

Isaiah 37:14-20

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After receiving a letter meant to induce fear in the hearts of its readers, Hezekiah takes the letter and his supplication to Yahweh at the temple.

Hezekiah is prepared. He is resisting. He is willing to fight. But he also sees reality. It is true Assyria has wiped out stronger nations. But it is also true they have defied God. So *Hezekiah* appeals to God to fight for them that *all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the Lord, you alone.*

The text implies that *Hezekiah* did not delay in what needed doing. He immediately appealed to the Lord God, for he knew that it was from Him alone that Judah could be delivered:

Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord (v 14).

The house of the Lord refers to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, which was modeled after the Tabernacle in the wilderness, which God told Moses to build as a copy of the true heavenly tabernacle, which is the throne room of God (Hebrew 8:1-2).

To learn more about the Temple read our article [“The Temple.”](#)

Hezekiah prayed to the LORD (v 15). The king begins his prayer to the *Lord* by identifying who He is, “*O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim*” (v 16).

The Hebrew term for *Lord* is “Yahweh,” the covenant name of God. That name speaks of God’s character and His relationship with His covenant people (Exodus 3:14, 34:6). The term translated as *hosts* is “Sabaoth” in Hebrew and means “armies.” It refers to the angelic armies of heaven.

Thus, the phrase signifies that the all-powerful God leads His army to fight for His people and defeat His opponents. It means that the *Lord* has all power and authority over human affairs.

To say that God is *enthroned above the cherubim* is speaking literally of the two cherubim on the lid or “mercy seat” of the ark of the covenant which was located in the tabernacle, and later the temple, but figuratively speaks of God’s presence. To learn more, see our commentary on [Numbers 7:89](#)

Hezekiah continues his prayer by acknowledging that God, as the creator of all things, is sovereign over all things, “*God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth (v 16).*”

It is appropriate here that *Hezekiah* acknowledges that God is the true king above all kings. It is to this power that *Hezekiah* will now appeal, asking Yahweh, the LORD, to intervene on Judah’s behalf.

Now *Hezekiah* outlines his petition to Yahweh and says,

“Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God” (v 17).

The first thing Hezekiah asks is for the Lord to hear the *words of Sennacherib*, the Assyrian king. These were words sent through his representative, Rabshakeh. Hezekiah points out that the taunts and assertions were a *reproach* to the God of Judah, the true and *living God*. Next Hezekiah says:

Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, (v 18)

Part of what Rabshakeh claims is true, and Hezekiah acknowledges the reality that in truth *the kings of Assyria have* in fact *devastated all the countries and their lands*, as Rabshakeh has asserted. And, in fact they also *have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them* (v19).

Hezekiah acknowledges the claim of Rabshakeh that the gods of these lands did not save them. But he also asserts that these gods are not true gods, like Yahweh, the Great I Am. The inference is that by delivering Judah, the true and living God can distinguish Himself and provide a witness to the nations.

After acknowledging which of Rabshakeh’s statements were true, including that he (on behalf of the Assyrian king) had reproached Yahweh God, Hezekiah now makes his request: *“Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, Lord, are God.”* (v. 20)

Hezekiah asks for deliverance, for the sake of Judah and his people. But he also asks directly for God to reveal Himself to *all the kingdoms of the earth*, that by this deliverance they *may know that* the God of Israel is *alone the Lord and God*. Hezekiah here invokes the name of Yahweh, the covenant name for God, meaning “The Existent One.” This name speaks both of God’s almighty creative power, as well as His special relationship with Israel/Judah, having entered into a covenant treaty with them (Exodus 19:8).

Biblical Text

¹⁴Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. ¹⁵Hezekiah prayed to the Lord saying, ¹⁶“O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ¹⁷Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. ¹⁸Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, ¹⁹and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. ²⁰Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, Lord, are God.”