

Isaiah 36-39

We now come to a part of the book of Isaiah which is different from any other. It is the historical section which separates the two main portions of the prophecy. This part might well be entitled "The Prophet at Work" since it gives more of the historical background of the prophet's actions and tells more about the results which followed these actions than any other part of the book. Careful study of this section makes it easier to understand the other parts of the book of Isaiah

There is a parallel to these chapters in 2 Kings 18 and 19 and another in 2 Chronicles 32. The one in 2 Chronicles gives much of the same material in different words and includes some additional historical facts. The one in 2 Kings is almost identical in wording with many of the verses here.

The section is naturally divisible into two parts, each of which contains two chapters. The first of these -- chapters 36 and 37 -- describes the great threat against Jerusalem by King Sennacherib and the deliverance through the marvelous interposition of God. We have noticed that this event was predicted in various ways in earlier chapters of the book. These two chapters are particularly interesting since they show how remarkably those predictions were fulfilled.

Isaiah 36:1 tells of Sennacherib's coming in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. The following verses may deal with events that happened a good many years later. It is probable that Sennacherib was not yet king of Assyria the first time he led an attack against Judah, but only general of the armies under his father. Perhaps his father had associated him with him on the throne, though keeping the main power in his own hands; in either case it would be entirely proper to carry back the title of king of Assyria to days when Sennacherib was not yet king.

The account passes over the many years of small attacks by the Assyrians and comes to the great attack which threatened the complete destruction of Jerusalem.

Both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles give details of the beginning of the attack which are passed over by Isaiah. 2 Kings 18:14-16 tells how Hezekiah tried to placate the king of Assyria by sending him a great amount of tribute. We noticed references in Isaiah 33:7 to the mourning of "the