

The last time we were together we saw how the enemies of God's people were being besieged by the king of Assyria. And his tactic for coming against Judah was to try and intimidate them into surrender so as to minimize his own casualties.

2 Chronicles 32:9-15 ⁹ After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem while he *was* besieging Lachish with all his forces with him, against Hezekiah king of Judah and against all Judah who *were* at Jerusalem, saying, ¹⁰ "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you trusting that you are remaining in Jerusalem under siege? ¹¹ 'Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria"? ¹² 'Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, "You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense"? ¹³ 'Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of the lands able at all to deliver their land from my hand? ¹⁴ 'Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? ¹⁵ 'Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you like this, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?'"

And so, this king has positioned himself not just against Judah, but against the Creator of the universe who chose a people to represent Him. If you're going to pick a fight with someone don't pick a fight with the one who can snuff you out like a candle.

But it gets worse. The king of Assyria isn't content in insulting Hezekiah and Judah, he has to write letters against God Himself.

2 Chronicles 32:16-19 ¹⁶ His servants spoke further against the LORD God and against His servant Hezekiah. ¹⁷ He also wrote letters to insult the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, "As the gods of the nations of the lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand." ¹⁸ They called this out with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, so that they might

take the city. ¹⁹ They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, the work of men's hands.

So, what do you do at this point? I suppose you could muster your troops and go out to battle against this king, but notice what Hezekiah does.

2 Chronicles 32:20 ²⁰ But King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed about this and cried out to heaven.

By the way, why does it say that Hezekiah and Isaiah cry out to heaven, a place, and not to God, a person?

Because in Scripture they are both used interchangeably. Where God is there is heaven, and where heaven is there is God. God's place and God's person are tied together forever, despite the fact that God needs no place to reside which again shows how God has chosen to intimately identify Himself with a people who need a place to reside.

You'll also notice that both Hezekiah and Isaiah pray to the Lord. This is the same Isaiah whose book bears his name. Isaiah son of Amoz.

Isaiah 1:1-6 ^{NAU} The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. ² Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. ³ "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, *But* Israel does not know, My people do not understand." ⁴ Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him. ⁵ Where will you be stricken again, *As* you continue in *your* rebellion? The whole head is sick And the whole heart is faint. ⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, *Only* bruises, welts and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.

And so, this Isaiah's ministry will come to an end during the reign of Hezekiah.

And once that Hezekiah and Isaiah cry out to heaven, the God of heaven answers.

2 Chronicles 32:21 ²¹ And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in shame to his own land. And when he had entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword.

Notice that an entire army is destroyed by one angel who represents God's people. This incident involving one angel against an entire army is not by accident, because just as we have seen with all of the O.T. it is meant to be a picture of the future kingdom that God has established for His people.

This particular incident with the king of Assyria will be played out again on a much grander scale as we see in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 19:17-21 ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 20:1-3 ^{NAU} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

There is a sense in which the destruction of the king of Assyria is just a glimpse into what God will do for His people and how this pictures that time in which God will finally destroy, not just Satan and his army, but the final enemy which is death.

1 Corinthians 15:22-28 ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴ then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

And so, for all who are in the camp of God we can be assured that God's hand is upon us just as His hand was upon Hezekiah and the people under his rule. The king of Assyria was simply foolish for even attempting to consider himself above the God of Israel.

Like the line in that song Jim Croche wrote many years ago: "You don't spit into the wind, you don't tug on superman's cape, you don't pull the mask off the 'ole Lone Ranger and you don't mess around with Jim." And, oh by the way, you don't mock the God of all creation.

And speaking of mocking the God of all creation, that can be done in a variety of ways not the least of which is to attribute to the creation that which only God should share in, namely to teach that matter is our god.

I was watching a program on the Science channel that was addressing how the world works and some scientist was rehashing how the big bang is responsible for our birth, not just as a universe but as the people we are today.

And I was amazed at how he stated it. In essence he said that in the beginning was the stuff of our existence and with the big bang came all of the elements that would lend itself to our existence and voila we have life.

My question is where did the stuff come from, from which we can have a big bang?

And how do you go from a chaotic big bang to a highly organized universe which is made up of non-living matter and then arrive at

highly complicated life in even a matter of a few billion years.
That's not science that's called faith which is religion.

That is to mock God and God will not be mocked. It is better to humble yourself before the Lord as Solomon once wrote.

Proverbs 16:19 ¹⁹ It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Daniel 4:37 ³⁷ "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

In Nebuchadnezzar's case he was given a second chance by God to humble himself, but that chance may not be given to others. But we, who have had our eyes opened by God and given eyes to see and ears to hear and given life in Christ must continue to humble ourselves before our mighty God and creator.

1 Peter 5:6-7 ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Back to our text.

2 Chronicles 32:21 ²¹ And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in shame to his own land. And when he had entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword.

Notice the irony here? He goes into the temple of his god. And while trying to find solace and comfort and guidance from the god of his own making he is killed by his own children.

2 Chronicles 32:22-23 ²² So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all *others*, and guided them on every side. ²³ And many were bringing gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem and choice presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.

God's hand in the affairs of the people of Judah did not go unnoticed by the inhabitants of the land as we see them bringing gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem and also gifts to God's servant Hezekiah. And in the process God blesses the people as He guides them on every side.

But who else is included in this exultation process in verse 23?

All of the other nations surrounding Judah.

Why do you suppose that is?

Because power is one thing that people understand, at least for a short time. No one in that region at that time could deny what had happened to the army of the king of Assyria and the boasts that he had made concerning his gods and how the God of Judah completely wiped them out.

And this was fresh in the minds of those surrounding nations, but history has a way of repeating itself because people have a short memory. There was the history of God destroying the first born in Egypt and bringing his people out of Egypt.

There was the history of God destroying people who came against God's people when Moses was leading them. There was the history of God destroying the Canaanites as Joshua led Israel across the Jordan and through Jericho.

All the people of Jericho knew how the Lord had gone before His people, but Egypt's calamity at the hand of God happened so long ago and who knows how much of that was fable and exaggeration. Big mistake to think that way.

But now, God has blessed Hezekiah and all is well in the kingdom as there is peace on all sides. Again a picture of how the kingdom of God is meant to be and how it will be one day in the future as all of Israel, that is all of God's people, both Jew and Gentile, will reside in the kingdom where death and sin and the curse are taken out of the way and there will be true peace.

But even with all of the blessings that Hezekiah had received from the gracious hand of God we are reminded once again how our hearts can easily drift from the grace that we receive and turn our attention to ourselves and the stuff of this world.

2 Chronicles 32:24-25 ²⁴ In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill; and he prayed to the LORD, and the LORD spoke to him and gave him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.

How is it possible that a man who was shown by God Himself, who was personally spoken to by God Himself, ever become proud?

Because it seems that man just can't help himself. And of course, even for the child of God, we still fight against that new nature that God has given us in Christ even as Paul did.

Romans 7:18-25 ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

The good news is that like Paul, who understood that humbling himself before God and giving thanks to God who gives grace abundance in Christ, we along with Hezekiah can humble ourselves before God in the end.

2 Chronicles 32:26 ²⁶ However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.

As we come to the end of chapter 32 of 2Chronicles we actually get a glimpse into why Hezekiah had a prideful heart even in the midst of God's blessings.

2 Chronicles 32:27-31 ²⁷ Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles, ²⁸ storehouses also for the produce of grain, wine and oil, pens for all kinds of cattle and sheepfolds for the flocks. ²⁹ He made cities for himself and acquired flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great wealth. ³⁰ It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did. ³¹ Even *in the matter of* the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

And unfortunately that test only showed how we must continually be on our guard to give God all the glory no matter how much or how little he bestows on us in this life. The wealth and power that God gave Hezekiah was actually a test from God to show what was in his heart.

But what part of life in this world isn't a test from God to show what's in our hearts? Whether in great blessings or in trials God is about testing our hearts to show how much we really rely on Him.

James 1:2-4 ² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 4:12-14 ¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

When writing to the church in Sardis the risen Christ said this to them regarding testings.

Revelation 3:10-13 ¹⁰ 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. ¹³ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

There is a testing or trial that is coming upon the whole world and we are told that we will be kept from that test. That test will prove to whom we belong because that test will show the hearts of those, like the king of Assyria, who mocked the God of all creation by rejecting the Son He sent into the world to redeem a people for Himself.

And that people includes you and me in Christ and that test we will not fail because that test will reveal that the name that God has placed on us is His mark of the Holy Spirit who has sealed us for the day of redemption.

Let us stay humble and not be tempted to let our hearts wander because of the things of this world that want to capture our attention at the expense of following our gracious God and Savior.