

Likewise the last prophecy of Assyrian defeat, 37: 21-38, only serves to bear out our conclusions. It too, of course, has its problems. But the problems are those of criticism rather than of exegesis. Hezekiah in great distress takes the letter of defiance from the Assyrian messengers and prays to the Lord. God answers by His prophet very decisively and in the characteristic exalted style which we have noted before, that the Assyrian will be turned back by the Lord even without a battle. How marvelously was the prophet's word fulfilled when God's death angel humbled the war-lords of earth! Some have thought the statement that the Assyrians would not besiege nor approach Jerusalem to be inconsistent with the statement in 29: 3, "I will encamp against thee round about and lay siege against thee with posted troops, and I will raise ~~xx~~ siege-works against thee." Aside from the fact that the Hebrew words are different in the two passages (which might be only a trivial way of escape), we should remember that both ~~xxxxxx~~ situations might very well be true. In ~~an~~ sense the city was not beleaguered as was Samaria for three years, for instance. Yet that a portion at least of the army of Assyria came before Jerusalem is undoubtedly also true. We have quoted Sennacherib's inscription boasting that he shut up Hezekiah like a "caged bird". There is no real difficulty unless we should choose to be pedantic.

But there does arise a difficulty in connection with verse 38. The events narrated in that verse did not occur until 681 B.C., sixteen years into Manasseh's reign, and yet they are presented as history. The older commentators assume that Isaiah could not have lived till then because they add the reigns of Ahaz, Jotham, and Hezekiah to get the length of his ministry (16, 16, and 29 make 61 years). Orelli in 1889 allowed that