

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 27, Part 3

2 Kings 18-19, Part 3

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Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent a message to Hezekiah. This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says. I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria.

And this poem, which is the rest of chapter 19, again, is one of the beautiful, beautiful passages in the scriptures. Virgin daughter Zion despises you and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee.

Now, why describe Jerusalem in those terms? Never been captured? Keeping that metaphor, what had Sennacherib come to do to virgin daughter Jerusalem? He's going to rape her. And so, Isaiah says, as Sennacherib runs away, virgin daughter Jerusalem is going to be saying, na, na, na, na, na, na. You mocked the Lord? Jerusalem's going to mock you.

Now, again, here's the mightiest man in the world. In the world. Again, we're looking at chutzpah here.

It's going to come a day, Sennacherib, when Jerusalem's going to be laughing at you. Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah's favorite term for God.

26 times in the book of Isaiah. The Holy One of Israel. The Holy One, the transcendent one, absolutely other of Israel, who has come into the presence of a helpless, worthless, useless people and given himself to them.

The Holy One of Israel. David? Well, no, it's God. This is God.

Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Right through the Old Testament, the virgin daughter is depicted as the loveliest, the tenderest, and the most desirable.

And of course, in Isaiah, it shows up in chapter 3, where the daughters of Jerusalem are decked out in all the finery of, I was going to say, the Sears catalog, but we don't do that anymore. But here they are, tinkling with their feet. They have ankle bracelets on so that they can't take big strides like they're walking through a plowed field.

The daughters of Jerusalem. And Isaiah says, and you're all going to be desolate in place of the beautiful coiffure, in place of the sweet perfume stench. So, this thing can cut both directions.

Yes. OK. By your messengers, you have ridiculed the Lord.

And you have said, now, if the Assyrian had done his homework, Isaiah has done his homework. Because these next two or three verses sound very much like the Assyrian royal annals, where these Assyrian kings are bragging about everything they've done. I, with my many chariots, have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon.

I've cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its junipers. I've reached its remotest parts, the finest of its forests. I've dug wells in foreign lands and drunk water there.

With the sole of my foot, I dried up all the streams of Egypt. Now, Isaiah has read their press reports. So, you have mocked Yahweh.

You have lumped him with all of those useless idols of the world. And you have exalted yourself. What does God have to say to that in verse 25? Have you not heard? Long ago, I ordained it.

In the days of old, I planned it. Now, I have brought it to pass that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Oh, my.

Sennacherib, I'm the one who's made it possible for you to do all this. This Yahweh that you compared to the idols of Hamath and Arpad, you couldn't do any of this without me. Now, again, think of that.

Hitler couldn't have done a thing without Yahweh. Stalin couldn't have done a thing without Yahweh. If you did these things, it's because I gave you permission to do it because it fits in with my sovereign plan.

And you would mock me? Verse 27, I know where you are. It's like these funny commercials. I know where you live.

And when you come and go and how you rage against me because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, my bit in your mouth. I'll make you return by the way you came. What's that imagery? What's he talking about here? Slavery, the captivity.

You planned to take all the Judean people off into captivity. And we've got pictures, reliefs that the Assyrians commissioned in boastfulness. Here are these people, clad in rags with chains.

The chain is attached to a hook in their mouth. And they're walking, headed 700 miles into captivity. God says you plan to do that to my people? Well, let me tell you, it's going to happen to you.

So, then we have a fascinating sign. Most of the signs in the Bible are really, I have to say it, poor because they don't prove that God is faithful.

That's why we want a sign. Lord, I don't know whether I can trust you or not. I don't know whether I really want to dare to obey you.

So please give me a sign that will prove that you are faithful and convince me to do this. Usually, the signs God gives us only happen after we have obeyed in the future. That's Moses.

I'll give you a sign. You will lead this people in worship on this mountain. And I can hear Moses saying, God, I don't want that kind of a sign.

I want you to do something right now. I think God said, how about a burning bush that doesn't get consumed? All right. But here's a sign.

You're going to eat grain from the silo this year. Next year, grain is going to come up voluntarily, and you're going to eat that.

Three years from now, you will be planting and growing crops. He's going to be gone. And you're going to still be here three years from now.

Well, okay, God. Yeah. Trust me.

And I will give you the evidence that I am trustworthy. This is what predictive prophecy is all about. It is to tell us, yes, the future is in God's hands.

And then when it happens, those people in the future will say, Wow, God kept his promise, didn't he? Predictive prophecy is not so we can build a timetable and figure out when Jesus is coming. So, we can live like hell until the day he gets here. No.

No. So it's the same here. Think about them three years after this.

Wow. Look, that's just what he said. He said three years from now, all traces of those serious issues would be gone.

Who would have thought it? Verse 32. And I'll stop. Therefore, this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria.

He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow there. He will not come before it with a shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came, he will return.

He will not enter this city, declares the Lord. I will defend this city and save it for my sake and the sake of David, my servant. And that night, the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 in the Assyrian camp.

Like verse 36. So, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Yeah, I guess so. And as I mentioned, I think this is very surprising in the background. Did you leave the rebel city intact? Did you leave the rebel king alive? In his records, Sennacherib brags about how much money he collected from Hezekiah.

He brags about all that he did. And then he says, I shut up, Hezekiah, like a bird in a cage. On my next campaign, I decided to go east rather than west.

I would too. He was on the throne for another 19 years and he never campaigned in the west again. I wouldn't either.

And remember, Egypt is his goal. Of course, he doesn't tell us that he lost 185,000 men one night. We wouldn't expect that.

But there it is. I like the way it's done. So, just sort of almost offhandedly.

All of this build-up. Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. Oh, by the way.

Yes. Yes. He can be trusted.

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of Hezekiah. Thank you for a man with his back to the wall who said, I'm going to trust the Lord.

Thank you for his faith. Thank you for his prayer. Thank you for the evidence that we can trust you.

And if we trust you, you will deliver us. Thank you for all the evidence that we have in our own lives of your trustworthiness. Thank you for all the good you have done to the people in this room.

And we testify it is from your hand. Thank you. In your name, we pray, Amen.