

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Isaiah Chapter 36 — Sennacherib Challenges Hezekiah's Trust in the Lord

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Isaiah Chapter 36 moves from:

Prophecy.

To:

History.

The great theological themes of the previous chapters are now tested in an actual national crisis.

For many chapters Isaiah has warned Judah:

Do not trust Egypt.

Do not trust horses.

Do not trust alliances.

Trust:

The Lord.

Now the question becomes:

Will Judah actually do it?

The enemy standing outside Jerusalem is:

Assyria.

The Assyrian king is:

Sennacherib.

His representative is:

Rabshakeh.

“Rabshakeh” is a title for a high-ranking Assyrian official rather than necessarily the man’s personal name.

Assyria had already captured:

Many fortified cities of Judah.

Jerusalem now appeared:

Vulnerable.

Militarily inferior.

Surrounded by an empire that had defeated:

City after city.

Nation after nation.

Rabshakeh therefore attacks more than:

Jerusalem’s walls.

He attacks:

Jerusalem’s faith.

His central question is:

“On what are you basing this confidence of yours?”

That is one of the most important questions in the chapter.

Rabshakeh systematically tries to destroy every possible source of confidence.

He attacks trust in:

Military strategy.

Egypt.

Hezekiah.

The Lord.

Then he replaces faith with:

Fear.

Propaganda.

Half-truths.

Threats.

Promises.

He argues:

Egypt cannot save you.

Hezekiah cannot save you.

Your God cannot save you.

Assyria has defeated everyone else.

Therefore:

Surrender.

Some of Rabshakeh's statements contain:

Truth.

Egypt really was an unreliable ally.

Judah really was militarily weak.

Assyria really had conquered other nations.

God really had used Assyria as an instrument of judgment.

But Rabshakeh takes true facts and drives them toward:

A false conclusion.

That is what makes his speech so dangerous.

The enemy does not always lie by saying:

Nothing true.

Sometimes deception takes:

Facts.

Removes God's promises.

Distorts spiritual meaning.

Then produces:

Despair.

Verse 7 shows this clearly.

Rabshakeh argues that Hezekiah had offended God by removing:

High places.

Altars.

But Hezekiah's removal of unauthorized worship sites was actually part of his:

Reform.

Rabshakeh misunderstood or deliberately distorted:

Faithful obedience.

Verse 10 contains another dangerous claim.

Rabshakeh says:

“The Lord Himself told me, ‘Go up against this land and destroy it.’”

Isaiah had indeed previously described Assyria as an instrument of God’s judgment.

But being:

Used by God.

Did not mean Assyria understood God’s purposes correctly.

Nor did it authorize Assyria’s:

Pride.

Blasphemy.

Mockery.

Assyria was an instrument.

Not:

The sovereign Lord.

Rabshakeh then deliberately speaks in:

Hebrew.

Why?

Because his real target is:

The people on the wall.

His strategy is psychological warfare.

He wants to:

Create panic.

Break confidence.

Separate the people from Hezekiah.

Separate Hezekiah from God.

He offers them:

Peace.

Food.

Water.

Another fertile land.

But beneath the attractive language is:

Exile.

He describes deportation as though it were:

Opportunity.

Then his argument reaches its greatest arrogance:

“Who among all the gods of these lands has delivered his land from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”

Here Assyria makes its fatal mistake.

It treats:

The Lord.

As though He were merely:

Another territorial god.

One deity among many.

An idol comparable to the gods Assyria had already defeated.

But the Lord is not:

One god among many.

He is:

The Holy One of Israel.

Creator.

Sovereign.

Lord of nations.

The chapter ends without:

Battle.

Miracle.

Victory.

Instead:

Silence.

The people obey Hezekiah:

“Do not answer him.”

Sometimes faith answers.

Sometimes faith argues.

Sometimes faith testifies.

And sometimes:

Faith remains silent before propaganda and carries the matter to God.

The central truth of Isaiah 36 is:

When Assyria challenged Judah’s faith, Rabshakeh used intimidation, half-truths, false theology, political pressure, and promises of comfort to persuade God’s people that trust in the Lord was foolish; yet the proper response was not panic or compromise, but disciplined silence and continued confidence in the God whom Assyria had wrongly treated as though He were merely another powerless idol.

I. SENNACHERIB INVADES JUDAH

Isaiah 36:1 — The Fortified Cities Fall

“In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, marched against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.”

The crisis is:

Real.

This is not imagined fear.

Assyria had already demonstrated:

Military strength.

Siege skill.

Political power.

Judah’s fortified cities were falling.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:13

The historical record likewise states that Sennacherib invaded Judah during Hezekiah’s reign and attacked its fortified cities.

2 Chronicles 32:1

After Hezekiah's acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib entered Judah and laid siege to fortified cities, intending to capture them.

2 Kings 17:5

Assyria had previously invaded the northern kingdom and besieged Samaria, demonstrating the empire's military power.

Spiritual Principle

Faith is not pretending:

The threat is small.

Faith recognizes:

God is greater.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A real enemy does not make God less real.

II. ASSYRIA COMES TO JERUSALEM

Isaiah 36:2 — Rabshakeh at the Aqueduct

“Then the king of Assyria sent the commander, Rabshakeh, from Lachish to Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah, with a large army. He stood by the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the washer's field.”

Rabshakeh arrives with:

Authority.

Army.

Confidence.

He comes from:

Lachish.

A major fortified city under Assyrian attack.

He positions himself near:

Jerusalem's water system.

That location is significant.

Water is essential during:

Siege.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:17

The parallel account records Assyrian officials coming from Lachish to Jerusalem with a large force and standing near the upper pool.

2 Chronicles 32:9

Sennacherib and his army were engaged against Lachish while representatives were sent to pressure Jerusalem.

Isaiah 10:28

Isaiah had previously pictured Assyria advancing town by town toward Jerusalem in an apparently unstoppable march.

Spiritual Principle

The enemy often attacks where:

Fear feels practical.

Food.

Water.

Safety.

Survival.

III. HEZEKIAH'S OFFICIALS MEET THE ASSYRIAN ENVOY

Isaiah 36:3 — Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah

“Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was over the palace, Shebna the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, went out to meet him.”

Judah sends:

Senior officials.

This is now:

Diplomatic confrontation.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:18

The same officials are named as representatives meeting the Assyrian delegation.

Isaiah 22:20

Isaiah had earlier spoken of Eliakim son of Hilkiah being raised into a position of significant responsibility.

2 Kings 18:37

These same men later return to Hezekiah with torn clothing after hearing Rabshakeh's words.

Spiritual Principle

Leadership sometimes means:

Standing where threatening words are being spoken.

IV. “WHAT ARE YOU TRUSTING?”

Isaiah 36:4 — The Central Question

“Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Tell Hezekiah, “This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours?”””

Rabshakeh calls Sennacherib:

“The great king.”

That title is deliberate.

He wants Hezekiah to appear:

Small.

Weak.

Insignificant.

Then comes the question:

“On what are you basing this confidence?”

Ironically, that is the right question.

But Rabshakeh expects the wrong answer.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:19

The parallel account records Rabshakeh challenging Hezekiah's source of confidence.

2 Chronicles 32:10

Sennacherib asks what basis Jerusalem has for remaining under siege rather than surrendering.

Isaiah 30:1

Judah had previously been condemned for making plans and alliances apart from God.

Spiritual Principle

Every crisis eventually asks:

What are you trusting?

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Pressure does not create your foundation.

It reveals it.

V. ASSYRIA MOCKS JUDAH’S STRATEGY

Isaiah 36:5 — “Empty Words”

“You say you have strategy and strength for war, but they are empty words. On whom are you relying, that you rebel against me?”

Rabshakeh attacks:

Military planning.

Political resistance.

Human confidence.

There is some truth here.

Judah is:

Militarily weaker.

But Rabshakeh assumes:

Military strength decides everything.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:20

Rabshakeh dismisses Judah’s supposed counsel and strength for war as mere words.

Psalms 33:16

A king is not saved simply because he possesses a large army, nor is a warrior delivered merely by great strength.

Jeremiah 9:23

The wise, strong, and wealthy are warned not to boast in human wisdom, strength, or riches.

Spiritual Principle

Human weakness does not equal:

Divine inability.

VI. EGYPT IS A BROKEN REED

Isaiah 36:6 — A True Observation Used for Manipulation

“Look! You are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.”

Ironically:

Rabshakeh is correct about Egypt.

Isaiah himself had warned Judah repeatedly:

Do not trust Egypt.

But Rabshakeh uses a true statement to argue:

Therefore trust Assyria.

God’s message was:

Do not trust Egypt.

Trust:

The Lord.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:21

Egypt is similarly described as a broken reed that injures anyone who leans upon it.

Ezekiel 29:6

Egypt is compared to an unreliable staff that failed those who depended upon it.

Isaiah 30:7

Isaiah had already called Egypt’s help worthless and empty.

Spiritual Principle

Someone can diagnose your false trust correctly while still offering:

Another false trust.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Rejecting one idol does not help if you replace it with another.

VII. RABSHAKEH MISUNDERSTANDS HEZEKIAH'S REFORM

Isaiah 36:7 — Truth Twisted Against Faith

“But if you say, ‘We trust in the Lord our God,’ isn’t He the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before this altar’?”

Rabshakeh interprets Hezekiah’s reforms as:

An offense against God.

But Hezekiah had removed:

Idolatrous.

Unauthorized.

Corrupt.

High places.

He had called Judah back toward:

Proper worship.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:22

Rabshakeh makes the same accusation, suggesting Hezekiah weakened Judah’s relationship with God by removing worship sites.

2 Kings 18:4

Hezekiah had actually removed high places, destroyed sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah, and eliminated corrupt worship.

2 Chronicles 32:12

Assyria again presents Hezekiah’s reforms as though reducing unauthorized altars somehow made Judah spiritually vulnerable.

Spiritual Principle

People unfamiliar with true worship may interpret:

Obedience.

As:

Disobedience.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not let an enemy define whether your obedience to God was actually faithful.

VIII. ASSYRIA MOCKS JUDAH'S MILITARY WEAKNESS

Isaiah 36:8 — “Can You Find Riders?”

“Now, make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can find riders for them.”

This is:

Mockery.

Humiliation.

Psychological warfare.

Rabshakeh essentially says:

Even if we supplied the weapons, you could not supply the men.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:23

Rabshakeh sarcastically offers Judah horses if they can provide enough riders.

Isaiah 31:1

Judah had been warned not to rely upon horses, chariots, and military strength rather than seeking the Lord.

Psalms 20:7

Some trust chariots and horses, but God's people are called to trust the name of the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

The enemy wants weakness to become:

Shame.

God wants weakness to become:

Dependence.

IX. JUDAH CANNOT MATCH ASSYRIA IN HUMAN STRENGTH

Isaiah 36:9 — The Military Imbalance

“How then can you repel one officer of the least of my master’s servants, relying on Egypt for chariots and horsemen?”

From a purely military standpoint:

The argument sounds strong.

Judah cannot match:

Assyria.

That is precisely why:

Faith matters.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:24

Rabshakeh mocks Judah’s inability to stand against even a lesser Assyrian commander.

Isaiah 30:16

Judah had trusted fast horses and military escape rather than quiet trust in God.

Isaiah 31:3

Egyptians are men, not God, and their horses are flesh, not spirit.

Spiritual Principle

If the battle is measured only by visible resources:

God’s people may look defeated before it begins.

X. RABSHAKEH CLAIMS DIVINE AUTHORIZATION

Isaiah 36:10 — A Dangerous Half-Truth

“Furthermore, do you think I have come up against this land to destroy it without the Lord? The Lord Himself told me, ‘Go up against this land and destroy it.’”

This is one of the chapter’s most subtle claims.

Isaiah had previously said:

Assyria was an instrument of God’s judgment.

But that did not mean:

Rabshakeh possessed prophetic authority.

Assyria understood God’s purposes.

Sennacherib had unlimited permission.

Assyria was exempt from judgment.

In Isaiah 10, Assyria is used:

And then judged for its arrogance.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:25

Rabshakeh repeats his claim that the Lord authorized Assyria’s invasion.

Isaiah 10:5

God calls Assyria the rod of His anger, showing that He can use a nation as an instrument of discipline.

Isaiah 10:6

God sends Assyria against a godless people for a disciplinary purpose, though Assyria’s own motives remain proud and destructive.

Spiritual Principle

Being used within God’s providence does not mean:

God approves your motives.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never confuse being an instrument in God’s hand with being innocent before God.

XI. JUDAH'S OFFICIALS ASK FOR ARAMAIC

Isaiah 36:11 — Keep the Threat from the People

“Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to Rabshakeh, ‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.’”

The officials understand:

Psychological warfare.

They know Rabshakeh is trying to influence:

The crowd.

So they ask him to use:

Diplomatic language.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:26

The officials request that Rabshakeh speak Aramaic rather than the language understood by Jerusalem's population.

Nehemiah 13:24

Nehemiah later refers to language differences among neighboring peoples and the importance of understanding speech.

Genesis 42:23

Joseph's brothers did not realize he understood them because communication was conducted through an interpreter.

Spiritual Principle

Words can become:

Weapons.

XII. RABSHAKEH WANTS THE PEOPLE TO HEAR

Isaiah 36:12 — Fear as a Strategy

“But Rabshakeh replied, ‘Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will eat their own filth and drink their own urine during the siege?’”

His purpose is now obvious.

He wants:

Fear.

Disgust.

Panic.

He describes the horrific consequences of:

Siege.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:27

The parallel account records the same threat concerning the desperate conditions siege would create.

Deuteronomy 28:53

Covenant judgment warned that siege conditions could become so severe that ordinary human boundaries would collapse under starvation.

Lamentations 4:10

Jerusalem’s later suffering under siege became so severe that famine produced unspeakable desperation.

Spiritual Principle

Fear often works by forcing the mind to imagine:

The worst possible future.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The enemy wants tomorrow’s imagined suffering to control today’s faith.

XIII. RABSHAKEH SHOUTS IN THE PEOPLE’S LANGUAGE

Isaiah 36:13 — Propaganda Goes Public

“Then Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in Hebrew: ‘Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!’”

He deliberately increases:

Volume.

Accessibility.

Pressure.

His message is now aimed directly at:

Ordinary citizens.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:28

Rabshakeh loudly addresses the people in their own language.

2 Chronicles 32:18

Assyrian representatives shouted loudly in the language of Judah in order to terrify and demoralize the people.

Jeremiah 22:29

Jeremiah repeatedly cries for the land to hear the Word of the Lord, contrasting true divine proclamation with Assyrian propaganda.

Spiritual Principle

Volume does not determine:

Truth.

XIV. ASSYRIA ATTACKS HEZEKIAH’S CREDIBILITY

Isaiah 36:14 — “He Cannot Deliver You”

“This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he cannot deliver you.”

Rabshakeh tries to separate:

People.

From:

Leader.

Hezekiah is presented as:

Deceptive.

Powerless.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:29

The Assyrian king warns Jerusalem not to allow Hezekiah to persuade them that deliverance is possible.

2 Chronicles 32:15

Sennacherib tells the people not to let Hezekiah deceive or persuade them to trust God.

Jeremiah 29:8

God warns His people elsewhere not to be deceived by false messages, reminding us that accusations of deception must be tested by truth.

Spiritual Principle

One common tactic of intimidation is to make faithful leadership appear:

Foolish.

XV. ASSYRIA DIRECTLY ATTACKS TRUST IN THE LORD

Isaiah 36:15 — “Do Not Trust God”

“Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord when he says, ‘The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’”

Now the real target is exposed.

Not:

Hezekiah.

Not:

Egypt.

Not:

Military strategy.

The real target is:

Faith in God.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:30

Rabshakeh tells the people not to believe Hezekiah's assurance that the Lord will deliver Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 32:11

Assyrian propaganda claims Hezekiah is condemning the people to suffering by telling them to trust God.

Jeremiah 7:4

Jeremiah warns against false confidence in religious slogans, showing that true faith must rest upon God Himself rather than empty religious claims.

Spiritual Principle

The enemy's deepest objective is often not merely to frighten you.

It is to make you:

Distrust God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When the attack finally reaches:

"Do not trust the Lord,"

the real battle has been exposed.

XVI. ASSYRIA OFFERS COUNTERFEIT PEACE

Isaiah 36:16 — Vines, Fig Trees, and Cisterns

"Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern,"

Assyria promises:

Peace.

Food.

Water.

Ordinary life.

The imagery sounds almost:

Biblical.

That is what makes it effective.

But the promise requires:

Surrender.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:31

The Assyrian king promises apparent peace, food, and security if Jerusalem will surrender.

Micah 4:4

True messianic peace is pictured as people sitting safely beneath their own vines and fig trees without fear.

1 Kings 4:25

During Solomon's peaceful reign, Judah and Israel lived securely under their own vines and fig trees.

Spiritual Principle

Counterfeit promises often imitate:

Real blessings.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The enemy may borrow the language of peace while demanding the surrender of faith.

XVII. EXILE IS DISGUISED AS OPPORTUNITY

Isaiah 36:17 — “A Land Like Your Own”

“Until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.”

Listen carefully.

Rabshakeh admits:

“I will take you.”

This is:

Exile.

Deportation.

Loss of homeland.

Yet he presents it as:

Upgrade.

Opportunity.

A land like your own.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:32

Assyria describes exile as relocation to another prosperous land.

Deuteronomy 8:7

The land God gave Israel was described as abundant with water, crops, and provision.

2 Kings 17:6

Assyria had already deported the people of the northern kingdom and resettled them in foreign lands.

Spiritual Principle

Bondage often markets itself as:

Freedom.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Whenever surrender costs obedience to God, attractive packaging does not make it freedom.

XVIII. ASSYRIA COMPARES THE LORD TO FALSE GODS

Isaiah 36:18 — A Fatal Error

“Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, ‘The Lord will deliver us.’ Have any of the gods of the nations delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria?”

Here Assyria’s reasoning becomes:

Blasphemous.

It assumes:

The Lord is like the gods of defeated nations.

But those gods were:

Idols.

The Lord is:

The living God.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:33

Rabshakeh argues that because other national gods failed to deliver their peoples, Judah's God will also fail.

2 Chronicles 32:13

Sennacherib boasts that no god of the conquered nations had successfully resisted Assyria.

Isaiah 10:10

Assyria proudly claims superiority over kingdoms whose idols appeared more numerous than those of Jerusalem and Samaria.

Spiritual Principle

Past success can become spiritually dangerous when it convinces someone:

God is no different from defeated idols.

XIX. “WHERE ARE THEIR GODS?”

Isaiah 36:19 — Assyria's Record of Conquest

**“Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?
Have they delivered Samaria from my hand?”**

Rabshakeh presents:

Evidence.

Hamath:

Fallen.

Arpad:

Fallen.

Sepharvaim:

Fallen.

Samaria:

Fallen.

His argument is:

History proves we cannot lose.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:34

The Assyrian official lists defeated cities and their gods as evidence of Assyria's supposed invincibility.

Isaiah 10:9

Assyria boasts over its victories at cities such as Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, and Damascus.

Isaiah 37:13

The same conquered nations are later cited again in Assyria's continuing boast against Jerusalem.

Spiritual Principle

A record of victories does not guarantee victory against:

God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Yesterday's success can become tomorrow's pride.

XX. ASSYRIA CHALLENGES THE LORD DIRECTLY

Isaiah 36:20 — “That the Lord Should Deliver Jerusalem?”

“Who among all the gods of these lands has delivered his land from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”

This is the climax.

The issue is now:

God's honor.

Assyria's boast essentially says:

No god has stopped us.

Why should:

The Lord?

The answer will come in:

Isaiah 37.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:35

Rabshakeh openly questions whether the Lord can deliver Jerusalem when other gods failed.

2 Chronicles 32:14

Sennacherib asks what god among the nations could deliver from his ancestors, implying Judah's God is equally powerless.

Isaiah 10:11

Assyria wrongly assumes Jerusalem and her God can be treated the same way as cities dominated by idols.

Spiritual Principle

Pride reaches its most dangerous point when human success becomes:

A challenge against God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Assyria's greatest mistake was not underestimating Jerusalem.

It was:

Underestimating the Lord.

XXI. THE PEOPLE REMAIN SILENT

Isaiah 36:21 — Wisdom in Not Answering

“But the people remained silent and did not answer him a word, because the king had commanded, ‘Do not answer him.’”

This is disciplined silence.

They hear:

Mockery.

Threats.

Blasphemy.

Provocation.

But:

Do not answer.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:36

The people remain silent because Hezekiah commanded them not to answer the Assyrian official.

Proverbs 26:4

Wisdom sometimes requires refusing to answer foolish speech according to its own terms, lest we be drawn into the fool's pattern.

Amos 5:13

There are circumstances so corrupt or dangerous that the prudent person recognizes the wisdom of silence.

Spiritual Principle

Not every challenge deserves:

A debate.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Silence can be faith when answering would only feed intimidation.

XXII. THE OFFICIALS RETURN WITH TORN CLOTHES

Isaiah 36:22 — Grief Before God

“Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was over the palace, Shebna the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, went to King Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and they told him what Rabshakeh had said.”

The officials do not pretend:

The words did not hurt.

They tear:

Their clothes.

This expresses:

Grief.

Alarm.

Humiliation.

But they carry the message to:

Hezekiah.

And Isaiah 37 will show:

Hezekiah takes it to God.

Cross References

2 Kings 18:37

The officials return to Hezekiah with torn garments after hearing the Assyrian challenge.

Job 1:20

Job tears his robe in grief after catastrophic loss, showing that genuine faith does not deny sorrow.

Joel 2:13

God calls His people beyond outward torn garments toward genuinely broken and repentant hearts.

Spiritual Principle

Faith does not require pretending:

Threatening words do not hurt.

It requires knowing where to carry them.

XXIII. TEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ISAIAH 36

1. Faith Is Tested Under Real Pressure

Principle:

Trust becomes visible when circumstances provide reasons to fear.

2. Human Help Can Be Unreliable

Egypt truly was:

A broken reed.

Principle:

A correct diagnosis of false trust should lead us toward God, not another idol.

3. The Enemy Can Twist Truth

Rabshakeh used:

Facts.

Half-truths.

Distortions.

Principle:

Not every statement containing truth is leading toward a truthful conclusion.

4. Obedience Can Be Misrepresented

Hezekiah's reform is portrayed as:

Offending God.

Principle:

Do not let outsiders define your obedience for you.

5. God Can Use Evil Powers Without Approving Them

Assyria was:

An instrument.

But remained:

Accountable.

Principle:

Providence does not erase moral responsibility.

6. Fear Is a Weapon

Rabshakeh deliberately addresses:

The people.

Principle:

Intimidation often tries to control the imagination before controlling the person.

7. Counterfeit Peace Can Hide Bondage

Assyria promises:

Vines.

Fig trees.

Water.

Then:

Exile.

Principle:

Examine the cost hidden beneath attractive promises.

8. God Is Not One Deity Among Many

Principle:

The Lord cannot be measured by the failures of idols.

9. Silence Can Be Wisdom

Principle:

Not every accusation needs an immediate response.

10. Threats Should Be Carried Toward God

The chapter ends with:

The message delivered.

The next chapter will show:

Prayer.

Principle:

What the enemy says to you should become something you bring before the Lord.

XXIV. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT FAITH

Faith is not tested most deeply when:

Everything works.

It is tested when:

Assyria arrives.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Trust matters most when visible evidence seems to argue against it.

XXV. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT PROPAGANDA

Rabshakeh uses:

Repetition.

Fear.

Public speech.

Mockery.

Selective facts.

Promises.

Threats.

Spiritual Principle

Propaganda often combines enough truth to sound credible with enough distortion to produce the wrong conclusion.

XXVI. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT HALF-TRUTHS

Rabshakeh is correct:

Egypt is weak.

Judah is militarily inferior.

Assyria has conquered nations.

Assyria has been used in God's judgment.

But he is wrong:

That God will therefore abandon Jerusalem.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A half-truth becomes dangerous when true facts are arranged to make us doubt God.

XXVII. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT FEAR

Fear is deliberately cultivated.

Rabshakeh wants people imagining:

Hunger.

Thirst.

Siege.

Death.

Spiritual Principle

Fear often begins by making an imagined future feel more certain than:

God's promise.

XXVIII. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Assyria says:

God sent us.

Isaiah had said:

God used Assyria.

But Assyria's arrogance went beyond:

God's permission.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God can sovereignly use what He later righteously judges.

XXIX. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT FALSE PEACE

Assyria offers:

Comfort.

Food.

Water.

But requires:

Surrender.

Spiritual Principle

Peace purchased by abandoning faithfulness to God is not true peace.

XXX. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT IDOLATRY

Rabshakeh's fatal theological error is treating:

The Lord.

Like:

An idol.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is not a larger version of false gods.

He is categorically different:

Creator rather than creation.

XXXI. WHAT ISAIAH 36 TEACHES ABOUT SILENCE

Silence here is:

Obedient.

Strategic.

Disciplined.

Spiritual Principle

You do not need to answer every person who is determined not to listen.

XXXII. THE QUESTION OF CONFIDENCE

“On what are you basing this confidence?”

This question belongs not only to:

Hezekiah.

But to:

Every believer.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A crisis eventually uncovers whatever we were leaning on before the crisis began.

XXXIII. THE BROKEN REED

Egypt cannot bear:

Weight.

Instead it:

Wounds.

Spiritual Principle

False supports often injure the people who depend upon them.

XXXIV. THE REFORM RABSHAKEH MISUNDERSTOOD

Hezekiah removed:

High places.

Assyria assumes:

Less religion means weaker divine support.

But the real issue was:

Purified worship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Removing false worship does not weaken faith.

It strengthens it.

XXXV. THE TWO THOUSAND HORSES

Assyria mocks:

Judah's lack.

Spiritual Principle

The enemy loves to calculate:

What you do not have.

Faith remembers:

Who you have.

XXXVI. "THE LORD TOLD ME"

Spiritual language does not automatically prove:

Spiritual authority.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Test claims made in God's name by:

God's revealed Word.

XXXVII. SPEAKING IN HEBREW

Rabshakeh chooses:

The language of the crowd.

He wants fear to spread:

Directly.

Spiritual Principle

The enemy often seeks the widest audience for discouragement.

XXXVIII. THE HORROR OF SIEGE

Rabshakeh paints:

The worst picture possible.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Fear magnifies the future until surrender appears reasonable.

XXXIX. “DO NOT LET HEZEKIAH DECEIVE YOU”

He attempts to break:

Trust.

Leadership.

Unity.

Spiritual Principle

Isolation is often part of intimidation.

XL. “DO NOT TRUST THE LORD”

This is the spiritual center of the attack.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Behind many attacks on faith lies one ancient suggestion:

God cannot be trusted.

XLI. THE COUNTERFEIT VINE AND FIG TREE

True peace in Scripture includes:

Vine.

Fig tree.

Safety.

Assyria copies the imagery.

Spiritual Principle

False promises are often most persuasive when they resemble:

Real blessings.

XLII. EXILE WITH GOOD ADVERTISING

Assyria says:

Another good land.

Reality:

Deportation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Bondage rarely introduces itself by saying:

“I am bondage.”

XLIII. THE FAILED GODS OF THE NATIONS

Assyria had defeated:

Idolatrous nations.

Then assumed:

All gods are equal.

Spiritual Principle

Bad theology can turn historical success into catastrophic arrogance.

XLIV. SAMARIA’S FALL

The northern kingdom had:

Fallen.

That fact intensified:

Judah's fear.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Another person's judgment should produce humility, not the assumption that God cannot preserve whom He chooses.

XLV. ASSYRIA'S FATAL QUESTION

"That the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

This is where:

Mockery.

Becomes:

Challenge against God.

Spiritual Principle

Pride becomes spiritually suicidal when it interprets temporary success as superiority over God.

XLVI. THE PEOPLE DO NOT ANSWER

Imagine:

An army outside.

A public challenge.

A loud voice.

And:

Silence.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Sometimes the strongest answer to mockery is refusing to let the mocker choose the battlefield.

XLVII. TORN CLOTHES

The officials are:

Grieved.

Spiritual Principle

Courage and sorrow can exist:

Together.

XLVIII. ISAIAH 36 AND ISAIAH 37

Isaiah 36 gives us:

The threat.

Isaiah 37 will give:

The response.

Chapter 36 asks:

Can God deliver?

Chapter 37 answers:

Yes.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never stop reading the story at the threat.

XLIX. THE ENEMY'S FIVE ARGUMENTS

Rabshakeh essentially argues:

Judah lacks military power.

Egypt cannot save them.

Hezekiah has supposedly offended God.

Assyria has divine authorization.

No other god has defeated Assyria.

Every argument is designed to reach:

One conclusion.

“Do not trust the Lord.”

Spiritual Principle

Whenever multiple fears all push toward distrust of God, examine the conclusion carefully.

L. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FACT AND INTERPRETATION

Facts:

Assyria is strong.

Judah is weak.

Egypt is unreliable.

Cities have fallen.

Interpretation:

Therefore God cannot save Jerusalem.

That interpretation is:

False.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith does not deny facts.

It refuses to let facts become larger than God.

LI. TRUST UNDER PRESSURE

Trust sounds easy:

Before Assyria arrives.

Spiritual Principle

The value of faith becomes visible when faith becomes costly.

LII. THE ENEMY'S VOICE

Rabshakeh is:

Loud.

Confident.

Detailed.

Persuasive.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Confidence of tone is not evidence of truth.

LIII. GOD'S SILENCE IN ISAIAH 36

God does not visibly intervene:

Yet.

That makes the chapter uncomfortable.

But:

Yet.

Matters.

Spiritual Principle

The absence of immediate intervention does not mean the absence of divine attention.

LIV. WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THE THREAT?

The crisis exposes:

Trust.

False alliances.

Assyrian pride.

Judah's need.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Some crises reveal truths that comfort would have allowed us to avoid.

LV. FAITH AND HUMAN WEAKNESS

Judah is:

Weak.

That is not denied.

Spiritual Principle

Faith is not confidence in:

Our adequacy.

It is confidence in:

God's sufficiency.

LVI. ASSYRIA'S TRUE WEAKNESS

Assyria possesses:

Army.

Conquests.

Confidence.

But lacks:

True knowledge of God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Spiritual ignorance can hide beneath enormous worldly power.

LVII. WHEN THE ENEMY USES THEOLOGY

Rabshakeh does not speak only:

Politics.

He discusses:

God.

Worship.

Providence.

Deliverance.

Spiritual Principle

Not every theological argument is:

Sound theology.

LVIII. TEST EVERYTHING BY GOD'S CHARACTER

Would the true God be:

Equal to idols?

No.

Would faithful reform automatically offend Him?

No.

Would being used as an instrument make Assyria sovereign?

No.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When confusing voices speak, return to what God has already revealed about Himself.

LIX. THE WISDOM OF NOT NEGOTIATING WITH MOCKERY

The people obey:

Hezekiah.

Spiritual Principle

There are moments when entering the argument simply gives:

The enemy more room.

LX. BRING THE WORDS TO THE KING

The officials take the message to:

Hezekiah.

Hezekiah will take it to:

God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not keep threatening words circulating endlessly in your mind.

Carry them toward:

LXI. EIGHT GREAT CONTRASTS IN ISAIAH 36

- 1. Assyrian Strength → Judah's Weakness**
- 2. Egypt's Broken Reed → Trust in the Lord**
- 3. Hezekiah's Reform → Rabshakeh's Distortion**
- 4. Divine Providence → Assyrian Presumption**
- 5. Fearful Propaganda → Disciplined Silence**
- 6. Counterfeit Peace → Hidden Exile**
- 7. Powerless Idols → The Living God**
- 8. Human Boasting → Coming Divine Answer**

Key Truth

The central conflict in Isaiah 36 is not merely between Assyria and Jerusalem, but between Assyria's claim of invincibility and Judah's faith in the living God.

LXII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Who invaded Judah?

Sennacherib, king of Assyria.

Question 2

What had happened to Judah's fortified cities?

Many had been captured.

Question 3

Who was sent to Jerusalem?

Rabshakeh, a high-ranking Assyrian official, with a large force.

Question 4

What central question does Rabshakeh ask?

“On what are you basing this confidence of yours?”

Question 5

What human ally does Rabshakeh correctly identify as unreliable?

Egypt.

Question 6

How does he describe Egypt?

As a broken reed that injures those who lean upon it.

Question 7

What does Rabshakeh misunderstand about Hezekiah?

He wrongly treats the removal of corrupt high places as though Hezekiah had attacked true worship.

Question 8

What does Assyria mock about Judah’s military strength?

They supposedly could not even provide enough riders for two thousand horses.

Question 9

What startling claim does Rabshakeh make?

That the Lord told Assyria to attack the land.

Question 10

Had God previously said Assyria would be used as an instrument?

Yes.

Isaiah 10 describes Assyria as a rod of divine discipline.

Question 11

Did that excuse Assyria’s arrogance?

No.

Isaiah also announced judgment against Assyria's pride.

Question 12

Why do Judah's officials ask Rabshakeh to speak Aramaic?

So the ordinary people on the wall will not hear his threats.

Question 13

Why does Rabshakeh refuse?

Because frightening the people is part of his strategy.

Question 14

What does he tell the people about Hezekiah?

That Hezekiah cannot deliver them and should not be trusted.

Question 15

What does he say about trusting the Lord?

He directly tells them not to trust God for deliverance.

Question 16

What does Assyria promise if Jerusalem surrenders?

Food, water, peace, and eventually relocation to another fertile land.

Question 17

What is the hidden reality behind that promise?

Exile and deportation.

Question 18

What major theological mistake does Rabshakeh make?

He treats the Lord as though He were merely another national god like the idols of conquered peoples.

Question 19

How do the people respond?

They remain silent.

Question 20

Why do they remain silent?

Hezekiah commanded them not to answer.

Question 21

How do the officials react afterward?

They tear their clothes in grief and report Rabshakeh's words to Hezekiah.

Question 22

What is the central issue of the chapter?

Whether Judah will continue trusting the Lord when every visible circumstance is being used to argue that faith is foolish.

LXIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Isaiah 36 asks several searching questions.

What Is My Confidence Based On?

Money?

People?

Government?

Health?

Ability?

Or:

The Lord?

Am I Leaning on a Broken Reed?

What appears:

Strong.

But repeatedly:

Wounds me?

Can I Recognize a Half-Truth?

Do I assume something is true merely because:

Part of it is correct?

Have I Ever Allowed Someone Else to Misinterpret My Obedience?

Do I know what:

God actually said?

Am I Intimidated by What I Lack?

Does the enemy constantly remind me of:

Resources I do not have?

Can I Distinguish God's Providence from Human Presumption?

Do I allow fearful predictions to control my imagination?

Am I tempted by counterfeit peace?

Would I compromise obedience for:

Comfort?

Security?

Acceptance?

Do I compare the Lord with human limitations?

Do I answer every criticism?

Or can I sometimes:

Remain silent?

Where do I carry threatening words after I hear them?

Into:

Fear?

Arguments?

Sleeplessness?

Or:

Prayer?

LXIV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Enemy’s Loudest Question Is Often: ‘Can You Really Trust God?’”

Rabshakeh talks about:

Egypt.

Horses.

Hezekiah.

Military power.

Exile.

But beneath everything is:

One question.

Can:

The Lord.

Be trusted?

Principle:

Spiritual warfare often turns visible circumstances into arguments against the character of God.

LXV. THE REAL BATTLE

On the surface:

Assyria versus Judah.

Deeper:

Pride versus faith.

Human strength versus divine sovereignty.

Spiritual Principle

The most important battle is sometimes happening:

Inside the heart.

LXVI. THE BROKEN REED WAS REALLY BROKEN

Faith does not require defending:

Egypt.

Isaiah had already condemned reliance on it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Defend God's truth, not every human strategy associated with God's people.

LXVII. HEZEKIAH'S REFORM

Removing false altars was:

Faithfulness.

Rabshakeh calls it:

Foolishness.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience may look irrational to people who misunderstand:

God's Word.

LXVIII. GOD CAN USE ASSYRIA AND STILL JUDGE ASSYRIA

This is a crucial doctrine of:

Providence.

God's sovereignty does not turn evil motives into:

Good motives.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God remains sovereign without becoming morally responsible for human arrogance and wicked intent.

LXIX. THE ENEMY WANTS THE CROWD

Rabshakeh refuses:

Private diplomacy.

He wants:

Public fear.

Spiritual Principle

Discouragement spreads faster when it is broadcast.

LXX. THE GREAT KING

Assyria repeatedly calls Sennacherib:

The great king.

But Isaiah has already shown who the truly exalted King is:

The Lord.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Human rulers often sound largest when compared only with other humans.

LXXI. THE FALSE GOSPEL OF ASSYRIA

Assyria's message contains:

Fear.

Surrender.

Temporary comfort.

Forced relocation.

It says:

Trust us and live.

Spiritual Principle

Every false salvation asks you to surrender something God told you to keep.

LXXII. "A LAND LIKE YOUR OWN"

The phrase sounds:

Kind.

It means:

You will lose your home.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Always look beneath the wording of a promise to the reality it produces.

LXXIII. THE LORD IS NOT HAMATH'S GOD

Assyria's theological category is:

Wrong.

Spiritual Principle

If your starting definition of God is wrong, your conclusion about His power will also be wrong.

LXXIV. PAST VICTORIES BECOME PRIDE

Assyria has:

Evidence.

But interprets it:

Arrogantly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Success is spiritually dangerous when it convinces us that we are beyond accountability.

LXXV. SILENCE AT THE WALL

The people do not:

Argue.

Insult.

Panic publicly.

They obey.

Spiritual Principle

Self-control can be an expression of faith.

LXXVI. TORN CLOTHES, UNBROKEN FAITH

The officials grieve.

But the story:

Continues.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You can be deeply shaken emotionally without surrendering spiritually.

LXXVII. THE CHAPTER ENDS BEFORE THE ANSWER

That is deliberate.

Isaiah 36 leaves us:

Under pressure.

The answer comes:

Next.

Spiritual Principle

Faith often lives for a time between:

The threat.

And:

The deliverance.

LXXVIII. SEVEN GREAT MOVEMENTS IN ISAIAH 36

1. Assyria Invades

Judah's fortified cities fall.

2. Rabshakeh Arrives

The threat reaches Jerusalem.

3. Human Confidence Is Attacked

Egypt, military power, and leadership are mocked.

4. Theology Is Distorted

Hezekiah's reform and God's sovereignty are twisted.

5. Fear Is Broadcast

Rabshakeh speaks directly to the people.

6. Counterfeit Peace Is Offered

Surrender is disguised as security.

7. The People Remain Silent

The chapter closes with grief but not surrender.

Key Truth

Isaiah 36 shows that faith is often tested not only by military danger but by arguments designed to make trust in God appear unreasonable.

LXXIX. FINAL APPLICATION

Isaiah Chapter 36 asks:

What happens when:

Faith gets mocked?

When:

The numbers are against you?

When:

The enemy has evidence?

When:

Cities have already fallen?

When:

The threat sounds logical?

That is where Judah stands.

Sennacherib has:

An empire.

An army.

A record of victory.

Judah has:

A weakened kingdom.

A surrounded city.

A frightened population.

Rabshakeh begins with:

“On what are you basing this confidence?”

That is the question every believer eventually faces.

What is your confidence based on?

If it is based on:

Everything going well—

It will fail when things go badly.

If it is based on:

Human support—

People can fail.

If it is based on:

Money—

Money can disappear.

If it is based on:

Strength—

Strength can weaken.

If it is based on:

God—

Then pressure reveals the foundation.

Rabshakeh is dangerous because he does not speak:

Pure nonsense.

He says:

Egypt is unreliable.

True.

Judah is militarily weak.

True.

Assyria has defeated powerful nations.

True.

God has used Assyria in judgment.

True.

Then comes the lie:

Therefore:

The Lord cannot deliver you.

That is how deception works.

It gathers:

True pieces.

Builds:

A false conclusion.

Be careful when fear interprets facts for you.

Then Rabshakeh says:

Do not trust:

Hezekiah.

Do not trust:

The Lord.

Make peace with:

Assyria.

The enemy always wants:

Transfer of trust.

From:

God.

To:

Something else.

And his offer sounds good:

Vines.

Fig trees.

Water.

Food.

Another fertile land.

But one word gives the truth away:

“Take you.”

They will be:

Exiles.

The promise of comfort conceals:

Bondage.

Then Rabshakeh reaches the height of arrogance:

What god has ever stopped:

Assyria?

Why should:

Your God?

That question sets up the entire next chapter.

Because Assyria has made one catastrophic mistake.

It has placed:

The living God.

In the category of:

Dead idols.

The chapter ends with:

Silence.

Sometimes that is:

Faith.

Not every attack deserves:

Your response.

Some things are better carried:

To God.

The officials tear their clothes.

They are:

Disturbed.

Grieved.

Shaken.

Faith does not require emotional numbness.

You can be:

Afraid.

Hurt.

Shaken.

And still:

Obey.

So when the Rabshakeh voice says:

Your faith is foolish.

Your God cannot help.

Look at the odds.

Look at what happened to everyone else.

Surrender would be easier.

Remember:

The loud voice is not necessarily:

The true voice.

The strong army is not necessarily:

The final authority.

And the chapter is not:

Over.

So:

Do not lean on broken reeds.

Do not accept counterfeit peace.

Do not let half-truths become full despair.

Do not confuse human strength with sovereignty.

Do not argue merely because someone provokes you.

Carry the threat:

Toward God.

And hold firmly to this truth:

Assyria may be outside the wall.

But:

The Lord is still on the throne.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

When voices around us say:

You cannot be trusted.

Strengthen:

Our faith.

When circumstances appear:

Overwhelming.

Remind us:

You are greater than circumstances.

Forgive us for leaning on:

Broken reeds.

Human strength.

Money.

People.

Systems.

Anything that takes the place belonging to:

You.

Father, give us discernment when we hear:

Half-truths.

Help us recognize when true facts are being used to produce:

False conclusions.

Keep us grounded in:

Your Word.

Your character.

Your promises.

Father, when fear paints pictures of:

The worst possible future.

Teach us to remember:

You are already there.

When the enemy mocks what we lack:

Remind us what we have in:

You.

When our obedience is misunderstood:

Give us courage to remain faithful.

When someone claims to speak in Your name:

Give us wisdom to test that claim by Scripture.

Father, protect us from:

Counterfeit peace.

Do not let temporary comfort purchase:

Spiritual compromise.

Give us wisdom to know:

When to speak.

When to answer.

When to remain silent.

And when threatening words reach our ears:

Teach us to carry them:

To You.

Thank You that You are not:

One god among many.

You are:

The living God.

Creator.

Sovereign.

Holy One of Israel.

No army is:

Too strong.

No empire:

Too large.

No boast:

Too loud.

No enemy:

Beyond Your authority.

Keep us faithful between:

The threat.

And:

The answer.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord when he says, ‘The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’” — Isaiah 36:15

Central Truth

Isaiah 36 reveals how Assyria attempted to destroy Judah's faith through intimidation, military superiority, half-truths, distorted theology, counterfeit promises, and direct attacks upon trust in the Lord; yet the chapter teaches that human strength, propaganda, and past victories cannot determine what the living God is able to do, and His people must refuse to let fear redefine His character.

Isaiah 36 in One Sentence

Isaiah records Sennacherib's attempt to break Jerusalem's faith as Rabshakeh mocks Judah's weakness, exposes Egypt as a broken reed, twists Hezekiah's reforms and God's providence, broadcasts fear to the people, promises counterfeit peace through surrender, and finally challenges the Lord Himself, while Jerusalem responds with disciplined silence and carries the threat toward the king rather than surrendering to Assyria's propaganda.