

# WEEK 06

## ISAIAH 36

Being obedient to God entails standing firm in faith and holding onto His promises especially when being challenged, insulted, or tempted.

## Preface

---

**In the previous weeks**, we learned about God's wrath and judgment upon His enemies. **Last week**, we learned about the severity of God's judgment for those who oppose Him and His promise to vindicate those who remain faithful.

**This week**, we will learn how to stand firm in faith when facing challenges and opposition.

**Context:** Isaiah 36-39 contains stories about King Hezekiah's life and the ways he dealt with political challenges. He trusted in God's deliverance amidst a threatening Assyrian invasion.

**History:** In the 14th year of King Hezekiah's reign (701 BC), the Assyrian army besieged the cities of Judah (2 Kgs. 18 and 2 Chr. 32). Unlike his father King Ahaz, King Hezekiah was a king who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" and kept the LORD's commands.

## Observation

---

1. What was the king of Assyria/his commander persuading King Hezekiah to do or not to do? What were his reasons and arguments? (Isa. 36:4-10)

*Leaders' note: The commander's arguments were based on what was imminent and visible only. All these questioned the foundation of King Hezekiah's faith and confidence in the LORD.*

2. Why did Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah ask the Assyrian commander to speak in Aramaic instead of Hebrew (Isa. 36:11)? Did the commander follow?

*Leaders' note: Aramaic was the official language of international relations at that time. They wanted the commander to speak in Aramaic probably because they did not want their people to feel discouraged.*

3. How would you summarize the Assyrian commander's appeal to the people of Judah (Isa. 36:13-20)? Who/What was he challenging or insulting?

*Leaders' note: The commander compared the LORD with foreign gods, and tried to confuse the LORD's true deliverance with the Assyrians' so-called deliverance of the people of Judah.*

## Interpretation

---

1. From a spiritual point of view, what led to Assyria's attack of Judah?

*Leaders' note: It could be a result of the disobedience by King Ahaz and the people (Isa. 8:5-8) or the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 10:5-6). The commander claimed divine authorization (Isa. 36:10) but that might just be a bluff or war strategy.*

## 2. Why would it be a problem for Judah to accept Assyria's offer and form an alliance?

*Leaders' note: To accept the advantages proposed by Assyria, the people of Judah must come out of the protection of the walls of Jerusalem, which would make them susceptible to surrender to the Assyrians, and then be exiled (Isa. 36:17). God has warned the people to put their trust only in God's deliverance and not to make treaties with foreigners, consistent with His command in Exo. 23:32 and Exo. 34.*

## 3. Where did Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah put their trust? What can we learn from their response to the Assyrian commander's challenge when we face opposition?

# Application

---

1. Have you been challenged by others about your Christian faith? How did you respond?
2. This chapter teaches us to put our faith in God's promise of future deliverance rather than immediate relief from suffering through wrong means. Have you come across such a dilemma before? What are the obstacles or concerns that prevent you from making the right decision?
3. What practical steps can you take to strengthen your faith in God when things are not going as planned?

## Optional Follow-Up Exercise: Exploring Basic Apologetics

The Assyrian commander challenged the faith of King Hezekiah and the people of Judah through his persuasive speech. To this day, similar questions are still being asked: *If God is real, why are Christians still suffering? How can you prove your God is real?* While we may not have all the answers, it is still important to understand basic apologetics to equip ourselves when questions arise (1 Peter 3:15).

Here are some classic arguments for the existence of God. Discuss in your group about which ones are more convincing / which ones you would use to respond to a non-believer:

1. **The Cosmological Argument (Ps. 102:25; Heb. 3:4):** The universe is an extraordinary *effect* that necessitates an adequate *cause*, which is God.
2. **The Teleological Argument (Ps. 19:1-6; 94:9-10):** Complex order and design in the universe requires an intelligent Designer, and could not have occurred by chance. The Designer must be of sufficient intelligence to order with purpose, which is God.
3. **The Anthropological Argument (Ps. 8:3-8):** The appearance of mind, emotion, and will in humans is most reasonably the result of a superior intelligent, feeling, and willing Being, which is God.
4. **The Moral Argument (Prov. 28:1; Rom. 2:14-16):** Moral awareness is found generally among individuals and cultures. The presence of an absolute moral obligation implies the existence of an absolute moral Lawgiver, which is God.
5. **The Aesthetic Argument (Ps. 19:1-4; 27:4):** Capacity for the admiration of beauty, even when the object of beauty has no practical value, is universal. The existence of beauty must be accounted for by a ground and giver of beauty, which is God.

(Source: Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Szigel, eds. *Exploring Christian Theology*. Vol. 1: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2014), 189.)