SECOND KINGS

Chapter 16

*Ahaz King of Judah*

**In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. 2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. 3 He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. 4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree. 5 Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but they could not overpower him. 6 At that time, Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the men of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath and have lived there to this day. 7 Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, “I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. 9 The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death. 10 Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. 11 So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. 12 When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. 13 He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. 14 The bronze altar that stood before the Lord he brought from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the temple of the Lord—and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15 King Ahaz then gave these orders to Uriah the priest: “On the large new altar, offer the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. Sprinkle on the altar all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance.” 16 And Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had ordered. 17 King Ahaz took away the side panels and removed the basins from the movable stands. He removed the Sea from the bronze bulls that supported it and set it on a stone base. 18 He took away the Sabbath canopy that had been built at the temple and removed the royal entryway outside the temple of the Lord, in deference to the king of Assyria. 19 As for the other events of the reign of Ahaz, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? 20 Ahaz rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Hezekiah his son succeeded him as king.**

**16:1** *seventeenth year of Pekah.* 735 b.c. (see note on 15:27). The reign of Ahaz apparently overlapped that of Jotham, with Ahaz serving as a senior partner beginning in 735 (see notes on 15:33, 37; see also notes on v. 2; 17:1). (CSB)

**16:2** *twenty years old when he became king.* Perhaps the age at which Ahaz became a senior co-regent with his father Jotham in 735 b.c. (see note on v. 1). Otherwise, according to the ages and dates provided, Ahaz would have been 11 or 12 instead of 14 or 15 years old when his son Hezekiah was born (cf. 18:1–2). (CSB)

 *sixteen years.* The synchronizations of the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah with those of Pekah and Hoshea of the northern kingdom present some apparent chronological difficulties (see notes on v. 1; 17:1; 18:1, 9–10). It seems best to take the 16 years specified here as the number of years Ahaz reigned after the death of Jotham, thus 732–715 (see notes on 15:30, 33). The beginning of his reign appears to be dated in a variety of ways in the Biblical text: (1) in 744/743, which presupposes a co-regency with his grandfather Azariah at the tender age of 11 or 12 (see 17:1); (2) in 735, when he became senior co-regent with Jotham (see v. 1); and (3) in 732, when he began his sole reign after the death of Jotham. (CSB)

 *Unlike David his father.* Ahaz does not even receive the qualified approval given to Amaziah (14:3), Azariah (15:3) and Jotham (15:34). (CSB)

**16:3** *ways of the kings of Israel.* It is unlikely that Ahaz adhered to the calf worship introduced by Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan (see 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16). The reference here is probably to Baal worship in the spirit of Ahab (see notes on 1Ki 16:31–33; see also 2Ch 28:2). (CSB)

 *sacrificed his son.* Israel had been warned by Moses not to engage in this pagan rite (see Lev 18:21; Dt 18:10). In Israel the firstborn son in each household was to be consecrated to the Lord and redeemed by a payment of five shekels to the priests (see Ex 13:1, 11–13; Nu 18:16). See also 3:27; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; 2Ch 28:3; Jer 7:31; 32:35. (CSB)

**16:4** *high places.* See 15:4, 35; see also note on 1Ki 15:14. These high places appear to be those assimilated from pagan Baal worship and used for the worship of the Lord in a syncretistic fashion. (CSB)

 *under every spreading tree.* Large trees were viewed as symbols of fertility by the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan. Immoral pagan rites were performed at shrines located under such trees. Contrary to the explicit prohibition of the Mosaic covenant, the Israelites adopted this pagan custom (see 17:10; 1Ki 14:23; Dt 12:2; Jer 2:20; 3:6; 17:2; Eze 6:13; 20:28; Hos 4:13–14). (CSB)

**16:5** *Rezin … and Pekah … marched up to fight against Jerusalem.* See notes on 15:25, 37. (CSB)

 *could not overpower.* See Isa 7:1–17; 2Ch 28:5–21. Rezin and Pekah desired to replace Ahaz on the throne of the southern kingdom with the son of Tabeel in order to gain another ally in their anti-Assyrian political policy (see notes on 15:19, 25). The Lord delivered Judah and Ahaz from this threat in spite of their wickedness because of the promises of the Davidic covenant (see 1Ki 11:36; 2Sa 7:13; Isa 7:3–7, 14). (CSB)

**16:6** *Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath.* See note on 14:22. (CSB)

 *Edomites then moved into Elath.* See 2Ch 28:17. The Philistines also took this opportunity to avenge previous defeats (compare 2Ch 26:5–7 with 2Ch 28:18). (CSB)

 *to this day.* See note on 1Ki 8:8. (CSB)

**16:7** *Tiglath-Pileser.* See notes on 15:19, 29. (CSB)

 *your servant and vassal.* Ahaz preferred to seek security for Judah by means of a treaty with Assyria rather than by obedience to the Lord and trust in his promises (see Ex 23:22; Isa 7:10–16). (CSB)

**16:8** *silver and gold found in the temple.* The temple treasure must have been restored to some degree by Jotham (see 12:18; 14:14). The name “Jehoahaz of Judah” (Ahaz) appears on a list of rulers (including those of the Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites) who brought tribute to Tiglath-Pileser in 734 b.c. (CSB)

**16:9** *attacking Damascus and capturing it.* In 732 b.c. Tiglath-Pileser III moved against Damascus and destroyed it (see the prophecies of Isa 7:16; Am 1:3–5). (CSB)

 *deported its inhabitants to Kir.* The Arameans were sent back to the place from which they had come (Am 9:7) in fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos (Am 1:5). The location of Kir is unknown, though it is mentioned in connection with Elam in Isa 22:6. (CSB)

**16:10** *Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser.* As a vassal king to express his gratitude and loyalty to the victorious Assyrian ruler. (CSB)

 *altar in Damascus.* Perhaps that of the god Rimmon (see 5:18; 2Ch 28:23), but more likely a royal altar of Tiglath-Pileser. Ahaz’s reproduction of such an altar would have been a further sign of submission to the Assyrians. (CSB)

**16:13** *burnt offering … grain offering … drink offering … fellowship offerings.* With the exception of the drink offering, these same sacrifices were offered at the dedication of the temple (1Ki 8:64). (CSB)

**16:14** *north side of the new altar.* Ahaz removed the bronze altar from its prominent place in front of the temple and gave it a place alongside the new stone altar. (CSB)

**16:15** *large new altar.* Even though fire from heaven had inaugurated and sanctioned the use of the bronze altar for the worship of the Lord (see 2Ch 7:1), Ahaz now replaced it with an altar built on the pattern of the pagan altar from Damascus. Although the bronze altar was quite large (see 2Ch 4:1), the new altar was larger. (CSB)

 *morning burnt offering.* See 3:20; Ex 29:38–39; Nu 28:3–4. (CSB)

 *evening grain offering.* See note on 1Ki 18:29. (CSB)

 *king’s burnt offering and his grain offering.* There is no other reference to these special offerings of the king in the OT, with the possible exception of Ezekiel’s depiction of the offerings of a future prince (Eze 46:12). (CSB)

 *I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance.* Seeking omens by the examination of the entrails of sacrificed animals is well attested in ancient Near Eastern texts. Here Ahaz states his intention to follow an Assyrian divination technique in an attempt to secure the Lord’s guidance. (CSB)

**16:17** *side panels and … basins from the movable stands.* See 1Ki 7:27–39. (CSB)

 *removed the Sea from the bronze bulls.* See 1Ki 7:23–26. Perhaps the bronze was needed for tribute required by Tiglath-Pileser III. (CSB)

**16:18** *in deference to the king of Assyria.* As a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser, Ahaz was forced to relinquish some of the symbols of his own royal power. (CSB)

**16:19** *other events of the reign of Ahaz.* See 2Ch 28, where, among other things, it is said that Ahaz went so far as to “shut the doors of the temple” (2Ch 28:24). (CSB)

 *annals of the kings of Judah.* See note on 1Ki 14:29. (CSB)

**16:20** *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1Ki 1:21; see also 2Ch 28:27. (CSB)

 *Hezekiah his son succeeded him.* For the reign of Hezekiah see 18:1–20:21. (CSB)