

of the history is made clear by the prediction which Isaiah made in the thirtieth verse of the thirty-seventh chapter where he said, "And this shall be a sign unto thee. Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof." Here Isaiah declares that the promise that God will deliver Jerusalem from the attack of the wicked Assyrian king will be fulfilled after about two years. The people would be closely shut up in Jerusalem for about two years, unable to venture far from its walls, since bands of Assyrians would occasionally come into the area, though the main Assyrian army was encamped about thirty miles away in the Philistine plain. The king of Assyria was busy taking other cities of Judah, capturing Philistine cities, and making preparations for an attack on Egypt. Jerusalem expected that any day it might be attacked; from time to time King Sennacherib sent envoys with boastful and blasphemous messages designed to scare the people into submission while sparing him the necessity of an actual attack. No real siege was brought against the city, but it would certainly have occurred soon if God had not intervened after the two year period of terror. Sennacherib had conquered far stronger cities than Jerusalem; no human force would have been able to deliver it.

The picture of the boastful and blasphemous character of the king of Assyria in these two chapters fits exactly with the picture of himself which he gives in his annals, where he describes his exploits in terms which boast that no one on earth can be considered as his equal.

God's Method

In Isaiah 37:36 we are not told how God smote the Assyrians. The statement reads: "Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." It would be most natural to think of some sort of swift plague as the method the Lord used to free Jerusalem from this menace. There is a story told by Herodotus about this same King Sennacherib which he heard in Egypt. According to this