

inevitably toward complete fruition. The Lord is pictured as doing nothing about it until it is just about to come to its completion; then He steps in and brings it to an end. The Lord says that He will take His rest and consider in His dwelling place, allowing the clear heat and the cloud of dew to work in slow and regular fashion; as nature takes its course the thing proceeds forward and apparently seems certain of completion. This is a description of the working out of the plans of Sennacherib. The Assyrian conqueror marches over the land; his troops take city after city; they conquer area after area; their power is constantly increasing. It seems as if Jerusalem will soon fall, and all of Judah will be in their hands. Then they will march on with mighty force against Egypt and Ethiopia. While the Ethiopians are rushing around frantically trying to get help from others, desperately equipping themselves for a great stand against the mighty Assyrian empire, the Lord is sitting calmly, watching what is progressing, waiting until the exact moment when He chooses to intervene.

In verse 5 we find the hour of harvest almost here -- "The bud is perfect and the sour grape is ripening in the flower" -- but the process of fruition has not yet reached its end. Suddenly the Lord intervenes and cuts off the sprigs with pruning hooks and cuts down the branches. The great plan of the Assyrian is suddenly brought to an end!

What a perfect picture of that great event described in Isaiah 37, where God intervened with mighty power to destroy the armies of Sennacherib! It is vividly pictured in 29:1-8. One day the Assyrian was strong and great, and seemed absolutely certain of conquering all that he desired. The next day everything was gone. His power vanished as a dream in the night. His army melted away, as the angel of the Lord smote it, and it was necessary for Sennacherib to return to his own land and give up his plans of conquest in the west. Before the harvest was ripe the Lord intervened with His pruning hooks, to cut off the sprigs and take away the branches.

Verse 6 describes the result. It is a figurative picture of the great host of Sennacherib's army lying prostrate and desolate upon the hills of Palestine -- a prey to the birds and wild animals.