

Series: ID: Follow the Leader

November 15, 2015

Title: Dig, Build, Stand

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Text: 2 Chronicles 32

Bad Things/Good People

Trouble comes knocking

The year was 701 B.C.

Hezekiah had been king for 14 years. During that time he had opened the doors to the Temple, removed pagan idols from this realm, and had re-established the worship of the LORD. He was a good king doing the right thing:

And then, Trouble came knocking on his door:

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2 Chronicles 32:1 NIV

After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself.

The Big Player in Hezekiah's world was Assyria. Assyria had erased the northern kingdom of Israel from the map just 21 years earlier. When Assyria's king Sargon died in 705 B.C. both Egypt and Babylon rebelled against the new king, Sennacherib. Hezekiah, whose kingdom was obligated to pay repressive tribute to the Assyrians, had sided with the Egyptians, hoping that they would help him get free of Assyria.

Now Sennacherib had shown up to quash the rebellion. Trouble was knocking on his door.

Was this the end?

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For Hezekiah and the people of his time there was nothing more terrifying than an Assyrian invasion. The Assyrians were the dominant superpower of

their time. Sennacherib was king of a vast empire that stretched from modern day Iran to Egypt.

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He built his capital, Nineveh, into the largest and most imposing city of its time. Its walls ran for 71/2 miles around the city. His palace was one of the wonders of the ancient world, with 80 rooms, magnificent artwork, and hanging gardens.

His armies were the most feared storm troopers that the ancient world had ever seen. Using the latest technology, his armies systematically surrounded enemy cities, built earthen ramps up the walls, then brought in battering rams to reduce the fortifications to rubble. As they say, "Resistance was futile."

Hezekiah had met the *internal* crisis created by his father's generation. Now he faced the ultimate *external* crisis: Would Judah survive, or would this southern kingdom disappear from the map, a footnote of history? And what would happen to God's master plan to rescue humanity through the Hebrew people?

Bad Things/Good People:

Think of the dilemma that King Hezekiah faced: He had gone out of his way to do *all the right things*, and just when everything had come together, here comes Sennacherib, itching to tear everything down!

The fact is that *bad things happen to good people*. Just because you put your house in order and do the right things doesn't mean that bad things won't happen. Putting our trust in the Creator instead of the chaos of this world doesn't mean that we never come face to face with that chaos.

God put us here precisely to *face the chaos with His power and order*.

So what do you do when the chaos seems ready to run you down?

Dig, Build, Stand

Dig a Spring:

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Hidden deep under the city of Jerusalem is a 1750 foot long tunnel that channels water from the Gihon Spring outside the old city walls to the Pool of Siloam. The tunnel was cut through solid rock at the command of none other than King Hezekiah.

The first thing that Hezekiah did to prepare for Sennacherib was to block off the opening to the Gihon Spring so that his enemies would not have access to its water.

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2 Chronicles 32:2-4 NIV

When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?" they said.

Then he had his workmen dig the tunnel to channel the spring water into the city.

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2 Chronicles 32:30 NIV

It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David.

The water from the Gihon spring has been filling the Pool of Siloam ever since.

Build a Wall:

The second thing Hezekiah did was to build a wall.

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2 Chronicles 32:5 NIV

Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced

the terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields.

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When you walk through the Old City of Jerusalem you can see the new wall that Hezekiah built to withstand Sennacherib. It is called the Broad Wall – and that it is! It is 23’ thick and was 26’ high. It encircled and protected what had been the suburbs of Jerusalem, including the Pool of Siloam at the end of the tunnel.

Stand Strong:

With a secure supply of water and a new strong wall, there was just one more thing to do: Stand Strong!

Sennacherib arrived in Judea and captured virtually every other city. He sent his general to demand that Hezekiah surrender Jerusalem. In fact, he ridiculed Hezekiah and the LORD *in Hebrew* so that every soldier on the city walls could hear his taunts. Hezekiah received a written report of what the Assyrian general had demanded and spread it out before the LORD:

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Isaiah 37:14-20 NIV

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

"LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

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"It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, LORD, are the only God."

The spring and the wall had fulfilled their purpose: they gave Hezekiah a place to stand strong.

Of Mice and Men?

Isaiah's prophecy:

God gave the answer to Hezekiah's prayer through the prophet Isaiah:

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Isaiah 37:21, 33-35 NIV

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word the LORD has spoken against him:

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*"He will not enter this city
or shoot an arrow here.
He will not come before it with shield
or build a siege ramp against it.*

*By the way that he came he will return;
he will not enter this city,"
declares the LORD.*

*"I will defend this city and save it,
for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!"*

A mysterious defeat:

The battle for Jerusalem never happened.

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2 Chronicles 32:21 NIV

And the LORD sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew

to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons, his own flesh and blood, cut him down with the sword.

The Greek historian Heroditus wrote of Sennacherib's failed campaign against Egypt and Judah. His explanation goes like this:

A swarm of field mice gnawed through their quivers and their bows, and the handles of their shields as well, so that the next day weaponless, all they could do was flee, and their losses were heavy."

Historians speculate that the reference to the "swarm of mice" might be connected to an outbreak of the plague that the Bible speaks of which decimated Sennacherib's forces.

A few years later, Sennacherib was assassinated by one of his own sons as he prayed in the temple of his god. Hezekiah would die of old age in his own bed – in Jerusalem.

The best laid plans of mice and men...

Finding God in the Chaos:

God has called you and me to be leaders who bring His rule and His goodness to our world. Sometimes we will do all the right things, and then find ourselves under attack with everything hanging in the balance.

When those times come, it's time to *dig a spring, build a wall and stand strong.*

Dig a spring: It's time to dig *deep* into the spiritual bedrock of our lives to find the Living Water. The spiritual wells of this world will fail us; we need a deeper source. Jesus said:

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John 4:13-14 NIV

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Build a wall: It's time to build a wall between ourselves and the chaos. David wrote:

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Psalm 61:2-3 NIV

*From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

*For you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the foe.*

The wall we build is a wall of trusting in God. And remember, a wall is only as strong as its weakest point. Walk around your faith walls. Ask yourself, "Where am I most vulnerable?" It's time to build up those walls.

Stand Strong: When you've dug the spring and built the wall, then you have a place where you can *stand strong*. You have a place where you can spread out your fears, your worries, your future before the LORD. You have a place where He promises to be your strength.

Remember, the tests will come. So it's time to dig, build and stand.