
2KINGS 19: 1 When king Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the LORD's house.

Hezekiah as greatly distressed, and sends to Isaiah to pray for him, 2Kgs 19:1-4. Isaiah returns a comfortable answer, and predicts the destruction of the king of Assyria and his army, 2Kgs 19:5-8. Sennacherib, hearing that his kingdom was invaded by the Ethiopians, sends a terrible letter to Hezekiah, to induce him to surrender, 2Kgs 19:9-13. Hezekiah goes to the temple, spreads the letter before the Lord, and makes a most affecting prayer, 2Kgs 19:14-19. Isaiah is sent to him to assure him that his prayer is heard; that Jerusalem shall be delivered; and that the Assyrians shall be destroyed, 2Kgs 19:20-34. That very night a messenger of God slays one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians, 2Kgs 19:35. Sennacherib returns to Nineveh, and is slain by his own sons, 2Kgs 19:36, 2Kgs 19:37.

2KINGS 19: 2 He sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

Verse 2

To Isaiah the prophet - His fame and influence were at this time great in Israel; and it was well known that the word of the Lord was with him. Here both the Church and the state unite in fervent application to, and strong dependence upon, God; and behold how they succeed!

2KINGS 19: 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of trouble, of rebuke, and of rejection; for the children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to deliver them.

Verse 3

The children are come to the birth - The Jewish state is here represented under the emblem of a woman in travail, who has been so long in the pangs of parturition, that her strength is now entirely exhausted, and her deliverance is hopeless, without a miracle. The image is very fine and highly appropriate.

A similar image is employed by Homer, when he represents the agonies which Agamemnon suffers from his wound: - Οφρα οἱ αἰμ' ἐτι θερμον ἀνηνοθεν ἐξ ωτειλῆς· Λυταρ ἐπει το μὲν ἔλκος ἐτερσετο παυσάτο δ' αἶμα, Ὄξειαι ὀδυναι δυνον μένος Ἀτρεΐδαο· Ὡς δ' ὅταν ὠδινούσαν ἐχῇ βέλκος ὄξυ γυναῖκα, Δριμυ, το τε προΐεισι μογοστοκοὶ Εὐλειθυῖαι Ἥρης θυγατέρες πικρὰς ὠδινὰς ἐχούσαι· Ὡς ὄξει' ὀδυναι δυνον μένος Ἀτρεΐδαο.

Il. xi., ver. 266.

This, while yet warm, distill'd the purple flood;

But when the wound grew stiff with clotted blood,

Then grinding tortures his strong bosom rend.
Less keen those darts the fierce Ilythiae send,
The powers that cause the teeming matron's throes,
Sad mothers of unutterable woes.

Pope

Better translated by Macpherson; but in neither well: "So long as from the gaping wound gushed forth, in its warmth, the blood; but when the wound became dry, when ceased the blood to flow amain, sharp pains pervade the strength of Atrides. Racking pangs glide through his frame; as when the Ilythiae, who preside over births, the daughters of white armed Juno, fierce dealers of bitter pains, throw all their darts on hapless women, that travail with child. Such pains pervade the strength of Atrides."

2KINGS 19: 4 It may be the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left."

Verse 4

The remnant that are left - That is, the Jews; the ten tribes having been already carried away captive by the kings of Assyria.

2KINGS 19: 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

2KINGS 19: 6 Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall tell your master, 'Thus says the LORD, "Don't be afraid of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

2KINGS 19: 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he will hear news, and will return to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"

Verse 7

Behold, I will send a blast - and he shall hear a rumor - The rumor was, that Tirhakah had invaded Assyria. The blast was that which slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand of them in one night, see 2Kgs 19:35.

Cause him to fall by the sword - Alluding to his death by the hands of his two sons, at Nineveh. See 2Kgs 19:35-37.

2KINGS 19: 8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he had departed from Lachish.

Verse 8

Libnah - Lachish - These two places were not very distant from each other; they were in the mountains of Judah, southward of Jerusalem.

2KINGS 19: 9 When he heard it said of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "Behold, he has come out to fight against you, he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying,

2KINGS 19: 10 'Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, "Don't let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Verse 10

Let not thy God in whom thou trustest - This letter is nearly the same with the speech delivered by Rab-shakeh. See 2Kgs 18:29.

2KINGS 19: 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly. Will you be delivered?

2KINGS 19: 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Telassar?

2KINGS 19: 13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?"

2KINGS 19: 14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it. Then Hezekiah went up to the LORD's house, and spread it before the LORD.

Verse 14

Spread it before the Lord - The temple was considered to be God's dwelling-place; and that whatever was there was peculiarly under his eye. Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord, as he wished him to read the blasphemies spoken against himself.

2KINGS 19: 15 Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, "LORD, the God of Israel, who sit above the cherubim, you are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Verse 15

Thou art the God, etc. - Thou art not only God of Israel, but God also of Assyria, and of all the nations of the world.

2KINGS 19: 16 Incline your ear, LORD, and hear. Open your eyes, LORD, and see. Hear the words of Sennacherib, with which he has sent to defy the living God.

2KINGS 19: 17 Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands,

2KINGS 19: 18 and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

2KINGS 19: 19 Now therefore, LORD our God, save us, I beg you, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, LORD, are God alone."

2KINGS 19: 20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Whereas you have prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you.

2KINGS 19: 21 This is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: "The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you.

Verse 21

The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee - "So truly contemptible is thy power, and empty thy boasts, that even the young women of Jerusalem, under the guidance of Jehovah, shall be amply sufficient to discomfit all thy forces, and cause thee to return with shame to thy own country, where the most disgraceful death awaits thee." When Bishop Warburton had published his Doctrine of Grace, and chose to fall foul on some of the most religious people of the land, a young woman of the city of Gloucester exposed his graceless system in a pamphlet, to which she affixed the above words as a motto!

2KINGS 19: 22 Whom have you defied and blasphemed? Against whom have you exalted your voice and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel.

2KINGS 19: 23 By your messengers you have defied the Lord, and have said, 'With the multitude of my chariots, I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down its tall cedars, and its choice fir trees; and I will enter into his farthest lodging place, the forest of his fruitful field.

Verse 23

The tall cedar trees - the choice fir trees - Probably meaning the princes and nobles of the country.

The forest of his Carmel - Better in the margin: the forest and his fruitful field.

2KINGS 19: 24 I have dug and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.'

Verse 24

I have dipped and drunk strange waters - I have conquered strange countries, in which I have digged wells for my army; or, I have gained the wealth of strange countries.

With the sole of my feet - My infantry have been so numerous that they alone have been sufficient to drink up the rivers of the places I have besieged.

2KINGS 19: 25 Haven't you heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Now have I brought it to pass, that it should be yours to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps.

Verse 25

Hast thou not heard - Here Jehovah speaks, and shows this boasting king that what he had done was done by the Divine appointment, and that of his own counsel and might he could have done nothing. It was because God had appointed them to this civil destruction that he had overcome them; and it was not through his might; for God had made their inhabitants of small power, so that he only got the victory over men whom God had confounded, dismayed, and enervated, 2Kgs 19:26.

2KINGS 19: 26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power. They were dismayed and confounded. They were like the grass of the field, and like the green herb, like the grass on the housetops, and like grain blasted before it has grown up.

2KINGS 19: 27 But I know your sitting down, and your going out, and your coming in, and your raging against me.

2KINGS 19: 28 Because of your raging against me, and because your arrogance has come up into my ears, therefore will I put my hook in your nose, and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way by which you came."

Verse 28

I will put my hook in thy nose - This seems to be an allusion to the method of guiding a buffalo; he has a sort of ring put into his nose, to which a cord or bridle is attached, by which he can be turned to the right, or to the left, or round about, according to the pleasure of his driver.

2KINGS 19: 29 "This shall be the sign to you: You shall eat this year that which grows of itself, and in the second year that which springs of the same; and in the third year sow, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat its fruit.

Verse 29

This shall be a sign unto thee - To Hezekiah; for to him this part of the address is made.

Ye shall eat this year - Sennacherib had ravaged the country, and seed-time was now over, yet God shows them that he would so bless the land, that what should grow of itself that year, would be

quite sufficient to supply the inhabitants and prevent all famine; and though the second year was the sabbatical rest or jubilee for the land, in which it was unlawful to plough or sow; yet even then the land, by an especial blessing of God, should bring forth a sufficiency for its inhabitants; and in the third year they should sow and plant, etc. and have abundance, etc. Now this was to be a sign to Hezekiah, that his deliverance had not been effected by natural or casual means; for as without a miracle the ravaged and uncultivated land could not yield food for its inhabitants, so not without miraculous interference could the Assyrian army be cut off and Israel saved.

2KINGS 19: 30 The remnant that has escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

Verse 30

The remnant - shall yet again take root - As your corn shall take root in the soil, and bring forth and abundantly multiply itself, so shall the Jewish people; the population shall be greatly increased, and the desolations occasioned by the sword soon be forgotten.

2KINGS 19: 31 For out of Jerusalem a remnant will go out, and out of Mount Zion those who shall escape. The zeal of the LORD will perform this.'

Verse 31

Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant - The Jews shall be so multiplied as not only to fill Jerusalem, but all the adjacent country.

And they that escape out of Mount Zion - Some think that this refers to the going forth of the apostles to the Gentile world, and converting the nations by the preaching of the Gospel.

2KINGS 19: 32 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, 'He shall not come to this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it.

Verse 32

He shall not, etc. - Here follow the fullest proofs that Jerusalem shall not be taken by the Assyrians.

1. He shall not come into this city;
2. He shall not be able to get so near as to shoot an arrow into it;
3. He shall not be able to bring an army before it,
4. Nor shall he be able to raise any redoubt or mound against it;

5. No; not even an Assyrian shield shall be seen in the country; not even a foraging party shall come near the city.

2KINGS 19: 33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come to this city,' says the LORD.

Verse 33

By the way that he came - Though his army shall not return, yet he shall return to Assyria; for because of his blasphemy he is reserved for a more ignominious death.

2KINGS 19: 34 'For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake.'"

2KINGS 19: 35 That night, the LORD's angel went out, and struck one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. When men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

Verse 35

That night - The very night after the blasphemous message had been sent, and this comfortable prophecy delivered.

The angel of the Lord went out - I believe this angel or messenger of the Lord was simply a suffocating or pestilential Wind; by which the Assyrian army was destroyed, as in a moment, without noise confusion or any warning. See the note 1Kgs 20:30. Thus was the threatening, 2Kgs 19:7, fulfilled, I will send a Blast upon him; for he had heard the rumor that his territories were invaded; and on his way to save his empire, in one night the whole of his army was destroyed, without any one even seeing who had hurt them. This is called an angel or messenger of the Lord: that is, something immediately sent by him to execute his judgments.

When they arose early - That is, Sennacherib, and probably a few associates, who were preserved as witnesses and relaters of this most dire disaster. Rab-shakeh, no doubt, perished with the rest of the army.

2KINGS 19: 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and lived at Nineveh.

Verse 36

Dwelt at Nineveh - This was the capital of the Assyrian empire.

2KINGS 19: 37 As he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Esar Haddon his son reigned in his place.

Verse 37

Nisroch his god - We know nothing of this deity; he is nowhere else mentioned.

Smote him with the sword - The rabbins say that his sons had learned that he intended to sacrifice them to this god, and that they could only prevent this by slaying him.

The same writers add, that he consulted his wise men how it was that such miracles should be wrought for the Israelites; who told him that it was because of the merit of Abraham who had offered his only son to God: he then said, I will offer to him my two sons; which when they heard, they rose up and slew him. When a rabbin cannot untie a knot, he feels neither scruple nor difficulty to cut it.