



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Ahaz's Altar

The Fifteenth King.

You can read King Ahaz's story in 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28.

When I, Ahaz, son of Jotham, became king, I decided to usher in a new era for Judah. It began when I sacrificed my sons in the fire. When the enemy nations came for me I recruited the help of Assyria to alleviate the damage. Unfortunately the king of Assyria turned on me. The only reason we escaped unscathed was by taking Temple treasure to produce a bribe.

So I reasonably changed my course of action by offering sacrifices to the gods of Damascus. They had clearly done more for their people than our God had done for us.

I set up so many pagan altars. It is actually crazy. One god after another failed us. So I turned to the next one. There must be a real God or gods somewhere. It surely can't be the God of Judah. It couldn't be the God of my forefathers.

Ahaz, son of Jotham, comes to power at the age of twenty. The hope of an entire nation rests upon him. So far, things haven't been perfect in Judah. Although it certainly seems to be on an upswing.

Until Ahaz takes over, that is.

Ahaz: The Beginning.

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestor David had done." (2 Chronicles 28:1)

Things instantly go wrong. Ahaz mimics the sins of his forefathers by following the kings of Israel and casting metal images of Baal. Then he commits one of the worst sins recorded in the Old Testament: killing his children in the fire at the valley of Ben-Hinnom.

Whether Scripture is speaking literally or figuratively, Ahaz offers sacrifices and burns incense "under every green tree". I'm guessing there aren't many green trees left in Judah by this point. **Ahaz was searching for hope in the wrong places.** Again and again, he turned to false gods, even though the God of Judah was waiting for him.

Ahaz: The Middle.

"At that time King Ahaz of Judah asked the king of Assyria for help. The armies of Edom had again invaded Judah and taken captives. And the Philistines had raided towns located in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev of Judah... So when King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria arrived, he attacked Ahaz instead of helping him." (2 Chronicles 28:16-20)

Yet again, we see the same sad story. God raises up the king of Aram, who humbles Ahaz and exiles his people. In one day, 120,000 of Judah's soldiers are killed. To make it worse, a warrior from Ephraim by the name of Zicri kills Ahaz's son, Ahaz's palace commander, and Ahaz's second-in-command.

Israel's armies then storm in and capture 200,000 women and children, taking them back to Samaria. This has gone far enough. The LORD sends a prophet to Israel, demanding the prisoners' return. God's anger turns upon the Israelites, so they bring the prisoners back.

But wait, Edom also decides to invade. We've now seen God repeatedly using a set list of enemies to realign Judah when they go astray. I think He does the same thing nowadays. **He will use similar circumstances or problems as a way of nudging us towards Him.** Too bad Ahaz refuses to listen.

Without considering God's help, Judah's king calls up the king of Assyria. Instead of helping Ahaz, King Tiglath-pileser (epic name) attacks Ahaz. Scripture cites Ahaz's faults as "encouraging his people to sin and being utterly unfaithful to the LORD." Ahaz bribes the Assyrians with valuables from the Temple, but this doesn't end his problems.

Ahaz: The End.

"The king took the various articles from the Temple of God and broke them into pieces. He shut the doors of the LORD's Temple so that no one could worship there, and he set up altars to pagan gods in every corner of Jerusalem." (2 Chronicles 28:24)

It keeps getting worse. Ahaz makes the same mistake as Amaziah by worshipping the enemy's idols. His logic is: *They helped my enemies defeat me. Therefore I should worship them.* He doesn't pause to consider the One who allowed the false gods and the nation they represented to defeat him.

Ahaz also takes articles from the Temple and breaks them into pieces. He removes the side panels and basins from the water carts and takes the bronze basin called the Sea. He then closes the Temple. Oh, and he takes inspiration from the altar's design in Damascus and

builds his own altar in the Temple. This is a wicked act. **Trying to "update" religion as we see fit is detestable to God.**

When he dies, Ahaz is not buried in the royal cemetery.

What Defined Ahaz?

I really can't see anything positive in the reign of this king. Not only did he reject God, but he intentionally defiled God's Temple and sacred objects. This reminds me...

Don't Turn a Blind Eye

"Even during this time of trouble, King Ahaz continued to reject the LORD."
(2 Chronicles 28:22)

To put it simply, Ahaz suffered from the all-too-common disease known as selfishness. He turned a blind eye to God and others. Additionally, he defiled God's Temple.

I know this isn't all that relatable to us, so I'll put a different spin on it. Where in life are we turning a blind eye? At a church conference I attended last month, the speaker highlighted how various atrocities (such as slavery) had persisted for so long because the world looked away. Nowadays in Canada, similarly awful things are taking place because we continue to ignore what God says is right.

A quote that resonated with me was, *"Injustice that is invisible, inevitably becomes tolerable. Injustice that is made visible, inevitably becomes intolerable."* Where is God calling us to stand for truth? Where does He want us to stop turning a blind eye and do what's right? Is there something in your community, in your family, or in your life that needs to stop? God knows that when we stop turning a blind eye to sin, we can truly know Him and His plans.

Ahaz missed the memo. By creating his own altar and "updating" religion, his kingdom collapsed around him. This is a warning: **God hates it when we tweak or modify religion to suit our preferences.** Don't do it.

Good/Bad.

I'm sorry to say that Judah's string of godly kings has been snipped. In its place, we got a king who ignored God and attempted to modify religion and worship his own gods. Not cool.

Which is why we need to put Ahaz in his place on the [Kings Chart](#). He is our eighth king on the 'BAD side.

Ahaz's attempts to redefine religion and shake things up should warn us not to take God lightly. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. Next week, we'll see whether Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, understood this principle. To recap the idolatry of 2 Kings 16:14...

"Then King Ahaz removed the old bronze altar from its place in front of the LORD's Temple...and placed it on the north side of the new altar."



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