

## Isaiah 36-37 • The Overt Spiritual Attack

### Introduction

This story is told three times in the Bible, provided in 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32 as well. When God repeats things, it's extremely important to pay close attention. There are important lessons here about God's sovereignty, about God's working in the world, and even how His enemies operate. On the surface are lessons for us about how to discern and engage in spiritual warfare, but at deeper levels we are presented with a picture of how things will be in the Last Days leading up to what we've learned to call "Armageddon", the final battle when the nations of the earth are gathered against Christ and after which He establishes His millennial reign. This is a time when the enemy has the appearance of success because God has given over to them the unfaithful northern kingdom of Israel, so that now their pride desires to also pursue the faithful remnant of Judah. What happened then will happen again.

<sup>36:1</sup>Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. <sup>2</sup>And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field. <sup>3</sup>Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.

<sup>4</sup>Then Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is this confidence that you have? <sup>5</sup>I say, 'Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>6</sup>Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

<sup>7</sup>"But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?"

<sup>8</sup>"Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. <sup>9</sup>How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? <sup>10</sup>Have I now come up without the LORD's approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'""

### [Read 36:1-10]

**Q: Why does the place Rabshakeh chose to deliver the king of Assyria's message seem familiar?**

A: The "conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field" is the exact same place from which Isaiah was known to deliver the King of Heaven's message. (See Isaiah 7:3.)

**Point:** *Spiritual deceivers always attempt to mimic God's ways, imitating in their outward appearance God's spiritual authority and ways.*

**Q: The very first point concerns Israel's alliance with Egypt. How does this relate to Isaiah?**

A: God spoke specifically through Isaiah warning Israel not to enter into an alliance with Egypt, and if they did that it would fail them. (See Isaiah 30-31.) They would appear to be affirming God's Word to Judah through Isaiah.

**Point:** *Spiritual deceivers often incorporate some of the truth of God's Word to give their message an air of legitimacy. However, we must always be discerning so as not to allow one truth to deceive us into believing that the other points accompanying it are also truth. There is no such thing as "truth by association".*

**Q: What is the first clear betrayal that their message is false?**

A: In v.7 they attack Hezekiah's spiritual reforms as being something false, when in fact they were not. The high places and alternative sites of worship which Hezekiah destroyed were traditionally associated by people of that time as belonging to the "god of the land", whatever god was thought to possess that territory. By destroying those places and ordering that worship take place only in the temple, the Assyrians reveal they don't really know God's ways or that Hezekiah has been rightfully following them.

**Point:** *Spiritual attacks are most often initiated by attempting to reinterpret right worship as actually somehow being wrong worship. This is how they begin the process of establishing a false belief system.*

**Q: What should be the second clear betrayal that their message and intentions are false?**

A: In v.8, they attempt to buy off Hezekiah.

[Continued on the next page.]

**Point:** Spiritual greed is always revealed by earthly greed. Because they themselves can be bought off, they believe everyone else can, too.

**Q: What is their final salvo in this first round of attacks?**

A: They claim to be acting according to God's will and by His authority.

**Point:** Deceivers attempt to discredit the righteous and even buy them off as a prelude to establishing themselves in their place. They do this invoking God's name but not actually following His Word in the process.

**[Read v.11-12]**

<sup>11</sup>Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, "Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall."

<sup>12</sup>But Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?"

**Q: What does this teach us concerning spiritual deceivers?**

A: They want as much public visibility as possible. They like to bring about changes by manipulating the group rather than relying on the truth. They aren't interested in engaging true spiritual leaders but in replacing them. They desire to bring to bear the pressure of the group.

**[Read v.13-20]**

<sup>13</sup>Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. <sup>14</sup>Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; <sup>15</sup>nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us, this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' <sup>16</sup>Do not listen to Hezekiah,' for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, <sup>17</sup>until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. <sup>18</sup>Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? <sup>19</sup>Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? <sup>20</sup>Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

**Q: How does this attack compare to their opening attempt?**

- The first attack tried to discourage reliance on Egypt; this one discourages reliance on Hezekiah their king.
- Both attacks attempt to tarnish Hezekiah's spiritual credibility.
- The first attack tried to bribe Hezekiah; this time they try to bribe the people.

**Point:** Spiritual deceivers always try to court and sway public opinion as a tool of elevating themselves in the people's eyes at the expense of the true spiritual leaders.

**Q: How has their assertion about God's role in all of this changed?**

A: Originally they claimed to have been sent by God; now they simply number Him as but one of the many false gods whose nations they've defeated. They are making the claim that they have spiritual "right" on their side.

**Point:** Spiritual deceivers reveal themselves by their attempts to use other religions and alternative spiritual practices to demote God's place among the people. They mix in non-biblical truths and practices to weaken true faith and obedience.

<sup>21</sup>But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him."

<sup>22</sup>Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

<sup>37:1</sup>And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup>Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. <sup>4</sup>Perhaps the Lord your God will hear the words of 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, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'"

<sup>5</sup>So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. <sup>6</sup>Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall 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 blasphemed Me. <sup>7</sup>Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"

<sup>8</sup>Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. <sup>9</sup>When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "He has come out to fight against you," and when he heard it he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup>"Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"

<sup>11</sup>Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? <sup>12</sup>Did the gods of those nations

### [Read v.21-22]

**Q: Why was silence at this time the most appropriate response?**

A: It benefited the people the most by also silencing Rabshakeh's dissertation, and it provided the opportunity for God's people to seek a right response.

**Point:** *It's always tempting to respond in the flesh, but that usually results in lending credibility to the other side. One must seek the right response by the Spirit.*

### [Read 37:1-4]

**Q: What is Hezekiah's initial response?**

A: Personal repentance wherein he presents himself before God ("entered the house of the LORD") and seeks His Word ("sent Eliakim...to Isaiah").

**Point:** *We should never engage the enemy without first engaging the Lord. Securing spiritual stability is critical before engaging a hostile foe.*

**Q: How does Hezekiah rightly interpret the TRUE nature of the attack?**

A: Hezekiah recognizes it's not really against him or the people, but against God Himself. What is at stake is not the defense of the name of the king or country, but the name of the One True God.

**Point:** *Things may happen to us in the course of this life, but we have to recognize when in fact they're actually attacks on God's name and kingdom rather than our own.*

### [Read v.5-7]

**Q: What is the work assigned to Hezekiah by God to deal with this attack?**

A: "Do not be afraid". God is demanding a personal response of faith and endurance until He accomplishes the right response on their behalf.

**Application:** *Do we often limit our request of God to what WE can do? How well do we regard that a response of faith and endurance is our first calling rather than direct action?*

### [Read v.8-13]

**Q: How does this 3<sup>rd</sup> attack reveal their true nature and intent?**

A: They directly attack God as the source in their urging, "Do not let **your God** in whom you trust deceive you". Notice that whereas they initially used His name and called Him "LORD" in v.10 and then v.18, they now call Him "your God", revealing that, in actuality, He is not theirs.

**Q: What is the basis of this latest assertion?**

A: That since the false gods all failed their previous victims, the God of Israel would be but another. They did not actually hold God in any special esteem or regard.

**Point:** *Spiritual deceivers eventually reveal that they hold no special regard for God. They will attempt to define Christianity according to the terms and conditions of other, false religions in order to paint it with the same, broad brush.*

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which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, even Gozan and Haran and Rezep and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar? <sup>13</sup>Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?”

<sup>14</sup>Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, <sup>16</sup>“O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup>Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. <sup>18</sup>Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, <sup>19</sup>and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. <sup>20</sup>Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God.”

<sup>21</sup>Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, <sup>22</sup>this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

“She has despised you and mocked you,  
The virgin daughter of Zion;  
She has shaken her head behind you,  
The daughter of Jerusalem!

<sup>23</sup>Whom have you reproached and  
blasphemed?

And against whom have you raised your  
voice

And haughtily lifted up your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>Through your servants you have  
reproached the LORD,

And you have said, ‘With my many  
chariots I came up to the heights of the  
mountains,

To the remotest parts of Lebanon;  
And I cut down its tall cedars and its  
choice cypresses.

And I will go to its highest peak, its  
thickest forest.

<sup>25</sup>I dug wells and drank waters,

And with the sole of my feet I dried up

### [Read v.14-20]

#### **Q: What is significantly different about the way that the king of Judah presents the situation and the king of Assyria?**

A: Hezekiah admits that Assyria has been successful, but not for the same reasons it has boasted. Hezekiah recognizes that the gods defeated by Assyria to date were, in reality, no gods at all. Hezekiah also recognizes that this attack is, in reality, against God: “...listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God”.

#### **Q: What does Hezekiah specifically seek?**

A: He seeks an outcome wherein “all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God”. In other words, Hezekiah does not seek to defend his own name and glory, but God’s.

**Point:** In spiritual warfare, our chief concern is for the name and person of Christ, even at the expense of ourselves. The solution we should be seeking is something that vindicates and holds up God’s name rather than our own.

### [Read v.21-29]

#### **Q: How does God confirm the source of the real cause of this conflict?**

A: In v.23 He specifically states that the Assyrians have undertaken reproach and blasphemy of the Lord, that it’s against Him they have directed their pride.

#### **Q: How does God describe the Assyrians’ actions to date?**

A: He confirms that they have been granted earthly success in their endeavors, but explains in v.26 that it only came about because of **HIS** will, because of **HIS** using them. They overcame previous countries and their gods because, according to v.27, God weakened them in advance of Assyria’s forays.

#### **Q: What is particularly powerful in God’s describing that their arrogance and pride will lead to “My hook in your nose”?**

A: There are literally ancient carvings uncovered showing Assyria leading away its captives into slavery in just this manner, strung together by hooks in their noses and led away.

**Point:** As was the original problem with Satan himself, the core problem of spiritual deceivers is rooted in pride, and it’s in dealing with their pride that God responds to them.

**Application:** When a person or group is consumed by and motivated by pride, our direct attempts to confront them are often only marginally effective because they see themselves as being in a higher position over us and not subject to God at all. This is why we earnestly need to seek God’s intervention, that an effective response to pride can be mounted.

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All the rivers of Egypt.’

<sup>26</sup>Have you not heard?

Long ago I did it,

From ancient times I planned it.

Now I have brought it to pass,

That you should turn fortified cities into  
ruinous heaps.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore their inhabitants were short of  
strength,

They were dismayed and put to shame;

They were as the vegetation of the field  
and as the green herb,

As grass on the housetops is scorched  
before it is grown up.

<sup>28</sup>But I know your sitting down

And your going out and your coming in

And your raging against Me.

<sup>29</sup>Because of your raging against Me

And because your arrogance has come up  
to My ears,

Therefore 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.

<sup>30</sup>“Then this shall be the sign for you:  
you will eat this year what grows of itself,  
in the second year what springs from the  
same, and in the third year sow, reap,  
plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup>The  
surviving remnant of the house of Judah  
will again take root downward and bear  
fruit upward. <sup>32</sup>For out of Jerusalem will  
go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion  
survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts  
will perform this.”

<sup>33</sup>“Therefore, thus says the Lord  
concerning the king of Assyria, ‘He will  
not come to this city or shoot an arrow  
there; and he will not come before it with  
a shield, or throw up a siege ramp against  
it. <sup>34</sup>By the way that he came, by the same  
he will return, and he will not come to  
this city,’ declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup>‘For I will  
defend this city to save it for My own  
sake and for My servant David’s sake.’”

**[Read v.30-35]**

**Q: What is the provision God makes for the remnant? What does this teach about how God works on our behalf in such situations?**

A: God makes provision so that they can return to their work and life for Him. He will not allow the enemy’s efforts to permanently interrupt them. Having clung to the Lord, they will fully recover and continue in His name.

**Point:** *If the enemy cannot achieve total destruction, it will attempt to render us ineffective by choking our resources. People who cling to God in spite of the circumstances experience the fact that He is greater and can overcome them. God’s remnant is always enough to fully carry on His work and is never therefore rendered ineffectual as long as its faith remains intact.*

<sup>36</sup>Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead. <sup>37</sup>So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. <sup>38</sup>It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.

### **[Read v.36-38]**

**Point:** *When spiritual enemies are defeated, they often continue to fail to learn the right lesson and instead of submitting to the One True God, retreat yet again to their false gods.*

### **Overall Application**

*The enemy can appear frightening in its size, intensity, and ferocity, but it always relies on that kind of fear and intimidation to overcome their lack of truth. They are always betrayed by their speech and actions, which are not in alignment with God's Word. In reality, they are attacking God through us, actually waging a battle with Him.*