

THOSE THINGS THAT WERE NOT RIGHT

2 KINGS 16:1 – 17:41

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~ God is not the Author of confusion. But our Spiritual Safari has become a bit confusing in our previous several reports, because this section of Scripture is extremely confusing to the Scripturally untrained and Biblically illiterate mind. I'm sure many people find my paradoxical arrogance unappealing; and they're the ones who don't read very far in my reports, but not because I am a turn-off, which I already know; no, the real reason is because they aren't interested in hearing from God. For the sincere student of Scripture, this leg of our expedition is as interesting as any other. If you love history, this is very interesting to you. If you love practical spiritual lessons, these several chapters should be very helpful. If none of those things appeal to you, then you likely stopped reading a *long* time ago.

In our last several reports, we have been following the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Paul later tells us "*.... all of these things were written as examples unto us.*" We have primarily followed the southern kingdom of Judah, but interwoven into that written history has been that of the northern kingdom of Israel. As we have seen, there were no – as in *none* – good kings in the northern kingdom. Subsequently, this report marks the end of the northern kingdom, and God's judgment comes upon them as they are taken into captivity by Assyria in chapter seventeen.

Also in our last report, we concluded with Jotham reigning in Judah. Jotham was a good king. Micah was the prophet who prophesied to Jotham during his days on the throne. Isaiah also lived during that period; and Jotham slept with his fathers which brought Ahaz to the throne. Ahaz is not a good king. In fact, he is a very bad king. This is the time when Pekah was on the throne in the northern kingdom. We also saw in our previous report Hoshea formed a coup de' etat against Pekah and killed him; and Hoshea will be the last king in the northern kingdom of Israel.

This report begins with Pekah in his seventeenth year on the throne. Ahaz begins to reign at that time. Ahaz was just like all the terrible kings of Israel,

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and he offered his children as living sacrifice to pagan gods – generally Baal or Ashtaroath. This was about as low as any nation could ever go – spiritually speaking. This was far beyond worshipping golden calves – this was open and flagrant demonism; just as Ahab and Jezebel had done. This king took Judah the whole route back into pagan idolatry and heathen worship....

XVI

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

2 Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father.

3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

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.

~ Isaiah has an extended section in his prophecy regarding this time in the history of the nation Israel. In chapters seven through ten, Isaiah deals with this. It is a very important part of Isaiah's writing because he mentions the virgin birth of Christ and the coming of the One Whose Name is Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God – and more – that is, the Lord Jesus Christ! Ahaz had full access to Isaiah, but Ahaz stubbornly refused to listen to God. Ahaz was enlisting help from Egypt and, quite frankly, that didn't end well. Isaiah challenged Ahaz to trust God but, again, Ahaz determined he wasn't going to do that; and he turned to Assyria for help. That cost him all of his silver and gold – and it provided the opportunity for the Assyrians to take

Samaria captive. That opened the door for Assyria to take the entire northern kingdom into captivity....

6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

~ "Unto this day" means up to the time in which this book of Kings was written. This also marks the first use of the word "Jews" in the Word of God. There are many people today who are anti-Semitic, and they erroneously maintain that this term "Jew" only applied to those from Judah. Well, interestingly, the first time we see the word in Scripture, it is applied to the northern kingdom of Israel; specifically, those on the very far northern border with Syria. I think it is important to note that the entire nation – all twelve tribes – had the name "Jews" applied to them....

7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy 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, which rise up against me.

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

9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.

14 And he brought also the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

~ So, Ahaz sees this man-made altar and he was fascinated; so much so that he makes an exact replica of it back in Judah. What this means is he is no longer worshipping the True and Living God. See, friends, worship has to be done God's way – or it isn't worship of Him. As we read on, we see Ahaz break down the true altar. Naturally, the next recorded event in his life is his death. That brings Hezekiah to the throne; and Hezekiah was a very good king. He is another king by which revival will come to the land....

16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17 And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

18 And the covert for the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

19 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?

20 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

XVII

1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

~ This chapter brings the captivity of the children of Israel by Assyria. King Hoshea attempts to buy his way out of defeat but fails. Shalmaneser discovers Hoshea has conspired against him, so he exacts another tribute against Israel. After three years of this treatment Shalmaneser takes all of Samaria into full captivity. Hoshea wasn't quite as bad as Ahab and Jezebel were; and he wasn't quite as bad as Ahaziah had been – but he had refused to relinquish the golden calves – and that was enough for God to deem him an evil king.

Remember, Samaria was the city that Omri, the father of Ahab, had built. Ahab came along and made it his permanent home. As we have seen before on safari, a more beautiful place cannot be found in Israel than where the palace of Ahab and Jezebel was located. Naboth's vineyard was there, too. As we read on, we see all of Israel taken away and placed in different cities throughout Assyria.

There are many people who believe the ten northern tribes have somehow been lost. Others say the ten tribes turned up in Great Britain. Others still think the United States houses the ten tribes in our modern age. That all

makes for a sensational theory, and it does well in ministering to the emotional pride of most people. They like to feel they're part of the ten lost tribes, you know. Interestingly, the Word of God didn't lose the tribes. In fact, the specific cities where they were moved to are given right here. Also, in the New Testament book of James, he wrote this:

James 1: 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting ~

Apparently, James didn't think the ten northern tribes were lost. If they did get lost, they didn't get lost because they went into captivity. Further, when the remnant returns to the land after the captivity, we'll see there were members from all of the twelve tribes. Of course, several million went into captivity between the two kingdoms; but only around sixty-five thousand return after the captivity. So, if anything, all twelve tribes were lost. But I don't see any of them being lost according to the Word of God....

4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

24 And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

25 And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.

26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30 And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

35 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.

38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

39 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

41 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

~ The Lord had been more than patient with Israel for a very long time before He permitted them to be taken into Assyrian captivity. For more than *two hundred years* after the dividing of the kingdom, God had given them every opportunity to turn back to Him and forsake idolatry. Well, they wouldn't listen; and they were sent out of the land. Remember, God told them a *LONG* time ago – way back in the times of Moses and Joshua – that if they turned away from Him He would put them out of the land. Well, the day has come when it's too late! They had idols of pagan worship on top of every hill and under every green tree by this time. Gross immorality and licentiousness had permeated the peoples land, homes, lives and hearts! They indulged in everything immoral and wrong, and loved all things contrary to the commandments of the True and Living God.

God had put the heathen out of the land when Israel came into the "Promised Land." The children of Israel were well aware of that fact. God said He would not permit His own people to stay in the land when they were in rebellion against Him. God had sent them prophet after prophet

and seer after seer to warn them of this day – but they wouldn't listen to any of them. God had sent Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Joel and Micah by this time; and all of these prophets warned about this taking place. In the face of that, Israel had insisted on their evil ways.

Verse fourteen tells us Israel would not listen, and they hardened their necks – and they would not believe! The real thing they were guilty of was *UNBELIEF!* Unbelief is the great sin of mankind today. Our modern society has absolutely ruled God out of their lives. God is not sought after and God is totally shut out from our educational system, government, marketplace, social gatherings, homes – and He is shut out from most churches, too. If we don't think God will judge us, we are woefully gullible and naïve. We see judgment beginning to take place in every sphere of the world today. God judged His own people in the Word of God in this section of Scripture and He will do it again. In spite of all of that; notice the last eight words of this verse proclaim that, in spite of their rejection of Him, *He is still their God!* We ought to consider that very carefully.

So, our safari closes out this leg of our expedition with a history lesson about the northern kingdom. I realize this is not the most thrilling section of Scripture there is; however, it is very important to understand spiritually. The king of Assyria brings other people into the cities of Israel; and they will never have another northern kingdom. This is where the Samaritans of the New Testament – like the woman at the well in Jesus day – originate. Of course, this polyglot mixture of people did all the same evil things. From here, we will exclusively follow the destiny of the southern kingdom of Judah – which will also be sent into captivity. The only reason God didn't send Judah away at this time was because there were a few good kings; and for the sake of David – because David had been a man after God's own heart – and God had made a covenant with David ~