SECOND KINGS

Chapter 19

***Jerusalem’s Deliverance Foretold***

**When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord. 2 He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 3 They told him, “This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. 4 It may be that the Lord your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the Lord your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives.” 5 When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, “Tell your master, ‘This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Listen! I am going to put such a spirit in him that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.’ ” 8 When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah. 9 Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him. So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word: 10 “Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, ‘Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.’ 11 Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? 12 Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them: the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah?”**

**19:1** *sackcloth.* See note on 6:30. (CSB)

**19:2** *palace administrator.* See note on 1Ki 4:6. (CSB)

*secretary.* See note on 2Sa 8:17. (CSB)

*leading priests.* Probably the oldest members of various priestly families (see Jer 19:1). The crisis involved not only the city of Jerusalem, but also the temple. (CSB)

*prophet Isaiah.* The first reference to Isaiah in the book of Kings, though he had been active in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz (see Isa 1:1). (CSB)

**19:3** *as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.* Depicts the critical nature of the threat facing the city. (CSB)

**19:4** *living God.* In contrast to the no-gods of 18:33–35. See 1Sa 17:26, 36, 45 for another example of ridiculing the living and true God. (CSB)

*pray.* Intercessory prayer was an important aspect of the ministry of the prophets (see, e.g., the intercession of Moses and Samuel: Ex 32:31–32; 33:12–17; Nu 14:13–19; 1Sa 7:8–9; 12:19, 23; Ps 99:6; Jer 15:1). (CSB)

*remnant.* Those left in Judah after Sennacherib’s capture of many towns and numerous people (see note on 18:13; cf. Isa 10:28–32). Archaeological evidence reveals that many Israelites fled the northern kingdom during the Assyrian assaults and settled in Judah, so that the nation of Judah became the remnant of all Israel. (CSB)

**19:7** *spirit.* Of insecurity and fear. *report.* Some interpreters link this “report” with the challenge to Sennacherib from Tirhakah of Egypt (v. 9). Others regard it as disturbing information from Sennacherib’s homeland. (CSB)

*cut down with the sword.* See v. 37. Here the eventual murder of Sennacherib is connected with his blasphemy against the living God. (CSB)

**19:8** *Lachish.* See 18:17 (see also note on Isa 36:2). (CSB)

*Libnah.* See note on 8:22. (CSB)

**19:9** *Tirhakah.* See note on Isa 37:9. (CSB)

*Cushite.* See NIV text note. (CSB)

**19:12** *Gozan.* See note on 17:6. *Haran.* See note on Ge 11:31. It is not known just when Haran was taken by the Assyrians. (CSB)

*Rezeph.* Located south of the Euphrates River and northeast of Hamath. *Eden.* See Eze 27:23; Am 1:5; a district along the Euphrates River south of Haran. It was incorporated into the Assyrian empire by Shalmaneser III in 855 b.c. (CSB)

*Tel Assar.* Location unknown. (CSB)

**19:13** *Hamath … Ivvah.* See note on 18:34. (CSB)

***Hezekiah’s Prayer***

**14 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: “O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 16 Give ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. 17 “It is true, O Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. 18 They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men’s hands. 19 Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God.”**

**19:14** *letter.* See 2Ch 32:17. (CSB)

**19:15** *enthroned between the cherubim.* See notes on Ex 25:18; 1Sa 4:4. (CSB)

*you alone are God.* See notes on 18:33–35; Dt 6:4. (CSB)

**19:18** *fashioned by men’s hands.* For the foolishness and futility of idolatry see Ps 115:3–8; 135:15–18; Isa 2:20; 40:19–20; 41:7; 44:9–20. (CSB)

***Isaiah Prophesies Sennacherib’s Fall***

**20 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. 21 This is the word that the Lord has spoken against him: “ ‘The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises you and mocks you. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. 22 Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! 23 By your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord. And you have said, “With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest parts, the finest of its forests. 24 I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.” 25“ ‘Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. 26Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. 27 “ ‘But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. 28Because you rage against me and your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.’ 29 “This will be the sign for you, O Hezekiah: “This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 30Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. 31For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. 32 “Therefore this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. 33By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the Lord. 34 I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.” 35 That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. 37 One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer cut him down with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.**

**19:20** *heard your prayer.* On this occasion Isaiah’s message to Hezekiah was unsolicited by the king (contrast v. 2). (CSB)

**19:21–28** The arrogance of the Assyrians and their ridicule of the Israelites and their God are countered with a derisive pronouncement of judgment (cf. Ps 2) on the misconceived Assyrian pride (see Isa 10:5–34). (CSB)

**19:21** *Virgin Daughter of Zion.* A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

**19:22** *Holy One of Israel.* A designation of the God of Israel characteristic of Isaiah (see note on Isa 1:4). (CSB)

**19:24** *dried up all the streams of Egypt.* A presumptuous boast for one who had not even conquered Egypt. (CSB)

**19:25** *I ordained it … now I have brought it to pass.* The God of Israel is the ruler of all nations and history. The Assyrians attributed their victories to their own military superiority. However, Isaiah said that God alone ordained these victories (see Isa 10:5–19; cf. Eze 30:24–26). (CSB)

**19:27** *I know.* See Ps 121:8. (CSB)

**19:28** *hook in your nose.* At the top of an Assyrian obelisk an Assyrian king (probably Esarhaddon, 681–669 b.c.) is pictured holding ropes attached to rings in the noses of four of his enemies. Here Isaiah portrays the same thing happening to Sennacherib (see note on Isa 37:29; cf. Eze 38:4; Am 4:2). (CSB)

**19:29** *This year you will eat what grows by itself.* Sennacherib had apparently either destroyed or confiscated the entire harvest that had been sown the previous fall. The people would only have use of the later, second growth that came from seeds dropped from the previous year’s harvest (see Lev 25:5). This suggests that Sennacherib came to Judah in March or April about the time of harvest. (CSB)

*the second year what springs from that.* Sennacherib’s departure would be too late in the fall (October) for new crops to be planted for the coming year. In Palestine crops are normally sown in September and October. (CSB)

*in the third year sow and reap.* The routine times for sowing and harvesting could be observed in the following year. The third year is likely a reference to the third year of harvests detrimentally affected by the Assyrian presence.

**19:30–31** *remnant.* See note on v. 4. For use of the term “remnant” as a designation for those who will participate in the future unfolding of God’s redemptive program see Isa 11:11, 16; 28:5; Mic 4:7; Ro 11:5. (CSB)

**19:32** *not enter this city.* Sennacherib, who was presently at Libnah (see v. 8; see also note on 8:22), would not be able to carry out his threats against Jerusalem (see note on 18:13). (CSB)

**19:34** *for the sake of David my servant.* See note on 1Ki 11:13. (CSB)

**19:35** *angel of the Lord*. See note on Ge 16:7. (CSB)

*a hundred and eighty-five thousand.* See Isa 37:36. (CSB)

**19:36** *Nineveh.* The capital of the Assyrian empire. (CSB)

**19:37** *Nisroch.* The name of this deity does not appear in preserved Assyrian records. (CSB)

*his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer.* Ancient records refer to the murder of Sennacherib by an unnamed son on the 20th of the month of Tebet in the 23rd year of Sennacherib’s reign. (CSB)

*Ararat.* See note on Ge 8:4. (CSB)

*Esarhaddon his son succeeded him.* And reigned 681–669 b.c. Assyrian inscriptions speak of a struggle among Sennacherib’s sons for the right of succession to the Assyrian throne. Sennacherib’s designation of Esarhaddon as heir apparent, even though he was younger than several of his brothers, may have sparked the abortive attempt at a coup by Adrammelech and Sharezer. (CSB)