

## **SENNACHERIB TURNED BACK**

– JULY 2. – ISAIAH 37:14-38. –

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."**

– Psa. 46:1.

IN A PREVIOUS STUDY our attention was drawn to the good King Hezekiah of Judah, his zeal for the Lord and the notable Passover celebration which he brought about and the overthrow of idolatry following. Our present study relates to him at a later period in his reign. The Assyrian empire to the north and east, with its capital at Ninevah, had become great and powerful and threatened to become the first Universal Empire.

Before Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah his father entered into a treaty whereby peace was secured by the payment of an annual tribute. Egyptians, Philistines and Sidonians urged Judah to join them in the confederacy by which they hoped all might regain their liberty from the Assyrian yoke. Urged by his people, Hezekiah joined this confederacy and stopped the tribute money – contrary to the Lord's admonition through the Prophet Isaiah. The measure was popular, and the king did not seem to realize how fully the Prophet represented the Lord in the matter. He should have remembered that Israel was under a special Covenant with the Almighty by which He was their Sovereign, their King, and the Arbiter of their destiny. The error was allowed to work out a serious penalty for the disobedient, but when the king and the people repented and gave evidence that the lesson had been learned. Divine mercy came miraculously to their assistance, as we shall see.

## **SENNACHERIB THE CONQUEROR**

The King of Assyria, with a large army, took the field. Knowing the difficulties of a siege of Jerusalem, he did not begin with it, but

passed down the Mediterranean coast, overthrowing the Sidonians and Philistines, to Joppa and farther south; and then eastward to Lachish, a fortified city of Judah. The whole country was filled with fear, as nearly forty cities of Judah, one after the other, fell. King Hezekiah and his counselors resolved to avoid, if possible, a siege of war, and sent ambassadors to King Sennacherib apologizing for their temerity in refusing the tribute money and asking what compensation would satisfy him.

The penalty was a heavy one, amounting to nearly one million dollars, which at that time was a much larger sum than it would be today. The payment of it required the removal of much ornamental gold from the temple, but it was paid over and the release granted. The successful Sennacherib, about to attack Egypt, rued his agreement with Judah, and, in violation of his compact, his general appeared before Jerusalem and demanded its surrender. [R4833 : page 171] Loudly did he proclaim the victories already achieved and warned the people of Jerusalem not to trust in their God for deliverance, telling them that other peoples had trusted in their gods and that all had failed before Sennacherib.

Fear prevailed in Jerusalem. The king and his counselors were not only fearful of war and captivity and the loss of their *all*, but they dared not trust the people lest they should surrender and open the city gates. Then it was that the king and his advisors and the people sought the Lord in prayer.

The Lord was waiting to be gracious, as He always is to those who are His true people. He delayed, however, to give the word of comfort, until the necessities of the case had humbled the people and taught them a lesson of faith and dependence upon their God. Then came the answer of the Lord, the prophecy that the King of Assyria should not come into the city nor shoot an arrow there, nor even come before it with shields, nor cast up embankments of siege, but that the Lord would defend the city as His own. Doubtless the prophecy

seemed strange to the people. By what miracle this could be accomplished they could not think. The lesson to us is that:

"God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

### **A HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND SLAIN IN A NIGHT**

Isaiah briefly and poetically declares that the angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians, without explaining in what manner. We remember the statement of the Scriptures that wind and fire and lightning may be the Lord's messengers or angels. Quite probably, in this instance, the messenger of death may have been a malignant form of fever said to prevail at times to the northeast of Egypt; but it matters not to us what messenger the Lord used to turn back the Assyrian hosts.

The lesson for us is to note the Divine power which overrules, orders and directs, so that all things shall work together in harmony with His will. It was not His will that Assyria should become the first Universal Empire. That honor was reserved for the kingdom of Babylon, a century later – at exactly the proper time when God was prepared to withdraw His own typical kingdom, of the line of David, from the earth – to be "overturned, overturned, overturned" until the Messiah should come.

The lesson to the Christian is that we should keep right with God, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty; and that so doing, all things shall work together for our good.

## **"THE ENEMY MELTED LIKE SNOW AT THE GLANCE OF THE LORD"**

The story of Sennacherib's defeat by the angel of the Lord has been put into verse by one of our great poets, Byron, as follows: –

"The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold;  
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen.

"Like the leaves of the forest which autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown;  
For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.

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"And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow at the glance of the Lord."

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