



As we continue in our study of 2 Kings 15, we see that Jotham led a life of compromise that invited God's discipline. Doing right but keeping back part of your life from God is not wise, for the Lord deserves to be worshipped with all our hearts. Then in 2 Kings 16, we learn that God loves even the disobedient, like Ahaz, and gives them opportunities to repent. Unfortunately, men's hearts are hard, and Ahaz, like others, refused to give glory to the Lord for the victory he experienced, and the priest Urijah followed him into his folly. May we all learn to serve the Lord whole-heartedly and seek to please Him more than man.

1. Principles from **2 Kings 15**

- a. How you finish is more important than how you start.
 - i. Uzziah was a good king for most of his reign, but in his last years, pride filled his heart.
 1. Uzziah was a successful, popular king.
 2. Uzziah tried to sacrifice to God as if he were a priest.
 3. The priests confront Uzziah.
 4. His arrogant dismissal of God's law led to his leprosy.
 5. Uzziah spent his last seven years of life quarantined.
- b. You reap what you sow (**Galatians 6:7–8; Hoseas 8:7**).
 - i. King Shallum was assassinated, just as he had assassinated the previous king.
- c. If you appease the Enemy, he may retreat but he will always return.
 - i. King Manahem of Israel appeased the Assyrian king with silver, about 46 million dollars in today's currency.
 - ii. The king of Assyria left, but he returned after a time.

2. **2 Kings 15:32–38** – *“In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.”*

- a. Jerusha
 - i. Jotham's mother was the daughter of Zadok the priest
- b. Jotham
 - i. Jotham ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah.
 - ii. Jotham did right, but he kept the high places.
 - 1. The high places were shrines to false gods.
 - 2. Israel often tried to conform to the cultures around them.
 - 3. **DISCUSS**: How can you spot and reject the human tendency to conform to the worldly culture around you?
 - 4. Even as the Israelites returned to the Lord, they would make the shrines tools for worshiping God.
 - 5. However, God never asked to be worshiped in this way. The Israelites were meant to worship God at the temple.
 - 6. **DISCUSS**: How can we learn how God wants to be worshipped?
- c. Enemies
 - i. The Lord sent the kings of Syria and Israel against Judah.
 - 1. If there is compromise in your life, God will seek to get your attention.
 - 2. God disciplines those He loves (**Hebrews 12:6**).
 - 3. **DISCUSS**: How has God used trials to develop in you an undivided heart?

3. **2 Kings 16:1–4** – *“In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. 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. 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. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.”*

- a. Ahaz
 - i. When Ahaz began to reign, Pekah had been king of the north for 17 years.
 - 1. They dated the reigns of kings by comparing who was king of the north and who was the king in the south.
 - ii. Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign.
 - iii. Ahaz was one of the worst of the kings of Judah.
 - 1. Ahaz “made his son pass through the fire.”
 - 2. **2 Chronicles 28:3** – *“He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the*

abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”

3. Molech was a Canaanite god with the head of a bull and body of a man. The inside of the bronze idol was heated up like a furnace until its arms, extended outward, were red-hot. Children were then sacrificed into the hands of this false god.
4. The sin of abortion is like the worship of Molech.
5. God hates our sin, but He continues to love us.
6. **DISCUSS:** How does God’s love compel you to leave the flesh behind?

4. **2 Kings 16:5–6** – *“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. 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. 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.”*

a. Elath

- i. Elath is now called “Elat.”
- ii. Elat is the southernmost tip of Israel along the Gulf of Aqaba.

b. Jews

- i. The word translated as *“the men of Judah”* is translated as “Jews” In the KJV, among other translations.
 1. This is the first time the word “Jews” is used in any Bible translation.
 2. The word “Jew” came from the word “Judah.”
 3. The northern 10 tribes are about to go into exile, so the Jewish people become known by the name of the remaining kingdom of Judah.

c. Ahaz

- i. The kings of Syria and Israel fought against Ahaz but could not overcome him.

d. Isaiah

- i. Isaiah was a prophet during the reign of Ahaz.
 1. **Isaiah 6** tells us that Isaiah began his prophetic ministry after King Uzziah died, and Uzziah was the grandfather of Ahaz.
- ii. Isaiah explained why the other kings failed to overcome Ahaz.
 1. **Isaiah 7:1–2** – *“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. 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."

- a. The wind simile refers to the Jews' fear of their enemies.
2. **Isaiah 7:3–9** – *"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, 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. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, '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'—thus says the Lord GOD: 'It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass. 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. 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.'""*
- a. The Lord commanded Isaiah to speak to Ahaz, king of Judah.
- b. The "smoking firebrands" are the kings Rezin and Pekah.
- c. God's promise that "within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken" came to pass when Israel went into exile.
- d. God told Ahaz, "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." In other words, God wanted Ahaz to trust the Lord to defend the house of David—not for the sake of Ahaz, who had been faithless, but for the sake of God's great name.
3. **Isaiah 7:10–17** – *"Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 'Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.' But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!' 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? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.*

For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house—days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah.”

- a. God told Ahaz to ask for a sign.
- b. Ahaz refused, saying he would not test the Lord. This is the same man who sacrificed his children to Molech—he was already testing the Lord. This was false humility.
- c. **DISCUSS**: How do you determine whether you are acting with true or false humility?
- d. Isaiah said the Lord would give “you” (plural) a sign anyway.
- e. God’s sign was bigger than the present moment—He inserted the Messiah amid a dark and wicked world.
- f. Skeptics, critics, and liberal theologians say that the Hebrew word translated as “*virgin*” in **Isaiah 7:14** is ‘**almâ** and can mean “young woman.”
- g. However, if God wanted us to interpret this to mean “young woman,” then why would this be considered a miracle and a sign?
- h. ‘**Almâ** is better translated “*virgin*”. When the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—was created by 72 Jewish scholars, they translated ‘**almâ** to the Greek **parthenos**, meaning “a young woman who has never been with a man.”
- i. Matthew, when quoting **Isaiah 7:14** in **Matthew 1:23**, also used the word **parthenos**.
- j. **DISCUSS**: How have you seen God insert the hope of the Messiah amid your sinful state? How is this hope changing you?

5. **2 Kings 16:7–16** – *“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.’ 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. 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. 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.' Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded."

a. King of Assyria

- i. The king of Assyria at that time was Tiglath-Pileser III.
- ii. Knowing he was outnumbered, Ahaz circumvented both Rezin and Pekah and went to ask the king of Assyria for aid.
 1. Assyria was a rising power at the time, so Ahaz likely also sought to make peace with Tiglath-Pileser for that reason.
 2. By paying tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, Ahaz was agreeing to be his vassal.
- iii. The king of Assyria accepted Ahaz's payment and killed Rezin, king of Syria.

b. The folly of Ahaz

- i. Rather than thank God for his victory, Ahaz worshipped false gods on false alters after the pattern of Tiglath-Pileser.
 1. **DISCUSS:** What are some modern-day idols that people place their trust in? How can you remind yourself where your victory comes from?
- ii. Ahaz wanted to push out the real altar of God to the north in case he needed it, as if God's altar were a good luck charm.

c. The folly of Urijah

- i. Urijah the priest did all that Ahaz commanded him.
 1. Unlike the priest who confronted King Uzziah when he tried to sacrifice to God contrary to the law, Urijah did not have the moral courage to call out his leader's sin.
 2. Urijah violated his oath to the King of Kings to please an earthly king.

3. Beware of pastors and spiritual leaders who seek to please men rather than God.
4. **DISCUSS**: How can you develop your moral courage?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (1984 NIV)