

Spread It Before The LORD

Hezekiah's immediate response to Rabshakeh's threats and blasphemy shows he was a man of faith and as such conscious of his own weakness and need for God's help. The king was confident of God's power and had respect for Isaiah's role as an intermediary and prophet of the Lord. Upon receiving news of Rabshakeh's profanity Hezekiah humbled himself and entered into the house of the Lord. He sent a delegation to Isaiah to appraise him of all that had transpired and waited for a word from the Lord.

Hezekiah's hope

Hezekiah's trust in God was founded on divine mercy. He knew Israel and Judah had sinned against God but trusted in divine grace for deliverance. He pleaded the need of the covenant people, he invoked the glory of the Lord's name. Soon Isaiah relayed the Lord's message to the king saying, 'Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid'. He encouraged Hezekiah with an account of the steps the Lord would take to secure victory, even prophesying the Assyrian king's death in his own land.

Rabshakeh makes his report

It does not appear Rabshakeh was given a formal response from Hezekiah. Leaving the large force in place as an ongoing source of intimidation the envoy returned to Sennacherib with news that Hezekiah and Jerusalem were prepared to hold out despite the king's threats. By this time Sennacherib had decamped from Lachish and moved his army to Libnah. Likely, Lachish had already fallen. Libnah was near to Jerusalem so Sennacherib was on the city's doorstep.

A rumour takes root

However, despite appearances, it was not Hezekiah who was short on time. Sennacherib heard a rumour, true or false, that the king of Ethiopia was approaching with an army and ready to fight. Sennacherib also learned that God had promised to deliver Jerusalem. In haste he wrote a letter intensifying his threats and demanding that the city surrender at once. Again, Assyrian blasphemy spilled out. Sennacherib accused God of deceiving Hezekiah and of being no better, or stronger, than the idolatrous gods of the heathen. He topped off his contempt with proud boasting and exaggerated claims.

'Spread it before the Lord'

Having received and read this latest correspondence Hezekiah again took himself to the temple bearing Sennacherib's letter where he 'spread it before the Lord'. Then he prayed. What a delightful prayer Hezekiah offered to the Lord in this moment of need while surrounded by enemies and threatened with destruction. Hezekiah trusted in his Saviour who had promised to defend, deliver and preserve His people from their enemies. He came to the throne of grace and sought his Saviour's help.

Creator of heaven and earth

Hezekiah worshipped God's glory and dominion as Creator, then he pleaded God's covenant promises to Israel. Grace equipped and enabled this child of God to approach the Lord with reverence, confidence and gratitude. Faith taught Hezekiah how to pray. He ended his prayer with a request, 'Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only'. No matter who, or what, our 'Sennacherib' is this blessed request can be repeated by all the Lord's people in trouble and distress for it shall surely come to pass.

The world will know

Without doubt the nations will know that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. Without doubt God's people will know the redeeming love of their Saviour. Isaiah tells Hezekiah that the achievements of the Assyrian kings were nothing in the sight of God. Their boasted victories over other nations were obtained according to God's purpose. Sennacherib was a tool in God's hand to accomplish His will.

More than we ask

The end of the matter was certain. As impudent as Sennacherib's taunts were, God's judgment was sure. The Assyrians would not even shoot an arrow against the city wall and their king would be led back to his own land like a broken animal with a hook in its nose. In addition, for Hezekiah's reassurance, Isaiah informs the king that the land will produce crops of its own accord in the coming two years sufficient for all the people, by year three they may return to planting and reaping.

The end of Sennacherib

For the Lord's own glory and for the sake of His covenant people God delivered the city of Zion, a type of the church. The remnant people were secure and their salvation confirmed the continuance of God's plan for redemption by the coming of the Messiah. In the days following God sent an angel into the camp of the Assyrians and one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers were slain. Sennacherib fled to Nineveh, his own city, but there, some ten years later, he was slain in his own temple, by his own sons.

Amen

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