

9525

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP 1981

HEZEKIAH - A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #5 EXHORTATION

The Daughter of Zion hath despised Thee

Reading: Isaiah 37

My beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are we, b&s, and what are we, that we should be permitted to come here this morning, and to come near unto Yahweh and to bring in our own hands, the offering of our hearts and our minds to God, and to serve our Father first, and then be invited by Him, through His Son, to eat with Him in this memorial way? Who are we, and what are we, that that privilege should be given unto us? My heart is full this morning, b&s, as no doubt yours is, as we have been born along by the power of this book. It's a remarkable record and it's almost beyond me to express how I feel this morning, to come here, in this place with so many of you, to meet in the way that we do, in fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord and to His Father.

And as we come through the life of Hezekiah, b&s, you will have noticed that I haven't had need to go into the Psalms to show him as a type of Christ, or into the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, or as our bro. George in his opening remarks did this morning, in the book of Revelation; for I've found that the life of Hezekiah is sufficient for this weekend, because it's so wonderful, so wide and so broad. And yet no doubt all of you, have been stirred in your minds to think above what I'm saying, and to see our Lord Jesus Christ so wonderfully reflected in this man's life, and to know that He was coming, b&s, the greater than Hezekiah, Emmanuel, God, God with us! What a remarkable title that is, and as we come this morning to consider the crisis that came upon Hezekiah, and the terrible anguish of his heart, as he heard the words of the blasphemer, Rabshakeh, and was later to receive a letter from Sennacherib following up those words. and he went back into Yahweh's house, to seek that blessing! As we come to that crisis, b&s, let us all translate in our own minds and save me the task, translate in your own mind your own circumstances, the siege which you are under from day to day, not only from the world and the pressing ecclesial problems, but from our own personal problems. The problems which relate to you and to me that come from within, and we're under siege all the time, b&s, to the greatest enemy that we have to face, the enemy of self! And to know that we can do nothing else but to clothe ourselves in the garments of sackcloth

and come to Yahweh and say, 'deal with this enemy, for we find him beyond our power to grasp'. And those are the things which are left up to you this morning, and to myself as we again, at the end of this feast are going to participate in the memorials and the responsibility for the continuation of this study, is no longer mine, it's yours and mine! And we've all got to translate the terms of what I'm going to tell you in exposition, into terms of exhortation.

Let's pick up the story then in 37th chapter of Isaiah from whence we won't move this morning, because the chapter contains just about all that we want, with a few supporting references. And we left the story, b&s, of Eliakim, and Shebna and the few men that were with them, going back within the walls to report to Hezekiah the tragic circumstances of the speech of Rabshakeh. They had stood resolutely there, and for but a minor blemish, they had not answered him, and stood there and watched him, and with steely gaze they had kept their decorum; and Rabshakeh's psychological battering ram, b&s, bounced off the wall! and he had not been able to penetrate that city. And although they went back clothed in sackcloth and mourning, they had won a great victory! they hadn't wilted beneath the blast of his verbal onslaught. And they had won the day, and he had to turn his back upon that city, unable to get through those doors without a fight.

But they knew he would be back, or they thought he would be back! He never came again, and that was the wonder of the occasion; and as they went back in and they told Hezekiah in the 1st verse we read, 'Hezekiah rent his clothes, and he went into the house of Yahweh. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth', and you know, b&s, there's a wonderful exhortation in those few details. Here is the king, there is the head of David's house, Eliakim, there is the recorder, Shebna, there are the priests, there are the elders of the nation, the whole nation being represented there, b&s, there wasn't a dignitary that was missing! and they're all walking into the house of God clothed in ashen. You think of it, where are the robes of glory and beauty now? Hezekiah has laid aside his purple, Eliakim the flowing robes of the house of David; they're all gone, b&s, and there's deep and abject humility here, and there's a great lesson in this!

Do you know, I don't believe we've altogether learnt that lesson. We talk about the Russian invasion of the Land of Israel, and we speak confidently, b&s, of divine intervention, and there's nothing wrong with that. We speak confidently that God will not allow Israel to be destroyed, and there's nothing wrong with that, but I don't think we should be so confident about ourselves! because I believe the lesson of this man, Hezekiah, is a great lesson for us. He never presumed upon Yahweh's intervention, he didn't say, 'I am sure', he said, 'it may be that Yahweh will interfere'. That was Hezekiah's mind, b&s, and I can tell you now, I am far from confident as far as my own personal standing is concerned, I am supremely confident about God's intervention for David's sake, for the city of Jerusalem's sake, for Israel's sake, and above all, for His name's sake. I am far from confident for my sake, and I would feel with Hezekiah when he said those words, 'it may be', and that was the attitude of a man, b&s, who's clothed in sackcloth.

Who are we? what are we? You consider, b&s, our standing in the sight of the Creator, and learn a lesson from the prayer of Hezekiah. It was a wonderful prayer, he never presumed; you know I tremble at times to hear brethren and sisters talk about providence in their lives! I absolutely tremble from head to foot, when I hear people talk so glibly about the providence of God in our lives. We know the providence of God is in our lives, b&s, but very often it's in a manner that we don't recognize; and yet we talk so flippantly about the providence of God arranging our holidays, and in such things as God has no interest. And, b&s, we ought to get down on our knees, and think about our eternal salvation; of which all these other things pile into insignificance. And as far as that is concerned, it may be that God will intervene for us! and there's no guarantee as far as we are concerned, the guarantee is in His Word. But we, b&s, are poor weak mortal men and we come here this morning, and I wanted to say these words at the beginning, that we commence our memorial feast, all of us, in sackcloth! because that's how that chapter commences; it's a day of trouble, of rebuke, of blasphemy, as Hezekiah said.

And he went to Isaiah, the son of Amos. A man that had his own personal relationship with his God, b&s, but he did not presume upon that either. He still found strength in others! It's a wonderful thing to know that another brother or sister is praying for you; and although we may be able to establish our own personal relationship with our Father, it's a wonderful thing to have confidence in God through another person. It's a good thing, because it places us in a position of dependence; not only upon God but upon our fellow man. And he went to Isaiah the son of Amos, 'the salvation of Yahweh in strength', as Amos means 'strength'. And there was the salvation of Yahweh in strength, b&s, and he sought Isaiah, and you know, in 2 Chronicles chapter 32 and verse 20, it records that Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed together. What a wonderful thing that would have been to behold, the two of them praying together, the prophet and the king, beseeching the blessing of Almighty God upon them.

And what were Hezekiah's feelings at this stage? He used a proverbial expression in which there was conjured up all that he was thinking. He said in the 3rd verse of Isaiah 37, he said, 'it was a day of trouble, rebuke and blasphemy', for he said, 'the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth'. There was a proverbial expression, b&s, which really means there was a failure of human resources at a critical time of pain and anguish! and you can imagine a woman in this situation, and our sisters here this morning, will enter into the spirit of this no doubt, better than the brethren, because theirs is a personal experience; and as the time of the birth arrives it is a time of crisis and of some anxiety, for we're never sure! It is a time, b&s, when the woman needs to bring together her resources both emotionally and physically, and she must bring that child into the world, and she must work to bring that child into the world! And what a terrible thing it would be, that after the long period when the child is ready to be born, the woman finds at that critical point to bring that child into the world, all strength drained out of her body and it looks like it's going to be still-born. And that's how he felt, he'd used every resource that he had, he'd drawn upon the strength of Yahweh; he strengthened himself, he strengthened the walls, he brought the water in,

he'd been to Isaiah, his prayer went to God, he'd drained himself utterly dry of resources, and still he knew that he couldn't make the grade, he just couldn't hang on long enough.

And he sent those words to Isaiah the prophet, in a matter of great extremity; do you know, b&s, that expression is used two other times in the scriptures and I want to turn these up, because I want to show you Yahweh's answer to that! In Isaiah 26, and you will see the importance of this expression when you see the answer in both cases is the same, and in Isaiah 26 and verse 17, the prophet says in verse 17, 'like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Yahweh. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen'. And Israel, b&s, pregnant with hope, had found in the extremity of the crisis, when there should have been for the world, a nation born at once, Israel found, b&s, it was beyond their resources to complete that wonderful hope. And in the very crisis of birth, they failed to bring forth anything but wind, and human resources were spent and utterly exhausted, and the prophet says, 'thy dead men shall live' and God's answer to that, b&s, is resurrection. Thy dead men shall live, and you know, when we stand at the brink of the grave, as some of our members have done and gone into that yawning abyss, and some of them knowing for a long time it was coming, and as it drew nearer, they would know what that meant, b&s. And with all the power of faith, the power of the Word, the help of their brethren and sisters, finally as time went by and slipped passed them, they knew, b&s, that human resources were expended; there's nothing more and they knew that if it hadn't been for God to open the womb of the grave, then there would never be born into the world, that man child of righteousness! And that's how Hezekiah felt! the expression is found in Hosea, and exactly the same answer comes forth from the prophet. In Hosea 13 and verse 13, the expression is found here again, it says, 'the sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for (says the Hebrew) he delays to come forth from the mouth of the womb', and as the sorrows of travail came upon Israel, there was a delay at the mouth of the womb because they could not work any deliverance in the earth, and there again, at the time of crisis and pain and anguish, human resources were utterly expended; 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave' is God's answer and you know, b&s, therefore, when you run that expression back to Hezekiah, he was looking into the pit. He'd come to the yawning abyss, all human resources had gone, and he came before his God, b&s, in the words of a man in the New Testament who said, 'Lord, I believe, oh, help mine unbelief!' And that's what he was saying, it was beyond him to go any further and that's how he felt.

And he prayed, b&s, that God might help them! And I want you to notice he said very little; you know, reverent men always say very little, they know so much about their God, they don't have to offer Him vain repetitions, b&s, they know the thing that is uttermost in the mind of the Father, and all he said was this in verse 4, 'it may be that Yahweh Elohim will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God'. Now you work out what Hezekiah's saying there in that 37th chapter of Isaiah, it may be, he said, that Yahweh Elohim will hear the words of

Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God. Now, b&s, if it may be that God would hear blasphemy against His holy name, where was Hezekiah standing? If there was some expression of doubt that Yahweh would answer a challenge to His own name, what's the hope of Him answering a challenge to your name or my name? I'll tell you, there's no hope, b&s, our life is made up of a manifestation of the Father through the Son, and our appeal to the throne could never be any more or less than that; God will never intervene to save anyone except those people in whom His Son is reflected. God will save no one but Jesus Christ; there will only be one man in the kingdom, b&s, and He's the man of One, multitudinously manifested, yes! but Jesus Christ is stamped on every individual, that's the one that God's interested in. And as Hezekiah said, it may be that He's heard the reproach of the living God; he made no mention of his own extremity, the extremity of the city or of the people in this crisis, because he knew that if God didn't answer him for that, there was no hope of any other answer! Now that's not the words of an arrogant man who walked around saying, 'hah ha, look what God will do with Russia'; and when we stand there with Jesus Christ, will we do nothing to the Russians?

That was not the words of Hezekiah, b&s, and he was a greater man than you or I, look, we're not worthy to tie his shoes, and that was his attitude! That was his attitude, and having prayed that God might intervene for His own sake, he then appended another prayer that Isaiah might lift up his voice for the remnant that is left! A pitiful remnant that was caged up in that city, a remnant that was left (we haven't got time to run into that but it was a favourite subject of Isaiah, the remnant that was left!). It wasn't long, b&s, and Yahweh's reply came back, and Isaiah said unto him in verse 6, 'thus shall you say unto your master, Thus saith Yahweh, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard', see Rabshakeh had said that Hezekiah's strength was mere words, well, so are they; don't be frightened of his words says God, because He says, 'don't be frightened of him because the king of Assyria has blasphemed Me', and there was the basis of divine intervention; Hezekiah knew that if anything got a response, that would, and it got a response! And that's what I said, that's the greatest mistake that Rabshakeh made, and it got a response, he's blasphemed Me, and that's all God said in this context about His intervention; that was all that was necessary, and Hezekiah knew, b&s, that if they were to be included in that deliverance which was going to come upon the Assyrian, they have to be in God because there's no other basis for divine intervention. And if they weren't in God and for God, they're not included in that; he's blasphemed Me! And we ought to be people of the book, people of God, standing up for God's principles, manifesting God's character and reflecting in our lives, the glorious attributes seen in Jesus Christ His Son. And if that's our life, b&s, then may be we can walk with some degree of confidence, for Yahweh will answer any challenge to that!

And Hezekiah knew it; 'I will send a blast upon him' and that word 'blast' is the word 'ruwach' it is used throughout the scriptures, b&s, for a physical blast of power, but I don't think that's what He means there! The word 'ruwach' is the word 'spirit' of course, which is render 'spirit' and it very often means 'an attitude of mind', a 'perception of certain matters' and here I believe it means just that. What happened, of course, Yahweh didn't send a physical blast upon him, but He sent upon him an impulse to

leave Jerusalem; 'I'll work on him, says Yahweh, don't worry about him, I'll get him away from the walls; and He did, b&s, He did send a blast upon him, for Yahweh said, 'he shall hear a rumour', and he did! He heard a rumour almost immediately; Tirhakah the Ethiopian king of the 25th dynasty of Egypt had come up, and was coming up from the south and was a potential danger. Sennacherib was down in Lachish about thirty miles south of Jerusalem, and had made it his headquarters down there; Tirhakah is coming up from the south, he's a potential danger, we ought to deal with him first; he's bigger fish than Hezekiah. And the rumour sends Rabshakeh away, b&s, and he goes.

And Yahweh said, 'he shall return unto his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land'. But that didn't happen immediately, did it? And do you know, b&s, if we had been living in those days, as we have course in our own day, the signs of the times are not always clear and apparent for the immediate future. He shall return to his own land, and he shall fall by the sword in his own land, and Isaiah had said previously, 'I will break the Assyrian in My Land', and there was opportunity for scoffers to point to a discrepancy in the divine record if they wanted to! But on one hand Isaiah says, 'I will break the Assyrian in My Land' then he says 'he'll go home to his own land and fall by the sword in his own land'; it all came to pass, b&s, but it took some working out and waiting for and watching for! And it took faith! it wasn't as if the Assyrian came up and God destroyed him and that was it! Oh, No! there was a lot to doubt; circumstances were all against that being fulfilled, and although every letter of that was fulfilled, it didn't happen in a manner that which perhaps many imagined that it would. There had to be the watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, day and night, watching for those signs that would herald the end of the Assyrian, and ultimate peace for Israel.

Now, of course, Rabshakeh departs to the south; but he knows full well what Hezekiah perhaps is thinking; although he was wrong on this occasion. Perhaps there were many others in that city who were thinking what Rabshakeh thought they would think! and that is this, that when he got down to Lachish he heard that Sennacherib was now moving forth to Libnah. This is important, b&s, because Lachish is 30 miles south of Jerusalem, Libnah is about 10 miles north or northwest of Lachish; so Sennacherib has uprooted his camp and is moving north, and he's coming towards Jerusalem and he's going to meet Tirhakah up there, somewhere south of Jerusalem, that's where he was. And because he's occupied with Tirhakah, he sends this letter back to Hezekiah; and he doesn't want Hezekiah to have any moments of peace, 'I'll be back said that letter'. And all the letter did, b&s, all the letter did was to repeat a form of boast, but this time Sennacherib cleverly extends that boast.

You note what he says, verse 11, he said, 'Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed'. Now Rabshakeh made the point that the king of Harmath, of Arphad, Sepharvaim and so on, that those kings had been destroyed by the present Assyrian power, but Sennacherib appends a list and goes back further, and he says, 'Now look, Hezekiah, if you haven't been impressed with his words, consider history way back. Now where are the kings of Gozan, Haran, Rezep, Eden, Telassar; you go back in the annals of the Assyrian history, Hezekiah, we've got a longer record of consistency against false gods and other

gods than you have ever realized! The god of my fathers right back there'; and you know, he extended, b&s, the list, that Hezekiah might have a longer look at a longer period of history, that he might be more greatly impressed with the power of Assyria. It was a frightening letter because it showed a determination on the part of the king of Assyria! He wasn't going to forget little Jerusalem which was small-fry in relation to Egypt, b&s. It wasn't as if the Egyptians were going to draw him and he'd forget them; 'I won't forget you, I'm coming back!'

And of course, Hezekiah was thrown back again, b&s, upon his God! And he went before his God, in verse 14, and the end of verse 14 says, 'he spread that letter out before Yahweh'. Spread that letter out before Yahweh, not that Yahweh couldn't read it, b&s, without it being spread out; it was a very wonderful symbolic gesture, it was a prayer without words, he spread that letter out and no doubt, in some way, pointed to the matter he wanted to emphasize; he has blasphemed You. You see, Hezekiah never lost sight of that principle, 'open your eyes, O God, open your ears, and see, what he said about You'. You know, there's a wonderful man, b&s, who knew the mind of his God! 'O Yahweh of armies, God of Israel', all those expressions, those titles that he used in the name of Yahweh, conjuring up before Hezekiah's mind, all that Yahweh stood for; HE WHO WILL BE, which, b&s, is a very simple thing, there's nothing complex about the Yahweh name, it's as simple as A, B, C. It really means and simply means that God will come into our life, will fill our minds with His Word, impress us with His virtues and give us the courage and the faith to practice them, so that we can go to people and say, 'He that hath seen me hath in measure, seen what my Heavenly Father is like; HE WHO WILL BE you and me, is all it means! And that's conjured up before Hezekiah, all the principles for which He stood for! And He had armies, and He was the God of Israel, and He dwelt between the cherubim, and why would Hezekiah bring that matter before God? that He was the One that dwelt between the cherubim?

For what was the 'cherubim'? Again, b&s, very simple, all the details of these matters, tend to sometimes clog people's minds, that the thing is so profound they'll never understand it! it's very simple, the cherubim back in the garden of Eden, were there for no other reason than to keep open the way to the tree of life! not to barricade it, not to obliterate it, but to keep it open, that in keeping it open people might approach in the right way! What was the tree of life, b&s, what was the tree of life, b&s, as far as Hezekiah was concerned? IT WAS ISRAEL! isn't that the way to the kingdom? salvation is of the Jews! that way can't be closed; the Assyrian can't close that road and Yahweh stands astride it! HE WILL NOT HAVE IT CLOSED! and he reminded Yahweh of the tremendous power that was going to be necessary to keep that road to the kingdom open! 'O Shepherd of Israel, that dwelleth between the cherubim', said Psalm 80, and the Shepherd of Israel, b&s, is a Shepherd to preserve that flock because they are the way to the kingdom! We bring an interested friend to the truth, what do you tell him? You take him straight to the promises made to the fathers, you lead him straight through the nation of Israel straight to God; who's going to close that door? And that's what Hezekiah prayed for, the cherubim of Israel, 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubim' and as bro. Thomas so beautifully expounded for us, 'the word 'cherub' itself comes from a root word which means 'to ride' and there is such a thing as 'the chariots of the

cherubim'. Blow Assyria with his chariots; there were chariots there, b&s, aplenty gleaming with divinity; flashing with brilliance of divine power, ridden and driven by Yahweh on the wings of the wind, Who would shake the earth and the foundations of the earth, and they bear the foundations of nations; that's what Hezekiah had at his command with merely conjuring up that expression, the cherubim, and he brought before God all that was necessary to bring the Assyrian down upon the earth. And he said to God 'that He was God of all the kingdoms of the earth, Yahweh was not the god of Assyria, but He was Yahweh Who was God of Assyria; He wasn't their god in the sense that He was the God of Israel, but He's the God of everybody! Where are the gods of these nations? they are no gods; but Assyria, b&s, was under the domination of the God of Israel, that's what Hezekiah was saying. He's got them all under His control and there was nothing to fear!

And he pointed out in verse 18, 'it is true what Sennacherib had said in his letter; of a truth, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have done what they boasted about, and that makes it all the better, doesn't it? and Hezekiah was virtually saying to Yahweh, 'isn't it good that it's true!? Isn't it wonderful that it's true, if it wasn't true, we wouldn't be able to work this day a marvellous work, but we can, Yahweh, because it is true what he says, he has beat them all and when You lay him low, everyone will know that there is no god in earth, like our God!' That prayer, b&s, couldn't help but be answered! because it's through the weight, the full weight of responsibility for the whole thing on Yahweh's shoulders and Yahweh was pleased to have it! It set the stage for divine intervention, it drew everybody's attention to the tremendous issues involved; that when Yahweh moved out there, b&s, in the history of the stage of the world, there was a drama to be enacted that would be indelibly imprinted and burnt upon every mind that saw it. And that's exactly how Yahweh had played that stage for years; 'art thou not He of whom I have spoken long ago?' He had been bringing this drama, b&s, for years, to this crisis. And what a marvellous thing it was to see it come like that.

And we come now, I believe, to one of the most thrilling sections of Isaiah's prophecy, Yahweh's answer to the Assyrian! His answer to the Assyrian, b&s, and His answer to all our problems. All of which are epitomized out there in the armies of this world, where all the problems, the atheism, arrogance, the pride, the brutality, the crudeness, and all that flesh stands for is manifested in the armies of the world. And the answer of Yahweh is nothing short of absolute magnificence; and the first words of that answer, as Isaiah strode, no doubt as he would, to Hezekiah perhaps overlooking the wall, and pointing the finger of scorn at the great Rabshakeh, what an enormous power! 'The virgin', oh, b&s, 'the virgin' and threw it in his face! and the mighty Rabshakeh whose verbal battering ram had not even dented that wall, was smacked across the face, by the delicate virgin! 'The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised you', you know, b&s, they weren't light words! I believe, that there were 5 things implied in that statement, every one of them of the height of significance!

First of all, there was an utter contempt for Assyrian might, because Yahweh matched them by a virgin. Assyria had come there and boasted of his strength by matching his army against army. And Yahweh showed an utter contempt for all power by standing



before Assyria as His great force, a little virgin. That's how I despise you, says Yahweh's answer through Isaiah. But why a virgin? Well you see, b&s, he'd come to the hill of Nob, he had shaken his fist under the nose of the daughter of Zion and threatened to do violence and rape her; and she's standing there still a virgin! That's the point that Isaiah is making; she was unsullied by foreign intervention. She still had enclosed around her, the walls of Jerusalem; she was still a cistern of which he hadn't drunk; she was an unsullied little girl, she was pure; he hadn't laid a hand on her, but he wanted to rape her! You know, if you read the 23rd chapter of Isaiah you'll learn there that the power of Assyria did rape the virgin daughter of Tyre, he ravished her, but he didn't ravish that little girl. And there she was, and what are we going to learn from that? What was Hezekiah going to learn from that? He was going to learn, b&s, that as long as we remain virgins, then there is no power on earth that can touch us either. And as we surround the Lamb around Mt. Zion, the 144,000, the record says and it's talking about men and women, 'for they are virgins', they had not been defiled by the great whore system of the Roman world. And there was a great message for Israel in those words, that as long as they remained unsullied from the idolatrous practices of the world, maintain their purity before God, no foreign hand would ever lay itself upon them! That's what He was telling them, b&s!

And the fourth point was, that the promise of divine intervention, was that a virgin would conceive! And who is the One who was going to cause her to conceive? it was going to be Yahweh. Would Yahweh have anyone touch His virgin, b&s? that was the power of the Word! Isaiah had stood upon the gushing forth of Gihon, and had told Ahaz that he could have a sign in heaven and in earth, heaven and earth, and there'd be a connection between the two; and a virgin would conceive because heaven and earth would be connected and Rabshakeh came up to touch that girl; he couldn't touch her because God, b&s, was going to move into there, and she was His bride! And it was by the connection of heaven and earth that the great power of Yahweh, El with us, was to come into the centre of that nation. What a marvellous reply that was, whose goings forth were of old; the origins of the power that was going to come into Israel, b&s, had come from a long way back, from eternity, and came into that city through the virgin daughter of Zion and to defy the might of the world. That's what was going to happen!

And finally, the message that came home through that statement, 'the virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee', b&s, is in verse 23, for He says, 'whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high'. Who was he? Who was the one that you're blaspheming? Well, He says, I'll tell you who He is, He's the Holy One of Israel, and that, b&s, is one of the titles of the Deity that Isaiah uses over and over again, and only a ½ dozen times outside the book of Isaiah is that title used. Who is He? Who is the Holy One of Israel? Well, I'll tell you who He is, the 54th chapter of Isaiah will tell you who He is, and this is why that man couldn't touch that girl; and here's the Holy One of Israel in Isaiah 54 and verse 5, 'For thy Maker is thine husband; Yahweh of armies is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called', that was the name of her husband! And He says, 'who do you think you've come up here to blaspheme? whose girl is she? That's my girl, that's my bride-to-be; you think you can lay a hand

upon her? well, I'll tell you something, my name is the Holy One of Israel which Isaiah goes on to say in chapter 4, is linked with Yahweh of armies, and you can't lay a hand on her'. And that was spat in his face, and Rabshakeh turned his back on that city, b&s, and walked away.

And Isaiah said in the words of chapter 37 and verse 22, This is the word which Yahweh hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee', and there was a picture of Rabshakeh, looking at the walls of the city, impregnable as far as his verbal assault was concerned; they had been unmoved by his assault, and now in frustration and bitterness, had to turn his back and the virgin looked at him; and there she was for all the world to see, a lovely girl, unsullied by divine intervention. Pure in the sight of God, dedicated by the burnt offering, in fellowship with Him through the peace offering, pure now because all the idolatry had been thrown over the walls into the brook of Kedron, and she shook her head at him and said, 'Hah, hah, hah! she said, 'I'm pure for my Maker' and all it needed, b&s, was for God to come into that arena and take His bride: and God was with them!

And the children were going to come to the birth! Look at Isaiah 66, and here was the answer that God was giving through the virgin daughter of Zion, what a magnificent answer it was! Hezekiah had said, 'the children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth', and Isaiah 66 is the complete answer in verse 6, 'A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Yahweh that rendereth recompense to His enemies' (Yahweh's come into the city! the city's trembling with His presence; He's in there!) 'Before she travailed she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children'. Hezekiah, 'Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Yahweh: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God'. Oh, Hezekiah, 'Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her (because I do) rejoice for you with her, all ye that mourn for her', and then He goes on to speak in glowing language of the coming family, a nation born at once, b&s. You can't have a nation born at once, you see God is not talking in that prophecy of having a multiplicity of people born at once, He's talking about a nation born at once, and a nation is not merely a gathering of people, it's a heritage, a tradition, a history, it's rooted and grounded in traditions that go back for years, that's what makes nationhood, b&s. It's a human impossibility, but you see, in the ultimate of things that this prophet is talking about, which was going to be epitomized in the deliverance from Assyria, in the ultimate of things, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, we shall be caught up with Him to be ever with the Lord in the political aerial of this world, and those that sleep in Jesus will be caught up with Him; and there will be a congregation of saints brought together, and we shall stand with Abel onwards, b&s, and rejoice in the glory of God's immortality and what will we find? We'll find that Abel's traditions are our traditions, and our traditions are Abraham's traditions and Abraham's traditions are Jeremiah's traditions and Hezekiah's are Isaiah's and so forth, and we'll all stand there as if we've lived together for years! And the foundations of our nationhood

go right back to the Genesis' record; and a nation literally, in literal truth will be born at once, and that's God's determination! 'I will ransom them from the grave, thy dead men shall live', and when all human resources are expended, God will open the yawning pit and bring out of it a nation with its tradition and history embedded in it, which He calls from one passage of scripture to another, a generation of the race!

And that was the great promise, and you know, Hezekiah was promised that, b&s. He was promised that, he was promised to see the incipient fulfilment of that when he finally got outside the gates of Jerusalem, and again set root down in the land of Judah. It was a wonderful message, all epitomized in that wonderful expression 'the virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee'. Ah, it's marvellous, b&s, who cares for the world? who cares for the world? with all its ramifications, who cares what it says and does? Where is the power that can stop that? And as we travail together, using all our human resources to the utmost degree and still failing to produce in ourselves, b&s, the ultimate, we look upon that table! 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit', and the Lord Jesus Christ was saying, 'the children have come to the birth, and as far as I'm concerned, as Jesus of Nazareth, there is no strength to bring forth;' 'I will ransom thee from the power of the grave'. And He was born of the virgin daughter of Zion, the handmaid of Yahweh, and He was GOD WITH US; there, b&s, is the answer to all our problems!

And what if Sennacherib had breached the walls? and raised the city to the ground? It still wouldn't have been the end, anymore than when Nebuchadrezzar did it years later. For ultimately it will be 'thy dead men shall live'. And that's the answer, b&s, to all problems, and whatever defeats we may seem to suffer, they're only stepping stones to a glorious victory, and it matters not, does it, it matters not if that's the hope that burns in the hearts of each and everyone of us?

And then I want to be very quick in the next section of Isaiah 37, as the prophet moves through that chapter and he uses all the couplets of the boasts of Assyria. What the Assyrian was able to do, and you know, b&s, the very words of Isaiah here, or shall we say, words very similar to them; you can go today to the British museum and read them, and there in the 'Taylor Prism' because it was so called, because it was excavated in the Assyrian area, they brought that prism and cleaned it all up and there it is, and there's Sennacherib's boast of all that he could accomplish by the power of his might; and all that Isaiah is doing, if you go there and look at that prism, you'll read some of the words that are in this chapter. It's a wonderful thing to know that there is in the earth today, in the earth today, there are actual inscriptions that that chapter is basing its remarks upon. Those inscriptions which said 'that I can take my chariots' (to quote the prism) 'over rugged mountains and difficult paths and through trackless wastes and through dry country'. And Isaiah said, 'you have boasted by the multitude of my chariots, I'm come to the heights of the mountains; I can take a chariot, he says, into the recesses of Lebanon'; (of course he couldn't but such was the boast of the Assyrian that he said he could). He says, 'you can boast, you can cut down tall cedars and the fir tree, he's gone through forests, nothing impedes his progress, b&s, there is no natural barrier that Sennacherib can't traverse. Isaiah says in verse 25, 'I have digged, and drunk

water'(he'd have to if he was going to invade Egypt, for the might of his army to cross that desert before he came to Egypt, he'd have to dig wells; it would be an extreme feat to do that but he'd do it, he said. And when he got there he said, 'I will dry up all the rivers of the Nile canals' (as the Hebrew has it) and of course, Egypt was surrounded by a canal system. They had no mountains to defend them, b&s, but they laced the whole area; they had the whole area laced with this canal system, no chariot could get through there except Sennacherib's; and he boasted in his might, b&s.

And what was Yahweh's answer to that? Look at it in verse 26, He says, 'Haven't you ever heard that long ago I've done all that', in other words says God, I know you can do that! and I've made preparations for you to do it; I believe you! I know that there will be no natural boundary that will impede your progress to a given point, but to pass which he couldn't go! but up to that point, says God, I know that you're right. But what you don't understand is that I've planned it for you, I've planned that for you! Do you know how He did it? Well, He says in verse 27, 'Therefore their inhabitants were of small power', you see, Sennacherib, it isn't because you've been growing in might, it's because as you progressed, I've gone ahead of you and weakened the other nations. You are a pitifully weak power by comparison to Me; a virgin threw you out of Jerusalem, and in your growing pride and power and pomp you've forgotten that all I've done is softened up nations as you came to them! and He uses expressions, b&s, of a decline in power of nations. Yahweh said, 'I've made them as grass of the field, I made them as young herbage, I made them as grass on the housetops which grows in the gutter of course, and when the sun comes up quickly, gone; I've even made them like seed that has sprung up out of the earth, and then blasted it by the heat before it's ever got a grip in the ground'. So as Sennacherib came along, all he was, b&s, was a first-class lawnmower! and as he came to the various grasses, Yahweh was making it tidier and tidier and tidier until he came to grass that wasn't in existence; He'd scorch it off the ground. He said, 'you think that you're mighty; it's only because I've made the other nations weak'.

And that was Yahweh's answer to the might of Assyria, b&s! and if Assyria didn't believe it, verse 28 says, 'I know where you live, I know everything you do' and the expressions 'thy going out and thy coming in' and 'thy abode' b&s, cover every practical existence in life! I know every single move that you've been making, I know everything about you and you've charged into my Land like a raging bull, and I've let you go. But, Assyria, you're going to go so far, and I'm going to sling a bridle over your head, and pull you to a grinding halt; and when I've got your head roped in, I'm going to stick a pin through your nose, put a chain in it like you do with your captives, and then we'll lead you right the way back where you came from, put you in your own land, call upon your own children and they're going to stick a sword in you!' The virgin daughter of Zion hath laughed at you!

And you know, b&s, 'I will put hooks in thy jaws' is the expression quoted in Ezekiel 38 which I've been telling you all through these studies; and we're going to see, Yahweh Elohim of Israel, the husband of that daughter of Zion go to work! And we'll see the Russian very shortly, b&s, as he begins to make his grand move for the building up of

his image empire, and when we go back from this Easter camp, don't ever miss the daily news; with the intrigues in Poland and the Pope's working there, and with all that's going on in the Gulf war between the Arab states, with Israel's raging inflation, America's expertise in technology which must be frightening the Russians, with the impending decision of the Kremlin to make their grand move, b&s, we will see him come forth, we will see Yahweh working among the nations of Europe to make them grass, young herbage grass upon the housetops, and grass scorched before the wind and the Russian will run down to the Middle East, with such ease and power until Yahweh puts a bridle in his nose and pulls him up, b&s, right at the brink of the destruction of Jerusalem.

And we will see it, may be, if this morning we absorb into our being, the manifestation of God through His Son! And if that's done in measure, may be, He will hear our prayer; and if He does, b&s, we are going to see great and glorious things! Oh, if the brotherhood of Christ, if we could only, b&s, understand what we're called to? If only, b&s, we knew who we are and where we are today by God's grace? We would love each other with a fervency beyond description; it would be a forgetting and a forgiving of all those personalities and personal things which we commit against each other. There would be a zeal and a dedication to the purity of God's truth, a dignity and respect for each other because our God is with us! and we would go forth to conquer this world, b&s, with Christ if that's our attitude. And we would know the certainty of those things, because it hasn't been that the world has blasphemed us, but we can open the letter of our hearts to God and say, 'look what they've done, they've called you in question', and we would know that that always gets an answer! And in measure, therefore, as we live the life of Christ, which is the life of God, that's the answer, b&s, that we'll get from God, 'I have heard that they have blasphemed Me'.

And then finally in this chapter, from verses 30 to 35, just a short little section, Isaiah gives Hezekiah a message of encouragement! And turning from the Assyrian in verse 30 he says, 'And this shall be a sign for you, Hezekiah, you shall eat this year such as grows of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof'. You see what he was saying, b&s, was the sign; you know, there were hypocritical men, that always sought a sign from our Lord Jesus Christ; it was a sign of the moment, immediately, something spectacular, look at the sign that Hezekiah got! It was a sign, b&s, that stretched over at least 15 months; and what Isaiah was saying was that the sign (now you try and comprehend this) that the sign he got was, that within about 15 months he may be able to get outside that city! or that he would be if he accepted that sign. Because if that was spoken in the autumn of that year, having not sown the previous year, he would have to eat that which groweth of itself, because he still couldn't go outside; the Assyrian didn't just go home after the destruction of 185,000. Oh, no, it took 15 months for that land to be cleared of Assyrian marauders. So Hezekiah's still interested in that year, having come in the autumn he couldn't sow that year for the next one either, so for all the next year there's nothing sown, and all they could do was go out and gather what they could when they could. And in that third year there would be no obstructions out there, no dangers; they could go forth and sow and reap, and then,

b&s, they would know by that sign, that they were free from the Assyrians. And for 88 years the Assyrian trode the world! and squashed nations out of existence and brutalized people and from the day that Rabshakeh turned his back on that city, they never saw the Assyrian again!

And even when Yahweh slew that host, I believe, it was out of sight of Jerusalem; they never saw the Assyrian again. Yahweh said he won't come near this place, he won't cast seeds against it, he won't shoot an arrow here, and they could fire arrows at a considerable distance; they never saw him again. But, b&s, you think of the faith that was necessary! Hezekiah, I believe, composed the Song of Degrees, I don't think (and it's my personal opinion, I don't think that he actually wrote them, he may have written some of them; I don't think he actually wrote them, I think he got them composed). And one of them said this, 'he that goeth forth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him'. We're all in Jerusalem, we've received the sign, the weeks go past and there's news abroad that there's still danger in the Land; the evacuation of the Land isn't completed. That year goes by, we're eating what seed we've got left; all the next 12 months rumours have it that we still can't go outside according to the sign given by Isaiah; it's a long sign, b&s, and we're eating away at the precious seed, and the heap's getting smaller and smaller and smaller. Come into the third year, there's little left; and now Hezekiah orders his people to swing the doors of Jerusalem open, and that Israel is going to blossom and bud and fill the world with fruit, because Isaiah said, 'you'll put your roots down and your fruit will grow up', the little remnant in the city will again repopulate the Land. So Hezekiah says, 'come with me', so we look into our bag, b&s, we've got a handful of wheat; now then, here's the question, what do you do with it? If we throw it in the ground there is a risk that the season may not be good enough for it to grow; there's no risk if we believe Isaiah! but you see, b&s, that's only half the story. That risk would be there with any ordinary farming, but the biggest risk of all was, will the Assyrian come back? And the news of the day said that he would! The headlines of the world said 'he is absolutely supreme', everywhere there's news of his supremacy, what do you do with it? Well, Hezekiah would have gone out and went 'swish'(sowed his seed), and he would have known, b&s, that it would have taken root downward and produced fruit upward, 'fruit unto God', as Paul puts it in Romans. But that would have taken a lot of faith, and for 80 more years the Assyrian empire was supreme.

You know, b&s, it's not easy to manifest faith, is it? And we have that assurance on the table here, with us this morning. Israel, b&s, shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit; that's the Christadelphian movement along with all the faithful of old who have died before us; we're going to take root into this earth, b&s, and bring up fruit towards God! The Israel of God is going to do that along with the nation, the natural seed of Abraham. And we're going to blossom and bud and fill the world with fruit, here we are packed into this little valley here, b&s, just a few of us; we only represent a minority of people in this world. We are the remnant caved as you might say, in spiritual Jerusalem, outside of which there is a raging tumult of nations and peoples and tongues. And yet the day is going to come, the long sign of Israel's history, b&s, in the third year they will revive and Christ will come, and the doors will be opened and we will

go forth to sow that seed of the gospel. It will take root and it'll blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit; and there will be no one in that day who is not frightened to spread his precious seed, because we will know, b&s, the power of God in our own selves, let alone in our lives today!

Such was the wonder of the sign that Yahweh gave His people! And as we therefore, come to the table this morning, as the daughter of Zion, cleansed from the impurities of this world by the power of the gospel message and the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ; to know that the Holy One of Israel is coming to marry us, and He'll not have any man lay a hand upon us! In that confidence, b&s, we participate in this feast, with Him who is, the Emmanuel, who was born of the virgin, and who was indeed, 'power with us', to save us from our sins.