

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**II CHR. 32:1** After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

**2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,**

3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which *were* without the city: and they did help him.

**4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?**

5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised *it* up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo *in* the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

**6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,**

7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him:

**8 With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.**

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *other*, and guided them on every side.

**23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.**

## NOTES

# Hezekiah Rallies Judah's Army

Lesson Text: II Chronicles 32:1-8, 22-23

Related Scriptures: II Kings 18:17-37; 19:1-19;  
Isaiah 36—37; Jeremiah 17:5-8

TIME: 701 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (II Chronicles 32:8).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **PREPARATION FOR A SIEGE— II Chr. 32:1-5**

From Abijah, we jump ahead in time to another of Judah's kings: Hezekiah, who is characterized in both Kings and Chronicles as one of the godliest and most faithful rulers since David. Hezekiah had some failings, but they do not appear in this week's text or impinge on its concerns.

The nation of Judah had fallen on hard times under the evil rule of Hezekiah's father, Ahaz. Hezekiah spent the first fourteen years after Ahaz's death conducting a massive reform of Judah's spiritual life. He repaired the temple, destroyed pagan altars and high places, restored the Passover (which had been neglected), and refurbished the temple and its workings.

**A rude invasion (II Chr. 32:1).** We might think that after faithfully carrying out such an extensive program intended to restore honor to the Lord, Hezekiah might be granted a well-earned time of rest and peace. But it

was not to be. The great reforms were hardly completed when Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, invaded Judah. He laid siege to all the smaller fortified cities, intending to break their defenses and take them for himself.

An Assyrian invasion should not have been a great surprise to Hezekiah. During his fourth year as king, he had watched on the sidelines as Sennacherib's grandfather, Shalmaneser V, laid waste to the northern kingdom of Israel and eventually carted off its population to permanent exile (II Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:9-12). Assyria was the most feared power of the time, or of any time. Their extreme cruelty and overwhelming power were impossible to ignore. Now, in Hezekiah's fourteenth year (18:13), they were back.

**Assessment of options (II Chr. 32:2-3).** For Hezekiah, it was bad enough to see the other fortified cities of Judah fall into the Assyrian king's grip. He soon realized, however, that even Jerusalem was not safe.

The account in II Kings 18 adds the detail that Hezekiah initially tried to buy off Sennacherib with a massive tribute, even to the extent of stripping the gold off the doors of the temple (vss. 14-16). The reprieve was temporary at best.

The II Chronicles account omits the issue of paying tribute, concentrating rather on Hezekiah's defensive preparations. In 32:3 we are told that he met with his officials and military advisers and made plans to cut off "the waters of the fountains" outside the city. This is a reference to springs located just outside the city whose flow could be blocked or redirected as needed.

**Defensive maneuvers (II Chr. 32:4-5).** In short order, a large force assembled and succeeded in stopping the flow of the springs as well as a stream that ran through the fields.

Hezekiah did not stop with securing the water supply. He immediately set about strengthening Jerusalem's physical defenses, beginning with the city wall. Over the years, sections of it had weakened or broken down; Hezekiah repaired these and made them even stronger by building towers on top of them. Then he went one better by building an entire second wall outside the first one.

Hezekiah also reinforced a structure called the Millo. This was a fortification that dated to Jebusite times and to which David had added (II Sam. 5:9). Most archaeologists identify it with a stepped or terraced structure on Jerusalem's southeast side. In addition to these measures, the king increased the supply of weapons.

### **ENCOURAGEMENT TO STAND STRONG—II Chr. 32:6-8**

**Assembling a fighting force (II Chr. 32:6a).** Hezekiah's next step was to appoint military officers ("captains of war") over the people. It was important to establish clear lines of authority and orga-

nization and not let the people face the enemy as an unruly mob. After choosing his officers, the king asked them to assemble before him in the square at the city gate. It is possible that "them" refers to all the people, but more likely it was the newly appointed captains.

**Boosting morale (II Chr. 32:6b-8).** We could get the wrong idea from the statement that Hezekiah "spoke comfortably" to his men (vs. 6). The meaning is he spoke words of encouragement—encouragement in the true sense of the term—that is, he instilled courage into them. That is one of the most important things a good leader can do.

So, as the Lord once exhorted Joshua (Josh. 1:9), Hezekiah urged his men to be strong and courageous. There was no need to fear or be cowed by the Assyrian king or by the vast army he had behind him. Why? The king offered one reason only, but it was decisive: as vast as Sennacherib's army looked, a far greater power was present with the men of Judah.

In case his officers failed to grasp his point, Hezekiah spelled it out. The Assyrian king had only "an arm of flesh" at his disposal (II Chr. 32:8). He had a great army, but they were only men. It really did not matter how many of them there were, for Hezekiah and his men had the Lord their God with them.

### **VICTORY FROM THE LORD—II Chr. 32:22-23**

The last two verses of our text summarize the victory the Lord gave His people, but it is helpful to briefly survey the particulars of what happened in between. Sennacherib, who was still besieging the city of Lachish, must have gotten wind of Hezekiah's morale-boosting speech, for he sent a mocking reply intended to vaporize the newly instilled fortitude (vs. 9).

Sennacherib took direct aim at

Hezekiah's assurance that the Lord would fight for Judah. He derided the notion, basing his own confidence on the fact that no nation's gods had stopped him—why should the people of Judah think their God would do any better (vss. 11-14)? Of course, this was an empty boast since Israel's God was the one true God.

Sennacherib repeated his brash claim: no god had ever rescued anyone from him or from his ancestors, and that was not about to change (vs. 15)! There followed a concerted campaign by his officials and messengers to heap scorn on the very name of the Lord and His power (vss. 16-19).

What the Assyrian king never realized was that his mocking attack on the Lord's presence and power sealed his own undoing.

The Lord heard Sennacherib's insults only too clearly. We are told in II Chronicles 32:21 that He sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army with all its officers. Sennacherib returned home in disgrace, only to be slain by his sons as he entered his own god's temple.

In II Kings 19:35-37, we learn additionally that the Lord's angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

**Rescue from the imminent danger (II Chr. 32:22).** The Lord therefore rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's threat, just as their king had assured them He would. As it turned out, He fought their battle for them entirely on His own, requiring no assistance from them whatsoever.

The Lord simultaneously rescued them from "the hand of all other," that is, from any other threat that might have arisen. That He "guided them" means He took care of them, or gave them rest. So, Jerusalem and all Judah had peace on every side.

**Respect in the eyes of neighboring peoples (II Chr. 32:23).** The sudden destruction of 185,000 enemy soldiers does not go unnoticed by surrounding nations. An obvious result of Jerusalem's dramatic deliverance was a boost in the city's prestige, especially for the Lord and for Hezekiah. Many of the neighboring peoples brought gifts to both the Lord and the king.

Not many of us will ever face an army bent on destroying everything we hold dear. If Hezekiah could stand up to such a threat with courage and faith in the Lord's protection, can we not trust Him to fight for us?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## QUESTIONS

1. What happened soon after Hezekiah completed his great reform program?
2. What plans did Hezekiah and his advisers make?
3. How did he strengthen Jerusalem's physical defenses?
4. What was the Millo?
5. Why did Hezekiah appoint "captains of war" over his people (II Chr. 32:6)?
6. What does it mean that he "spake comfortably" to them?
7. What great contrast did Hezekiah draw between his army and the Assyrian king's?
8. What made Sennacherib's claim that no nation's gods had resisted him an empty boast?
9. What does it mean that the Lord "guided them on every side" (vs. 22)?
10. How did neighboring peoples respond to Jerusalem's deliverance?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. No one who seeks to live a godly life will go unchallenged (II Chr. 32:1; cf. II Chr. 29:1—31:21; II Tim. 3:12).
2. We should plan for success with sound strategy and partnerships that do not compromise God's Word (II Chr. 32:2-3).
3. God gives wisdom and resources to face both long-term and immediate challenges (vs. 4).
4. Faith does not discourage preparation but rather inspires it (vss. 5-6).
5. As believers we can face enemies and challenges with confidence, knowing God is with us (vss. 7-8).
6. God is glorified when we act wisely and trust Him (vss. 22-23).

—Cheryl Y. Powell.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think God allows believers to have enemies?
2. Why is it important to understand that faithfulness to God does not insulate anyone from attacks?
3. Where do we find the proper balance between trusting God and making wise plans for our future?
4. What are some areas of life in which we might experience spiritual attacks today?
5. How have you seen God fight "battles" for you or one of His other children (II Chr. 32:8)?
6. What effects did the miraculous deliverance of King Hezekiah and the people of Judah have on them and on others?

—Cheryl Y. Powell.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (II Chronicles 32:8).**

God used Hezekiah's leadership to embolden the people. Hezekiah said that they should not be dismayed because of the Assyrians' impending attack. He explained that the Lord's strength was greater than that of the Assyrians. He pointed out that the Assyrians were trusting in the "arm of flesh," meaning they were trusting in physical strength rather than the Lord. In this case, He intervened miraculously on behalf of His people. We must always remember that the Lord gives and takes away (Job 1:21), and the "arm of flesh" cannot stand against Him.

The situation got a little dicey after Hezekiah's meeting with the people. Sennacherib began a pattern of pernicious psychological attacks. He sent messengers to Judah to deliver messages that caused the people to doubt. He attacked Hezekiah's decision to take down the idols in the land and "limit" the people to one God. He boasted of his past military victories. He warned the people against Hezekiah's leadership. He blasphemed the Lord.

Through all the pandemonium, Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord. God had seen Hezekiah's efforts and faithfulness, and He sent an angel to drive the Assyrians out. The Lord showed all of Judah and Assyria that Hezekiah's trust in Him was justified.

—Carissa Dobson.