

2 Kings 16

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[0 : 00] Hello. It's good to see you this evening. Thankful to have the opportunity to be with you. I'm not real sure why we have a dark spot over here again, but we do.

So it seems like every year we fight that. When it gets a little cool, for some reason, these lights don't stay on. They go off and on, off and on.

But anyway, I've got light up here enough to read. It's a little dark spot right there, but there's enough light scattering around, so we're good. Let's go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll get right into our word together.

Father, we thank you so much. Just thank you for the day you've given us. We thank you for every grand opportunity that you've presented to us. We thank you for the great privilege it is of gathering together, being able to read the word of God with one another, study it with one another, to be encouraged from the truth that it contains.

Lord, as we study in particular the historical writings, we pray that you would help us just to continue to, Lord, see the testimony for good and for bad of those who've gone before us.

[1 : 13] And, Lord, that we would heed the warnings that we find in Scripture to walk in faithfulness and obedience to you. Lord, may your word speak truth into our life.

We ask it to be for your glory and honor. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. 2 Kings, 2 Kings, chapter 16.

2 Kings, chapter 16 is where we are at this evening. 2 Kings 16. We will look at the chapter in its entirety.

It is best seen that way, I believe. It's only 20 verses. We are in 2 Kings 16, verses 1 through 20.

I'll give you the parallel passage because I like to give it to you in case you want to go read a fuller account of the story. That will be in 2 Chronicles, chapter 28.

[2 : 13] We see the corresponding, excuse me, account of Ahaz's reign over Judah. We will pull a little bit of the information out of that for our fuller understanding of the text before us.

But for our purposes of reading and studying and hopefully for the purposes of understanding what God has to say to us, we will confine ourselves to this passage found in 2 Kings, chapter 16.

It says there, In the 17th year of Pekah, son of Remaliah, Ahaz, the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz 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 the Lord his God, as his father David had done. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel and even made his son pass through the fire according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out from before the sons of Israel.

He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. Then Rezan, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war, and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.

[3 : 30] At that time, Rezan, king of Aram, recovered Eleth for Aram and cleared the Judeans out of Eleth entirely. And the Arameans came to Eleth and have lived there to this day.

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying, I am your servant and your son. Come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.

Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord in the treasuries of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria listened to him, and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it and carried the people of it away into exile to Kerr and put Rezan to death.

Now king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, and saw the altar which was at Damascus. And king Ahaz sent to Eurasia the priest the pattern of the altar and its model according to all its workmanship.

So Eurasia the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus. Thus Eurasia the priest made it before the coming of king Ahaz from Damascus.

[4 : 43] When the king came from Damascus, the king saw the altar. Then the king approached the altar and went up to it and burned his burnt offering and his meal offering and poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.

The bronze altar which was before the Lord, he brought from the front of the house, from between his altar and the house of the Lord and he put it on the north side of his altar. Then king Ahaz commanded Eurasia the priest saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering and the evening meal offering and the king's burnt offering and his meal offering with the burnt offering of all the people of the land and their meal offering and their drink offering and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice.

But the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by. So Eurasia the priest did according to all that king Ahaz commanded. Then king Ahaz cut off the borders of the stands and removed the laver from them.

He also took down the sea from the bronze oxen which were under it and put it on a pavement of stone. The covered way for the Sabbath which they had built in the house and the outer entry of the king, he removed from the house of the Lord because of the king of Assyria.

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? So Ahaz slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

[6 : 06] And his son Hezekiah reigned in his place. 2 Kings chapter 16. We have been looking for some time at the reign of the kings in the north.

At this point historically, if we go back to the 15th chapter, the final king of the northern kingdom is in place. A portion of the northern kingdom has been carried away by the time we get to the end of the 15th chapter by the Assyrians and the remainder of them will be carried away and dispersed and displaced and intermingled with the Assyrian empire when we get to the 17th chapter.

But for a moment, the author of the book of Kings now steps back and shows us what is going on to the south in the southern kingdom of Judah. Because if you remember, at the close of the 15th chapter, we see that in those days, the Lord began to bring Aram and Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, against Judah when Jotham was reigning.

Jotham dies and his son takes his place and that is Ahaz. We have seen in the northern kingdom that there was opportunity to do good and to do what was right in the sight of the Lord, but they rebelled against it from the very beginning and therefore they continued to return to the sins of Jeroboam.

In contrast to that, in the southern kingdom, there is a greater and grander opportunity because not only do they have the temple, not only do they have the lineage of David, they also have the priests and the Levites and the altar and the sacrificial system.

[7 : 41] And for the most part, the southern kingdom is faithful. For the most part, the southern kingdom remains true, but we have interspersed amongst this the unfaithfulness of some in one of which we see this evening, that is Ahaz.

I want you to see this evening the pathways of the rebellious. The pathways of the rebellious. We do not have to go to the north and see in Israel what it looks like to rebel against a holy God.

We see here in contrast or in spite of every opportunity to do what is right, there is still the wicked heart of man who does what is wrong and does not do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

We notice that the standard for the southern kingdom of Judah was not necessarily the man who went before them, but the lineage that was being continued, that is, according to the ways of David.

And as we said this morning, not that David was perfect, but David walked with a heart for the Lord his God and loved the Lord his God. We find Ahaz, one who does what is not right and did not follow in the ways of his father David.

[8 : 53] Though God continues to persevere and preserve this lineage, he does not do what is right. And there are certain pathways that we see that the rebellious are prone to take in Scripture and even today, those who rebel against God are also prone to take.

Number one, we see that the rebellious embrace the local customs. The rebellious often embrace the local customs.

It says that in the 17th year of Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, Ahaz, the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. He becomes king at a time when a northern kingdom is really on the verge of falling and they're doing a great amount of wickedness.

And rather than moving away from the wickedness of the northern kingdom, he readily embraces it. If you go and when you go and when we get there, if the Lord allows us to tarry into the book of 2 Chronicles, the 28th chapter, you will find that one of the things that Ahaz does is he reintroduces the worship of Baal, which had been eradicated from Judah and even from Israel by this point.

So he reintroduces the worship of Baal, which was the product of a lady you know real well in scripture, Jezebel. So he brings the worship of Baal back into Jerusalem and he does it because it is what is going on around them.

[10 : 20] We are told that he does not go in the way of his father David, but he walked, it says in verse 3, in the way of the kings of Israel. So he was doing what his neighbors to the north were doing.

He was also doing what his neighbors to the west were doing. That's where the Baal worship would have come from. He is also doing what all the neighbors around him because not only does he bring in the worship of Baal, not only does he do the false ways of the people of the north, it says, and he even made his son pass through the fire.

Now there is a school of Bible interpretation that tried to soften this a little bit, but the most literal interpretation is that he sacrificed his firstborn son.

And that would be the worship of the false god of Moloch because this was something that was rampantly done among the Canaanite people. It says, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out from them.

So here we begin to see what he is doing is he is embracing the local customs of everyone around him. God had called his people to be a set-apart people.

[11 : 33] We've looked at that. We've seen that over and over again. It is from Genesis to Revelation. God wants his people to be different, to be set-apart. One of the great tragedies is not just when his people are not different, but when they become just like everybody else around them.

The great sin of the church at Corinth was not that they were sinning differently than the people around them, but that they were sinning in the same manner as the people around them.

Remember, there's this passage in 1 Corinthians. We took our time. We actually preached through it and then we came back and we preached through it again about the women's hair, right? That the women's hair needs to be short.

It couldn't be short. It needed to be long. She needed to have the head covering. And we were so confused. Not we weren't confused, but we were trying to be clear as to what that meant. And that was because in that day, at that time, in the city of Corinth, for a woman to have short hair meant that she was really rampant in prostitution and she was serving in the false goddess of Diana's temple as a temple prostitute.

So when the ladies were taking on the trend of the day and were bringing that into the church of God, they were representing and even most of the time behaving in the same sin that was going on in the world.

[12 : 41] It really had nothing to do with hair. They were sinning in the same manner as the people around them and they might have fit in with society, but they were not walking in obedience.

Ahaz here is fitting in with people around him. He is embracing the customs of the locals in all of his false worship.

She's a talkative one. It is okay. She's been looking at me since she came in. She's been talking. It's okay. Give her a microphone. Let her go. It's fine.

I might as well call attention to it. Everybody else has been just oohing over the whole time anyway, so it's okay. My granddaughters always say that when I stand up and preach, I know JC tells me all the time that Millie stands up on platforms and says, this is what Pop Pop does, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

So there you go. You know, all I'm saying is blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Let's get back on course here. All right, here we go. What Ahaz had done is he began to embrace the customs and the worship and the gods of the people around him.

[13 : 50] And in this, he is rebelling against not only the standard, but the calling of God upon his people. And look at what it says.

We go even further. This is a greater admonition. In verse 4, it says he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

You go to 2 Chronicles, you'll see that he set up altars essentially everywhere throughout Jerusalem, under every tree, under every corner, under every aspect of the town.

It says here that he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Now, this should capture our attention because the kings who do what is right in the sight of the Lord their God according to the ways of their father.

Every one of them, there's this one caveat. Only this did they not do. They did not tear down the high places in which the people were offering sacrifice and burning incense. Go back and read it. In Judah, you'll see that they did right except the fact that they did not tear down the altars in which the people were offering sacrifice and burning incense.

[14 : 59] But never until now do we find that a king participates in this high place burning of incense and offering of sacrifices.

This is a caution to us because, friend, listen to me. What we permit will eventually become what we practice.

What we allow to remain will eventually become the very things that we do. Why is holiness such a high standard?

Because if we overlook a sin or we overlook the presence of something and we can say, well, at least we're not doing it. This is why Paul challenges the church so much.

This is why Peter challenges the church so much. This is why John challenges the church so much. This is why James, all of those authors to the local churches in the New Testament, this is why the calling of the church.

[15 : 58] Peter says it is time for judgment to begin and it begins in the household of God first, right? And he says, and if we are scarcely saved, then where were the sinners and the ungodly appear? This is the calling.

Why? Because that which we permit will eventually become that which we practice. The kings allowed it to exist and finally there's a king who's doing it with them.

When it's all around you, it's much easier to fall into it. One of the surest pathways of the rebellious is that they embrace the local customs.

It's hard to stand apart. It's hard to be different. It's hard to stand out, especially when it's in your own neighborhood. They looked to the nation of Israel to the north and they're doing this and they're just like us.

They look to the kingdoms around them. They say, well, they're doing this and they seem to be prospering. They even look among their own nations and say, well, there's these high places and it seems to be okay. It has been permissible for every king that has preceded me so surely I can become practicing it.

[17 : 07] Then we begin to see that they embrace the local customs and the moment we begin to embrace them and we become like the people around us then we are on the path to rebellion. Number two, not only is it the embrace of local customs, it is an exchange of their loyal devotion.

When we begin to embrace things which we are called to shine and when we begin to embrace things which we should have nothing to do with then all of a sudden we will begin to exchange that which we are devoted to.

Make no mistake about it, every person is devoted and subject to something. Every person. You are devoted and subject to something or someone.

There is truly no such thing as personal independence. I am just taking it. It is all about me because then you are devoted to your own self and you are devoted to your own welfare and you are devoted to your own benefit and you are devoted to the one thing which is selfishness that is appalling to the Lord God.

To discipline Ahaz again you got to read 2nd Chronicles God begins to send these armies now when we read it in Judges it is so much easier of an account.

[18:27] Pekah son of Ramaliah and Rezin the king of Aram come against Jerusalem go read it in Chronicles not only did they come against Jerusalem they slay 120,000 inhabitants they carry away 200,000 women and children and if it had not been for the prophet Oded who met the king of Israel at that time and told him you are just as wicked as they if not more so send them back then these people would not have went back there is a great downfall there is this great battle that comes and all of this it says the Lord calls to discipline Ahaz for his rebellion these are matters make no mistake about it God will not be mocked that God is trying to get his attention God is trying to call him back to himself but what does Ahaz do rather than humbling himself it tells us in verse 7 so Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria the Assyrians at this moment are the emerging empire we had not heard anything about them until the 15th chapter and all of a sudden they come on to the scene and all of a sudden the people of Israel are paying tribute to them all of a sudden they are taking some of the people away up to this point the Egyptians might have been a place to go to but if you look historically at this time the Egyptians are in a weakened state of existence and what is going on is the Assyrians are emerging and becoming a powerhouse so when things get bad rather than turning to the Lord and falling on his face he turns to trust in the military power and if you're going to trust in military power then you might as well go to the one that at that moment is the strongest and best in the land so he goes to Assyria the Assyrians as you know are not a good people if you need to really understand it then go read the book of Jonah if you need to go a little bit further read the other prophetic books that talk how the Assyrians would lead people away as if they had fish hooks in their mouth and they would lead them to their slaughter and that God would eventually judge the Assyrians for all of their wickedness and rebellion and all of their atrocities which they brought upon all the people around them yet this is the one that Ahaz turns to and notice how he turns to him he says

I am your servant and your son so he is declaring his submission to him not only is he declaring allegiance to him he's declaring submission to him he is stating to Tiglath-Pileser that you are the sovereign over me and he exchanges his devotion which should have been directed to the Lord God to the king of Assyria and he begs him to come and deliver him rather than repenting and begging and asking God to intercede and confessing their own sins and taking the discipline rather than doing that he goes here now if again we read this text it seems like the king of Assyria said okay that's great I'll come down and help you read the rest of scripture it tells us in 2nd Chronicles that he was not greatly benefited from the king that is the king did not at once come down and help him the king kind of left him to his own the king said

I'll take your tribute and I'll take your loyalty but it does not mean I have to do anything why because when you trust in the powers of the world the powers of the world will do the things according to their own means it is then that Ahaz because he is now committed to being devoted to the standard of the world he begins to plunder the temple to pay the royal fines of the Assyrians to take care of them it tells us elsewhere in scripture that he took the utensils of the temple and began to cut them in half began to gather them up because they didn't have money in the bank but they had gold and silver in the temple so he should have been devoted to the Lord but he began to be devoted to the world and when we were devoted to the world we take the things that are dedicated to the Lord and we begin to give it to the world there is no such thing as a sanctified article at that moment sanctification means what to be set apart for holy purposes and holy services to be sanctified means to be set apart in this moment when we give devotion to the world nothing is sanctified in our life so we see here that this pathway to rebellion not only does it embrace local customs it exchanges a loyal devotion as a matter of fact the devotion was so loyal it tells us in the text before us that he began to shut down portions and parts of the temple the breezeway of the Sabbath the entrance of the king the tunnels he wasn't doing that because the king of Assyria made him do that most people believe that he did that because he needed the resources that were in these portions of the temple to pay the king of Assyria for his services it is so sad what happens he cuts the stands off of the borders he removes the lavender from the oxen that they're standing on he's plundering the temple to provide for the services of the world see what we are devoted to we will commit our resources to and we see

Ahaz doing that third pathway and the final pathway we see from the text is not only an embrace of local customs not only is it an exchange of loyal devotion the rebellious encouraged sin in the lives of others the rebellious the truly rebellious encouraged sin in the lives of others Ahaz gets the help he needs Tiglath-Pileser kills Rezan pushes back Pekka son of Amaliah and he takes over Damascus and it tells us in verse 10 now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria so he went there to meet the one who had helped him out and it says and when he went there he saw an altar he says that he saw an altar which was at Damascus one of the Assyrian altars historians tell us there's nothing ornate it tells us there's nothing really magnificent about the Assyrian altars this one is called a grand altar it might have been a little bit larger but there's nothing really becoming to the eye other than the fact that what we trust in we will begin to worship right and so the Assyrians are the things that are delivering them and the Assyrians have their own style of altars and he sees this altar and then this sad reality comes back and King Ahaz sent to Eurasia the priest the pattern of the altar which he saw now we have already seen how the faithfulness of the priest can maintain the faithfulness of the nation that when the priests are faithful and there's a remnant there then there is a preservation within the nation they can keep matters walking as they should they can keep them as they ought to be with the Lord they can at least give the people something to come back to but we are in great danger when the priesthood is compromised and the priesthood is swayed by the king it is a sad reality that Eurasia the priest sees the pattern and is commissioned by Ahaz and he builds the altar why?

because the king has commissioned him to build an altar so he builds an altar the problem with that is God has already commissioned the type of altar that ought to be in the temple and those matters have already been constructed and there's already one in existence but the king thought well this altar looks good and this altar is what I want and surely I can put this altar there and I can worship there as well and I can go before the Lord God however I want to mark it in scripture God is always very clear as to how people approach him right we must be careful to think that we can come before him in any way in any means in any I mean God it is a narrow way all throughout scripture if people tell you as a believer you're very narrow minded in salvation then praise them for telling you that because in scripture it is a very narrow minded and narrow way there is but one way to approach the Lord God before the tabernacle there is but one way in the temple and there is but one way through Jesus Christ to come to him for salvation deliverance from sin is a narrow manner in scripture this is why God was so clear in the visions that he gave first to Moses and then in the visions that he gave later to David and David passed it on to his son Solomon as to the construction of the articles the carts were to be so high they were to be made of such and such wood the vassals were to be so big the utensils were to be in such a manner the table the show bread the lampstands

[27 : 36] I mean everything was to such detail these things we read that we say why is it there because God is prescribing how man can come he doesn't say build a place and however you want to furnish it furnish it and then come to me he says this is what it's going to take to come to me and this prepares us for when we get to scripture and Jesus says I am the way no one comes to the father but through me we ought to be ready for that because all throughout the Bible we are told there are only certain ways that we can go but here Uriah accepts this commission because the king has commissioned him and commanded him too so he begins to build the altar and he builds the altar before the king makes his way back from Damascus and he has it set up Uriah sets it up between the bronze altar which is the one the Lord had commissioned them to do and the holy place King Ahaz walks in there is the bronze altar there is his altar and they are sitting in line with one another as you come through the door because as you walk through the door the altar was the first thing you saw well that wasn't enough

Uriah had built it he had positioned it Ahaz now goes up to his altar he offers his sacrifice on his altar and then he takes the bronze altar of the Lord and pushes it to the side he puts it he says to the north side of his altar essentially he moves it to the corner of the room now he says upon this altar the one that Uriah has built that was commissioned from what Ahaz has seen in Damascus you shall offer all the sacrifices right the sacrifices of the people the sacrifice you shall sprinkle the blood on this altar you should do everything on this altar but it's kind of we get lost a little bit in translation but it says as for the bronze altar he said that shall be for me to inquire by it doesn't necessarily imply that Ahaz is going to offer his sacrifices there the wording in the original language kind of leaves it open he is saying as for the bronze altar I will inquire as to what

I should do with it so what Ahaz is saying you let me figure out what I'm going to do with that God had already told them what to do with that it was to be right front and center so that sacrifices could be offered but he says you just push it to the side I'll figure out what I'm going to do with it and now all of a sudden the priesthood has been defiled because the temple has been defiled read a little bit further you find that the next step that Ahaz does we don't see it in the text but we see it in 2nd Chronicles he eventually leaves the people so far they shut the doors of the temple and there's no longer any worship there why because he is encouraging sin in the lives of others now he's followed by a very good king Hezekiah up to this point Ahaz is the worst king we have found in

Judah there is one coming after Hezekiah that will be worse but up to this point this is as rebellious as we can get Paul declared to the Romans in the book of Romans chapter 1 verse 32 when he's talking about how man knows what he ought to do and how he ought to do it because of the testimony of creation to the creator Paul is declaring the sinfulness of people who take part in certain sins we don't have to list them here things that are debauchery before God he says not only do they do this but he says but they give hearty approval to those who do it as well that is the rebellious are not only those who are sinning but also encouraging sin in the lives of others when we begin to embrace the local customs we begin to exchange our devotion very rapidly will we encourage greater sin in the lives of others and scripture is clear it says that it would be better for a millstone to be tied around our neck and us be cast into the sea than to cause someone else to stumble because it is one thing to do it ourselves it is a whole other thing to give hearty approval to those who do it as well and that is exactly what we see Ahaz doing with

Eurasia that is exactly what we see him doing with the people and then eventually they just close the doors of the temple and say we don't need this anymore let us be careful lest we walk on the pathways of rebellion because they are easily stepped upon but we must guard ourselves in the daily obedience let's pray and we will be dismissed father I thank you so much for this day we thank you for your word we thank you for the truth that your word contains so lord as we've come before you and we've studied the word of god today we know that we've seen a lot of information lord and we seek to gain great application lord the greatest thing that we can do is just to walk each day afresh and anew in obedience to your calling upon our lives lord may we look to you for our every decision may we look to you for guidance comfort and leading as a church and as individuals we ask that you would use us this week to encourage those around us lord to point others to the savior that we would lift up christ to a world that is in desperate need and may it be for your glory we ask it in jesus name amen thank you guys i greatly appreciate your time this