

Isaiah 37:21-38 The Protection of God Over His People

What a beautiful passage today from the Word of God. Last week we looked at some attributes of God displayed in Hezekiah's prayer. Today, we will consider God's answer to Hezekiah. Here, we will find at least 3 truths about how God relates to his people, which is very important for us. Let's begin.

1. God opposes those who fight against his people. This is a MAJOR theme, in Isaiah. And we see this in the love for and protection of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. In v. 22, after Hezekiah's prayer, God answers very directly concerning Assyria and their king and their opposition to Him. The king of Assyria (and his people) are at war with God's people. Assyria has already conquered the surrounding areas, or are in process of doing so. Now, they are closing in on Jerusalem itself, the very place of God's presence (temple) and his people. Look at the 2nd part of v. 22: **"She despises you, she scorns you—the virgin daughter of Zion; she wags her head behind you—the daughter of Jerusalem."** Apparently, Jerusalem was one of the few strongholds left in the Assyrian empire that had not been conquered or forced to completely submit to their authority. And the King hated these people, stubborn, rebellious, not recognizing his authority, etc. And right from the beginning Isaiah is clear. Those who oppose God's people, oppose God himself.

Look at v. 23: **"Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel."** And then in v. 24: **"By your servants you have mocked the Lord . . ."** And then in v. 29, **"Because you have raged against me . . ."** And because of this "raging" against God, they will be judged accordingly. God has no rivals! Do we have any mama bears sitting here today? I believe so. Let me ask, *"Mamas, how do you respond when someone accuses your baby of something they didn't do?"* *How do you feel when a bully comes against your child?"* I'm not downplaying fathers, because we feel the same. But, you don't want to cross a mama bear watching her cubs, even if they are not perfect (which they aren't). *"You let me accuse my own children. You leave them alone."* If you are God's child, you are special. You are the apple of his eye! And in protecting your honor, He protects his own. A sin against you is a sin against God.

Do you remember the passage in Matt. 25 where the King separates the sheep and the goats. At the end He says, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Today, if you are fighting against the people of God, you will not win, but instead judged. Let me mention 2 truths related to this subject before we move on.

Truth: The root of all raging against God is pride. We see this as the King of Assyria does not consider who he is as a created being ultimately under the control of God. They themselves were relying on the providence of God in all their provisions for their nation. Yet they took the glory for themselves. Look at vv. 24-28: **"By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon, to cut down its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses, to come to its remotest height, its most fruitful forest. ²⁵ I dug wells and drank waters, to dry up with the**

sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.” Notice God’s correction starting in v. 26: **“Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins,²⁷ while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.²⁸ “I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me.”** Brothers and sisters, do not be prideful! Give glory to God! FOR ALL THINGS!

Question: *“Why do the nations rage against God and his people?”* Truth: The nations rage because they oppose God and his Messiah. Look at Psalm 2: **“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,³ “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,⁶ “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”** And we see the application in vv. 10-12: **“Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”**

2. God will save his people. Here, the emphasis is on salvation. God will protect his people and ultimately save his people. Look at vv. 30-32: **“And this shall be the sign for you: this year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit.³¹ And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.³² For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”** We see this first in the protection of Jerusalem and all its people. The city and its inhabitants will not be destroyed, but saved. God’s people in God’s place are very important. And He will protect them at all costs. God will save a people!

Let’s think about this a bit deeper by asking a question. Who are God’s people? What about the ten tribes of the northern kingdom? You know, the ones whom Assyria has already conquered back in 722 B.C.? He didn’t save them . . . did He? From one perspective we must say absolutely, yes. They are God’s people. They are the physical sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in exactly the same way as the two tribes of the south (Judah, Benjamin). And in fact, God gives the ten tribes to Jeroboam. 1 Kings 11:31: **“Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes.”** And every indication we see is that if Jeroboam would have served the Lord with his heart and obeyed him, he and the people would have been blessed. But he did not. And, when we consider the southern kingdom, they often disobey. And as we’ve seen, they themselves fight against God and they are judged. And even during Hezekiah’s time, my understanding is that large numbers of the people were not loyal to God in their hearts.

With this in mind, it is important to view the entire nation of Israel from two perspectives. On the one hand, ALL of them can be called God's people because of their heritage, because of their birth, because of their position within the place of God's providence. And, they are blessed unlike the other nations. We see this clearly as God establishes his covenant with this people. But, on the other hand, we must see a people of faith, a people within a people, Isaiah's remnant. We see this throughout Isaiah. Look back at 37:32: **"For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."**

This is VERY important as it helps us makes sense of many texts and truths. Sometimes, the context is clear: God's ethnic people. Other times, it is clear, God's people of faith. And sometimes, God delivers his ethnic people, all of them (generally speaking). We see this with Egypt, the conquest of the land with Joshua, and at various times like Jerusalem with Assyria. But, there are times in the OT when God does not deliver the physical descendants of Abraham. Ex: The Northern Kingdom, 722 B.C.; the Southern Kingdom (586 B.C.); Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

But what is important for us is that God will always save a particular people (remnant). These are those with faith, in both the OT and the NT, this truth always stands. **"By grace you've been saved through faith . . ."** (Eph. 2:8-9). In Rom. 11 Paul speaks about this principle as the Gentiles are "grafted" into Israel. And this is by faith. He also distinguishes between physical Israelites and those with faith. In essence he is speaking of the new covenant in Christ. Jer. 31:33-34: **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."** ³⁴ **And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."**

So, from this perspective, God will save his people. This is a timeless truth. **"In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace . . ."** (Eph. 1:5-6). **"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'"** (Matt. 25:34). And, the means to salvation is faith and repentance.

This means God is a God who saves. And what do we need to be saved from. It is sin. Is. 59:2 says, **"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."** Oh, the great mercy of God! Is. 45:21: **"Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me."**

Application: Salvation is from sin. It is not from the things of this world. It is not always from physical harm. We must remember that God does not always protect and save us from the trials and tests of this world, or even death itself. But, he does protect us from himself and his own righteous wrath and the 2nd death that is coming to those who do not turn to Him.

3. God himself will do what is necessary to save his people. Look at v. 32: **“For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors.”** And notice WHO will do this: **“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”** This is one of the most beautiful truths in all the Bible! It is certainly a mystery, everything about it! But, we must get this truth! Let me put it another way. From our standpoint, there is absolutely NOTHING we can do to save ourselves. For if we are able to save ourselves by any works, any good thoughts, any good deeds, any good plans, any good decisions, God will not get all the glory. If salvation comes to anyone, it will be because GOD HIMSELF does EVERYTHING necessary for this to happen.

We see this in our passage with the salvation of Jerusalem and its people. They CANNOT survive the wrath of Assyria! God must do it! I want us to notice the miracles in this passage. #1) He sends the king away. In v. 29 God says, **“I will send the King of Assyria back to his land.”** In fact, it’s as easy as putting a bit in a horse’s mouth or a hook in a person’s nose, leading where I desire. And then in v. 30, miracle #2) he says, **“I’ll give you a sign.”** All the destruction the Assyrians have done to your land, I will restore. You will plant and you will eat. And even in the coming three years, you will plant vineyards and eat from their vines. This doesn’t seem like a big deal to us. But, from what I’ve read, the land was a war zone. And the destruction in Israel was immense and would have taken many years to rebuild. And this is a miracle. It is something ONLY God can do.

Then in vv. 33-35 we see miracle #3) The Assyrians won’t touch the city; no arrows, no shields, no siege mound, no soldiers will step one foot into the city. Look at v. 35 God says, **“For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”** Then, in v. 36 we see miracle #4) In one night the angel of the Lord (ONE MESSENGER), kills 185,000 men (more than both armies combined at the Battle of Gettysburg). **“And the people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead.”** This entire story proclaims our truth: If we, or anyone, is to be saved, it will be because GOD HIMSELF does EVERYTHING necessary to bring about salvation.

So, how does this apply to us? The REAL miracle, the one to which all miracles point is our truth. God must do it! Salvation is a miracle! God must give life! God must provide! Think of Israel in the OT. Were they ever faithful enough? Did they ever completely keep God’s covenant? Did they every obey the law sufficiently in their hearts and in their actions to save themselves? NO! In fact, at every turn, they were disobedient! Here, I must read from Isaiah 59 (turn with me).

Verses 1-4: **“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness. No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.”** Brothers and sisters, is this not our experience? God is holy. We are not! Can you recount your sins the last couple days, this week, this month? How many times have you gone back on your word with

God? How many times have you been unfaithful? Have your thoughts been perfect? Has your heart been pure? And as you look back, have you ever wandered away from God, even in your heart? And, if you aren't a Christian how many times have you tried to do good works, thinking God will approve? Look at v. 6: **“men will not cover themselves with what they make.”** And because of these things, look at v. 9: **“Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.”** Is this your experience? Of course it is! Look at v. 11-13: **“We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning back from following our God . . .”**

Now look at v. 15: **“The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede . . . then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him . . .”** This is where we see the gospel. Look at v. 20: **“And a Redeemer will come to Zion . . .”** Now fast forward to Gal. 4:4-5: **“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ^s to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”** This is so important! Who is the son? In essence He is God! God IS the Gospel!

Rom. 5:6: **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . .”**
 Rom. 5:8: **“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . .”** Think about the Gospel. From eternity, God loved a people and ordained that the Son come. He was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, without a sin nature, %100 God, %100 man. And he laid down his life miraculously at the right time. And his sacrifice was perfect. And He rose from the dead by his own power. And he ascended back to heaven from where He came. And He gives to his people the Spirit (even here it is wholly of God. For without the Spirit, how can we live?) And we await his return . . . All of these things must be! For they are all from God! Oh the beauty of the Gospel of our glorious God! (appeal to trust Christ.)

Applications.

The gates of hell will not prevail. For it is God who will accomplish this great work of salvation. No weapon against you shall prosper. God will preserve and keep you to the end.

God controls human history to bring about his purposes (v. 26).

We see the use of means to bring about his purposes. And, these are also ordained beforehand.

Finish with reading Psalm 76.