

# SECOND KINGS

## Chapter 19

*Isaiah Reassures Hezekiah*

As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.” 5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, “Say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.’”

**19:1** *house of the LORD.* The temple courts. Disaster seemed inevitable, but Hezekiah was a man of faith and prayer. (TLSB)

**19:2** *senior 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)

The high priest and leaders of the priestly families. (TLSB)

*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)

Not to be confused with another prophet, Amos. Cf 16:5–9; Is 7:12 for Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz’s, failure to trust in the Lord. (TLSB)

**19:3** *distress ... rebuke ... disgrace.* Hezekiah fears that the Lord is forsaking them. (TLSB)

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

**19:4** *your God.* Hezekiah feels isolated. He speaks as though Isaiah has a special connection with the Lord that he, the king, does not have. (TLSB)

*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)

Hezekiah detects a weakness in the Assyrian’s appeal. (TLSB)

*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)

People of Judah would have fled into Jerusalem for safety from marauding Assyrian soldiers. (TLSB)

**19:6** *reviled Me.* Hezekiah's hunch was right. The Lord had taken offense. (TLSB)

**19:7** *spirit.* Of insecurity and fear. (CSB)

The Lord would set in motion a feeling of fear in his heart. (TLSB)

*hear a rumor.* 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)

Hbr word is usually translated "report" or "news." The Assyrian had mocked Hezekiah for fighting with "mere words" (18:20). The Lord plans to defeat the mighty Assyrian with just that. (TLSB)

*fall by the sword in his own land.* Here the eventual murder of Sennacherib is connected with his blasphemy against the living God. (CSB)

**19:1–7** Through Isaiah, the Lord comforts Hezekiah and promises to defeat the mocking Assyrians with a mere word. Do not mock God or misuse His name! He regards words greatly and will answer you according to your words. Though His Word of rebuke has deadly force, His Word of comfort has life-giving force, as He demonstrated at creation and in the Gospel of His Son, our King. • Speak, O Lord, for Your servant is listening. Instruct me from Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

*Sennacherib Defies the LORD*

**8** The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he heard that the king had left Lachish. **9** Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has set out to fight against you." So he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, **10** "Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. **11** Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? **12** Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? **13** Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?'"

**19:8** *Libnah.* Judean fortress southwest of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**19:9** *heard.* The rumor God promised (v 7). (TLSB)

*Tirhakah.* General and brother of a ruling pharaoh of the Twenty-fifth (Ethiopian) Dynasty, who later became king in his own right (690–664 BC). There is no record that the two armies actually met in battle. (TLSB)

*sent messengers.* While awaiting the approach of an Ethiopian (Egyptian) army, Sennacherib was still hoping to convince the hard-pressed king of Jerusalem that it would be suicidal to continue the defense of the city. (TLSB)

**19:11** *devoting them to destruction.* The Assyrian increases the threat to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**19:12** *gods of the nations.* Sennacherib claimed that the idols of the peoples whom he defeated were no match for the Assyrian gods. The cities and areas mentioned here are in part those cited on the Rabshakeh's first visit to prove how futile it was to resist his master (18:34). Some cities have not been identified. (TLSB)

*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)

*Eden.* Likely a state on the upper Euphrates known in extrabiblical sources as Bit-'Adinni. (TLSB)

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

**19:8–13** The Lord shakes the Assyrian's confidence with a report about the Egyptians coming to Judah's aid. Today, have confidence in God's Word, though scoffers and critics may despise it. What the Lord promises, He performs and works salvation for all who trust in Him. • Grant me life, O Lord, according to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

*Hezekiah's Prayer*

**14** Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. **15** And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. **16** Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. **17** Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands **18** and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. **19** So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."

**19:14–19** Contrast Hezekiah's response with Israel's in 17:14–17. Hezekiah's prayer is rooted in Yahweh's uniqueness. (TLSB)

**19:15** *God, you are alone.* Thorough denial of Sennacherib's assertion that idols directed the fate of "the kingdoms of the earth." (TLSB)

**19:16** Hezekiah appealed to the only "living God," the Creator of heaven and earth, who had condescended to reveal Himself to Israel, "enthroned above the cherubim" (v 15) of the ark of the covenant. (TLSB)

**19:18** *work of men's hands.* For the foolishness and futility of idolatry see Ps15:3–8; 135:15–18; Isa 2:20; 40:19–20; 41:7; 44:9–20. (CSB)

Cf Dt 4:28; 28:36, 64; 29:17; Is 44:9–20; Ezk 20:32 for descriptions of other gods as nothing more than "wood and stone." (TLSB)

**19:19** *the earth may know.* Jerusalem’s deliverance would demonstrate to all kingdoms of the earth that the world conqueror, who had cast the gods of the other nations into the fire, could not “mock the living God” (v 16) with impunity (Ex 14:18; Ps 92:5–9). (TLSB)

**19:14–19** Placing Sennacherib’s words before the Lord, Hezekiah asks the Lord to distinguish Himself from the idols of the nations. When you pray, appeal to the Lord on the basis of His Word, which describes His unique attributes. The Lord will hear your prayer for Jesus’ sake and will answer faithfully.  
• O Lord God, please save us, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, O Lord, are God alone. Amen. (TLSB)

*Isaiah Prophecies Sennacherib's Fall*

**20** Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your prayer to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. **21** This is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: “She despises you, she scorns you—the virgin daughter of Zion; she wags her head behind you—the daughter of Jerusalem. **22** “Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel! **23** By your messengers you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I entered its farthest lodging place, its most fruitful forest. **24** I dug wells and drank foreign waters, and I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.’ **25** “Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of ruins, **26** while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown. **27** “But I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. **28** Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come into my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came. **29** “And this shall be the sign for you: this year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs of the same. Then in the third year sow and reap and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. **30** And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. **31** For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD will do this. **32** “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. **33** By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. **34** For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” **35** And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. **36** Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. **37** And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

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

Since Isaiah’s earlier promise of divine help (vv 5–7), the situation had become more desperate. In answer to Hezekiah’s continued pleading, the prophet again assured him that his prayer had been heard. (TLSB)

**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)

**19:21–28** *the LORD has spoken.* Literary form of prophetic utterance called a taunt or mocking song (cf Is 10:5–11). Addressing the Assyrian with devastating irony, Isaiah deflates his blasphemous arrogance. “The Holy One of Israel,” whom Sennacherib “mocked and reviled” (v 22), will force the overconfident conqueror to retreat to his homeland, leading him like an animal by a hook in his nose or a bit in his mouth (2Ch 33:11; Ezk 19:4). (TLSB)

**19:21** *you.* Singular. A personal message to Sennacherib that also applies to his army. (TLSB)

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

Even the little girls would feel confident in mocking the Assyrians. (TLSB)

*wags her head.* Gesture expressing contempt. Jesus suffered the same kind of derision (Mt 27:39). (TLSB)

**19:22** *Holy One of Israel.* A designation of the God of Israel characteristic of Isaiah. (CSB)

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

Sennacherib did not actually invade Egypt. He merely prided himself that he could overcome all resistance also in that land. (TLSB)

**19:25** *I determined it long ago ... now I bring 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)

Tools used to control animals and slaves. See note, Am 4:2. (TLSB)

**19:29** *This year you will eat what grows of 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 of the same.* 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. (CSB)

**19:32** *shall not come into this city.* Sennacherib, who was presently at Libnah, would not be able to carry out his threats against Jerusalem. (CSB)

**19:34** *for the sake of my servant David.* His servant David (2Sm 7:4–17). (TLSB)

**19:35** *angel of the LORD.* At the time of the exodus, the Lord sent “the destroyer” into every Egyptian home to smite its firstborn. The angel of the Lord executed judgment at David’s time by means of a pestilence. It is possible that he slew the Assyrian army by employing the same means. Luth: “It is well known that at the time of King Hezekiah the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night and by a single assault (2 Kings 19:35). And Christ praises the might of the angels when He tells Peter (Matt. 26:53) about the twelve legions, although a single angel would have been enough to turn back and destroy the enemies of Christ. Indeed, the story of Job proves that even the wicked angels are endowed with great power. It is profitable to know these facts; they serve to comfort the godly but to frighten the ungodly. For we who believe must be certain that the princes of heaven are with us, not one or two, but a great multitude of them, as is recorded in Luke that the heavenly hosts were with the shepherds (Luke 2:13)” (AE 3:270). (TLSB)

*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)

*Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.* 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)

**19:20–37** The Lord mockingly explains for Hezekiah how He planned for the rise and fall of Sennacherib to fulfill His purposes. When headlines disturb you, take comfort in the truth that all the intrigues of the nations and politicians are subject to the Lord’s plans for His creation and Church. The Lord responded to Hezekiah’s prayer for the sake of His promise to David, Hezekiah’s ancestor and the forefather of Jesus, our Savior. He will likewise respond to our prayers. • O Lord, in Your zeal, deliver us from evil. Grant us all confidence in prayer. Amen. (TLSB)