

12398

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP 1981

HEZEKIAH - A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND

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Study #4

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help

Reading: Isaiah 22

My beloved brethren and sisters and our dear young people. Well, we left Hezekiah on a very, very high note, did we not? as he contemplated the glory of that occasion, when the doors were swung open, the people in the exuberance of the moment, had voted unanimously to continue that feast for another 7 days, and in that 14 day instruction from the Word of life, the peoples' hearts had been moved. And the prayer of Solomon which Hezekiah had the Levites repeat, had been answered and that Yahweh had heard them in the habitation of heaven above, and had blessed His people.

And in 2 Chronicles chapter 31 and verse 7 we come to the climax of that early reform, which Hezekiah inaugurated on the first day of the first month of his reign, and it climaxed as we read in 2 Chronicles 31 and verse 7 with these words, 'In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps (that is the heaps of the tithes) and finished them in the seventh month'. And so in 7 months Hezekiah had restored the temple, he had excited and exhorted the Levites and the priests, changed the hearts of the men of Judah, brought Israel and Judah together in the Passover in the second month; in the third month he began to organize the priests to heap up the tithes which the people now willingly brought to the temple, and the storehouses of God, b&s, were absolutely packed full of the tithes, which now gave the Levites and the priests their opportunity to gave themselves unstintingly to the study of the Word, untroubled by the commercialism of the day. Whereby they could concentrate their attention, and Hezekiah had the setup now that he needed, to bring those people under the domination of the Word of truth; and b&s, it was not a minute too late!

You know, this high drama in Hezekiah's life is meant to be that way! It was not a second too late, for in the next 8 years, in the next 8 years the thunder of war was to crash all around those people, and the air was electrified, b&s, with horror because as Isaiah had said, 'the sea and the waves were roaring in the north, and the Assyrian flood dammed up for so long, had now dashed its banks and was flooding down in Emmanuel's Land, here it was coming to reach unto the neck! And it was a day of Isaiah 22, when it was a day of perplexity when men's hearts were failing them for fear and for

looking out for those things which were coming down upon the cities of Judah. And if you think, b&s, that I'm exaggerating the drama, I would laugh, no I wouldn't, but in a sense I would like for us to abbreviate the point, to be carried in time back to those days, and be sat on the pinnacle of the hill of Zion there, with Jerusalem and watch that Assyrian come, and there was nobody to stop him! Egypt was a broken reed! Egypt said loud things and sat still, the nations of the north had bowed to the might of Assyria; there was nobody to make war with the beast. And Judah, little Judah trembled, b&s, before the onslaught of this one that was coming down. And now the great political crisis, the international crisis was coming upon Hezekiah, that was to try him to the very end, b&s. To an extreme beyond our comprehension, and do you know, it took every one of those eight years for Hezekiah to get into those people, that our God of ages past, the Rock of ages should be a shelter from the stormy blast that was coming. And as we go through the history now, to try and put it all together in chronological order for you, listen carefully to what we're going to say, because I want to try and put the history together, I want to try and plot certain prophecies of Isaiah where I believe they belong; these matters, of course, are arbitrary, b&s, it's very difficult to establish the chronology; I may be wrong in one or two little places, it doesn't really matter, anyway, it's my opinion of how the history fits. If I'm wrong in certain details, it will not affect one wit, the overall importance of this situation.

Now we know this, that Hezekiah at some stage, broke his allegiance to Assyria by refusing to pay tribute. We won't turn all these references up because we've got a long way to travel in history; I believe that when Hezekiah had established himself in Jerusalem and had seen the strength of God's Word among His people, he saw fit to cease to pay tribute to the king of Assyria. That was a serious matter! and Assyria, of course, was not worried merely about Judah, their big worry was Egypt. Little Judah didn't concern them all that much, it was Egypt that worried them, and there were intrigues in that land, b&s, between Egypt and of course, the peoples of the Middle East, as Egypt tried desperately to get those people to make allegiance with them, not because Egypt wanted to protect Judah, Egypt couldn't care less about Judah; Egypt was worried about her own skin, and she was trying to get a battery of fortresses across that area, as a battery against the Assyrian, and so she was entreating very deeply among those people. Hezekiah broke his allegiance with Assyria and didn't want anything to do with Egypt for a while. But that's what was going on, and so when the Assyrian saw the danger of the situation, as one after another of the people broke away from him, when the time came around and the season allowed the movement of armies, the great Assyrian flood rolled into the Land, as an absolute invincible force, and as I said before, they go down in the annals of ancient history as the cruelest people known on earth since before the Nazis. They were absolutely and extremely brutal people!

And there was panic everywhere! In the 4th year of Hezekiah, the 4th year, b&s, 3 years just from the time of his reform, there was Shalmanezzer in the north, just a few miles north in Samaria, besieging Samaria for two years; their brethren were now under siege. What about those who had refused the Passover? what about those who'd laughed the messages to scorn? what about those that said Hezekiah was a fool's dip, what about it now? with Shalmanezzer around Samaria squeezing the very life out of it?

In two years it fell, in the 6th year of Hezekiah, the walls came down, Shalmanezzer himself died, and Sargon took over. And the new general, more brutal than the rest of them, crushed the very life out of Samaria and dragged them off into captivity; dragged them off and as the Assyrians had the practice as we'll learn later on from Isaiah, they use to put rings through their noses, put them in chains, and drag them by the nose into captivity. And away went the apostates, b&s, and God's Word had been fulfilled. And the earth shook with the news! and it filtered down through Judah.

And Sargon was on his way to Philistia, Isaiah chapter 20 and verse 1 tells us that, b&s, and we pick up now the prophet Isaiah as he watches the advance of the Assyrian. Fear and horror was everywhere, you've only got to read the history of the times and the Assyrian inscriptions to know of the dreadful holocaust that was being enacted in this land at this time. And here is Sargon, 'And in that year Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him), and he fought against Ashdod, and took it'. So now Hezekiah has got the Assyrian over to his right or to the left (whatever way he's facing) but he's got to move to his west, towards the Mediterranean, they're almost diagonally opposite him to the west of Jerusalem. So he's taken all the north, he's right over there, he's just across from the seacoast, about 40 miles from Jerusalem. And of course, Ashdod buckled under the weight of the Assyrians, and stories came in, and I'm quoting now the inscriptions that have been dug up, b&s, which today are still extant, some of them in the British museum; stories came into Jerusalem of the horrors of what was going on. And fear and terror gripped the inhabitants of Judah; and Isaiah the prophet looked upon this with dismay as he saw the reforms of Hezekiah falling apart because the terror was upon the people.

And in the 10th chapter of Isaiah he describes an imaginary advance of the Assyrians. This, I believe, was only in the minds of the people; some think that the Assyrian did come this way, there is no historical record that the Assyrian came from the north, it would seem to me that Isaiah is painting an imaginary picture as people were horrified, to think that they were under the siege of the Assyrian. So we read in Isaiah chapter 10 and verse 28, as Isaiah said, 'He's come to Aiah, he's passed the Negev, at Michmash he's laid up his carriages'. Now those villages, b&s, were just north of Jerusalem and there was a string of them as they ran down from the north, coming on to Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem is on the end of a mountain range there which towards the north, rolled up towards the north; it was open to the north, they had protection on the west by the valley of Hinnom, which ran around to the west down to the south; they had protection on the east by the valley of the Kedron which came down and joined it on the southeast corner, and on every one of those slopes they had clear protection. From the north the hills came down unto Judea, and here he comes down that ridge, and he came to Michmash, Michmash the gash there, (a gash in the hills), an excellent place to stop him. The place where Jonathan performed his wonderful exploits years before, and thrilled all Israel. There he is and he's laid up his baggage at Michmash. Will they be able to hold him in the gash? No; he's gone over the passage! Nothing is going to stop him, and having gone over the passage, one after another he steps towards Jerusalem, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah of Saul; he comes to Gallim in verse 30, then Laish and Anathoth, he's almost within sight of the city. 'Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of

Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day;' (and Nob, b&s, is immediately north of Jerusalem and it looks across a little valley straight into the city). And he came to Nob in their imagination, stood up there, and the marching group of Assyrians looked at the little daughter of Zion as she was called; the delicate, feeble, defenseless little virgin, and shook his great male fist under her nose! and threatened her with brutality and rape; that's what he threatened her with as Isaiah was going to tell us, the next time we come to see him. He threatened to rape her and brutalize her into the ground, and he shook his fist at her; and he defied the God of heaven! And the people ignored him and in the imagination of all the rumors that were going through Judah; these rumors were going through Judah, and there was terror everywhere, b&s, and yet the prophet kept putting at them, not only the frightful things of what was coming, but he tried to instil in them a hope for the future!

The hope of deliverance and he says in verse 33, 'Behold, Adon, the ruler, Yahweh of Armies shall lop the bough with terror' and he saw the Assyrian as the Assyrian himself boasted in his description, that he could drive his chariots up Lebanon and he saw the Assyrian coming down like a stately cedar; and as Yahweh says, has perched himself virtually overlooking Jerusalem, tall as a cedar, Yahweh says 'I'll take the top off of him'. And He did, you know! Because the 185,000 that died, and we'll learn later on from the record in Chronicles, it tells us was the cream of the army. The captains and the lords and the generals and He took off the top bough; and He took it off just in time, right there in the vicinity of Jerusalem. And that was the picture of terror that gripped the people at that time.

And what was happening inside the walls? Hezekiah was hard put to it now, b&s; it's one thing to have a reform (we can have a bible camp up here at Glenlock, no problem to get several hundred people to come up here and sit there patiently and listen to the Word of God expounded. But if you could hear the tramp of Assyrian feet up there on the road, and to know that we're next, it's a difficult thing to concentrate on the Rock of Ages and to believe in the shadow of His power!) It's a very difficult thing and we've been thinking of ringing up Ronald Reagan for help, to go down to Egypt and see what he can do for us! and to sit still and wait for God is a dreadfully hard thing! And there was Hezekiah under enormous pressure to keep those people together; and he wasn't succeeding. In the 22nd chapter of Isaiah we have a picture of what was going on in the city; and we know this relates to the top of Hezekiah because two of his officers are named in here, which we meet again in Isaiah 36, so we know the setting of this chapter very clearly indeed!

And Isaiah sees them, b&s, preparing for a fateful resistance against the Assyrian. And what was going on in Judah? what was the attitude of the people? 'The burden of the valley of vision', Jeremiah called it 'the valley of slaughter', and they saw Jerusalem ringed by its valleys as being a scene of the next slaughter. What's wrong with you? says Isaiah, and he looks around the city, what does he see? Everywhere he could look upon the housetops there were parties, everyone was having a party! Yahweh had called for boldness, mourning, girding with sackcloth, and 'behold, joy and gladness; let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!' And they had given up the ghost, they'd given up

the fight, it was all over and they thought, 'we've had it' so they ran up to the top of their houses and there they were having a riotous time, a tumultuous city, a joyous city. Isaiah said, 'your men are slain not with the sword, nor die in battle', they had a defeatist attitude; they weren't slain with the sword or died in battle, they had given up! And they said, 'let's just booze our way out of life and forget about it all, and when the Assyrian comes we'll be so drunk, we won't feel the pain of it all! Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die'.

What a dreadful way that was to go, b&s, and you know, the apostle Paul quoted those words of those men in 1 Corinthians 15, and if you don't know what that chapter's about, I suggest you haven't done your readings for a long time. That's the chapter about resurrection, and resurrection, b&s, is the sure and certain hope even if we lose the fight today; we can never lose it in the ultimate, and Paul quoted those words in the monumental section of scripture dealing with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the sureness of those that live in Him. What a wonderful thing to believe in God, that even if we lose the fight today, we can never lose it ultimately, and yet these people had lost it forever! And they had forgotten about the exhortation of Hezekiah, and they'd gone onto their housetops; you see, the Law of Moses had specified for them, the way to build houses. It said they built their houses with flat roofs, they had an outside staircase which lead to the roof, so that a man can come home, go up the outside staircase, and get on the roof without actually going inside. There was a reason for that; we find several instances in the scriptures, b&s, that that was the way in which men use to come home and in privacy, before they mingled in the domestic circle, coming out of the fields with thankfulness for a daily task performed; they could go up the outside staircase and pray to the God of heaven on the rooftop. That's where Peter was praying when he saw the sheet let down from heaven; that's how they were suppose to use it. Unfortunately, David was up there when he saw Bathsheba in the yard next door, and his mind was distracted from what he should have been doing. And Isaiah looked around at all those places, and do you know why they had the places built like that? Here's a marvellous thought! You read in your leisure the 30th chapter of Exodus about the construction of the altar of incense; and it speaks about the altar of incense having walls and a roof. Look at the margin of your bibles, you'll find roof and walls, and when you walked into the holy place you saw the altar of incense there, it had a flat roof and an battlement built around it; it's absolutely wonderful that is, and the LORD ordered them to build a battlement around the roof for safety reasons, as the altar of incense had its top a flat roof and had a battlement around in a crown of gold. that's exactly how they were to build their houses. And every man's house in Israel was a replica, and your house and my house was a replica of the altar of incense, and our houses, b&s, should be full of the incense of prayer, and there they were on top of those houses having a riotous time, eating and drinking and saying, 'tomorrow we shall die'.

And that's the spirit that had gripped that nation. You know, they made some feeble attempts to protect themselves. And how feeble were they? And as the prophet Isaiah went around, he wept, wept his heart out because the very things they were doing to protect themselves, b&s, were in themselves magnificent exhortations to them! Look what they were doing, verse 8, 'And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst

look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest'. What was that? As I said we don't have the time to turn up all these passages, but you see, what Solomon did was this; when he built the temple he built other important buildings which surrounded the temple, and went before the temple. And there was one building which was in the position towards the temple which a person had to pass through before he got to the temple, and he called it 'the house of the forest of Lebanon'. It was a rectangular building and it was in the midst, b&s, where the roof was supported by a colonnade of cedar posts, magnificently polished; it had large narrow windows down by the sides where the streaming of the sun's light could come in. And around the walls of that glorious house of the forest of Lebanon, he put 500 shields of gold, and that was the armour of the house of the forest. And when a man walked in there towards God's temple, and the light of the sun crowded through those narrow windows, it flashed on the shields and they were all beautifully mirrored in the glorious grand timber of the cedar wood. Faith is an incorruptible power is what they were learning as they walked towards God's temple! and they took them down to face the Assyrian; they were never intended for war! the record of Kings is quite explicit as to why they were used and how they were used. They were used on those ceremonial occasions as the king made his way up to worship, the guard would come through the house of the forest of Lebanon, each man would take down his shield, they would surround the king, and he would walk towards God covered by men of faith!

You know, by the time of Rehoboam, when the kingdom was already in decline, Shishak king of Egypt came up and took away those shields as part of the spoil for war, and Rehoboam who had no faith whatever, replaced them with shields of brass. And there in the house of the forest of Lebanon was a lesser metal which didn't give off the flashing brilliance of the gold nor the durability of that, and it spoke of the man of the flesh and that's what Judah was! And they took them down to defend themselves against the Assyrian, and Isaiah wept, he wept bitterly to think that they had missed the whole point of the house of the forest of Lebanon, and the armour of God which is the shield of faith! Absolutely missed that!

And Isaiah wandered around to see the rest of the defences of the city, and he says in verse 9, 'Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool'. Verse 11, 'Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool', but he says, 'you have not look unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago', they had already commenced that conduit that Hezekiah later on finished. They were starting to bring the water supply into the city, and again, b&s, the thought of looking at that, he wept bitterly because he could see the frantic endeavours by these men who had no faith, who had now lost all their faith that Hezekiah had instilled in them, tearing at their hearts and there they were frantically trying to bring this water in; and Hezekiah's looking at that stream with a broken heart and he says, 'you don't understand; have a look at where it's coming from! don't you know who put it there? Put your trust in Him, you can understand where the force of God is!' They never found it; 'Why can't you understand that your faith will come from a direction that you can't understand, but it will come, as surely as that water will come!' Hadn't Isaiah stood there, b&s, sometime

before when Ahaz was on the throne, hadn't he stood there with his own boy, and told him that Yahweh would give him a sign! Of course he had, and there they were pitifully trying to bring that water through, and not understanding as they should have understood, the power of that thing! They didn't have any respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago, and that was the tragedy of the moment, as the Assyrian started his campaign in the Middle East.

And there were other problems! There were many, b&s, who had confidence but not in Hezekiah nor in God! There was a confidence in that city, it was in a meagre few too, but that confidence was born of a courage born in the flesh of arrogance and pride, and such a one is named here in verse 15. 'Thus saith the Lord Yahweh of Armies, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house', here's a man, b&s, who occupied a magnificent position in the nation, over the house; what was that? It was the house of David, and as I just mentioned to you, Solomon had several buildings; when the ceremonial occasions came around for worship and those buildings were traversed in order, they opened them with a key. Tradition tells us that the key was a very big one, not that it needed to be, but there was a ceremonial wonder about this, and they use to carry this key over their shoulder, and the man who was over the house, the treasurer, was the man to unlock all the doors and to close them again. He unlocked them and locked them because he was the treasurer, and he was a man of great notoriety and dignity and they accompanied him on his journey, and there he'd take his big ceremonial key and the key of David was upon his shoulder. And he'd come to the doors and insert this big key and turn the key and open up the doors of the houses of God and all the other glorious houses that Solomon had built. It was an honourable position and they clothed him in purple; he was a man that was looked up to, and Shebna had that occupation, b&s. He was one of the officers of Hezekiah, but he was proud and he was arrogant, he had a fortress, he had a defence against Assyria, he owned a fleet of chariots. He had a fleet of chariots and we learn that in verse 18, where the end of the verse says, 'and there the chariots of thy glory shall be taken, you shame your lord's house' (as that verse should be read) it's not the chariots of thy glory the shame of thy lord's house, it was 'you shame' your lord's house, why was he the shame of his lord's house? Who was his lord? His lord was David because it was David's house that he kept. And even though David was dead, it was David's house, and David, b&s, is immortal in God's memory, and he was the shame of his lord's house. Why? Because David was the one who owned the house who said, 'some trust in chariots, but we will trust in the LORD our God', and he was the shame of his lord's house! because his lord had told him never to put his trust in chariots. And he put his trust in chariots, and a fat lot of good they'll do him when the Assyrian rolls the world over, he could never do that. Why? he would take away Shebna's chariots, b&s, like thistle-down before the whirlwind. He would blast him out of existence, and yet he had such supreme confidence this man, and not only did he have confidence in the present, but he had confidence in the future!

As the prophet says in verse 16, 'what have you got here?' He had hewn himself out a sepulchre out of a rock; that's mine too! What's he saying? He was saying that Jerusalem was going to stand by my might! this fellow was going to beat the Assyrian

on his own! And if when he died, he said, he was going to be a monument in Jerusalem! You know, God wanted confidence, b&s, but He didn't want that sort of confidence; you know, there are men with that sort of confidence, not born of faith. Jeroboam was like that, he didn't have a nerve in his body, but it wasn't born of God! Men who are timid in their natural instincts, b&s, men who are sometimes down right cowardly, were inspired to great heights by faith; these people were born confidently!

And this fellow was there and he had these chariots and Yahweh threatened him and He told him this in verse 18. He said, 'he will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball unto a large country', now you take the Hebrew of that, which isn't a bad translation there, but take the more graphic description of the Hebrew; you see, he had these wonderful gowns and garments that went like a train behind him, with the key over his shoulder and all the attendants coming along the way, and these glorious garments sweeping through the house of the forest of Lebanon, and Yahweh threatened to wrap him up like a ball, the Hebrew word means 'to turn around and wrap up and up and up'. And then He got a large country, no obstructions, like a big open desert; and Yahweh's arm went swish and away went Shebna wherever the valley went rolling along with no obstructions into an endless country. That was going to be the end of Shebna; and you come to that sepulchre in Jerusalem and it's empty, and he's still rolling! I believe he's still going!!! And He rolled him away; you get thrown by Yahweh's arm into a country with no obstructions and see how far you'll go; perpetual motion. And away he went and his name means 'to lead captive', 'I will surely, says God, drive you from your station'. And He says in verse 17, 'with a mighty captivity'; and his very name means to 'lead captive'.

And do you see what was going on in Jerusalem? Picture the scene! All the drunken orgies of people saying, 'We've had it mates; it's all over; who cares, hip, hip hurrah; rule Britannia! and down she goes and we're gone tomorrow'. And there's Shebna strutting around saying, 'don't worry about the Assyrians, fellows, I've got him covered'; there's a sepulchre for me, when I die I'll be a monument of power in this city'. And you know, there were extremes in that place! And here they were, frantically getting out those shields as if those little golden shields could ever stop the march of the Assyrian, not understanding the mighty power of God, to save them from all these things!

And where was poor Hezekiah? Ah, b&s, he's under enormous pressure. Try and appreciate his situation! He sees all his work becoming undone, he sees his people panicking, he tries to gather and strengthen the situation, and Isaiah rises to the occasion. And this is where Isaiah shines in this record as Isaiah strolled into the scene, the eloquent prophet from Jerusalem. The man with the golden voice and the glorious prophecies of Isaiah, and he saw the situation and he instilled into Hezekiah with words of eloquence that surpassed literally, all the works of mankind ever written, and he inspired him with a golden scene of Zion! Oh, I wonder what Hezekiah would ever had done without him? they prayed together, they went to God together, they excited each other, and Isaiah thrilled him with messages. And he strode into the nation and warned them about what was going on; and there the encampment was meeting, there were urgent meetings of the cabinet as there are in warfare; what are we going to do? And

there was a big movement in cabinet to go to Egypt for help. And Isaiah in his 31st chapter warned them about that!

You know, these are exciting times, b&s, to see the work of the prophet now which was so dearly appreciated by Hezekiah. And he says in this 31st chapter and verses 1 to 3, 'Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and put their trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Yahweh. Yet He also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back His words; but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity'. (See there's heavy irony in those words; you're running to Egypt for help, says Isaiah, why do you need to go to Egypt for help? You don't put your trust in Yahweh, but do you know something? He also knows a little bit about what He's talking about!) And you see, he's addressing his words to the cabinet, the cabinet have been in crucial meetings as I'll show you in a moment, and Isaiah depicts this. The cabinet is in crucial discussion and the discussion is revolving around whether to go to Egypt or not; Hezekiah, I believe, steadfastly resisted that, but he's outnumbered in cabinet, b&s, because the urgency of the situation calls for help, help tomorrow not the next day; they need it now! And he says, 'woe to you' and he's trying to tell them in that cabinet, 'listen to Yahweh, He knows something, you know, He's wise'.

Verse 3, 'Now the Egyptians are men, and not El; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they shall fail together', and that's the message that Isaiah sent to the cabinet. His warning was that the Egyptians are no match for Yahweh, and if the cabinet decided to go to Egypt, then not only would Egypt fall but he would bring down with him, everyone that was hanging on to the tail of his chariots. And he warned that cabinet, but look, they were getting their way, b&s!

Chapter 30 and verse 1, there was political intrigue and it was being fought out in that cabinet as to what to do. And Isaiah warned them in chapter 30 and verse 1, 'Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, that take counsel, but no of Me; and come up with a covering' (now there's the authority that I'm using to depict the cabinet meeting, because that very expression 'to cover with a covering' b&s, means 'to weave a web of intrigue'. And they were weaving a web of intrigue in that cabinet, but they were doing it to add sin to sin); 'That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves' and there was poor Hezekiah, under enormous pressure; you put yourself on that throne and you're talking about Yahweh helping you. And the thunder of war is crashing in your ears, and the rebels are coming in and screaming about men and women being impaled upon stakes, of men being taken out to watch as their wives and children were flayed alive and the skin peeled off them while they were still alive, and then when there was no more skin, they were stretched out in the sun to let the sun burn them to death! And these were some of the things going on, horrible things! and they were screaming for help and they had to get help! Where are we going to go? and Hezekiah tried to tell them, and Isaiah said, 'don't go to Egypt, don't go to Egypt'. And they get in behind and say, 'we've got to get a party against Hezekiah,

we've got to get the votes swayed against him!' And they got the vote swayed against him; and they went to Egypt for help.

And Isaiah came back, b&s, with a message! And it was full of irony, and verses 6 and 7 of chapter 30 has that message. He said, 'the burden of the beasts of the south' (the Negev) into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels; to a people that shall not profit them. For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, their strength is to sit still'. Now I want to interpret those words for you, they need no interpretation except maybe in more understandable language. But first of all, when he talks about Egypt and their strength, the word is 'rahab' in the Hebrew. Now 'rahab' was applied to Egypt, Psalm 87 uses the title of 'rahab' to describe Egypt, why 'rahab'? because 'rahab' means to be very loud, that's why Rahab the harlot got that name, she was a coarse, loud woman before God's truth changed her! And Egypt was a coarse, loud nation who were very loud in their promises, and Isaiah describes the scene; alright, the cabinet got their way, so down goes all the money to Egypt to buy their help. And he sees them going into the south (the Negeb) down between Israel and Egypt, b&s, you've got to travel through the Negev; Australia is Israel upside down; if you go north in this country you get into the dry country, if you go south in Israel you get into the dry country, and as they went into the south there they met the lion and the young lion. The viper and the fiery flying serpent and you can see the ambassadors of Hezekiah the king in his cabinet, struggling down through the Negeb; burdened down with all the burdens of treasures to buy the help of Egypt. Struggling down there and getting before Pharaoh with a very difficult situation; and Pharaoh says, Yah, yah, yah, yah, we'll help you; we'll do what we can! and sat still! And a picture of heavy irony as Isaiah paints that picture, to profit them nothing, and that was the help of Egypt! You know, b&s, that's the world today, they're putting their trust in the western world, the western forces, the bastion of the United States of America, what are they going to do? They can sneak their aircraft around the world, and go up and down and in and out and land and go back again, what's that to the Russians? You can't fight wars from up there, you may be able to tomorrow, but it's too late tomorrow, the Russians are moving now. And when the conventional forces of Russia are seen from behind the Iron Curtain, I don't believe that there will be a force in the world that will come any where near them! Yes, they may have expertise in rocketry and in the atomic weapon, but they've got to be checkmated; who's going to use theirs? it's suicide, b&s, it will be fought in a good old slugging match in the field of battle, and in the field of battle the Russian is absolutely supreme! and the world knows it; and the time is coming when the loud noise of America will be heard, to do nothing! And we, if we're still here, when the Russian makes its grand move to the building again of its huge empire, b&s, we'll either be saying tomorrow we die or we'll be putting our trust in the coming of Christ! or we'll be looking to the United States of America for helping Australia. We are living in grand dramatic times, this history is taken by God Almighty who wrote the bible for us, He put that in Ezekiel 38, and I'll show you that at the end of our studies. He took that and put it in Ezekiel 38 and we use that, b&s, to warn the world; this history was a threat to the brotherhood not to the world! And it was the brotherhood that was under siege, not the

world; the world had gone and they were under siege up to their necks, until the Head came to save them.

And that's the situation that faced them here and they went down to Egypt for help. And what happened? Sargon did make a force of the Egyptians at Lachish just south of Gaza between Gaza and En Gedi, and history records a resounding victory for the Assyrians; he chose at that time, however, not to carry his victory across the burning desert into Egypt because at that time just as that happened, b&s, there was a revolt back home. And Merodach-baladan of Babylon who had been suppressed by the Assyrians had broken out again, and Sargon went home and the Middle-East breathed! Back he went and everybody breathed! And then we come to 2 Chronicles 36, everything I've told you thus far, b&s, happened in that little white gap in your bible between the end of chapter 31 and chapter 32; that's where all the battles were fought in that little white spot there, that history which I just related to you is in that section. Whether that history is in the exact chronology as I presented it, doesn't matter, it all happened in that gap between those two chapters.

Because the next chapter opens up with the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. And the Assyrian is again on the march! and this time he really means business! Merodach-baladan is in absolute chaff, he's dead, he's gone, they've crushed him out of existence, the Babylonians will never rise for 18 more years; that issue has been settled once and for all, well, for 18 years anyway. And the Assyrian now turns his face again towards the Middle-East, it is now 8 years later and he's coming down against Judah again, this time under the leadership of Sennacherib; I want to give you the reason why there is a reason, b&s, why that historical gap is there. You may wonder about it, and it's in Kings and, of course, Isaiah picks up part of it, but there's a gap there, a deliberate gap, and I'll show you why.

Listen! It says, 'After these things', 2 Chronicles 32:1, and the establishment thereof', now what things? So the history's missing, the things that were immediately before it, were all Hezekiah's righteous reforms. And you see, the things that we've got to come at now in here is one of the poorest translations that you could ever see! and it really destroyed the whole point, but do you know what that word 'establishment' is in the Hebrew? it's the Hebrew word 'emeth' which is the word for 'faithfulness'. After these things, faithfully done, God sends the Assyrian against them! Rotherham puts it, 'After these things done in faithfulness' now you see why the historical gap is there; it's telling us of the mind of Hezekiah and of his supporters. Here is the reward of faith, Sennacherib's army; and God was trying them, b&s, and you know, it wasn't the end of the trial! Another trial was to come upon Hezekiah, even more grievous, a personal trial upon his own body. And you know, Hezekiah in the extremity of the moment, grew a little bitter against his God! And I'm not being unkind to Hezekiah to say that, because he apologises profoundly for it, wouldn't you? He had lifted the nation in 16 days from the 16 years of apostasy of Ahaz, no man has any justification, b&s, to be bitter against our heavenly Father, but he was flesh and blood, and he was greater than you and I will ever be! And while for all the faithful things that he'd done, here's the horde of Sennacherib coming at him like a wall of water; one can well and truly imagine why the

chronicle says, 'and after these things faithfully done', here seems to be the reward of faith!

But it's a new Hezekiah; it's a new nation, for in the 8 years or less intervening between when Sargon went home and the coming of Sennacherib, b&s, Hezekiah had again rejuvenated his forces. When we next meet Shebna, he's a mere servant! and Eliakim has got his position. Hezekiah now rules the cabinet and there's no more talk of Egypt; he's in supreme command, and do you know, we're not told how that happens in detail, but the fact that these two men went out, Shebna fighting a second position behind Eliakim, there was the manifestation of Hezekiah that he had gained control of that nation; and I believe the man behind that was Isaiah, that glorious prophet of Judah, he must have been the power behind Hezekiah to win the day against that cabinet, and to put an iron clamp upon the Egyptian party, and to put their trust in Yahweh. And so Hezekiah, b&s, had been forced to pay tribute before Sargon went home, the tribute was reimposed on him, and he accepted that; he had to take the gold off the doors of the temple so that when Sennacherib came, we read in verse 2 of 2 Chronicles 32, 'And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem', the margin says 'he was forewarned'. Hezekiah realized, b&s, that Sennacherib was not going to honour that tribute; that's the point that's being made, he wasn't going to honour that tribute.

So what did Hezekiah do? It says in verse 4, 'that he took the waters of the fountain that were outside the city and stopped them; and he brought that water inside the city'. He completed that conduit and he ran the pool of Gihon, down the side of the city, under the walls, and he brought it inside the city and then of course, he channeled it down through the southern wall outside the city again. Brought in the pool of Gihon and then built another wall further down to enclose it; that's what he did! But he had respect unto the Maker thereof, and he would have done that by faith and, of course, as an expedient so they might have a water supply. But he would have seen in that, some spiritual import no doubt whatever, because verse 5 tells us, 'that he strengthened himself', now that's a critical point! They had strengthened the walls, he did too! but he went out and strengthened himself, and that, b&s, is what was necessary, and he covered himself with a shield of faith.

And then he got the people together, and he exhorted them from verses 6 to 8 of this chapter. 'He set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city' (into that great square before the gate of the city) 'and he spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him'. And if you think that that was a mere use of words, think again! Christadelphian ears tuned to the scriptures ought to know what he was doing; did you pick it up? I'll read it again, 'Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him'; that's only a precis of what Hezekiah said. But do you know where those words were coming from? 'Be strong and courageous' was the words of Moses to Israel when they faced the giants of Canaan; 'be not afraid nor dismayed'

were the words of Jehaziel to Jehoshaphat when he faced the might of the Edomites; and 'they that be with us are more than with him' were the words of Elisha when he faced the might of Syria around the city of Dothan. And he was giving them a first-class exhortation on putting your trust in Yahweh! Moses faced the Canaanites, Jehoshaphat the Edomites whom he couldn't match because they were so vast in number, and there was Elisha surrounded by the Syrians, and he quotes the words of each one (and you check it out; they are the exact words) now what a wonderful thing that is, see the joy of bible study; get down to it and have a look at the words and take it back to their context and that's exactly what it did for those people, and here we're getting a precis of what Hezekiah said. And he would have given them a story exhortation, b&s, of Israel going into the Land, of Jehoshaphat going out against the might of those Ethiopians and Edomites who had joined together to come up to invade him. And of the way Jehoshaphat dealt with them, and there were Edomites and Ammonites and Moabites in that host. Do you know how Jehoshaphat dealt with them? he went up to God and he said this, he bowed in reverence before his God and he said, 'when we came out of Egypt, you told us we're not to touch the Edomites, the Moabites and the Ammonites, because the Edomites were related to Jacob, of course, Moab and Ammon were the children of Lot, and they were related to Abraham. And God said, 'you are not to touch them! and they're here today, not our fault!' And God said, 'you're right! it's my responsibility; I told you to leave them alone and you did; and they're here! Stand aside and I'll handle the matter', and He slew the lot of them! And that what the sort of faith that was driven into these people.

And now for the Assyrian; he's in no position to die; he might be all the mighty power, but they that be with us are more than be with him, and as Elisha opened his servants eyes around the city of Dothan, he saw the chariots of fire around about not Dothan, around about Elisha! And he was the hub of Yahweh's chariot; ahah, you can imagine the power and the force of that exhortation as Hezekiah drove into those people; and they would have gone out there and have grabbed Sennacherib with their bare hands, I reckon at that moment, as he finished that exhortation . You know, b&s, so powerful was that exhortation that Rabshakeh heard of it, do you know that? he heard of that exhortation! And he knew that that exhortation had put a thrill in the people that was going to stand them in good stead, and he tried to undermine it because he knew the force and power of Judah was in those words! So powerful was that exhortation that it reached the ears of a heathen king.

And up he comes, Isaiah 36, Rabshakeh, what a boy! and this 36th chapter of Isaiah connects with 2 Chronicles chapter 32, we move to Isaiah because it's a more lengthy dissertation on the record. And we read in the first verse which connects it with 2 Chronicles 32, 'It came to pass in the 14th year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defended cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem' and the King's record tells us that in came Tartan and Rabshakeh, and those names are the titles, Rabshakeh means 'the cupbearer' he was the chief butler, Rabsaris means 'the chief of the eunuchs' and Tartan means 'the general of the army'. And they came up to represent Sennacherib; what is a chief butler doing there in the field of war? I know why he's

there! because I followed that speech that he made, and I'll tell you what, b&s, it is clear why he was there, because he was a man of incredible ability. You see, what Sennacherib was doing, and he probably did this to every city that he came to, it was an obvious thing to do; why send your forces against the city if you can psychologically batter it down? If they open the walls to you and say, 'well, look, it's a hopeless cause, what's the good of a siege anyway, because if we get a prolonged siege it only gets them madder and madder, and we suffer more for it; best to take the consequence as they say!' And I don't doubt that there were some cities who capitulated on the basis of 'what's the use?' so he would send his chief butler, a master of the arts of psychological warfare, and he was a master of the art. Look, no exaggeration here, you follow his speech, you'll see he didn't come up with a prepared speech, you can prove that by the way it's cast here! because what happens is this, as you run through this speech of Rabshakeh, to psychologically batter those walls down, you see what he did, he just observed what was going on roundabout him, and he changed his mood according to what he saw going on. He must have been a very clever man and extremely eloquent man of persuasion; and I've listed in the bottom of my bible the changing moods of Rabshakeh!

He first came up in a contemptuous attitude, then he tried to intimidate them, then he got sarcastic, he told bold lies, he got extremely coarse in his language, then he was appealing, and he even got down to being benevolent, till finally he reverted to boasting! And according to the mood of the people watching him on the wall, so he acted out the drama. And I can see this fellow doing it, very clever at the game, watching his audience and every audience's reaction, which you get to know after a while! and you watch them and you speak accordingly (when they go to sleep you hit the table) but you do and you can see the audience's reacting toward him, and he'd be moving around there, putting on a display second to none, and the people would try and think of the words of Hezekiah 'say nothing'. He doesn't say anything because he knew, b&s, to say anything would be to fall in his trap and you know, the only thing they did was disastrous! The only thing they did was disastrous and he was like a leech and grabbed it like a flash and used it for a good purpose. And to put on a speech there you know, quite an excitement to see how that was working, how he used their words against them.

His speech went like this; he tried to undermine Hezekiah's exhortation, that's where he started. He knew the force of Hezekiah's exhortation, he must have had intelligence of that, he then spoke of Egypt being a broken reed, he said that Hezekiah's religion was inconsistent and insincere. He challenged them to a wager of pledges to make a bet as to who was stronger! He drew their attention to the prophecy of Assyrian success; their own prophecy, he coarse and brutish, he made a loud appeal to the people on the wall and then he reverted to boasting of his conquest of Assyria. Now as he stood there, Hezekiah sent two men out to him. Verse 3, 'Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe along with their attendants', by now the positions are reversed, and there, b&s, without saying a word, the very fact that those two men in different positions, tells us very plainly that Hezekiah had made drastic changes to the cabinet, and is in full control of government, and there will be no more

talk about Egypt! It's all over and it's trust in Yahweh! and now we have that wonderful statement I believe, which applied to Hezekiah, 'that there was never a man like him in Judah before or since, that put his trust in Yahweh; and he had finally got rid of all the problems and he stood with one problem alone, Rabshakeh and Sennacherib of the Assyrian army.

And so Rabshakeh launches into his dissertation; all I want to do is paraphrase it for you. Verse 4, 'Say to Hezekiah thus saith the great king'; see how he starts, he doesn't even give Hezekiah his title, he's not even a king but there is a great king. 'What confidence in your God?' In verse 5 he says, 'These are vain words which Hezekiah has been using', in the Hebrew it means 'mere lip words'. Well, all words come from the lip, of course, what he meant was this, that the words of Sennacherib came out of the mouth of a gun! (they didn't have guns but we'll use the modern expression) Sennacherib was talking from the barrel of a gun! He said, Hezekiah now all he could do was spit; he spits out words but they're only words, where's the force behind them? And imagine the people sitting on the walls thinking, yes, that's what the Canaanites thought too! that's what the Edomites thought with Jehoshaphat, what the Syrians thought with its power and force in words; but he didn't know that! He said that scornfully, he was no religionist, he couldn't care less for that sort of thing; there's no work, there's no power and what about Egypt? Egypt's a broken reed. You know we sometimes imagine the expression 'broken reed' to mean one of those willowy reeds that bend down, you know, which you leave under a brick. That's not the point he's making! the reed he's talking about which grew in Egypt, he's talking about the reed which was very tough and very brittle but if you leant on it, it would break and of course, it would leave very sharp spikes that would go into your hands, that's what he's talking about! So it wasn't only a question of Egypt being weak and helpless to help them, but Egypt would be a danger to them! but their problem was if a man leaned, it would pierce his hands. You know, b&s, the Chronicles' record says, 'that the people rested on Hezekiah's words'. That the same word in the Hebrew as 'they leaned' and he's addressing this crowd and at this moment, he wasn't aware that the crowd on the wall were really hearing him; he was addressing the men before him. And he was trying to undermine their confidence in Hezekiah, that they had leaned on Hezekiah's word. And he says you musn't put your trust in Egypt.

Then he turns, b&s, to intimidate the people against Hezekiah. And I want you to notice how he went about this! You see, Rabshakeh knew something about the people in Jerusalem. He knew there was a respect for Yahweh in measure; now his job was not to fight against that city, his job was to get in there, somehow without war! He was skilled enough to know this, that when you're dealing with people's religion, you're dealing with a very sensitive subject. He did not start off by denigrating the religion of Yahweh, what he did was try and intimidate the people against Hezekiah; and he says, 'Look, I've heard what this Hezekiah's been doing. He's taken away all the altars of Yahweh; now of course, he hadn't taken away the altars of Yahweh, but in this heathen's mind, heathens always understood this, that God was honoured by the multiplicity of altars, that was always the heathen opinion; 'the multitude of altars' as Paul said in Athens, 'the more honour you gave to that god', and the point he was

making from his heathen viewpoint was, that you reckon Hezekiah is teaching you to trust in Yahweh. Look, he's diminished Yahweh's importance in your land; he's diminished Yahweh's importance. Furthermore he said, he has said, end of verse 7, 'ye shall worship before this altar', in other words he was trying to indicate that Hezekiah's religion was a religion of a dictator; (he wasn't a bad Communist was he)? He'd make a first-class tribunal leader; oh, Hezekiah, he talks about this and that and everything else, but look, he can't be trusted, he can't be sincere, he's diminished Yahweh's altars; I think Yahweh's a wonderful guy, I think He's got a marvellous religion, but really, this king, after all, says Rabshakeh, 'look what he's done! And what has he done to you poor people? you free men? you people who should have a voice in the government?'; he said to you, 'you shall worship at this altar in Jerusalem; now you should have a say in that matter!' and you can see him launching into his dissertation and trying to shake the confidence of Hezekiah in those people.

Now he had them; not a fly! Staring into the eyes of Shebna, who by this time, b&s, his confidence had flown out the window, he would have been standing there and his knees would have been water; confidence gone, but Eliakim stealing in his confidence, faced him, not a flinch! So he changes his mood, he said, 'I'll make a bet, give me pledges', he said, the word in the Hebrew signifies a 'bet'; we'll have a bet! You can just imagine how it would shake the confidence of the little group of men standing there, 'well, now, fellows, I'll make a bet! I'll give you 2,000 horses; bet you can't find 2,000 guys to ride!' What he meant by that of course was, not that they didn't have 2,000 men but there wouldn't be 2,000 game enough to come outside the walls! 'Bet ya; not a flinch! Steely eyes of Eliakim, not a word! So then he said, 'look, if you do that, verse 9, 'I don't think you could turn away the face of one captain'; 'one captain' in the Hebrew signifies a minor officer. He says, 'I'll make a bet; I'll give you 2,000 horses, you haven't got 2,000 horses have you?' NOT A WORD! He gets nothing out of them; 'alright, you haven't got 2,000 horses, I'll give you 2,000 horses, you couldn't get 2,000 blokes on them, and I'll bet you, that I'll send you a minor captain, you know, a fellow that's just got a menial task in the army and you wouldn't be able to beat him, he's a skilled soldier for all that! 'Bet ya'; NOT A WORD, and then he says this at the end of verse 9.

'The least of my master's servants', and he says, 'you put your trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen'. They were the words of Isaiah, and you can imagine him looking straight into Eliakim's eyes and saying that! Trying to shake his confidence in Isaiah the prophet; 'you put your trust in Egypt for chariots, don't you? You know that Eliakim!' Straight into the eyes of Eliakim and NOT A WORD, not a flinch, and Rabshakeh is really winding up, he says, 'Now listen, I haven't come here, he says, 'without Yahweh, your prophet says that; I'm here by Yahweh's command, Eliakim, you know that!' NOT A FLINCH! because in the back of Eliakim's mind was the prophecy of Isaiah 10, b&s, which said that the Assyrian would come against Jerusalem, but it said also, that he's a tool in My hands; he's the rod of My anger, I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and he's like an axe, says Yahweh, and he boasted himself that as an axe he could hew down my people'. But the end of chapter 10 says, 'I'm going to take that axe out of his hand, and cut his head off'; but Rabshakeh didn't use that set of words, he just wanted to shake Eliakim's belief, but at least Eliakim knew that Yahweh had prophesied that he would come. And can you see the way this man is going about it? and of course, as he's

talking to them, they become aware that the people on the wall are listening! and Eliakim in a moment of weakness, b&s, in a moment of weakness, looked around and realizing he's being heard by the people on the wall, knowing that he can't shake Rabshakeh, he foolishly says to Rabshakeh, 'look, speak in the Syrian language!' Oh, he knew what he was getting at straight away, ah! hey, you crowd, as they're being marched away and, of course, they all took notice!

You know, b&s, that man could speak at least 4 languages; he must have been speaking in Hebrew, mustn't he? because they were all hearing and listening to him; he was to speak to them in the Syrian language, and he was an Assyrian. He was no fool! What other language could he speak? He could probably speak every language in the Middle-East; he could probably speak Philistian, he could speak whatever you liked, he was a master of languages, and as soon as Eliakim said that, he could have bit his tongue out of his head! because Rabshakeh swings around in the Jews' language in the ears of the people on the wall, and he knew how to handle the common folk. And of course, who'd be sitting on the wall? the old rabble rousers; inside the city, genuine men would be concentrating on their prayers to God! The ones on the wall would be curious about what's going on, who would be the best sort of people on the wall. And he turns to them and as soon as Eliakim said, 'speak in the Syrian tongue', he said, 'Oh, you crowd, you can hear me can't you? Listen to me you mob, the days going to come when you'll sit down to a meal in your own excretions'. Brutal, coarse language; he spat at them, b&s, and in a guttural voice no doubt, with all the argument he could command, 'you'll sit down and drink the excretions of your own body, you fools' head'.

Well, Eliakim realized he had said the wrong thing, and the only thing that was said to him, and that Hezekiah had said to them, 'say nothing', because he knew the cleverness of that man! Rabshakeh said, 'don't let Hezekiah deceive you!' and having brutalized the people, he watches their reaction, and look what he does with them, b&s, he sings out with a loud voice in verse 13, so they could all hear him; and then he says, 'listen to me, you people, don't let Hezekiah deceive you; he's not able to deliver you'. B&S, he never said he was! If the people had any brains they would have known that Hezekiah never said he could; he said that Yahweh would deliver them, and yet Micah the prophet was to tell the people, that this man, Hezekiah, would deliver them through Yahweh's strength; 'he will be the peace when the Assyrian shall come within our borders', says Micah. But Hezekiah didn't make any claim, b&s, to greatness or to power! and he says in verse 15 of Isaiah 36, 'Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh, saying, Yahweh will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria'.

Now, he says in verse 16, having brutalized the people with the coarse language, Rabshakeh becomes all benevolent; 'Make an agreement with me', in the Hebrew, b&s, the word 'berakah' means a 'blessing', 'come out and make your peace with me', and do you know what I'll do for you? Well, he says, I'll let everyone of you, he says, eat under his own vine, and of his fig tree', and they were the words of Micah! He knew what the prophets were telling them, and he uses the elegant words of Micah the country prophet which added those words, to the common words he had with Isaiah; but being the

country fellow he put those words on, 'under the vine and under the fig tree', and Rabshakeh was using the colourful, wonderful language of Micah the prophet, and his offer was this! Imagine anybody falling for this! He says, 'there you will be living peacefully under your own vine and fig tree until we can arrange the transportation to deportation!' That's what he said, it's just a question of getting the tickets, and while the tickets are being arranged and all the lovely transport, in coaches, air conditioned etc. to the glorious country, we'll just live under our own vine and fig tree. And then when I take you away, he says, 'I'll give you a land like your own' (fool's dip) He understood not, b&s, that it wasn't the glory of the Land which consisted of the scenic beauty; all its productivity as far as that goes, the glory of all lands which was their Land, wasn't because of its productivity so much nor its scenic beauty, but its ability as the topography allowed it, to teach them spiritual lessons, for they were dependent upon Yahweh! that's why it was the glory of all lands, the hills and valleys which drinketh the water and the rain of heaven! The impossibility of irrigation for this river system, so that men would rely upon the water of God's heaven that they might appreciate the goodness of the Creator; it wasn't that it was the best land in the world to produce anything, although it was the most scenic, it was the most suited to bring out spiritual qualities, and he never understood that!

And he tried to get the people away on that basis, 'Come to a nation like mine!' And then he made his fatal mistake, and it was a fatal mistake, 'have any of the gods of the nations delivered his hand out of the king of Assyria?' And you see, b&s, the words which are to be addressed to Eliakim, turn to the people on the wall, now went one stage higher, and were addressed to the throne in heaven. And there was his mistake! and do you know, and I'm thrilled about this, that on the several occasions when Hezekiah bent his knee to the Creator for deliverance, he went over the matter of the siege and all the extreme circumstances of that, but he always came back to this point, 'he hath charged you, O Yahweh', and when he laid Sennacherib's letter, the letter which came later before him, he laid it open before Yahweh, there were the words that challenged Yahweh, and do you know, b&s, as the silence was broken from Yahweh, and Isaiah came out, he came out with this statement. 'I will defend this city for My sake', there was the answer, and do you know, Hezekiah was to learn from that, humility, and if that challenge hadn't have come, b&s, who knows? If that challenge hadn't have come, and when the answer came from heaven, 'Hezekiah, I've heard him' and the answer was very direct, very, very brief and straight to the point; it didn't mention the people's extremity, it didn't say anything about that, it said, 'he's challenged Me, and I'll take it up!'

And that was what Hezekiah wanted; but do you know something else, b&s, look what Rabshakeh said about Samaria, in verse 19? 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?', even a heathen king knew that Samaria had put its trust in the gods of the nation! and he bracketed Samaria with all the gods of the heathen, notice that! Even a heathen king looking on the brotherhood from outside, saw their weakness, and he bracketed Samaria with all those heathen nations. Verse 20, 'And who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Yahweh

should deliver Jerusalem', and he saw equally so, that Yahweh was the God of that city! You know, b&s, sometimes through the eyes of outsiders we get a better view of ourselves than we ourselves can see. When Brian Wilson wrote his book of 'Sects in Society' and he wrote about the Christadelphians, it was extremely accurate, and brethren marvelled at the accuracy; but you see, he was able dispassionately to look from the outside and write dispassionately about the brotherhood as we know it. And sometimes you know, an outsider can look very dispassionately at the brotherhood, and can see things that we can't see ourselves. And Rabshakeh saw very clearly, that Samaria was numbered among the heathen and that Yahweh was the God of Jerusalem! He saw that very clearly and it's a wonderful testimony, I believe, to the faith of Hezekiah, that he was able to establish that power in that city.

And in verse 21, 'But they held their peace and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh'. You know, b&s, what happened from thereon was wonderful! they went back and told him all the words of Rabshakeh, Hezekiah went straight to the Source of comfort, to Yahweh, and to His prophet that Yahweh loved, to Isaiah his friend, and they prayed together, and back came the answer. There was a magnificent answer, it's the answer, b&s, that we've all been longing to hear. Tomorrow morning we'll deal with that answer in an exhortation; I want to tell you, I've struggled hard in the preparation of these studies to arrange the study, that we might speak tomorrow morning about Hezekiah's bed of sickness, which I believe, is far more applicable to the situation; but unfortunately, I feel that would be an injustice to the study as a whole, but we won't lose much, as tomorrow morning we gather around the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel, and to hear the words of His Father answering that heathen king, an answer, b&s, which is absolutely indescribably beautiful, to thrill every true Christadelphian heart, in a glorious hope of the future, and in a strong unswerving confidence, in Yahweh the God of Jerusalem!