

2 Kings 16-17 – Thursday, May 5th, 2016

2 Kings 16 -- 1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done. 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

- The narrative begins with an all too familiar account of yet another king who did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord.
- However, not only was he an evil king, he actually came from one of only nine good kings who did right in the sight of the Lord.
- Namely, Jotham, who was the only one of the nine good kings that did not falter and fail by sinning against God in the end.

- When we get to the end of this chapter, we'll be introduced to the son of Ahaz who is none other than Hezekiah a godly king.
- The reason I point this out here, is because of what we're told in verse three about Ahaz walking in the ways of Israel's kings.
- In other words, instead of Ahaz following in his godly father's footsteps, he instead followed the ways of the influence of evil.

- Thankfully, Hezekiah would not follow in his ungodly father's footsteps and instead follow in the ways of his grandfather Jotham.
- To me, this speaks to the paramount importance of the influences in our lives, such that, we're all prone to the bad examples.
- One commentator noted that Ahaz was the first instance where Judah had imitated the apostasy and wickedness of Israel.

Ronny Simon in his book Give us a King had this to say about Ahaz, "It's no wonder that Ahaz, a weak and defeated king, needed Assyria's help to keep his throne. The Bible notes his tendency toward worshipping the gods of the neighboring peoples, comparing his sins to those of the kings of Israel. In one verse 2 Chronicles 28:19, he is even called "king of Israel." Is this simply an error, or is it perhaps a disparagement of the king because of his beliefs?"

- I don't know if it's possible to overstate how evil it was for Ahaz to imitate what Israel had done by worshipping the god Moloch.
- Moloch was the pagan god that they offered child sacrifices to while beating drums in order to drown out the infants screams.
- Actually we get that saying, "fire in the belly," from Moloch because they placed the baby on the iron arms with the fire inside.

Leviticus 20:1-5 (NKJV) — 1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: 'Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name. 4 And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, 5 then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.

5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to make war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him. 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites went to Elath, and dwell there to this day. 7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me." 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. 9 So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.

- Here we're told of an evil plan to dethrone Ahaz as king in order to set up a Syrian king over Judah and cut off David's lineage.
- But God!!! But God, in His sovereignty and according to His promise would not allow this satanic plot against Him to prevail.
- This because, God's promise to David, that the Savior of the world would come from his lineage, absolutely must come to pass.

Isaiah 7:1-18 (NKJV) — 1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2 And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind. 3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, 6 "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel"—7 thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass. 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people. 9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established." ' ' 10 Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" 13 Then he said, "Hear now,

O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

10 Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. 11 Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. 12 And when the king came back from Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. 13 So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. 14 He also brought the bronze altar which was before the LORD, from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the house of the LORD—and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15 Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, “On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.” 16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded. 17 And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts, and removed the lavers from them; and he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pavement of stones. 18 Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple, and he removed the king’s outer entrance from the house of the LORD, on account of the king of Assyria. 19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20 So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

- Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, Ahaz incorporates the pagan altar of the false gods from Syria into the temple.
- To make matters even worse, in order for him to accomplish this, he had to first remove everything that was in the way of this.
- In other words, he had to get rid of that which was holy, in order to bring in that which was unholy, which sadly is done today.

F.B. Meyer of this wrote, “This introduction of the altar of a heathen shrine into the holy temple of Jerusalem reminds us the many rights in modern religious observances which have been borrowed from paganism, and warns us that the Church has no right to go to the world for its methods and principles.”

- The reign of King Ahaz goes down in Israel's history as being amongst the most wicked and evil if not the most wicked and evil.
- Were it not for the grace and mercy of God it's very unlikely that Judah would have survived this period during Ahaz's evil reign.
- I find it interesting that God would have in place His prophets Isaiah and Micah, for such a time as this, to deliver God's Word.

G. Campbell Morgan had this to say, “It would seem as though the light of truth were absolutely extinguished. It was not so, however, for it is likely that throughout the whole reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, Isaiah was uttering his message, and that during the reign of Ahaz Micah also was delivering the word of God.”

2 Kings 17 -- 1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. 2 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. 3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. 4 And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5 Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

- This is perhaps one of the saddest accounts in all the Bible, such that, the northern kingdom of Israel is conquered by Assyria.
- I suppose in some way, this is a textbook case of the proverbial dog returning to its vomit in the sense that this is what they did.
- More specifically, they turned from God, and to the false gods, which is why the narrative now explains why God would allow it.

Adam Clarke - “The rest of this chapter is spent in vindicating the Divine providence and justice; showing the reason why God permitted such a desolation to fall on a people who had been so long his peculiar children.”

7 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, 8 and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree.

- Here we're told the children of Israel sinned against the Lord by fearing other gods and walking in the statutes of other nations.
- Moreover, they built for themselves high places, sacred pillars and wooden images continuing their worship of the false gods.
- It's interesting that they had to worship a god whether it was a false god or the true God because this is how we are created

11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." 13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." 14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them.

- There's something here that's not so easily seen at first read and it has to do with the progression, which they sin against God.
- First, they serve idols, which provoked God to anger so much so that He warns them, but they continue to stiffen their necks.
- Actually, this is cyclical in the sense that it shows a pattern with both Israel then, and us now, in that we sin against God's love.

G. Campbell Morgan - Their sin was first against law, but finally it was against patient love."

16 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. 19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. 21 For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.

- This is the end of the ten northern tribes of Israel as an independent kingdom, at the time they were dispersed by the Assyrians.
- What's so tragic about this period in Israel's history is it could have been easily avoided had they but worshipped the true God.
- Instead, as one commentator said it, "They worshipped the true God in a false way and then began to also worship false gods."

24 Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. 25 And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. 26 So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." 28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. 29 However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt. 30 The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. 33 They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. 34 To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, 35 with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; 36 but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. 37 And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods. 38 And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. 39 But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies." 40 However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals. 41 So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children's children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.

- So the chapter ends with an interesting reference to Israel, this as it relates to the New Testament reference to the Samaritans.
- What happened was that the religious mixture promoted by the Assyrians would ultimately continue for centuries in Samaria.
- Be that as it may, the record of Israel turning it's back on God is a terrifying indictment on any nation that would do the same.