

**“I have brought it to pass...”**

1. Tell about some unfinished projects or unmet goals on your “list” these days.

**Invitation to pray:** Lord, Author and Finisher of my faith, enable me to hear Your voice in the Word today. Accomplish Your good and perfect will in my life. My trust is in You alone.

The historical chapters 36-39 form the bridge between the two sections of Isaiah’s book of prophecy. Though this week’s passages come first in the book’s order, most agree that the events of chs. 36-37 actually occurred *after* those in chs. 38-39. Isaiah may present his information this way because he uses chs. 36-37 to conclude the book’s first half, dealing with Assyria, while chs. 38-39 lead into the book’s final half, relating to the Babylonian exile and beyond.

Let’s look back. In 735 B.C., God told of the northern kingdom’s coming fall (7:8b, 8:4b-7a).

2. From the following, what was foretold at that time about Judah, the southern kingdom?
  - a. Isaiah 7:17-18, 8:7b-8; (also recall 1:7-9)

- b. Isaiah 10:5-6, 12-21, 24-34; (similar/related passages are in chs. 8, 14, 29-31, 33, etc.)

As foretold, northern areas of Israel fell first to Assyria (732 B.C.). Later, Israel’s last king, Hoshea, joined a rebellion during the Assyrian regime change following Tiglath–pileser’s death. The next kings who took over rule of the empire (Shal-manazer, and then Sargon) sent armies to put down that revolt, bringing final defeat to the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. As ch. 36 opens, the same cycle is in motion: Sargon dies, Sennacherib is crowned, rebellion spreads, and Assyrian retaliation is launched.

3.
  - a. Now, get reacquainted with King Hezekiah: review/comment briefly on II Kings 18:1-8. (To dig deeper sometime, read the further great account in II Chronicles 29-31.)
  - b. Did the revival of Hezekiah’s early reign bring lasting change to Judah? (Recall Isaiah 28:7, 14 and 30:9, passages concerning his time as king.)
4. Now note what happens as you **read** II Chronicles 32:1-8, then **Isaiah 36:1**.

The vast Assyrian army was known for extreme brutality, torture, and gruesome displays of dead victims. They were the first to use rolling siege towers to overcome long-trusted wall defenses.

5. a. Sometime in this whole sequence of events (perhaps after Isaiah 36:1; it's unclear), what does Hezekiah do, from II Kings 18:13-16? Tell your observations/reactions.
  
- b. Does this action "work"? Tell the Assyrian king's action in **Isaiah 36:2**, in 701 B.C. Note: Lachish is 30 mi. s.w. of Jerusalem; and *Rabshakeh* (NAS) means *commander*.

The commander's army takes position right where Isaiah long ago warned Hezekiah's father (King Ahaz) to trust God, not the Assyrians, to deliver him from his foes. Ahaz refused: as foretold, Assyria has *become* the foe.

6. **Read Isaiah 36:3-4** and II Chronicles 32:10. Why do you think the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, has his commander begin with *words*, not military attack?
  
7. **Read carefully Isaiah 36:4-20** and describe the verbal "psychological warfare" tactics you observe the king using in these messages. (See some "reality checks" in the next question.)
  
8. a. Now, a few facts. Briefly : God's words to his people about Egypt are similar to the field commander's statement in 36:6, but what are *His* aims? See Isaiah 31:1-3, 5-6, 8.
  
- b. How do II Kings 18:3-4, Deuteronomy 12:1-5 (concerning mountaintop Baal shrines where the people had been worshipping God) counteract the claims in Isaiah 36:7?
  
- c. Undoubtedly the Assyrians have been told Isaiah's prophecies concerning them; but what has the king chosen to omit in Isaiah 36:10? (See question 2b; also notice 37:10.)

9. Did the commander's attack scheme seem familiar? **As time permits, briefly** note what you learn of the real enemy behind the enemy, then and now, from: Ephesians 6:12; John 8:44; Revelation 12:9-10; Genesis 3:1-8; II Corinthians 4:4 and I John 4:4.

**For your own heart:** How do these truths serve as a faithful reminder to you this week?

Our enemy attacks God by assailing us. Using what we see, hear or read, or simply by planting his suggestions among our own thoughts, he delights to take aim at our knowledge of God's heart and Person, and our love for each other. He focuses us on merely human resources, encouraging pride or despair. He paints false pictures of what obedience and disobedience will bring. He misrepresents people and circumstances to us. Mostly, he'd love us to look away from God completely. But God Himself is with us in this fight!

**Scan Isaiah 36:21-37:13.** Torn clothes show grief, dismay. V.7's *news* or *rumor* isn't told here.

10. How effective would you say this attack has been: what do you see happening in 36:21-37:7?

11. Not achieving quick surrender, the field commander and his forces apparently rejoin Sennacherib's main army. Is the matter closed yet (37:8-13)? Is there a lesson here?

We've seen that Hezekiah is very much like we are; sometimes he gets it very right and sometimes he gets it very wrong. Think about his possible options at this point.

12. a. To observe what he chooses to do in the face of these circumstances, **read** thoughtfully through **37:14-20**. Tell what you notice and what you learn for your own heart and life.

- b. What is told to us right away in **37:21-22a**? Is this significant?

**Isaiah 37:22b-38** tell us the Lord's continued response to Hezekiah, given for all the people.

13. Hezekiah and his people of Jerusalem knew full well the cause of their present dire distress (e.g. read 1:21, 10:5-6a). How might the Lord's specific words of 37:22-23 impact them?

14. a. Verses 24-25 poetically reveal the Assyrian king's belief that no obstacle was too great for his might. How does God "clear up" these misconceptions in verses 26-29?
- b. Tell the ways you see God showing care and encouragement to Hezekiah in vv. 30-35.
- c. At this point, this is all still a matter of faith for Hezekiah and the people in Jerusalem. **Then what happens**, in verses 36-37? And what occurs 20 years later, in verse 38? (Read also II Chronicles 32:16-23, where great additional details are given.)

Sennacherib's annals boasted later, "I had Hezekiah the Jew..prisoner in Jerusalem..like a bird in a cage," but no word of explanation is given for his sudden halt of the invasion and return home!

15. In spite of God's many messages, do you think the people had any inkling of all He could/would really do? Tell the ways He fulfills all His word in chs. 36-37. (Recall question 2).
16. Take a moment to look again at 37:31-32, 35. As God had the power and faithfulness to do just as He had said and protect King Hezekiah and the remnant of Judah, what was He also doing for us all? (See II Samuel 7:11b-13, Acts 13:21-23, 29-30, 38-39.)
17. As you think back over all that we have studied in Isaiah thus far, why do chapters 36-37 serve as such an appropriate conclusion for this first section of the book?
18. **In closing**, write out your **praise** to the Lord for all you have seen of Him in this passage. **Realize** He is the same yesterday, today and forever. **Lay open** before Him **and offer up** to Him all your cares, needs and desires. **Rest** in the wonder and assurance of all He is. Amen.