

**Sermon Notes & References**

**Rabshakeh's Words, God's Words**

**Isaiah 36:1-37:7**

May 2, 2010

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<sup>A</sup> 1 Peter 1:17, Philippians 3:20  
<sup>B</sup> Isaiah 7:1-3  
<sup>C</sup> Isaiah 10:5-15 and following

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<sup>D</sup> 2 Kings 18:13-16  
<sup>E</sup> Acts 4:12  
<sup>F</sup> Isaiah 26:3, 2 Timothy 2:19

A. Introduction

1. "Two Different Worlds"

a. that was the title of a top 40 song back in 1956—{2}.

Two different worlds,  
We live in two different worlds;  
For we've been told,  
That a love like ours could never be.

b. similar songs have since followed, on this subject of lovers torn apart because of their different backgrounds

2. Christian believers, too, in two different worlds

a. different song has expressed this fact

This world is not my home  
I'm just a-passing through  
My treasures are laid up  
Somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me  
From heaven's open door  
And I don't feel at home  
In this world anymore.—{3}.

b. life here is but a 'time of our sojourning' (1 Peter 1:17 AV)

c. our world, 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20)

3. so in this time on earth, we believers find ourselves

a. hearing two voices

b. the voice of this world, from the prince of this world, as found in its laws, our culture, our society, the media, and almost every facet of our daily living

c. the other voice being that of God, by His Spirit and in His Holy Word and through His servants

- d. so it is important that we be able to distinguish these two voices, to overcome the evil: to adhere to the good
4. In the passage which is before us today, Isaiah 36:1-37:7
- a. we find two different voices, forming a sharp contrast
  - b. first there is the voice of Rabshakeh
    - (A) railing against and threatening God's people
    - (B) speaking the words of the power behind him, those of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, the world power
    - (C) and behind him, of the ruler of this world, Satan
  - c. then there is the voice of the Living God
    - (A) quiet, authoritative, comforting to His people
    - (B) who has the whole matter of Assyria under His control
5. the confrontation of these two voices begins in a familiar spot
- a. [36: 1 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 36:2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field.](#)
  - b. it is 28 years since the last time we were on this spot
  - c. the prophet Isaiah then confronted King Ahaz, telling him not to fear Syria and Israel, but rather to trust in God
  - d. abut Ahaz refused, instead making a treaty with Assyria
  - e. now chickens have come home to roost
  - f. the envoys of Assyria standing in the same spot, not as allies but as adversaries; the king , not faithless Ahaz, but faithful Hezekiah, who had called the nation back to God
  - g. Hezekiah sends out his envoys on a diplomatic mission: [36: 3 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.](#)  
– let's listen to the conversation

- B. The Words of Rabshakeh to the Envoys . . . . . 36:4-10
1. Blustering Words – 36:4 Then Rabshakeh said to them, “Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, “What is this confidence that you have? 36:5 I say, ‘Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.’ Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?’ ”
    - a. Rabshakeh’s words he is not on a diplomatic mission
      - (A) diplomacy submits requests; he issues a command;
      - (B) diplomacy would recognize the credentials of the envoys and of the one sending them; he presents his own credentials, and the grandiose title of his king, but ignores their status and even that Hezekiah is a king
    - b. Rabshakeh is here to intimidate Hezekiah and God’s people
      - (A) he is there to undermine their confidence
      - (B) he challenges their resistance and rebellion as mere ‘lip words,’ empty boasts with no strength behind them
      - (C) he belittles their faith: ‘what kind of object of faith have you got, anyway, that you would rebel against ME!?’
    - c. the voice of the world still speaks thus to God’s people
      - (A) ‘we have the agreement of the majority of people in how we establish our laws; keep the church out of it’
      - (B) ‘we have the accumulated knowledge of centuries and the sacred shrines of science as our strength; who would dare to stand against these?’
  2. Discouraging Words – 36:6 – Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.
    - a. Rabshakeh does not wait for an answer from the envoys, but goes on to answer his own question: ‘If you will not answer, then I will – you are trusting in Egypt’
    - b. and Egypt? it is like one of the reeds that grow along its Nile river; seemingly sturdy and stiff, in reality broken, its ends sharp, piercing the hand holding on to it
    - c. Rabshakeh uses Isaiah’s message to his own purposes
    - d. the world is quick to use God’s word against God’s people
      - (A) Satan did it tempting Jesus in the wilderness

(B) be ready: the voice of the world uses the Bible against the church to justify its own ends and purposes

3. Misapplied Words – 36:7 – But if you say to me, 'We trust in the Lord our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?
  - a. Rabshakeh knows the Name of Yahweh, but not the truth
  - b. Hezekiah had apparently removed shrines to Yahweh
  - c. so why would Yahweh be willing to protect Jerusalem and Hezekiah
  - d. in fact, if Yahweh was unable to stop Hezekiah's removal of his high places and altars, how can he stop Assyria?
  - e. the world's voice does misunderstands the spiritual so their evaluation of it is always flawed
  
4. Insulting Words – 36:8 Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 36:9 How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?
  - a. the picture he portrays is, in the extreme, ludicrous
  - b. 'I will give you 2,000 horses, if you can put riders upon them, they cannot stop the least of our captains going his way, so what good would Egypt's cavalry be to you if you had it!?'
  - c. the voice of the world belittles the strength of God's people
  
5. Twisted Words – 36:10 Have I now come up without the LORD'S approval against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' " ' "
  - a. perhaps Rabshakeh had heard of Isaiah's words about God use of Assyria to punish Judah as found in Isaiah 10:5-15
  - b. if so, he blithely ignored the rest of it which said: for when the Lord was done, he would then punish Assyria
  - c. in any case, with blasphemous boldness he assumes himself to be ordained by Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel
  - d. the voice of the world will readily claim divine authority

- C. The Diplomats ask for Diplomacy . . . . . 36:11-12
1. in these verses, Hezekiah's envoys speak
    - a. this is the first and only time that they do so
    - b. 2 Kings 18:13-16 relate how Hezekiah sought peace with Assyria, agreeing to their demands, stripping the palace and temple to pay the tribute demanded by Sennacherib
    - c. but Rabshakeh is not here to confirm that peace
      - (A) he is accompanied by a large army
      - (B) he is speaks not the language of diplomacy, Aramaic, but Judean language so that all can hear his threats
  2. quietly Hezekiah's envoys command that he speak in Aramaic
    - a. but Rabshakeh knows no rules or constraints
    - b. in words that are too vulgar to repeat he threatens a siege so intense as to bring a famine of the most extreme severity
    - c. then he turns and shouts his threats at the people of God
  3. be prepared to resist the voice of the world which in attacking Jesus Christ and God's people knows and admits no constraints
- D. The Words of Rabshakeh to the People . . . . . 36:13-20
1. Belittling Words – 36:13 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 36:14 Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; 36:15 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us, this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." '
    - a. he had already disparaged, made light of, Hezekiah by refusing to give to him his proper title of king
    - b. now he proceeds to humiliate Hezekiah even further
      - (A) this is the great king, the king of Assyria speaking
      - (B) Hezekiah is a deceiver; he cannot deliver Jerusalem
      - (C) do not listen when Hezekiah would have you trust God
    - c. the voice of the world shouts out against God's spokesmen

2. Enticing Words – 36: 16 ‘Do not listen to Hezekiah,’ for thus says the king of Assyria, ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 36: 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.’
  - a. Rabshakeh calls for the people of Jerusalem to surrender
    - (A) there he stands beside the pond – the ‘berekhah’ or blessing, so called because of water brings a blessing
    - (B) he tells the people to make a ‘berakhah’ with him, a blessing, in which they will be at peace with him
  - b. it will not be so bad, in fact it will be wonderful, he says
  - c. rather than facing a siege, and famine and thirst – ‘see this pond here?’ – you will be able to return to a normal life – ‘you will eat from your vine, you will drink fresh well water’
  - d. and, when, as you know we are going to do anyway, we take you away into another land, you will find land to be every bit as productive and fine as this land
  - e. be warned; the voice of the world is always enticing – come, touch, taste, feel – but it’s not Beulah land!
  
3. Blasphemous Words – 36: 18 ‘Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, “The Lord will deliver us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 36: 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 36: 20 Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the Lord would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ ”
  - a. to Rabshakeh, Yahweh, the God of Israel was just like any other of the gods of the nations – not that they had no power but that they were powerless before his army
  - b. ‘so who is this Yahweh that He should deliver Jerusalem?’
  - c. ‘he is,’ says Rabshakeh, ‘just another god among many’
  - d. the voice of the world says, all religions are the same, we are all headed to the same place by different paths; but the Bible says, ‘And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name (than Jesus) under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.’ (Acts 4: 12)

E. The Answering Words . . . . . 36:21-37:7

1. Words of the People and Envoys – 36:21 But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." 36:22 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

- a. the nature and substance of the words of Rabshakeh deserved and received no answer – he was in output mode only and deaf to any reason – so they all were silent
- b. but his words did call for a response if not an answer
- c. a response was one of penitence and grief, of carrying out their duty as envoys and relaying them to the king

2. Words of King Hezekiah – 37:1 And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the Lord. 37:2 Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 37:3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. 37:4 'Perhaps the Lord your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'"

- a. Hezekiah's words are also backed by penitence
  - (A) he dresses himself, as do his messengers, in sackcloth
  - (B) it is not simply that he has been insulted by this envoy from Sennacherib, that causes him distress
  - (C) not simply that the attempt for peace – the children coming near to but never being born – has failed
  - (D) but in this he perceives the rebuke of God
    - (1) for the wickedness of Jerusalem and Judah
    - (2) for trusting Assyria, then Egypt, not God
    - (3) even his own attempting peace with Assyria
- b. but his real distress is that this Rabshakeh has blasphemed and made light of the living God
- c. 'so, let Isaiah pray, though we do not deserve it, that God will preserve this remnant left in Jerusalem'



3. Words of God through Isaiah – 37:5 So (in such a way) the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 37:6 Isaiah said to them, “Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 37:7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumour and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.” ’ ”
  - a. God does not tell Hezekiah everything at this point
  - b. but He does tell him all he needs to know to have peace
  - c. the words are the same as they were to Ahaz: ‘fear not’
  - d. to the ear of faith, such words are sufficient
  - e. ‘I,’ says Yahweh, ‘I am in control; I will defend my Name.’
  - f. the voice of God refutes every voice of the enemy and encourages His people that He is their God

#### F. Conclusion

1. how then are we to overcome the voice of the world?
  - a. when it is sounding at us on all sides
  - b. even from bodies falsely calling themselves ‘the church’
2. you recognize the counterfeit by fully knowing the genuine
  - a. let your heart and mind be fixed on Jesus Christ, the Truth
  - b. The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3) and remember
  - c. Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His’ (2 Timothy 2:19)
3. on this theme we close by singing, ‘How Firm a Foundation’

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
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2. Two Different Worlds, © 1956 by Al Frisch & Sid Wayne (?)
3. This World is Not My Home by Mary Reeves & Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977)