

Scripture Text

Isaiah 37.21-38

Context

Assyria has got Jerusalem surrounded and to natural eyes it seems as they are in an inescapable situation. The Rabshakeh has made an intimidating speech to Hezekiah and those within earshot on the city walls (Chapter 36). Hezekiah has responded by seeking God's Word through his prophet and by going to God in prayer. Isaiah has encouraged him that Hezekiah is not to be afraid, because God will rescue them from the threat.

Observation and Meaning

- Note how swiftly the answer to Hezekiah's prayer (v14-20) comes. What is God teaching us about prayer through this, as well as what He says to Hezekiah in v21?
- Who does God address in v22-29? Who does God say they've mocked (v22-5), why should they not be arrogant (v26-27) and what will God do to them in (v28-29)?
- What is the sign of v30-32 and how do these natural signs point to the renewal God will do in the hearts of his people?
- What does God promise to Hezekiah in v33-35? How would this have encouraged you? Do you think Hezekiah would have thought this could be likely?
- Why does God make this promise in v35? What is God's ultimate purpose?
- What happens in v36-38? How striking is this miracle? What do you think Isaiah intends to convey through the fact that the destruction of the Assyrians is mentioned so briefly? What other deliverance miracles in the bible does this remind you of?
- What is ironic about v38 (note the contrast with where Hezekiah went and how God answered him in v14, to where Sennacherib went and what happened to him)?

Big Idea

God will defy the mocking of those who denounce him and his purposes for the sake of his own name, and for the sake of his salvific purposes for the world, miraculously delivering his people.

Connecting to the Bible's storyline

God's purposes for the world are going to be fulfilled through his people, as promised to David. Israel is spared from the Assyrians by God's deliverance, in order that God's plans to bless the world through Israel with a king who will forever reign on David's throne will come to pass.

Sermon Outline

1. God responds to the prayers of his people (v21, 26)
2. God strengthens us by sending us his Word (v22-35)
 - a. His word shows his character
 - b. His word shows his promises
 - c. His word shows his purposes
3. God delivers in ways we least expect (v36-38)

Application

- How is your prayer life? Do you have confidence that God hears your prayers?
- How does God's word to Assyria in v26-29 encourage you in prayer? What should you be praying for?
- If God delivers them for his own sake and for the sake of his promises to David (v35) how does this encourage you to build your life upon his character and promises?
- God delivers his people in a very unlikely, and miraculous, way. How does this encourage you to trust God in even the most difficult of circumstances?
- In what areas of your life are you being challenged to trust God? What does it look like to trust God in those areas of your life?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

- Who is writing and to whom?
- What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
- Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
- Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.