

kingdom of Juda. At first he seemed to succeed, took several strongholds of Judea, and threatened Jerusalem. Ezechias raised his voice to heaven. «Fear not,» said the prophet Isaïas to the king. «Thus saith the Lord concerning the King of the Assyrians : He shall not come into this City (Jerusalem) nor shoot an arrow into it, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a trench about it.» That very night, 185,000 men of the Assyrian army died of the plague, and the king of Nineveh left Judea and shamefully returned to his dominions.

Êsarhaddon, third king of the dynasty of the Sargonids, determined to take revenge on the king of Juda, for the defeat of his father, Sennacherib. By his crimes, Manasséh or Manasses, son of Ezechias, had drawn down upon himself the anger of God. He was unable to resist Êsarhaddon, who brought him captive to Babylon, bound with a double brass chain. Êsarhaddon was the first Assyrian prince who succeeded in entering Egypt victoriously (690), and in adding to his titles that of King of Egypt and Éthiopia.

Ashurbanipal. — Nabuchodonosor I. — 22. Ashurbanipal was the last king who pursued the work of extending Assyria (667-625). He surpassed all his predecessors in activity, energy, and cruelty. He succeeded in keeping all the Assyrian conquests, despite the violent rebellions in Egypt and Chaldea, and gave the Empire its greatest extent.

His son and successor, Nabuchodonosor I, is the Assyrian king of whom the Bible says that he wished «to bring the whole world under his sway.» He sent forth his general, Holophernes, at the head of a formidable army. The kings and nations of Syria and Asia Minor hastened to submit. The king of Juda, trusting in the help of God, firmly awaited the enemy. Holophernes laid siege to Bethulia, but met with death at the hand of the valiant Judith. A fearful panic then seized the dismayed Assyrians. Leaving their tents and belongings,