

General Church Education



War With Assyria

2 Kings 18:14-37; 19:1-20, 32-37

Lesson 25

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 6: The Lord Is the Prophet

For ages 11-12 years

War With Assyria

2 Kings 18:14-37, 19:1-20, 32-37

Teacher Background

Hezekiah ruled Judah during the reign of three Assyrian kings. The third Assyrian king, Sennacherib, sent his army captain, Tartan and his cup-bearer, the Rabshakeh to threaten Judah. Judah was weak and had little bargaining power. The Rabshakeh delivered Sennacherib's message, but the people were silent. When Hezekiah heard of it, he tore his clothes. Then he turned to Isaiah, the prophet, who told him Israel would be safe. Sennacherib ridiculed him, but Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, who assured him He would deliver Israel. Indeed, the Lord saved Judah by killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

As with many of the stories in Kings, this might make us wonder what Jehovah was like. The slaughter of the Assyrians by the "angel of the Lord" may have an enormous impact on students. However, the Assyrians were turned back because Judah needed protecting, and the Lord's power needed to be illustrated. The Assyrians had no regard for the Lord and stand for reasoning from a love of self and the world.

Focus Points

- Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sent Tartan and the Rabshakeh to declare war on Judah.
- The Rabshakeh boasted of Assyria's power, distressing king Hezekiah.
- Hezekiah consulted the Lord, who saved Judah by killing the Assyrian army.

Readings from the Writings

"The 'Assyrian who shall be broken in the land and trodden down upon the mountains,' signifies reasoning from falsities against truths; 'to be broken' means to be dispersed, and 'to be trodden down' means to be wholly destroyed; 'mountains upon which this is done,' signify where the good of love and charity reigns, for there, or with such, all reasoning from falsities is dispersed or destroyed." *Apocalypse Explained* 304

"'And he rent his clothes' means mourning. This is clear from the meaning of 'rending clothes' as ... mourning on account of the loss of truth, or the fact that no faith exists. In the Word, especially the historical part, one often reads about people rending their clothes ... when the Rabshakeh was sent by Sennacherib king of Asshur and uttered insults against Jerusalem, Eliakim who was over the king's house, and Shebna the secretary, and Joash the recorder rent their clothes and reported these things to king Hezekiah; and when he heard them the king too rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth. The insults [the Rabshakeh] uttered were directed against God, the king, and Jerusalem, and so against Divine Truth." *Arcana Coelestia* 4763

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers the following activity choices:

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.” (2 Kings 19:19)

Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Match the Phrases

Match each phrase in the column on the left with a phrase in the column right by writing the letter by the phrase on the right in front of the number of the phrase on the left.

The Words of Isaiah

Isaiah was an important and powerful prophet of the Lord. He spoke the Lord’s words, told of the evils of Assyria, and prophesied of a better time for Judah. Read the words of the prophecy and write down what you think the Lord was talking about.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Make a Clay Contour Map of Jerusalem

Help students understand the circumstances under which Assyria delivered a message to the citizens of Jerusalem by building a model of the city. Use a contour map as a foundation for constructing a contour map of the hilly ground on which Jerusalem was built. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/project-make-a-clay-contour-map-of-jerusalem-2-kings-18-19.pdf>

Was King Hezekiah Tempted?

Explore the concept of temptation and investigate whether King Hezekiah was tempted. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-was-king-hezekiah-tempted-2-kings-18-19.pdf>

A Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

As you learn about the kings of Israel and Judah, complete a chart. As you fill in the spaces, think about whether the king is good or evil. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-a-chart-of-the-kings-of-israel-and-judah-1-kings-2-kings.pdf>

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Vocabulary

overthrew—forcibly removed from power

diplomatic language—the language a country uses for official business

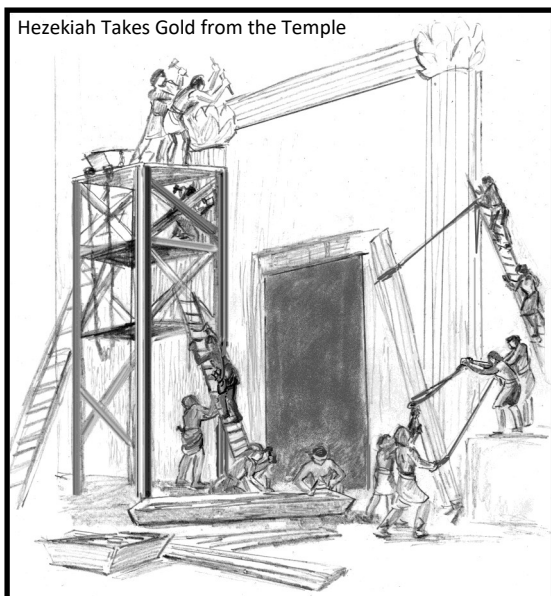
succumbed—given into the pressure to do something

Assyria Makes War Against Judah

Hezekiah ruled in Judah while three different kings ruled Assyria. To begin with, Shalmaneser was ruling. When he died, his brother Sargon II became king. After Sargon II died his son Sennacherib took the throne. Sennacherib was a powerful king who strengthened Assyria by building and finally overthrowing Babylon, a nation that had revolted against Assyria for years.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib set his sights on Judah. He attacked and captured the fortified cities there. In an attempt to stop the Assyrians, Hezekiah sent word to Sennacherib, telling him that he, Hezekiah, had done wrong and would pay whatever Sennacherib demanded. Sennacherib demanded an enormous amount, so Hezekiah took the gold that overlaid the doors and pillars of the temple in Jerusalem and gave it to the king of Assyria.

Hezekiah was not in a position to bargain—most of Judah's strongholds had been captured. Also, there was no other source of gold, for Ahaz had already stripped the temple and palace to pay off Assyria when Tiglath-Pileser was king. However, it turned out that Sennacherib was not dealing honestly with Judah. The gold which Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib did nothing to stop him. He sent an enormous army against Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.



The Rabshakeh Delivers a Message

Sennacherib did not go to Jerusalem himself. He sent other officials to lead his army. Among them were the Tartan, his army captain, and the Rabshakeh, his trusted cup-bearer. When the Assyrians arrived at Jerusalem, they called out to Hezekiah. He sent officials out to meet them just outside the city walls. First, the Rabshakeh questioned Judah's trust in Egypt and its Pharaoh. Then he tried to ruin Israel's trust in the Lord. He reminded them that Hezekiah tore down the high places that were built for the worship of the Lord, not knowing that they were against the Lord's commands.

Lesson 25 • War With Assyria

After these words the Rabshakeh offered Hezekiah's officers a deal. If Judah joined forces with Assyria, and put itself under Assyrian rule, then it would be safe from attack. Finally, the Rabshakeh told the officers that the Lord Himself had commanded the destruction of Judah.

You might remember that in Biblical times people believed that certain gods had power in specific places. The Rabshakeh knew that the people of Judah sacrificed to the Lord, so he used the Lord's name to demonstrate Assyrian power. If the god of Judah favored the Assyrians, Judah had no chance against them.

Sennacherib's Boast

Hezekiah's officials asked the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic, the diplomatic language of the region, so the people would not understand. They did not want the people to be so afraid that they would want to surrender to Assyria. However, the Rabshakeh spoke even louder in Hebrew, the language of Judah. He wanted the people to hear his king's challenge and promises.

The Rabshakeh then told the people that they would prosper under his king. But if they did not make peace with the Assyrians they would suffer like Samaria (northern Israel). He asked them if any god had been able to save the nations that Assyria had already conquered. The amazing power Hezekiah held in Judah at that time can be seen in the following words.

“But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, “Do not answer him.” (2 Kings 18:36)

Hezekiah Sends a Message to Isaiah the Prophet



Although they bravely stood up to the Rabshakeh, Hezekiah's officials returned to him with their clothes torn in anguish. When they repeated Sennacherib's claims to Hezekiah, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth—a sign of his grief and fear of what was to come. Then he went into the house of the Lord. Afterwards he sent some officials and elders to prophet Isaiah, to ask him to speak to the Lord for them.

Hezekiah wanted to trust in the Lord, but he did not always immediately turn to Him for help. When Sennacherib demanded tribute, he sent it to him. In this case he expressed fear and grief before going to the temple and sending for a prophet of the Lord. However, the important thing is that he overcame his fears and doubts and eventually went to the

Lord. Isaiah reassured the king's officials and told them that the Lord said they did not need to be fearful. Judah would be safe.

The Lord Answers Hezekiah's Prayers

Sennacherib heard that Judah had not succumbed to his first message, so he sent another. He told Hezekiah that he was foolish to believe in the Lord's power to save Judah. He reminded him of what happened to other nations that stood up to the Assyrian army—their gods had not saved them.

Hezekiah responded by immediately entering the temple and praying to the Lord. In his prayer he acknowledged the Lord as different from the gods which the surrounding nations worshipped.

“They were not gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.” (2 Kings 19:18, 19)

Isaiah sent Hezekiah the Lord's response. The Lord had heard his plea for deliverance. He spoke of the arrogance and blasphemy of Sennacherib and of the punishment Assyria would suffer because of it. Then He spoke of how He would protect Jerusalem.

“For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.” (2 Kings 19:34)

Assyria Is Defeated

One night after Hezekiah received the Lord's promise, the angel of the Lord went into the Assyrian camp and killed one-hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers. So Sennacherib fled to Nineveh, where he reigned for some time until his sons murdered him. Another son, Esarhaddon, became the new king of Assyria. This might seem dreadful, but remember that the Lord never causes evil to happen. He permitted the Assyrians to be killed so their powerful army could not overwhelm Judah. Also, this showed the Assyrians and the surrounding nations the power of the Lord, the God of Judah. Everyone would think twice before attacking Judah again.

In His message to Hezekiah the Lord spoke of the Assyrians, telling him that they had “reproached and blasphemed Him.” The Writings say that in a good sense the Assyrians stand for the part of our mind that recognizes and chooses good and true things. However, since the Assyrians rejected the Lord, they stand for the falsities and evils of religion and worship that come from our selfish desires and thinking.



Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.” (2 Kings 19:19)

Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Choose one or two.

Match the Phrases

Match each phrase in the column on the left with a phrase in the column on the right by writing the letter by the phrase on the right in front of the number of the phrase on the left.

The Words of Isaiah

Isaiah was an important and powerful prophet of the Lord. He spoke the Lord’s words, told of the evils of Assyria, and prophesied of a better time for Judah. Read the words of the prophecy and write down what you think the Lord was talking about.

Match the Phrases

2 Kings 18:14-37; 19:1-20, 32-37

Match the phrase on the left with one on the right by writing the letter in front of the phrase on

___ 1. Especially good things Hezekiah did when he became king.	A. Silver and gold from the temple and the king's house
___ 2. Relationship of Judah to Assyria when Hezekiah became king.	B. They "answered him not a word."
___ 3. The things Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria	C. Eliakim, Shebna and Joah
___ 4. The people Sennacherib sent to Hezekiah	D. Do not be afraid of the words you have heard from Sennacherib's servants. Sennacherib will die by his own hand.
___ 5. The people who met the people from Assyria	E. "Do not listen to Hezekiah."
___ 6. The challenge the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah	F. Prayed to the Lord to save Judah
___ 7. The words the Rabshakeh spoke to the people of Judah	G. Removed high places, tore down sacred pillars, cut down wooden images, broke the bronze serpent in pieces
___ 8. The answer the people gave to the Rabshakeh	H. "I will defend this city to save it..."
___ 9. What Hezekiah did when he heard the challenge from Sennacherib	I. The Tartan, the Rabsaris, the Rabshakeh, a great army
___ 10. The prophet to whom Hezekiah sent his servants to find out what he should do	J. "Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you."
___ 11. What were the prophet's words to Hezekiah	K. Whom do you put your trust in—Egypt, the Lord—instead, put your trust in the king of Assyria
___ 12. Sennacherib's response to the prophet's words	L. Thousands were killed by an angel of the Lord
___ 13. What Hezekiah did when he read the letter from Sennacherib	M. Isaiah
___ 14. The words from the Lord to Hezekiah	N. Assyria took the fortified cities of Judah
___ 15. The fate of the Assyrian army	O. Tore his clothes, covered himself in sackcloth and went into the temple.

The Words of Isaiah

2 Kings 19

This lesson introduces Isaiah, an important and powerful prophet of the Lord. In 2 Kings 19 Isaiah speaks the Lord’s words, telling of the evils of Assyria and prophesying a better time for Judah. Parts of this speech are given in the chart below. In your own words, describe what you think the Lord was talking about in each verse.

“By your messengers you have reproached the Lord.” verse 23	
“Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it?” verse 25	
“But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in.” verse 27	
“I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came. verse. 28	
“He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there.” verse 32	
“I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.” verse 34	

What did Hezekiah do to deserve the Lord’s protection from the Assyrians?

You can learn more about Hezekiah and the history of Judah and Israel from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah describes many events that took place. He also prophesies that Judah and Israel will fall and that the Lord will be born on earth. He often uses a poetic style.

Answers

Lesson 25

Match the Phrases

1. G; 2. N; 3. A; 4. I; 5. C; 6. K; 7. E; 8. B; 9. O; 10. M; 11. D; 12. J; 13. F; 14. H; 15. L.