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Dear Associates and Friends,

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In this month's article, "[Israel and Judah: 36. King Hezekiah and Assyria](#)," Hezekiah's successful first years as King of Judah face the threat of Assyrian invasion. Assyrian merchants covered the Near East because they were prosperous people from the richest kingdom of its day. The merchants followed the Assyrian military to buy and sell goods, pay attention to what they saw, and report to Assyrian officials.

As I have written before, I use the *Concordant Literal Version of the Old Testament* because of its consistent translation from Hebrew to English from one book to the next. The Concordant Version was produced from a system, not a committee of scholars, yet it takes into account idioms and figures of speech. The vocabulary is more consistent from book to book than most other Old Testament translations. This fact-based system of translation reduces ambiguity by allowing the context of words around any specific word to mold the meaning of that word to say what the writer — and God — intended to be received.

This feature makes for good side-by-side comparison of texts from Second Kings, Second Chronicles, and in this episode, historical and prophetic portions from Isaiah. It will be useful and perhaps surprising to read the texts from the article in your favorite Old Testament translation or the King James Version. Side-by-side you get a more complete understanding of what was said and done, while gaining insight into why the major players in biblical events act as they do.

Remember, I chose the narrative of Second Kings as my basic text against which I compare the text from Second Chronicles and Isaiah. Differences from Second Kings text are marked in *italics*. It does not mean the words are less important or wrong in any way. They are merely different words given by different writers. All are God's Word. What a marvelous system God our Father has designed to communicate His thoughts to us. It does not matter what language or level of education. His message of His truth can become our thoughts.

Cast of Characters:

YHWH. The controller of all events in heaven and earth, even when the participants only dimly understand His processes. He influences individuals, kingdoms, countries, and peoples and "**works all things after the counsel of his own will**" (Ephesians 1:11). The long saga of Israel and Judah gives evidence how any attempt to live according to the law of God will fail, as the apostle Paul tells us in the epistle to the Romans. Only God's grace through faith, with God's Holy Spirit, can bring us God's righteousness through Christ so we can be fully reconciled to them both in the future.

Hezekiah. Heroic reformer King of Judah, son and heir of Ahaz. He leads the defense of Jerusalem by insuring the water supply is provided to those in the city while denying water to the Assyrians. He strengthens the defenses of Jerusalem and encourages the people within the walls against a persuasive Assyrian leader trying to convince the people to rebel against Hezekiah.

Sennacherib, King of Assyria. This king reigned for 23 years. He accepts tribute (a bribe) from Hezekiah to have his army leave Judah, and then he ordered his army to attack Jerusalem. Nice guy.

Rab-shakeh. This is a title, not a name. Perhaps the highest Assyrian official Sennacherib could send to convince the people of Jerusalem to make Hezekiah surrender Jerusalem. His arguments are convincing except they reject YHWH and His ability to intervene whenever He chooses, then *rab-shakeh* insults YHWH in public. That is unwise to do, even for unbelievers because God is not

mocked (Galatians 6:7). Yet God gives the people the will to resist the temptation to revolt. They wait for YHWH's power to be manifest.

The Assyrian Army. The Assyrians overrun the Kingdom of Judah, conquering all its cities except the capital of Jerusalem. They have help from armies of vassal kingdoms subservient to Assyria. The entire Kingdom of Judah is looted.

Lachish. An important fortress city of Israel southwest of Jerusalem. It was besieged and conquered by the Assyrian army in a famous battle well documented by archaeology. Assyrian graphic (carved in stone) and written records use their conquest of Lachish as an example. Travelers to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh learn about Assyrian military prowess, especially their ability to conquer fortified defenses and cities.

The People of Jerusalem. Encouraged by King Hezekiah, the people of Jerusalem are told to look to YHWH and trust in Him for their salvation. This is wise counsel that came to Hezekiah, seemingly without prompting from the prophets Isaiah or Micah.

This month's presentation is part one. It begins with the invasion of Judah by Assyria and ends with the Assyrian enemy at the gates of Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah. The Assyrian spokesman for King Sennacherib tries to tempt the people within the protective walls of Jerusalem to revolt against Hezekiah, God's anointed King and Son of David.

The next episode "Israel and Judah: 37" will be Part 2 and it will involve the Assyrian merchants I mention in my opening paragraph. We will read the details of how God brings a denouement of this world-stage event during the time of Isaiah, Micah, and Hezekiah who tell the story of God's chosen people during a deadly threat. (See my Commentary, "[It's a Mystery.](#)")

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

• *1 Corinthians 10:11*

The above verse refers to Israel during the Exodus, but such things also apply to the entire story of the people of Israel:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus."

• *Romans 15:4-5*

Thank You

God communicates to all of us from His written words of Scripture into your minds. The words I write at this moment goes from my mind, through my fingers as I type. The words appear on the screen to be read by you and into your mind. It is communication from one mind to another through time and space, whether you read on the computer, on paper, or listen to the words being read to you.¹

If you appreciate what you learn from ASK, please begin to contribute to ASK as you are able. After all, those who labor in the word and doctrine should be provided for, even as an ox is worth its feed (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Our support is decreasing somewhat because some of our supporters over the many decades have become "just a little bit" older. In fact, my family has "hinted" that I myself have aged. We do thank you for the support you provide for ASK. We pray that God will bless you for helping us help others.

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¹ By reading aloud, even to yourself, you greatly increase your understanding of any text. It helps focus your attention, your senses, and with time improves your reading ability.