
2KINGS 16: 1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

Ahaz begins to reign, acts wickedly, and restores idolatry in Judea, 2Kgs 16:1-4. Rezin, king of Syria, besieges Jerusalem, but cannot take it; he takes Elath, and drives the Jews thence, 2Kgs 16:5, 2Kgs 16:6. Ahaz hires Tiglath-pileser against the king of Syria and the king of Israel, and gives him the silver and gold that were found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, 2Kgs 16:7, 2Kgs 16:8. Tiglath-pileser takes Damascus and slays Rezin, 2Kgs 16:9. Ahaz goes to meet him at Damascus: sees an altar there, a pattern of which he sends to Urijah, the priest; and orders him to make one like it, which he does, 2Kgs 16:10-15. He makes several alterations in the temple; dies; and Hezekiah his son reigns in his stead, 2Kgs 16:16-20.

2KINGS 16: 2 Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he didn't do that which was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, like David his father.

Verse 2

Twenty years old was Ahaz - Here is another considerable difficulty in the chronology. Ahaz was but twenty years old when he began to reign, and he died after he had reigned sixteen years; consequently his whole age amounted only to thirty-six years. But Hezekiah his son was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and if this were so, then Ahaz must have been the father of Hezekiah when he was but eleven years of age! Some think that the twenty years mentioned here respect the beginning of the reign of Jotham, father of Ahaz; so that the passage should be thus translated: Ahaz was twenty years of age when his father began to reign; and consequently he was fifty-two years old when he died, seeing Jotham reigned sixteen years: and therefore Hezekiah was born when his father was twenty-seven years of age. This however is a violent solution, and worthy of little credit. It is better to return to the text as it stands, and allow that Ahaz might be only eleven or twelve years old when he had Hezekiah: this is not at all impossible; as we know that the youth of both sexes in the eastern countries are marriageable at ten or twelve years of age, and are frequently betrothed when they are but nine. I know a woman, an East Indian, who had the second of her two first children when she was only fourteen years of age, and must have had the first when between eleven and twelve. I hold it therefore quite a possible case that Ahaz might have had a son born to him when he was but eleven or twelve years old.

2KINGS 16: 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yes, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

Verse 3

Made his son to pass through the fire - On this passage I beg leave to refer the reader to my notes on Lev 18:21; Lev 20:2, Lev 20:14, where the subject is considered at large.

2KINGS 16: 4 He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

2KINGS 16: 5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.

Verse 5

But could not overcome him - It is likely that this was the time when Isaiah was sent to console Ahaz; (see Isa 7:1); and predicted the death both of Rezin and Pekah, his enemies.

2KINGS 16: 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath; and the Syrians came to Elath, and lived there, to this day.

Verse 6

Recovered Elath to Syria - See the note on 2Kgs 14:22.

2KINGS 16: 7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me."

Verse 7

I am thy servant and thy son - I will obey thee in all, and become tributary to thee; only help me against Syria and Israel.

2KINGS 16: 8 Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the LORD's house, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

2KINGS 16: 9 The king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.

Verse 9

The king of Assyria hearkened unto him - It is said, 2Chr 28:20, that Tilgath-pilneser distressed him, but strengthened him not.

Though he came against the Syrians, and took Damascus, and slew Rezin, yet he did not help Ahaz against the Philistines, nor did he lend him any forces to assist against Israel; and he distressed him by taking the royal treasures, and the treasures of the temple, and did him little service for so great a sacrifice. He helped him a little, but distressed him on the whole.

It appears that, about this time, Pekah king of Israel nearly ruined Judea: it is said, 2Chr 28:6, that he slew one hundred thousand valiant men in one day; and that he carried away captive to Samaria two hundred thousand women and children, and much spoil; but, at the instance of the prophet Oded, these were all sent back, fed and clothed, 2Chr 28:8-16.

2KINGS 16: 10 King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria, and saw the altar that was at Damascus; and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and its pattern, according to all its workmanship.

Verse 10

Ahaz went to Damascus - He had received so much help on the defeat of Rezin, that he went to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria, and render him thanks.

Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar - This was some idolatrous altar, the shape and workmanship of which pleased Ahaz so well that he determined to have one like it at Jerusalem. For this he had no Divine authority, and the compliance of Urijah was both mean and sinful. That Ahaz did this for an idolatrous purpose, is evident from 2Chr 28:21-25 : "For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus; - and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me. And he made high places to burn incense to other gods in every city of Judah."

2KINGS 16: 11 Urijah the priest built an altar: according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Urijah the priest made it for the coming of king Ahaz from Damascus.

2KINGS 16: 12 When the king had come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king drew near to the altar, and offered on it.

2KINGS 16: 13 He burnt his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, on the altar.

2KINGS 16: 14 The bronze altar, which was before the LORD, he brought from the forefront of the house, from between his altar and the LORD's house, and put it on the north side of his altar.

Verse 14

Put it on the north side - He seems to have intended to conform every thing in the Lord's house as much as possible to the idolatrous temples which he saw at Damascus, and to model the Divine worship in the same way: in a word to honor and worship the gods of Syria, and not the God of heaven. All the alterations specified here were in contempt of the true God. Thus he provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers, 2Chr 28:25.

2KINGS 16: 15 King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "On 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 offerings; 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."

2KINGS 16: 16 Urijah the priest did so, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

2KINGS 16: 17 King Ahaz cut off the panels of the bases, and removed the basin from off them, and took down the sea from off the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pavement of stone.

2KINGS 16: 18 The covered way for the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry outside, he turned to the LORD's house, because of the king of Assyria.

Verse 18

And the covert for the Sabbath - There are a great number of conjectures concerning this covert, or, as it is in the Hebrew, the מוסך musach, of the Sabbath. As the word, and others derived from the same root, signify covering or booths, it is very likely that this means either a sort of canopy which was erected on the Sabbath days for the accommodation of the people who came to worship, and which Ahaz took away to discourage them from that worship; or a canopy under which the king and his family reposed themselves, and which he transported to some other place to accommodate the king of Assyria when he visited him. Jarchi supposes that it was a sort of covert way that the kings of Judah had to the temple, and Ahaz had it removed lest the king of Assyria, going by that way, and seeing the sacred vessels, should covet them. If that way had been open, he might have gone by it into the temple, and have seen the sacred vessels, and so have asked them from a man who was in no condition to refuse them, however unwilling he might be to give them up. The removing of this, whatever it was, whether throne or canopy, or covered way, cut off the communication between the king's house and the temple; and the king of Assyria would not attempt to go into that sacred place by that other passage to which the priests alone had access.

2KINGS 16: 19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

2KINGS 16: 20 Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

Verse 20

Was buried with his fathers in the city of David - But it is expressly declared, 2Chr 28:27, that he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings of Israel; and this was undoubtedly intended as a mark of degradation.

His reign was disastrous and impious; and it was disastrous because it was impious. He had been a scourge, not a blessing, to his people. He had not only made illegal alterations in the temple, and in the mode of worship prescribed by the true God, but he had polluted all the cities of Judah with

idolatry, and brought ruin upon the nation. On the whole, a worse king than himself had not as yet sat on the Jewish throne; and yet he had many advantages: he had for counsellor one of the greatest men ever produced in the Jewish nation, Isaiah the prophet; and God condescended to interpose especially for him when grievously straitened by the kings of Israel and Syria, both of whom were cut off according to the prediction of this prophet. But he would not lay it to heart, and therefore the wrath of God fell heavily upon him, and upon the stiff-necked and rebellious people whom he governed. He had sufficient warning and was without excuse. He would sin, and therefore he must suffer.