria was taken. I may have said, Sennacherib, this is in the days of Shalmaneser, Sennacherib's predecessor. But, Hezekiah rebelled in his days and so this created a cause where eventually they're going to want to go down and put this to rest.

So, the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria. Because, verse 12, they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant, all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded, they would neither hear nor do. That's the northern kingdom.

And this, of course, is palace talk. Well, those silly people, they didn't hear and they didn't do. No wonder, they've been notorious up there from the days of Ahab and all the way back to the

inception.

They've never been godly up there. So, no wonder. Now look, verse 13, in the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

This campaign is recorded in the annals of Sennacherib. They have these in cuneiform. And Sennacherib says, I took 46 cities in Judah.

That's what you have at the top of your handout. 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified or fenced cities of Judah and took them. As a result of this, Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish.

Now, the king of Assyria is at Lachish for part of this campaign. I'm going to try to say Lachish all the way through. When I look at it in Hebrew, it's Lakish.

But Lachish, he's there at Lachish. There is a guy named Ekron who is king of Lachish. And when that city is under siege and is eventually taken, then that king is going to escape and be received into Jerusalem.

He's going to come down and lodge with Hezekiah. So, here, in a summary fashion, much as the end of Genesis 1, on the sixth day God created man in his own image after his own likeness, male and female, created He them, and so on, it's a summary. This is the summary that precedes a lot of what follows.

So, you see I've got a little line there that says, insert details 1 through 6 here. So, between verse 13 and verse 14, you have details 1 through 6. And how do I know this? Before we go any further, how do I know this? Look down at the Isaiah account below. I should have put this on the next page.

You've got a little header there at the bottom of your first page that says the introduction is in Isaiah 36, 1 and 2. And I've printed it out for you there. What does it say? Exactly the same thing as 2 Kings. It came to pass in the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defense cities of Judah and took them.

Without a break, and the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto King Hezekiah with a great army. You see that? It is the same occasion. It is the 14th year.

He comes down. He takes the 46 fortified cities of Judah. And the army has come up to Jerusalem.

Then you have the Rabshakeh speech. And in both of them, you can see details 1 through 6 are faithfully recorded in almost identical fashion in both 2 Kings and in Isaiah. See details 1 through 6 there? The Rabshakeh gives his speech.

Now there are two parts of the confrontation. The first part is in person. Rabshakeh comes,

gives his speech in person.

Walks up and down. Mocks God. Flaunts their previous victories.

Says, who are you to trust in God? What do you think you're doing? After this speech, which takes up about 19 verses in both accounts, second detail, after this, Hezekiah goes and prays to the Lord. As a result of this prayer, Isaiah is sent to Hezekiah with the promise of deliverance. That's prong 1 of the attack.

That's phase A of the attack. After having delivered this, Hezekiah doesn't bend. He doesn't yield.

He doesn't surrender. We have no indication of any further response to the Rabshakeh. So the Rabshakeh goes back to Lachish to report on the relative failure of his first mission.

They didn't cave and they didn't surrender. It appears as though Hezekiah has held the line against this first incursion. He's doing okay.

So detail 3, Rabshakeh goes to Lachish and finds Sennacherib has left to go engage Libna. So word has to be sent to Libna that Hezekiah did not fold and needs more pressure. So Sennacherib, detail 4, sends fresh messengers with a second message to Jerusalem, in general Hezekiah in particular.

And there is a letter that is sent. These messengers recapitulate a lot of what the Rabshakeh said and what he did. Apparently there is a second announcement to the people in Hebrew.

And you get this by looking at the Chronicles account which I don't have down here. But in the same way that the Rabshakeh spoke the native language to intimidate the people, the people who come back, these messengers fresh from Sennacherib do the same thing. So here's the important deal.

There is a first attack and the line holds. The propaganda attack, the why don't you give up, what's the point of resistance, they hold. They maintain.

Hezekiah does the right thing. He goes and prays. Isaiah gives him a promise of deliverance.

However, here's the thing. After Sennacherib leaves there is no apparent change in the situation. Sennacherib is still in the area and by the way he has defeated Lachish and moved on to Libna.

Lachish has fallen. This is in the Assyrian records and we know that the king had to flee and he has in the meantime come to Jerusalem and told war stories about the devastation and the might of Assyria and his account perhaps we would assume or speculate may have done more damage than anything the Rabshakeh said. He has come and said you can't believe these guys.

We were like grasshoppers in their sight. I don't care how big the grapes are. These people are

too formidable for us to oppose.

Speaking Lachish in French, they were formidable. They were unopposable. Lachish was a very well fortified city and they sacked it.

This guy, I only am escaped to tell thee kind of a thing. So he's now in Jerusalem. We know this and you'll see it.

So all of this stuff is percolating. Yes they held but the threat has not been removed. It's still there.

It's just kind of shifted and now it expresses itself in a second and fresh way. Everybody with me so far? The letters come. This is detail four.

Sennacherib sends more messengers and this time a letter. Now he's going to put it in writing. The first time the guy is speaking extemporaneously and eloquently.

Second time it's a letter. You know how a letter is. You can carry it around.

You can reread it. It stays. It persists.

It's there and you can keep going back and reading it again. This is why people still send love letters instead of love text. You can love text all you want but people like a letter, like a memento, like something physical.

My beloved actually handled this and wrote on it and put a big smooch mark on the bottom of it or whatever. It's a tangible expression. And even today, even on our post-electronic age, tangibility still means something.

This is why the online blue something or other greeting card deal, people do that when they're in a hurry and they were too late to send you something. But almost always people still make or send you a wonderful card. It's tangible.

It just seems to carry more weight, right? Well, Sennacherib knows this. So he doesn't just send messengers. He sends a letter.

It's got the king's seal on it. Fine paper, fine Corinthian leather, whatever he wrote it on. It's something really impressive.

And it's delivered into the hands. And this is new. Have you ever thought about science saying that evolution happened? And you say, ah, poo-poo.

But then they start digging tangible bones out of the ground. And people say, hmm, well, maybe it was theistic or deistic evolution. Or maybe, you know, the tangibility of the evidence works on your mind.

It's got weight. It's got momentum. It's got lasting effect.

That's detail four, messengers and a letter with a second threat to Hezekiah. Both accounts have this. Detail five, Hezekiah does the same thing he did the first time.

Now, this is good. He takes the letter to the temple and he prays. For the second time, Isaiah responds.

And it is a three-part response. First time, it was a single response. Just take a quick look at Isaiah chapter 37.

In that first seven verses, Hezekiah covers himself in sackcloth, goes to the house of the Lord. He sends Eliakim and Shebna and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet. And they said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy.

For the children have come to birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth. It may be that the Lord... In other words, we've done all we can do and it's not going to be enough. And if you read Chronicles, the part that's in Chronicles that isn't in Kings and isn't in Isaiah is Hezekiah's tunnel, stopping up the water springs, making sure there's a water supply to fortify the city and so on.

And they've done everything. He fortified all the cities in Judah, as did his father. But all of that was in vain.

And they've done everything. They got all ready to give birth to a great victory. But because of doing all that, they've got no strength left.

They can't add to it. They can't do any more. This is what the figure means.

We've done all that we can do, and there's a baby stuck in breach. We cannot deliver victory for ourselves. There's no strength to do it.

So, Isaiah, you've got to take this to the Lord. It may be the Lord your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to reproach the living God and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.

Remnant that is left meaning what? Out of 47 cities, 46 have been rolled up, and the prize of Jerusalem is all that's left. Servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. Isaiah said to them, Thus you shall say to your master, thus says the Lord, Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

I will send a spirit upon him, certainly so. I will surely, certainly send a spirit. Tangible or intangible? Intangible.

Intangible threat, intangible reply. You don't need more fortifications. You don't need a bigger army.

You don't need more horses. You don't need more battlements and swords and whatnot. I'm just going to send a spirit.

You got to trust in my invisible deliverance. This is stage one. Still with me? Do not be afraid.

I will send a spirit. He will hear a rumor. Tangible or intangible? Intangible.

I'll send a spirit. He'll hear a rumor. He's talking.

Somebody's going to talk to him. He's whispering in your ear. Somebody's going to whisper in his ear.

Fighting intangibility with intangibility. He'll return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. He'll go home, be out of your hair, and somebody there is going to take care of him.

You don't have to kill him. You don't have to defeat him. His own people are going to kill him.

It's a promise. Well, days go by. Assyrians are still there.

He hasn't left. He hasn't moved. Lachish falls.

The king comes running in, rags and tatters, patting the flames off of his robes and saying, you can't believe what they did to us. The slaughter, the carnage. Let me show you the pictures on my iPhone of everything that happened.

It was grotesque. It was overwhelming. We couldn't stand.

They rolled us over, steamrolled us, just like they did everyone else. And this guy is just, you know, what's he going to do? Sit there and say, well, sure, good, you've got a promise from the Lord. My city's gone.

Of course, he's going to talk and talk and talk. Well, the second time, but they hold. They don't fold.

So now, Sennacherib is busy attacking and rolling up the weakened enemy of Egypt. And they meet them at Libna. And so, Sennacherib says, look, send this guy a letter.

Let's make this thing a little more forceful here. You messengers go, you carry this piece of paper from my hand, tell him what's what. That is detail number five out of Isaiah 37, 15.

So now, Hezekiah, verse 14 of Isaiah 37, 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 the letter before the Lord. Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the one who dwells between the cherubim.

Why would he say that? He's at the temple, right? You are God, you alone, all kingdoms of the

earth. You've made heaven and earth. 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 reproach the living God. Didn't we already do this? Hasn't God already said, Sennacherib's not a problem? He's going to hear a rumen, return to his own land, and be killed by the sword? By his own people? Did I not already give you a promise? He sent another letter.

You think that negates and cancels and abrogates everything I said the first time? What are you bothering me for? I already told you. It's handled. Be patient.

Wait. Have faith. But Hezekiah is deeply disturbed.

He goes to the temple and prostrates himself, throws this letter out before the Lord. Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all nations and their lands, 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 destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord, our God, save us from His hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord, You alone. Nothing wrong with this.

It's good. It's a good response. You ask yourself why He didn't say, Letter? We don't need no stinking letter.

Throw it away. I've got the promise of God. But understandable, being the king, seeing the significant threat, He goes the second time to the temple.

He does the right thing. He lays it before the Lord. He doesn't flee.

He doesn't surrender. He doesn't mount up the army and say, let's throw ourselves in a suicide attack. He goes to the temple.

This is a good thing. But, here's the thing. Isaiah, the son of Amos, verse 21 of Isaiah 37, and this is detail 6. There is now a three-part response.

You remember the first time there was a one-part response. I'm going to meet the intangible with the intangible. Don't worry about it.

This time, tangible letter. God gives a three-part response, including in the middle, the center of the sandwich, a tangible sign. The first part is a little letter to send back to Sennacherib.

Isaiah, the son of Amos, sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Because you have prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him. And then you have this long, poetic letter back to Sennacherib. Who is you? The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn.

He's not talking to Hezekiah. He's talking to Sennacherib. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back.

Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. By your servants you've reproached the Lord. These are the messengers.

And said, By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the heights of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon. I will cut down the cedars, the choice trees, enter the farthest height, fruitful forest, dug in drunk water. The soles of my feet dried up all the brooks of defense.

Did you not hear long ago, O Sennacherib, I made all of this stuff. You're only here because I let you live. Because I've allowed you for my own purposes.

Crushing fortified cities. Inhabitants with little power, dismayed and confounded. Grass of the field, green herb, grass of the housetops, green blighted before it has grown.

Life and death are in my hands, God says. I know your dwelling place, you're going out, you're coming in, and your rage against me. Because your rage against me and your tumult have come up to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came.

This is God's word to Sennacherib, but he gives it to Hezekiah in the same way that the book of Jonah is given to Israel. Hezekiah, you need to hear this. This is me talking to Sennacherib.

So in case you missed it the first time, I'm going to turn him back to his own land. And now, instead of a rumor in his ear, it's a hook in his nose, tangible or intangible. In the metaphorical sense, instead of hearing a rumor, God says, I'm going to put a physical hook in his physical nose, I'm going to physically drag him back to his own land.

Second part of the message. This shall be a sign to you, King Hezekiah. You'll eat this year such as grows of itself, second year what springs from the same, and the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof, and the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

Remember he said, pray for the remnant? He told his messengers, Shebna and Hilkiah, tell Isaiah to pray for the remnant. God says, here's my word about the remnant. After three years, out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion, the zeal of the Lord of hosts, will do this.

That's part two. Physical sign. The food you eat on a daily basis for the next three years is going to be your sign.

It's a daily sign, it's a weekly sign, it's a monthly sign, and it's a yearly sign. For three years, every single day, the food you eat should be a reminder of my promise. You need something tangible? Here's the tangible.

Third part of the message. Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, reiteration of the

promise to Hezekiah. He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mount around it.

By the way that he came, by the same he shall return. He shall not come into this city, says the Lord, for I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake. Three times he says he's not coming in, he's not going to take it.

I will deliver it, I will save it. It's a triple reiteration of the promise that he already gave the first time. Now, go back to your handout and notice after detail six, look up at the very top of your page which is the 2nd Kings account which mirrors this in all details.

Everything is the same. One through six have happened. What happened after this? Did Hezekiah hold? Did he sustain? Did he trust? Was the second message delivered through Isaiah, the three-fold message, enough for Hezekiah? No.

Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish. Why does he send to Lachish? He's holed up in the city. He doesn't know that the king isn't even at Lachish.

He's gone to Lebanon. Rabshaka knows that he left but Hezekiah doesn't know this. So Hezekiah sends to Lachish.

He's acting on old information and he sends and says, I have offended. Return from me. That which thou puttest on me I will bear.

The king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah, king of Judah, 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold. The message is relayed and he says, Okay, fine. I'm busy down here in Lebanon anyway and Jerusalem is a heavily fortified city perhaps.

It's going to take time and trouble and I don't want to fight a two-front war right at the moment. I'm tangled up here with the Ethiopians. So, fine.

And so he sends the tribute. How do I know he actually sent this tribute and it is on this occasion? Because in the Assyrian annals for this incursion where he says he took Lachish and he surrounded Jerusalem and he rolled up the 46 cities of Judah. In that very same account in the Assyrian records it says, Hezekiah paid me 300 talents of gold and the Assyrian account says 800 talents of silver.

Biblical account says a smaller amount of silver but there's some debate about, Well, was a talent measured differently for silver or whatever. Suffice it to say the Assyrian annals account for the gift actually arriving and it is at this same time. It's not ten years later.

It's not six years earlier. It is in the 14th year of Hezekiah. It is during this campaign.

The Assyrians say we went down. We captured all these cities. We burned Lachish with fire and he paid us.

It's right there. So, did it happen between the first and second letter? I don't think so. I think it happens after the second letter because Hezekiah is equally concerned and equally distressed.

But evidently, he didn't hold the line. God overlooks this in the Isaiah account. The public newspaper account in Chronicles overlooks this but in Kings, the diary of what goes on in the palace, 18, 14 through 16 is there.

We stripped the gold. We rationalized. We tried to buy the guy off.

The second incursion seems to have been too much for Hezekiah. Is it possible that after the first incursion he sent it? Maybe. I tend to think it is the second and here's why.

In those days, Hezekiah became sick unto death and Isaiah says, pack your trash. You're leaving this life. Why is that? Cause and effect is what makes the most sense.

It is an inference. The records are a bit spotty here in both the secular and the biblical history but why else? And this test, this pronouncement of discipline on Hezekiah reveals his lack of faith. Very quickly, I'm going to take just a couple of minutes here to close with something.

If you're in Isaiah, stay there. If you're in Chronicles, stay there. Either one has the same thing.

I'm in Isaiah. If you take a look at the word of Hezekiah, the song that he sang after his life is extended, which we've studied in detail. Let me just review.

We've looked at this in detail. What are the essential elements? At the beginning he says, in the prime of my life I'm going to Sheol. I'm deprived of the remainder of my years.

I will not see the Lord in the land of the living. It's all ending for me. So note-wise, mentally or on paper here, just put number one in Hezekiah's view, it's ending.

It's ending. Make sense? He says, Isaiah tells me it's over. Here's my song.

It's over. He says in verse 13, from day until night you make an end of me. I am, verse 14, mourning like a dove, my eyes fail to look upward.

I can't look up anymore. I'm downcast. My eyes are down.

I'm hopeless. Hopeless and mourning. That's number two.

Number three, it's God's fault. God is against me. God is opposing me.

God is the one cutting me off of the weaver's loom. God is the one who has decided that I can no longer continue even though I have done good. I've been a good guy and he's cutting me off.

So number three, the Lord opposes me. It's the Lord doing this. I was all set to continue.

And finally, beginning at verse 15, what shall I say? He's spoken to me. He himself has done it. I will walk carefully all my years in bitterness of soul.

Oh Lord, by these men live and in these are the life of the spirit. You restore me and make me live. It's my peace, for peace that I had bitterness, but you've lovingly, you actually, you have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.

Your love, you've loved me out of the pit. You cast all my sins behind your back. Old can't thank you.

Death can't praise you. The living will praise you as I do this day. The father will make known to the children, the truth.

We'll sing many songs, all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. So the fourth thing is God turned me around. God loved me out of the pit and put me back in the land of the living.

I'm going to sing and praise and communicate truth to the children. Those are the four kind of big ideas here. Now, very quickly turn back a page and look at the word of the Lord to Sennacherib, which was for Hezekiah's benefit and which he received before he got sick and could have learned from and should have modeled his own song after, in my view.

I suggest to you this. Number one. Remember what number one was? What did Hezekiah say in number one? It's over.

The party's over. It's ending. It's gone.

God's cutting it off. He's blowing out the lights. Last call.

Go home. Actually, go to the pit. Go to Sheol.

Go to death. Dismal downcast. What's God lead with in the message to Sennacherib? The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and is laughing.

She belittles you. She mocks you. She makes light of you.

This is what despise means. You make light of it. You diminish it.

So Hezekiah is mourning. God says the daughter of Jerusalem should be laughing. Laughing.

That's number one. And it is a beginning. And here's the beginning.

I got a little ahead of myself. The beginning idea, it's the virgin daughter of Zion. This is not the tired old spinster of Zion.

This is not the advanced in years mother of Zion. Couldn't you picture Zion as the mother of many children in a large population and so on? It's the virgin daughter. That suggests the beginning of things.

A virgin daughter's got her whole life ahead of her. She has yet to find her spouse. She has yet to have her children.

Her whole life stretches out before her in hope and beauty and opportunity. It's the virgin daughter. Why does God characterize Jerusalem as a virgin daughter? It's the beginning.

There's a great bright future ahead. Many children. Wonderful marital bliss.

It's a beginning. Hezekiah sees only an ending. Then number two, Hezekiah is mourning and bitter and going down to the grave.

Can't lift up his eyes. What does God say? Laughing. This is no big thing.

God's in his heaven. He made all of these things. This guy thinks he's rolling up cities and having big victories.

God made all of that stuff. He's holding your atoms together and if he quits, you're gone. You only even exist by his grace and by his allowance.

So instead of the mourning and downcastedness of Hezekiah, the virgin daughter's laughing. She's making light. She looks to God.

Her eyes are firmly fixed on the Lord who made the fruitful forest and the cypress trees and so on that this guy's trying to cut down. Thirdly, the Lord opposes me. What does the Lord tell Sennacherib? Buddy, when you mess with Jerusalem, you're messing with me and I oppose you.

God's not opposed to his own people unless they put themselves in that position. He's opposed to his enemies and his enemies are their enemies. And God has given Hezekiah this wonderful model.

You should be upbeat. There is a bright future. You should be laughing.

This problem is in God's hands and God opposes your enemy. And if the Lord be for us, who can be against us? But Hezekiah's little woe song is just the opposite. And then finally, Hezekiah says, well, God finally turned me around.

He loved me out of the pit, put me back in the land of living so that I can sing and praise. God turned me around. He brought me back.

He reversed my course. What does God say about Sennacherib? I'm going to put a hook in your nose and turn you around. And where Hezekiah says, God turned me around and I came back to life, God's going to turn Sennacherib around and he's going to go to his death.

So there is a loose parallelism. God had given Hezekiah an example in his answer to Sennacherib, followed by a sign, followed by a triple reiteration of the promise of deliverance. But Hezekiah tries to bribe his way out of the problem.

And that treasure, when Sennacherib goes back to his own land, all of those talents of gold and silver stripped from the temple and stripped from the pillars that Hezekiah dedicated to God, goes with him. And Hezekiah is never the same. The latter part of his reign is kind of like the latter part of Sennacherib.

It's nondescript. We know nothing about it except the birth of Manasseh. So what is the point of application as we get past all of the history and one attack or two and so on? You think about, I can't help, and I've suggested this before, I can't help but think about the Lord Jesus in the garden where He goes to pray.

And there is the first assault of the formidable task before Him. And He prays to God and God listens to His prayer. And when He returns and finds the disciples sleeping, He says, Watch and pray, lest you enter temptation.

And He goes back a second time. The second time Hezekiah goes back, the answer of the Lord isn't sufficient for him. And he ends up folding and trying to pay off the enemy.

God still delivers. God still slays 185,000. And you have to think Hezekiah was kicking himself.

Why did I fold? God promised the deliverance four different times. I foolishly paid and defaced God's temple. I cost myself.

I didn't trust the Lord. I lost the faith challenge. But God delivered me anyway.

The 185,000 still die. Sennacherib still returns to his own men because God is faithful to His promise. The difference is Hezekiah is on the wrong side of faith victory and righteousness.

God is going to do what God is going to do for His own sake and for the sake of His son David. Right? But which side of that victory are we on? The Lord Jesus is going to come back. Sin and righteousness and judgment are going to be handled by God, manifested by God, to the glory of God.

But which side are we going to be on? Are we going to be in the heavenly city, victors, virgin daughter of Zion, laughing, reveling in the deliverance of God, or are we going to be on the outside weeping bitter tears, singing songs of woe, and fumbling away our inheritance the way Hezekiah fumbled away the bribe to no purpose. It did no good. It just cost him.

God's deliverance is certain and sure. Which side of it are we on? The Lord Jesus did not make the Hezekiah mistake in the garden. Praise the Lord.

What a credit and what an example He holds up to us contra Hezekiah. When he was assaulted time and again with the challenge of the greatest thing anyone has ever faced, he held. And the Bible says that his father sent angels to minister to him at that time.

Well, it's memorable and it's important to understand why Hezekiah got sick and in the same way that God delivered Judah, but it didn't teach Judah the right lesson and they're going to go

out under the Babylonians because they don't learn this lesson. Hezekiah didn't really learn the lesson either, even though God delivered him, it didn't do any good. We don't want to be those people.

We don't want to be that guy. These things are written for our instruction. We can benefit from them.

We can heed the warning and be encouraged and motivated to follow the Lord Jesus in His example of faithfulness and obedience even to the point of death. For that reason, God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the powerful witness these things have to Your truth, Your faithfulness, the integrity of Your promises. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make them real, make them flame and live in our souls to motivate us and strengthen us for the days ahead as we face our challenges and see returning temptations and returning issues that try to wear us down. Lord, enable us to lay aside every weight and sin that besets us and to run with patience our race so that we can win the victor's crown and be pleasing in Your sight, glorifying to our Lord Jesus Christ in the day that He returns to bring us to Himself to be spotless and without blemish before You.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.