

big walls of Jerusalem expecting at any minute that the Assyrians would come and lay siege to them. Isaiah said to them, This year you will not be able to plow or --- next year you won't be able to plow or to reap. Next year you will be able only to rush out when the Assyrians aren't near and gather a bit of what grows by itself. But in the third year you will be able to plow and to reap because you will be safe then. God is going to protect you and it is a wonderful thing in those chs. how God did deliver them from Sennacherib, a tremendously powerful Assyrian king and the Assyrian king went back to his own land.

When I was studying the Ancient Babylonian language at the U. of Berlin we read Sennacherib's own inscription. In his own words he told about how he conquered this land and he conquered this country and he conquered this country and then he said one of my greatest enemies Hezekiah, king of Judah, I shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem. After telling of all the places he conquered to say he shut him up like a bird in a cage is pretty weak. It is quite clear he was not able to conquer Jerusalem because the Lord send a miracle and destroyed the greater part of his army and he had to go back to his own land.

The second most important city in Judah was Lachish. Lachish was much smaller than Jerusalem and Sennacherib attacked Lachish and he conquered Lachish but compared with Jerusalem that was nothing. But Sennacherib's palace has been excavated in Assyria and they have found in his bedroom a great big picture a bar relief on the wall. It shows the attack on Lachish and the conquest of Lachish and it says underneath this was his conquest of Lachish in the land of Judea. Well compared with Jerusalem Lachish was nothing. I call that Sennacherib's consolation prize. He boasted about a comparatively small thing thereby admitting the fact that he could not do the bigger thing. He did not succeed because God intervened miraculously and delivered Jerusalem from him.

That's one of the big themes of those chs. later on in Isaiah. In Isa.7-12 the prophet's vision looked on beyond the time of Ahaz in those chs. and he showed the coming of the Assyrian army and then he showed their failure to conquer the land, and how God marvellously intervened and that's also true of this section from 28-35. You have to listen to the Lord if you are going to be safe.

So the rest of this ch. tells how God is going to protect them. Their clever scheme is going to backfire. It won't work, but we read from vv.21 on how God is going to protect them. "The Lord will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim. He will rouse himself as in the valley of Gibeon to do his work his strange work and perform his task his alien task." Of course he did that maybe 20 yrs later when the Assyrian came right there and Jerusalem was in imminent danger of falling. By that great miracle that he wrought there.

Now stop your mocking, he says, or your chains will become heavier; the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has told me of the destruction decreed against the whole land." Now the rest of the vv. of this ch. I will not go in to in detail. They describe a farmer. As a farmer goes out to work in his field and in certain parts of the field he goes in with his big sythe and he cuts things down with force and then with other sorts of produce he takes it very carefully bit by bit. He deals differently with different parts of his field, depending on what is needed there.