



Hezekiah and Sennacherib's Dead Army by Myrtle Brown

The Assyrian army lead by Sennacerib was on a military campaign to conquer land and cities. They were working their way through the land from Assyria and were advancing on Jerusalem rapidly.

When Hezekiah tried to appease king of Assyria with gold and anything else he asked for, he said "take this but not Jerusalem." Well, Sennacherib took all the gold he could give him, even from off the temple, but nothing changed his mind (2 Chronicles 32:1) he camped with his army away from Jerusalem and planned the imminent war.

He wasn't the only one planning, Hezekiah prepared too, he finished an aqueduct which would draw the water from the Kidron river and into the city. This waterway was a tunnel underground through a rock hill called Ophel, they started at each end and managed to meet opposite one another in the centre. Being rock you can still walk through this today and it is quite long. Then Hezekiah strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, but he put his main trust in God to save the city.

Hezekiah called his captains of the army and told them "Don't be afraid or dismayed because of the king of Assyrians huge army. There are more with us than with them. With him there is a human army, but with us there is the God that made heaven and earth. He will be with us during our battle."

It wasn't too long until they saw the Assyrian army marching toward Jerusalem. They stopped in the valley of Kidron just outside the city walls. The Kidron river which usually flowed freely was dry, and the army was extremely dismayed to see nothing left but a little trickle. But looking up to the city they could see reservoirs inside the walls.

They asked for a parley with Jerusalem's officers. It was a real sling-off match from the Assyrians who were confident that they would soon destroy the city - mind you they had lately conquered many Judah's townships so their confidence was not displaced, it was demoralising for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to hear this for they were extremely scared already.

Hezekiah went directly to the temple to ask the Lord what he should do. Back came the very comforting words "Don't be afraid of his words, I will be with you" ...and much more than that for God had instructed the prophet Isaiah, who went to Hezekiah with a sign. Isaiah told Hezekiah that "You will eat all you grow this year, and year two the same, and in the third year you will sow and reap again." The prophet told Hezekiah that he would protect and defend his people and they shall take root downward and bear fruit upward. The Lord also said "in the future your people will be able to spread out from the city and sow and reap." He relayed also that the Assyrians would not come into the city nor shoot an arrow there. What a comforting message that was.

Then Sennacherib heard that the Egyptians were marching up to attack the Assyrians, which prompted him to take the army down to Egypt and fight them. Once that battle was won, they returned to their original mission which was to annihilate Jerusalem. The army once again camped around the city walls. The next day was to be the start of the onslaught. What a terrifying sight the city of tents would have been for the people of Jerusalem to look down on.

The night passed and in the morning scouts were sent out to report on progress, but they were soon back telling their captains and Hezekiah that "out there" was an army of dead men and horses. God had kept his word, no less than 183,000 men were no more, 2 Chronicles 32:21.

Sennecherib himself escaped death and he was able to go home, but several years later his two sons killed him. This event was so important in God's eyes that he recorded it in three places: Isaiah 36:2, 2 Kings 18:2, 2 Chronicles 2:32.

Now read Bryon's poem about this event - it was a poem that I learnt at school.

The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of the spears was like stars on the sea
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown!

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed on the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled no the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the windows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Bryon.