

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023 • Read 2 Kings 16**

*Questions from the Scripture text: In what years of whose reign, did who begin to reign over whom (v1)? How old was he (v2)? How long did he reign? Where? What did he not do? In whose sight? Unlike whom? In what way did he walk (v3)? What did he do to his sons? Like whom? What else did he do (v4)? Who attacked him in v5? With what success? What did Rezin take in v6 (cf. 14:22), and who ended up dwelling there? To whom does Ahaz look for help (v7)? What did he call himself? What does he ask him to do? Whose silver and gold does he give to whom (v8)? How did the king of Assyria respond (v9)? Where did Ahaz go to see whom (v10)? What did he see there? To whom did he send the design of it? What did Urijah the priest do in v11? And what did Ahaz do with this altar (v12–13)? What did he move to behind it (v14)? What would now be done with the Assyrian copy-altar (v15–16)? And how would he use the bronze altar instead? What else did he do, on whose account (v17–18)? What is written where (v19)? What happened to Ahaz (v20)? Who reigned in his place?*

**Why can't churches rest on a history of orthodoxy?** 2Kings 16 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **even formerly sound churches are in constant danger of plummeting into religion, faith, and worship that God hates.**

In chapter 15, the northern kingdom plummeted into sin and chastening that would soon lead to its exile. Surely, the southern kingdom and the line of David would be better, right? Wrong! Ahaz is the only king of Judah of whom the formula in v2 is used. He's from the line of David. And his father (Jotham), grandfather (Uzziah), and great-grandfather (Amaziah), and great-great grandfather (Joash) had done what was "right" in the eyes of Yahweh (though not like David, cf. 12:2–3, 14:3–4, 15:3–4, 15:34–35).

"Conservative" churches must be careful not to think that they are immune to ending up like the most blatantly wicked churches. Generations of tolerating partial obedience and compromise finally produce the precipitous plunge into wickedness that we have in 2Ki 16, with Ahaz's wicked religion, wicked faith, and wicked worship.

**Wicked religion**, v1–4. vv3–4 give us a trifecta of the wickedness of Ahaz's religion. First, he copied the practices of the apostate church in the north (v3a). This is like if evangelical churches were to start keeping man-made holy days, celebrating mass, and observing Lent. Second, he copied the vile practices of the pagan religions of the land, including murdering his own children (v3b). This is like if evangelical churches were to start ordaining women, and tolerating or promoting sexual perversion and the murder of babies. Third, he himself (the verbs are singular) committed the very sin that previous kings had only failed to restrain others from committing (v4). This is like if church leaders went from failing to discipline for certain sins in one generation, to the leaders themselves committing those sins in the next.

Why give these examples of what this is like? Because this is exactly what has happened to mainline evangelicalism, and is in the process of happening even in former NAPARC churches and one current NAPARC church. Let none who are currently "Presbyterian and Reformed" think that they are somehow immune!

**Wicked faith**, v5–9. To his wicked religion, Ahaz added wicked faith. He begins by trusting and submitting to the king of Assyria (v7a), even praying to him for salvation (v7b) and giving him offerings (v8). He so admires him that he learns his way of worship from him (see next section). In many countries, rather than suffer persecution from the government, there are churches that are willing to trust in government protection and adjust to whatever worship the government directs them to have. It has happened throughout church history, and at the time of writing, it is now happening in China and Canada and beginning to happen in the U.S. Faith in the government or military power is a wicked faith.

**Wicked worship**, v10–19. Finally, Ahaz goes all-out in his observance of imitation-Assyrian religion. He has found something in the world that looked impressive, and since it felt and seemed so worshipful, he brought it into the church. He hedges his bets, keeping the bronze altar around, just in case he needs help or information from Yahweh too (end of v15). And so have many done who have abandoned true worship. They have added what seemed most impressive from man while keeping whatever they thought was most useful from the Lord.

We breathe a great sigh of relief when we get to vv19–20. Thankfully, Ahaz goes to his grave where he can stop doing harm. And, if we know what is coming with Hezekiah his son, we are grateful for the coming mercy of God. But for now, in chapter 16, we have this important lesson in how quickly and far even a conservative man or church can fall. May the Lord keep His churches and grant unto them reformation and repentance! Thankfully, the Church—capital C—now has Christ as its Head; though local lampstands may be removed, she will never again fall as a whole.

From where does repentance come? How is it maintained? From where can churches and Christians learn what traditions are acceptable to God, and which ones are prolonged offenses and latent disasters?

*Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You and praise You for sparing us and our fathers in the faith. For many generations, You have maintained unto us the preaching of Your gospel. And You have often given us new reformation of doctrine and worship. Forgive us for when we act as if because of these mercies, all of our traditions are acceptable to you. And forgive us for when we act as if we are not in continual danger of falling into even more dreadful sin than others who have thus far been worse than we have. In Your mercy and power, grant unto us reformation and revival, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP72A "God, Give Your Judgments to the King" or TPH72A "O God, Your Judgments Give the King"**

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Second king 16, these are God's words. In the 17th year of pick of the son of remalia. It has some king of judah, began to reign. It has was 20 years old when he became king and he reigned 16 years in jerusalem and he did not do what was right in the sight of yahweh as god as his father, david had done.

But he walked in the way the kings of israel. Indeed, he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom yahweh had cast out from before the children of israel, And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places on the hills and under every green tree.

Than resin king of syria and pica. The son of ramalia, king of israel, came up to jerusalem to make war. And they besieged a-has, but could not overcome him. At that time. Resin king of syria captured, he left for syria and drove the men of judah from he left and the edomites went to elect And dwelt dwell there to this day.

So it has sent message messengers to tiggletth believer king of Assyria saying i am your servant and your son come up and save me from the hand of the king of Assyria. And from the hand of the king of israel who rise up against me. And it has took the silver and gold that was found in the house of yahai and in the treasuries of the king's house and sent it as a present to the kingdom of Assyria, So the king of Assyria heated him for the king of Assyria, went up against Damascus and took it carried.

Its people captive to cure and killed resin. Now king ahaz went to Damascus to meet to look believes our king of his area and so on alter that was at Damascus.

And king a has sent to ureata priest the design of the altar and its pattern. According to all its workmanship.

Then you rea the priest built, an altar. According to all that king, a has had sent from Damascus. So you read the priest made it before king as came back from Damascus. And when the king came back from Damascus, the king saw the altar. And the king approached, the altar and made offerings on it.

So he burned his offering and his grain offering and he poured, his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. You also brought the bronze altar, which was before he all pay from the front of the temple. And from between the new altar and the house of yahua and put it on the side of the new altar.

Then king a has commanded urea. 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 green 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. Thus, did you read other priest? According to all the king he has had commanded. And kinga has cut off the panels of the carts and remove the lavers from them.

And he took down the sea. From the bronze auction that we're under it, put it on a pavement of stones. Also, he removed the sabbath pavilion. Which they had built in the temple. Any rev, the king's outer entrance from the house of yahweh on account of the king of Assyria.

Now, the rest of the act of it has, which he did or they not written in the book of the chronicles Of the kings of judah. So it has rested. With his fathers and was buried with his fathers. In the city of david. And hasakia his son. Rained. In his place.

This chapter is full of dreadful wickedness in one of the reasons. It's so dreadful is because of where it takes place. It takes place in judah. So far, we have not seen. A king of judah. There was of course at the lab but we have not seen a king of judah.

Of whom. It said that he did evil in the sight of Yahweh or he did not do what was right in the sight of y'all by that. Has been reserved for ahaz, and it's been reserved for a has To, as we see in the opening verses. Has wicked religion that copies three different.

Uh, wicked. Sources. One is the religion of israel. The apostate and declining church, the religion of the northern kingdom. The other is the religion of those who are in the land before. Whom yahweh had cast out and you remember the lord? Uh, telling israel that if they Committed the sins of those nations.

The ordered cast them out to And the other is the religion, the popular religion of the people. You remember. Uh, we've had several kings who did do what was right in the eyes of y'all play but They did not do as their fathers and father David had done because during their days the people Uh, still sacrificed on the high places.

But the verbs. In verse 4 are singular. It's describing a has now not just failing to restrain the total but himself going up to the high places and Under every green tree. And this is a reminder that even a church that has been preserved. For many generations, even A family, even a man.

Um, who comes from a line that has been preserved in faithfulness to god or comparative faithfulness, we should say to god from any generations, may fall quickly and may fall greatly. In his religion. We, of course are Conservative Presbyterians, but we come. Um, From a denomination that almost fell entirely or we're in a denomination and almost fell entirely.

Uh, in the 1970s and 1980s and got mercifully spared it. But we can look around. And we can look at, Um, other churches, other denominations that are sisters to ours. That are the descendants of anomination that 150 years ago. Was far more faithful. Than any of our current. Presbyterian and reformed denominations.

In fact, the pcusa is descended from it. And that's just a few kings worth. Of time. And where is the pcus USA? Now, It is. Promoting the murder of children and abortion. It is promoting the approval of all manner of perversion, the worship services are even more of an abomination.

Then, the worship services of Uh of the declining reformed and Presbyterian churches today. They are. A great deal like a hats. Having imitated now in our workshop, the most apostic churches, incorporating things from the papacy and some of them even things from from other wicked religions. Like imitating the things from the people of the land even to the point of the burning or the murder.

Of babies, just as a has had done. And also, Whatever the people like to do regardless of whether it is approved of god. Incorporating quickly into the worship services. Just as a has himself. As the people had liked to do in the kings had not done in the past but now hey it did.

On every green hill on every high hill and under every green tree. And so we must not think. That our church or our family or your own heart. Is not susceptible, it's not vulnerable to falling into this kind of sin. We have the example here in the word of god.

And we have the example in our own history, very close to us. In history. The, the pc usa and the arp come from the same roots. And in fact, we're so still joined together that in the 1950s. That is in. You know, when

When my mother was one. They published a joint hymnal together. And in 1980, Or so the ARP was on the verge of falling off the cliff. Giving up. Uh, the word of god. There are many people who have come. From christian families, even families where there was worship even families where the mom and dad were fairly consistent.

And yet. Uh, one way or another, and not that the mom and dad did everything perfectly, but you're certainly have not The children, never Uh, new gods to be their own god. Never dealt with him genuinely during the worship of god coming. Knowing their sin and knowing that god was bringing them near.

Uh, through the blood of the lord, jesus and rejoicing in the forgiveness that they get from him in the life, and the holiness, and they get by his spirit rejoicing that they know, God, and that they may worship him and being renewed in, in loving him, who has loved them and wanting to live out of that love.

So what we need to do, Every time we worship together, every every time you worship privately because this is what those who are alive in christ do and if you don't you don't have to give yourself life from christ which is something you can't do anyway. But god, the holy spirit will and he can and you seek it from him and we'll pray it for you.

And if you want to be sure. Of him and sure that you are his and Uh, you come to me. Come to your mom. Talk to us, we will pray with you. We will pray for you. We'll help you. We will seek the lord's face together that he would keep us from falling.

For we see in, A has not just wicked religion, but also wicked faith. He goes to syria. He Either sees a syrian altar. Which you might think, you know they fella at last but they sure were tough to get rid of it. Took a theory to get rid of them.

Their gods are pretty strong. Um, Or maybe you just like the design or whatever it is something in the in the about the altar and Damascus. After a syria has fallen, Um, Appeal to him or it could be something that dig with believer has already erected and set up as an Syrian altar in the place of the Syrian gods who had failed.

And the gods of the people who had won now. Get to have their worship set up, whatever it is. It's It's irrational and wicked. And yet he not having faith in the lord who made the heaven, the earth of all that. It's in them. He hedges his bets as they say.

He thinks i'll just take some from every religion. And second chronicles 28. Where the parallel about a has its rain is Is found, does he build jerusalem with altars? You just take a little bit of this and i'll take a little bit of that. And Everything has some some wisdom in it, some spirituality.

People would have considered him a great man of faith. Oh, he's such a spiritual king. Look at how he has increased acts of faith and worship. That's not how the Bible sees it isn't. We shouldn't rejoice over. All of the. Faith, or all of the religiosity? That we see.

In the nation or the church. It's not all good. And say, oh well they're sincere, yes that's problem. It's since sincere evil is bad. There's wicked, religion, and wicked faith, and of course, wicked worship. As we've already described the The new altar that he gets and he moves the bronze altar.

It says he puts the bronze altar on the north. You enter from the east. So, what that means is In the place where the bronze altar was, right by you. He would have the ultra from Damascus and the bronze alter would be behind it, but he tells usually or Uria the priest, you know, make sure you leave it there.

Just in case i need to inquire. And so he's including yahweh worship. Have an abandoned yahweh. Were you just added all these other things to it? So, this is actually a man who prays to yahweh Will we tend to read something like second kings 16 and say, oh well, this guy has left the lord for other gods, which is how the lord sees it.

When we pray to him, but also Trust in other things. Delight in other things. Redesign. Which is exactly what he does, isn't it? He gets rid of the panels of the carts, he removes the lavers from the carts. You remember with the expansion from the tabernacle to the temple, you know, there was the wash patients and we just heard preaching.

On the wash basins. And so you had the great big C that was on the auxin. And that was the great washing, but all of the carts that were used to Attend. The temple mount each one of them had a labor for washing with the reminder of our sinfulness before.

God the need for him to cleanse us and all those wonderful things we heard from Exodus in the evening sermon this week. There's all, we don't need those anymore. No longer have a sense of our sin, we no longer have a sense of the holiness of yahweh. It's time for some remodeling.

We need to freshen up our worship. This is old and stuff and stargy, and traditional and boring for the people. They'd really like something new, Even brings the sea down off the backs of the oxen, and who knows? Y entirely. I mean, if you're going to add a great big swimming pool to the temple mount then You know that's an attraction right?

Everybody likes to advertise us. Let me bull. Put on account of the king of Assyria, the new hip ruler of the world. And not is joining the new modern order of things. Come on, let's get the church contemporary. Hey has. It's probably very proud. Of all of these. Changes that he made.

Very pleased with himself for The creativity that he brought. To the worship of Yahweh. Incorporating, all these other things. After all, there's all sorts of wisdom and all sorts of people aren't there. Even in Presbyterian and reformed denominations today. Read some of what their celebrity pastors, write. And they're writing against the regular principle and talking about how, you know, god has, uh, given wisdom and creativity, and in many different areas to many different types of people, and we shouldn't reject an idea out of hand, just because the person had it wasn't saved.

You see, the way that we can think? If we lose the sense of the greatness of god's redemption because we've lost the sense, Of the greatness of our sin and we've lost the holiness of god. And his exclusivity, his greatness has justice. Every one of us is susceptible, every one of us is vulnerable.

We don't read this and we say, and say huh? I'm glad i'm not like that. That could never happen to me. We say, thank you lord. That thus far. You have helped me. Pleased by your mercy, great that that would never happen to me. Grow me in christ. Make me to love your holiness more.

Make me to rejoice over. You're saving me for my sin more, make me see the hatefulness of my sin more. For, if we are not growing in grace, Than we may not be in grace at all. Yes, there are times. Of back, sliding and doubt and coldness in a christian's life.

But on the whole, the christian grows, And that's what we should seek from him. Because he hasn't just saved us so that we would Arrive at the place that we are. You could saved us so that we would be conformed at last To christ the great king. Whom obviously Judah needed.

For, even if you have a josiah, you don't have what you need. But here, that just hadn't made as

Spray.

Father, we thank you for the warnings that you had for us in this passage. Don't pray that you would. Grant to us, the act of working of your spirit that we would have. A genuine. And right, heart and life towards you. That you would give us. An increasing sense and understanding of.

The hatefulness of sin, and especially a false worship. And an increasing and genuine sense of your holiness. When most of all that you'd make us, To rejoice over. What you have done for us in christ. That we would know your forgiveness and your righteousness and him And that we would love to glorify you for his

name's sake.

Grab these things by your spirit. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.