

FERVENT PRAYER

The historical section of **Isaiah 36-39** separates the two major parts of the book of Isaiah. The Assyrian Empire had already conquered all the northern kingdom of Israel and all the southern kingdom of Judah; all that remained was Judah's capital city of Jerusalem.

Sennacherib king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh his general to Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, the assistants to Hezekiah king of Judah. Rabshakeh knew the culture, language, and recent history of Israel, and used it to inflict psychological warfare upon the people on the wall of Jerusalem. He tried to discourage the people and even said that the Lord sent him (like many so-called "prophets" claim today) to capture the city (**36:10**). However, he also spoke against the Lord, questioning His ability to stop Assyria (**36:18-20**).

They tore their clothes in mourning and went to Hezekiah, who reacted by tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth for mourning; he went to the temple to pray and had his assistants ask Isaiah the prophet to pray for the remnant (**36:22-37:2**).

Isaiah gave the Lord's answer to Hezekiah not to worry, because He would cause Sennacherib to return to his own land where he would die (**37:6-7**). In the meantime, Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah making the same blasphemous comments that Rabshakeh did.

Hezekiah went to the temple and laid out the message that Sennacherib had sent. Hezekiah fervently prayed to God that He would teach not just Sennacherib, but all the kingdoms, that only Jehovah is God, and all other gods are false.

God provided the answer that Sennacherib would not hurt or even attack Jerusalem (**37:33**). It happened as God said. An angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians, so Sennacherib returned home unsuccessful. His failure was further compounded when he was killed while worshipping his god Nisroch (a lot of good that did him), just as Isaiah prophesied (**37:7**).

God said specifically that this message of Sennacherib's defeat was, "*because you have prayed to Me.*" (**37:21**) This is an excellent example of **James 5:16**: "*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*" Let us pray with faith and purpose that God is glorified!