

**File No. 86**

**II KINGS 18:17 – 19:36**

II Chronicles 32:1–8

**A LETTER FOR HEZEKIAH**

(SBS Bk 3 Story No. 41)

*Story Notes*

Hezekiah was an outstanding king. He destroyed the false worship that Israel had fostered and trusted himself and his nation to the Lord. Like Joseph, Samuel and David before him, the Lord was with him and he prospered. But Assyria was now strong and had captured the Northern tribes.

An Assyrian army returned, and its commander taunted Hezekiah with trusting Egypt, or even worse, with trusting in the Lord. He thought that when Hezekiah removed the numerous worship places of false worship around Judah that he was dismantling their religion. He knew they needed Egyptian cavalry to complete their defenses. They could not even find their own horsemen for a battle. Had not the Northern tribes fallen to him? What could Judah's gods do? He claimed that their own God, the LORD, had commanded him to destroy their city and then to take them to his land. If they would give him their allegiance, he would provide for them. He was like Satan who promised Jesus the kingdoms of this world if he would bow down and worship him.

All this became public knowledge and the whole city knew their dilemma. Wisely, Hezekiah had said to his ambassadors that they should give no answer. This was a problem for God.

## **Chapter 19**

Hezekiah went straight to the temple and humbled himself before God. He also needed the fellowship of the prophet Isaiah in this crisis. The surrounding cities had been defeated. How could Jerusalem stand? Money had not kept Assyria away. The city could not long endure a siege. But Assyria claimed its gods were superior to the Lord on whom Hezekiah had set his trust. Would the Lord let this go unchallenged? Hezekiah thought not and believed Isaiah would think the same.

Without delay, the word of the Lord assured Hezekiah that Assyria would retreat and that their king would be killed in his own land. The Assyrian commander returned to find his king diverted by another war and left behind him a further taunt against God. The Assyrians were too full of their own successes to know the power of the living God. Hezekiah humbled himself again and took the letter to the Lord. What was at issue was the arrogance of those who had reviled the living God, and even more so, the purpose of God to make himself known to all nations. Surely God would deal with this threat for the sake of his own name.

Again, Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah from the Lord. Concerning Israel he said, 'You are like a virgin daughter confident in the house of her father, tossing her head at danger.' To the King of Assyria he said, 'You think you have done great things, not realising that it was I who gave it to you to do them. I will lead you away like a captive with a hook in your nose.' He also gave Jerusalem an immediate sign of his favour: they would have food for the present, and be able to farm very soon. Then, they would grow strong and spread to re-inhabit the cities that had been destroyed.

All this was said to assure Hezekiah and Jerusalem that they should not fear the enemy at their gate. Jerusalem would remain, for God and for David. In the morning, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, (or 185 of their commanders), were dead. Without further word, the army left, and their king died as God predicted.