

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part LIV: Triumphantly Facing Godless Opposition To Our Faith (Isaiah 36:1-22)

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus predicted that His followers would face opposition and persecution for their faith (John 15:20).
- B. When Assyria actually invaded Judah, Assyria's king sent his officer Rabshakeh to Jerusalem to taunt Judah's king Hezekiah and people who were shut up behind their city walls, a taunt that opposed their faith in God.
- C. We view the passage on this event in light of its contexts for insight on facing godless opposition to our faith:

II. Triumphantly Facing Godless Opposition To Our Faith, Isaiah 36:1-22.

- A. Isaiah had long and repeatedly predicted the Assyrian invasion of Judah, but the day finally arrived, and Sennacherib as Assyria's king invaded all of the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them, Isaiah 36:1.
- B. Assyria's king then sent his officer, Rabshakeh to Hezekiah at Jerusalem with a large army and stood at the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the "Washerman's Field," and there Hezekiah's officials, Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, stood on the wall above him to meet with Rabshakeh below, Isaiah 36:2-3 NIV.
- C. Rabshakeh proceeded to try to demoralize the city's inhabitants into surrendering versus fighting, Isa. 36:4-20:
 - 1. First, he mocked Judah's effort to rely on Egypt for protection from Assyria, for Egypt was a "splintered reed" that not only would not hold up if one leaned upon it, but even harm one, Isaiah 36:4-6 NIV.
 - 2. Second, Rabshakeh mocked Judah's trust in the God of the Bible, for Judah's king Hezekiah had removed many of the altars to the Lord in the high places, telling Judah to worship only before the altar of God in the Jerusalem temple, Isa. 36:7. Rabshakeh clearly did not understand that Scripture forbade the worship of God at these high places, so his argument at this point was futile, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1087.
 - 3. Third, Rabshakeh mocked Judah's warriors, claiming if he offered to give 2,000 horses for their men to use in making war against him, they could not defeat even one Assyrian low-ranking officer, Isaiah 36:8-9.
 - 4. Fourth, Rabshakeh claimed that Judah's God had sent Assyria to destroy Judah anyway, a claim aimed at terrorizing the people of Judah into surrendering to Assyria without a fight, Isaiah 36:10.
 - 5. At this point, Hezekiah's officials Eliakim, Shebna and Joah asked Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic since they understood that language but not in Hebrew, for that would frighten the people along the wall, Isaiah 36:11. Rabshakeh instead coarsely claimed he had been sent to speak to all of the city's inhabitants about their tragic demise (Isa. 36:12), so he continued to cry out in Hebrew, warning the Jews about their king's deceiving them in trusting in Judah's God of the Bible for protection against Assyria, Isaiah 36:13-15. Rabshakeh offered to transport the people safely to a good life in Assyria if they surrendered (Isa. 36:16-17), blasphemously claiming that heeding Hezekiah's call to trust in God was futile since none of the gods of the other nations Assyria had attacked had been able to deliver them from his army, Isaiah 36:18-20.
- D. Hezekiah had ordered Judah's people not to answer a word to Rabshakeh, so they obeyed, but in distress, Hezekiah's officials returned to report Rabshakeh's words to him, their clothes torn in dismay, Isaiah 36:21-22.
- E. However, had the people and Hezekiah's officials paid attention to the prophecies of God's messenger in Isaiah to that date, all of this slanderous, blasphemous speech would have been relatively easy for them to handle:
 - 1. First, Rabshakeh's speech, given at the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the "Washerman's Field," was the same spot where Isaiah had told Judah's king Ahaz about the demise of the Aram-Israel threat in Isaiah 7:3. Assyria had conquered Israel 21 years before coming to Hezekiah's Jerusalem in partial fulfillment of Isaiah's Isaiah 7:3 prediction that had been given 34 years before this (Ibid., p. 1047, 1086), so in light of the location of Rabshakeh's speech, Judah had evidence that God was sovereign over anyone who threatened His people simply from noting the location from which Rabshakeh was speaking!
 - 2. Second, Isaiah had before predicted Assyria's invasion followed by her destruction by God at the jubilation of Judah's people (Isa. 30:31-32; 10:12-19), and Isaiah had told Judah not to rely on Egypt, so Rabshakeh's mock of that reliance could have been avoided had Judah heeded Isaiah's former messages, Isaiah 30:1-2.

Lesson: Though Assyria's officer Rabshakeh spoke humanly slanderous, blasphemous, demoralizing words about Judah and God to the dismay of Jerusalem's people and Hezekiah's officers, had they heeded the words spoken before that event by the Lord's prophet Isaiah, Rabshakeh's words could have been far easier for them to handle.

Application: May we fill our minds and hearts with Scripture to handle attacks that arise against our faith.