

# OpenTheo

## 2 Kings 15 - 16



### 2 Kings - Steve Gregg

In this episode, Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of the events recorded in 2 Kings chapters 15 and 16. The story follows the reigns of various kings, including Jeroboam II, Zechariah, and Peka, and their actions that led to their downfall or success. The narrative is heavily focused on the relationship between the Israelites and their God, Yahweh, and how their transgressions against Yahweh led to their eventual defeat and downfall. Gregg provides insightful commentary on the historical and cultural context of the story and how it relates to biblical theology.

### Transcript

We're picking up the story of 2 Kings chapter 15. We're going to go through a lot of rulers in the Northern Kingdom in a very short space of time. One of them ruled for only one month.

And in the time that the Northern Kingdom had six rulers in succession, Judah had one ruler named Azariah, also known as Uzziah in the book of Isaiah. And even later in this book, for example, in chapter 15 verse 13, he is referred to as Uzziah. But he's also called Azariah.

These are two names for the same man. And he was pretty much a good king. He made his mistakes too, as even the good kings apparently did in Judah.

But he was one of the better ones. And it says in the 27th year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, and that of course is Jeroboam II, whose death was recorded at the end of chapter 14. But as the narrator goes back and forth between the kingdoms, he kind of picks up the overlapping rulers in each respective place.

So although we read of the death of Jeroboam, we now are going to go back to the 27th year of Jeroboam. And that's when Azariah, the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king in Judah. He was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 52 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Jeholiah of Jerusalem. Now he did what was right in the sight of

Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. Except that the high places were not removed.

The people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. Now, not much is told about his reign here. Essentially, after verse 4, it jumps to the end of his life and his death in the next three verses.

But there's more on his life in 2 Chronicles, which has to be inserted here. Before we get to verse 5, which really winds his life down at the end, there is a considerable more information about his reign. In chapter 26 of 2 Chronicles, up through verse 15.

As you can see, verse 3 repeats what we just read. Isaiah was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 52 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding and visions of God. And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

Now, in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding and visions of God, we don't know who this Zechariah is. As I mentioned, there are 36 different people in the Bible named Zechariah. Some of them more, and some less famous.

In some cases, Zechariah is just the name of somebody's father. In other cases, it's the name of a king in Israel, or a prophet, or a priest, or something like that. In this case, this Zechariah, I don't think we know anything more about him, except that we're told that in the days when Uzziah was king, this Zechariah was a man who had understanding in the visions of God.

Now, does this mean he had visions, like a prophet has? Isaiah the prophet arose during Uzziah's reign also, near the end of it. But this man, Zechariah, apparently had visions of God, as Isaiah did. Or else someone was having them, and this man just knew how to interpret them.

It's not exactly clear. But what we see is that during Uzziah's reign, there were some people who were hearing from God, or at least knew what God was saying, through visions. Whether Zechariah was having the visions himself, or interpreting somebody else's visions, as, for example, Daniel interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, or Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh.

It may be that this Zechariah simply interpreted visions that others had. In any case, the mention of him here in verse 5 of 2 Chronicles 26 is simply telling us that there was revelation coming from God during this time to the king of Judah. Now, verse 5, or excuse me, verse 6. Now he went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath, the wall of Jabne, and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities

around Ashdod and among the Philistines.

God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians, who lived in Ger, Baal, and against the Meonites. Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

It is said that in Uzziah's reign, the kingdom became more prosperous than it had become at any time since Solomon's time. Apparently, because of his military exploits, and he did seem to place a strong emphasis on weapons and fortifications and such, and he apparently was able to defeat some of the enemies that had not been defeated for many generations previously. The Philistines, for example, and the Ammonites.

And he put them under tribute, so he got wealth brought into Judah from these foreign countries, and that's how he managed to build things up. He built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, at the valley gate, and at the corner buttress of the wall. Then he fortified them.

Also he built towers in the desert. He dug many wells, for he had much livestock, both in the lowlands and in the plains. He also had farmers and vine dressers in the mountains and in Carmel, for he loved the soil.

He was a king who loved to cultivate soil. It's kind of interesting. He was a city guy, born a prince in Jerusalem, a metropolitan man, and yet, like many people who are raised in cities today, can have a hankering to go and have a garden or go out and live on a farm or something, be farmers.

This is how he busied himself recreationally and also, of course, enriched, I'm sure, the resources of the country, because he loved the soil. That's an interesting thing to say about a king. Moreover, Uzziah had an army of fighting men who went out to war by companies according to the number of their role as prepared by Jael, the scribe, and Maaziah, the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains.

The total number of chief officers of the mighty men of valor was 2,600, and under their hand was an army of 307,500. So more than a quarter of a million people in the standing army and over 2,500 chief officers over them. And it says, that made war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy.

Then Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows, slings to cast stones, and he made devices in Jerusalem invented by skillful men to be on the towers and the corners to shoot arrows and large stones. Apparently, he built catapults and so forth, who were invented by skillful men. Apparently, some new innovations in warfare came up through, the new technology in warfare came up through his sponsorship, new ways to shoot arrows in large numbers and throw stones and so forth.

So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. Now, till he became strong, what happened after that? Well, unfortunately, something didn't happen after that. Because he was so well off, because he was so powerful and so forth, he became somewhat proud.

And we read that also in the next verses in 2 Chronicles 26, 16. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, unfortunately, for he transgressed against Yahweh, his God, by entering the temple of Yahweh to burn incense on the altar of incense. Now, this is something the pagans did.

The pagan kings served as priests to their national gods. But Israel was different than the nations, in that God had a different line, a different family line to be kings from those that were to be priests. The priests were to be of the tribe of Levi, of the family of Aaron.

The kings were to be of the family of David, of the tribe of Judah. There was not to be overlapping between those. Remember that in the days of Samuel, King Saul had been rejected by God, because he intruded into the priestly prerogatives of offering a sacrifice before battle, when he was supposed to wait for Samuel the Levite to come and do it.

And because Saul did that, he was rejected from being king. Isaiah also did the same thing. He went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense, apparently taking his cue from pagan nations around him where the kings had that prerogative.

He apparently felt like, well, he should have that prerogative too. He's as good as they are. So Azariah, the priest, went in after him, and with him were 80 priests of the Lord, who were valiant men.

Priests who were soldiers, really. I mean, valiant men means that they were strong and tough. And 80 priests went in there to physically resist the king from doing this sacrilege in the temple.

And they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed. You shall have no honor from the Lord God.

And Uzziah became furious, and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, which is what he was doing in the temple there, burning incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, besides the incense altar. And Azariah, the chief priest, and the priest looked at him, and there on his forehead he was leprosy.

So they thrust him out of that place. Indeed, they also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. These priests didn't want to get leprosy.

So they thrust him out, I'm sure, without touching him, because you don't touch a leper, not safely. So they forced him to leave, and he apparently became more pliable once he realized he had been struck by the Lord. He was a little angry at them for resisting before, but now that he had leprosy, he apparently was more compliant.

King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house because he was a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Now, Jotham and Uzziah apparently had a co-regency period at the end of Uzziah's life because of the leprosy. And Jotham was sort of the king, one of the kings, one of the rulers, during this last several years. I think a lot of scholars would say it's maybe ten years at the end of Uzziah's life that Jotham was co-regent with him.

Here it says he was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. Jotham was. And Jotham, by the way, was a good king also.

Now, the rest of the Acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, wrote. Interesting. We don't have the writings of Isaiah recording all the works of King Uzziah, first to last.

But Isaiah was a cousin of his. Isaiah was like a second or third cousin to the royal family in Jerusalem. And Isaiah began... Well, I don't want to say he began prophesying, but he had his notable vision in Isaiah 6 where he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple, and the Lord said, Who will go for us? And Isaiah said, Here am I, send me.

And then a coal was put on his mouth, and he was commissioned to go and preach. That's all in Isaiah 6. That chapter begins in the year that King Uzziah died. I saw the Lord.

So, at the death of Uzziah, Isaiah had this vision. But there are five chapters in Isaiah before that. And some believe that Isaiah was prophesying somewhat even before he had that particular vision.

So that would mean that during the reign of Uzziah, Isaiah had done a bit of prophesying. And now we're told that Isaiah was chronicling the acts of King Uzziah. Now, we don't have any of those acts of Uzziah chronicled in the book of Isaiah.

The book of Isaiah does tell us a bit of history about King Hezekiah and a very little bit about King Ahaz, but no real history about Uzziah. So what that means, of course, is that there's another book written by the prophet Isaiah that has been lost, which, if we found it, would be nice to have. I mean, it'd be a nice supplement to what we have in the scriptures here.

It would certainly belong in the Bible, since it was written by the prophet Isaiah. Anyway, we see Isaiah, the son of Amoz, wrote this other book. So Uzziah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of burial, which belonged to the kings, for they said, He is a leper.

They didn't bury him in the tombs of the kings, as his fathers and his sons were buried in, but he was buried in the field, on the property that belonged to the kings. He still received a burial on the royal property, but because he was a leper, they didn't bury him in the same caves with the kings who had been buried, his fathers, his ancestors. Then Jotham, his son, reigned in his place.

Now, back to 2 Kings, chapter 15. I might mention, also, that in addition to Isaiah the prophet, two other prophets were prophesying in the reign of Uzziah. One of them was Amos.

Now, Amos was prophesying largely against the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam, and Hosea, also, during the reign of Uzziah, began prophesying in the northern kingdom. Now, shortly after this time, Micah began prophesying in the southern kingdom, and his ministry overlapped Isaiah's. So, in the reign of Uzziah, there were two notable prophets in the northern kingdom, prophesying against Jeroboam II and others.

And there were two, well, there was Isaiah that came up in the time of Uzziah, but then after that, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah's reign, there was Micah, also, in the south. So, we had Isaiah and Micah in the south, Amos and Hosea in the north around this time. We don't have any reference in the Books of Kings to those prophets, except for Isaiah.

He comes up as a player in the story a little later on. But, Amos, Hosea, and Micah are not mentioned in the Books of Kings, but they were prophesying at this same time. Back to 2 Kings 15.

Then the Lord struck the king, so that he was a leper until the day of his death. So he dwelt in an isolated house, and Jotham, the king's son, was over the royal house, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the Acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? Now, the writer of Kings knew of a book called the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, which had more about this king's reign.

The writers of Chronicles knew of a book by Isaiah the prophet. It might have been this same one. We might be being informed that Isaiah was the author of the book, the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

Or not. It's possible also that there were two different books, both of them lost to us today, that had more of this information. Verse 7. So Azariah, or Uzziah, rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David.

Then Jotham, his son, reigned in his place. Meanwhile, back in the north, we've got a lot of kings coming and going. Remember, Azariah, or Uzziah, reigned for 52 years.

Well, we have a succession of really short-lived rulers in the north, six of them during this period of time. One of them is Zechariah, yet another Zechariah in the Bible. He didn't reign very long.

In the 38th year of Azariah, or Uzziah, king of Judah, Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, reigned over Israel and Samaria six months. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done. This is going to sound like a broken record.

Every one of these northern kingdoms, they did evil, as their fathers had done, and did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who had made Israel a sin with those golden calves he'd made. They stayed up. Those golden calves never came down for about 200 years, approximately, of the northern kingdom's history.

Then Shalem, the son of Jabesh, conspired against him and struck and killed him in front of the people. And he reigned in his place. Now, the fact that he did it in front of the people means he didn't do it stealthily.

Apparently, this Zechariah was not a popular king. And someone wishing to overthrow him could do it right in public, and no one even cared. Didn't stop him.

Usually, assassinations of this took place, you know, in more private situations, like in the king's chambers, someone would come in and kill him as he slept or something. But in this case, Shalem just came in and killed him right in front of everybody, apparently with impunity. He was obviously the murderer of the king and no one raised any charges against him.

Instead, he just reigned in his place. So, Zechariah must have been a rather unpopular king. Now, the rest of the Acts of Zechariah, indeed, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

This was the word of the Lord, which he spoke to Jehu, saying, Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation. And it was so. You know, there were nine dynasties of kings in the Northern Kingdom, but only one dynasty in the Southern Kingdom.

The dynasty of David reigned continually in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. But in the Northern Kingdom, there were assassinations, and kings weren't always succeeded by their sons. And it was very rare, frankly, for one dynasty to go more than two generations.

But because Jehu had been zealous against Baal worship, but not really totally zealous for the Lord, as he should be, the prophet had spoken to Jeroboam, I mean Jehu, excuse

me, and told him that God was going to let his dynasty rule for his sons for four generations. Including Jehu, that's five, really, because there was Jehu, then there was Jehoahaz, his son, then Joash, then Jeroboam II, and then Zechariah. So, really, after Jehu himself, there were four generations.

Now, I would have thought that that would be called five generations, since Jehu would be the first. And, therefore, I'm not sure how this is being figured. It may be that Jehu is not being counted as one of the four, or maybe that Zechariah, his son, is not being counted, because he didn't last long.

Maybe he didn't really, since he didn't reign for a whole year, or whatever, it's possible that he's not even counted as having reigned. He never got to his first anniversary of his kingship. One way or the other, the historian sees this as the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jehu's reign, his sons would reign to the fourth generation.

It may be that that, in itself, does not include Jehu, since it's his sons. We're talking about four generations of his sons' reign. Zechariah was the last of them, and he was replaced by Shalem, but Shalem didn't do very well, either.

Shalem, the son of Jabesh, became king in the 39th year of Uzziah, king of Judah. He reigned for a full month in Samaria. It's funny, it just says, I mean, a month is a very short number, it says a full month, not less.

Not less than a full month, but a complete month. He really made it a long time as a usurper. But, so the guy before him that he killed had reigned for six months.

Now, you're going to have three, four different kings in one year here, because Jeroboam had died, left it to Zechariah, who reigned only six months, so it's still the same year that Jeroboam had been king. And then you've got Shalem, he's there for one month, so it's still the same year. And then you've got this guy, Manahem comes up, and he's reigning in the same year.

You've got one year where there are, what, four kings. Now, Manahem, the son of Gadi, went up from Tirzah. Tirzah was, of course, the former capital of the northern kingdom.

It had been changed in the days of Omri to Samaria, but the early kings had been in Tirzah. And he came to Samaria and struck Shalem, the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and killed him, and he reigned in his place. Now, the rest of the acts of Shalem, of which there could not have been many, he reigned only one month, you know, this is the rest of his great reign.

And the conspiracy which he led, indeed, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. Then from Tirzah, Manahem attacked Tifsa, which was a city way up in the extreme parts of the north of Israel, all who were there and its territory, because they did not open to him. They apparently didn't recognize the legitimacy of his reign.



Therefore, he attacked it, and all the women who were with child, he ripped open. So he murdered all the pregnant women. Why do that? I mean, they're harmless.

And that was apparently to make an example of this city, so that no one would dare to challenge him in the future, because he's not just a conqueror, he's a butcher. And so this would cause people to take heed if they were going to resist him in the future. However, it turned out that he did get resisted.

In the 39th year of Azariah, the king of Judah, Manahem, the son of Gadi, became king over Israel and reigned 10 years in Samaria. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who had made Israel to sin.

Pul, the king of Assyria. Now, Pul was the name of this king. Later on, he's known as Tiglath-Pileser III.

He's even called by that name later on in the chapter, verse 29. It says, In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, that's the same king that we're reading of. It's called Pul.

I don't know which of those names I would prefer if I were him. But he came against the land, that is the land of Israel, and Manahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom in his hand. Now, this often happened in the early days of the Assyrian expansion.

This period of time was when the Assyrians were starting to press their advantage westward. They had been earlier than this trying to press against Babylon. And Babylon and Assyria had some conflicts for decades before this.

And now Assyria was trying to expand to the west into Syria and Lebanon and Israel and Judah and so forth, trying to conquer those lands there. In the early days, Assyria was not putting their whole effort into it. Of course, eventually they would.

In fact, before the end of this chapter, the Assyrians captured some cities in Israel and it begins to be the end of the northern kingdom because Assyria was the power that eventually destroyed them in the reign of Hoshea, a later king, but not much later. This is beginning to be the crumbling of the northern kingdom that has been apostate through its entire history from the time it broke off from Rehoboam's dynasty. They've never really had a good king and they've been idolaters and God has sent prophet after prophet and they have not listened.

And so the Assyrians are being raised up to destroy them. In fact, you'll find in Isaiah chapter 10 that God describes Assyria as a tool that God is using like a saw or an ax to hew wood. He said the Assyrians don't see themselves as God's agents, of course.

They didn't know about God, but they were being used by God. He was putting a hook in their jaw and drawing them down to attack Israel and to destroy it because it was an evil Israel. It's time for Israel to be judged.

And so God was bringing Assyria down upon them. Initially, though, Assyria was not totally determined to conquer them. Probably they were occupied with campaigns on different fronts and were not concentrating all of their resources in one place.

So when Assyria comes down and threatens Israel, they can be bought off at this point. And so Manahem, the king, gave the king of Assyria a thousand talents of silver. This is about 37 tons of silver.

You know, silver is evaluated these days by the ounce, not by the pound, certainly not by the ton. But 37 tons of silver would be a mighty big ransom to pay to get these guys off your back. And yet that's what Manahem had to pay.

And so, you know, the Assyrians, they could have just pressed their advantage and conquered Israel and taken the money anyway. But since they probably figured, well, we'll just take the money. That'll help finance our campaigns in other directions.

And we'll come back and destroy Israel later on. Why expend human resources here? Why concentrate any of our troops here when these people are ready to buy us off and we can just come back and take them later on? So Manahem just stalled the inevitable, which was that Assyria would someday come and destroy this kingdom of Israel. Manahem exacted the money from Israel from all the very wealthy, from each man 50 shekels of silver.

So he's sort of like an Obama-type ruler, you know? He'd run up the bills of the country and then just take it from the rich. To give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land.

Now, the rest of the acts of Manahem and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Manahem rested with his fathers, but not in peace, I imagine. And Pekahiah, his son, reigned in his place. Now, in the 50th year of Azariah, king of Judah, so we still got Uzziah down there in Judah during this time, though it's near the end of his reign, the 50th year of his reign.

He reigned 52 years. Pekahiah, the son of Mahanim, became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned two years. And he did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Then Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, an officer of his, conspired against him and killed him in Samaria. I suppose there were probably about as many kings in the north died by intrigues and assassinations as there were died any other way, certainly of natural causes. And so he was killed in the citadel of the king's house along with Argov and Aria.

Now, we don't know who Argov and Aria were, but apparently they were killed at the same time. They may have been princes, heirs to the throne, or they might have been other important people in the government. And with him were 50 men of Gilead.

That is, Pekah came with 50 men from Gilead. It is believed that Pekah was, perhaps it says he was a commander, an officer of his, probably commanded troops that were over in the eastern side of the Jordan in Gilead. And some have speculated that he was even reigning over there, over a region in Gilead, in competition with Manahem here, or, I'm sorry, in competition with Pekahiah, and that he came and pressed over his reign over this side of the river too.

Now, the rest of the acts of Pekahiah and all that he did, indeed, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. So, in the 52nd year of Azariah, which was the last year of Azariah's reign, thinking of Judah Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned 20 years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord and did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Now, in the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, that's the same king that was a problem to Manahem earlier on, came and took Ijon, Abel, Beth, Meachah, Janoah, Kadesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali. And he carried them captive into Assyria. Now, this would later happen to the whole nation, but this is a significant portion, the whole tribe of Naphtali up in Galilee, some significant cities, and Gilead, which is the region on the west, or on the east side of the Jordan.

These were co-opted by the king of Assyria. They were taken into captivity. The people were taken off, away from the land.

So this was going to happen more wholesale sometime later, but not much later. This was the beginning of the end for the northern kingdom. Assyria was starting to do to them what they would ultimately do to their doom.

Then Hoshea, the son of Elah, led a conspiracy against Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, and struck and killed him. I'm not sure why anyone at this particular point would want to kill the king and become king instead. This is not a thriving country.

This is a country that's actually on its way down, losing territory, threatened by the most powerful, aggressive power in the world at the time. I don't think I'd want to be the king at that time, but it's possible that Hoshea flattered himself that he could do better in perhaps resisting the Assyrian threat. After all, if the king Pekah lost so much territory from the country to the king of Assyria, no doubt whoever came to power would be hoping to reverse that trend and apparently thought he could do it.

So he led a conspiracy against Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, and struck and killed him. He reigned in his place in the 20th year of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, whose reign we have

not yet read about, but of course, since Pekah began to reign still during the reign of Uzziah, we have to read to the end of his reign before we get back and consider the southern kingdom again. Now, the rest of the acts of Pekah and all that he did, indeed, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Now, in the second year of Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, king of Israel, Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. Now, Isaiah and Micah now were both prophesying in the south. Isaiah's ministry was about 50 years long, and he began, according to the opening verses of the book of Isaiah, his prophecies came to him during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, so four consecutive kings.

Whereas Micah, his ministry spanned the reign of the last three of those kings, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. So Micah was probably a bit younger than Isaiah. Perhaps a protegee of Isaiah's.

It's possible that Isaiah in his time oversaw the schools of the prophets, and that Micah might have been one of them. We don't know. We don't have any real knowledge that Micah and Isaiah ever saw each other across paths, but since they were prophets of Yahweh at the same time in the same city, there's a good chance they were compatriots and partners in ministry.

And we do have the phenomenon, a very strange phenomenon, actually, that Micah, chapter four, begins with the same four verses that Isaiah chapter two begins with. Isaiah two and Micah four have exactly the same prophecies in almost exactly the same words. That's the prophecy about in the last days it shall be that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above all the hills, and all the nations shall flow into it, and they shall go and say, let's go into the house of the Lord, the God of Jacob, and we'll learn his ways.

And it says they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and the nations shall not learn war anymore. And so that famous prophecy of Isaiah chapter two, it's also found almost verbatim in Micah chapter four. And these two prophets were contemporaries.

Micah, the younger one, it's likely that Micah was influenced somewhat by Isaiah and may have even consciously and deliberately been quoting Isaiah as his contemporary and mentor. Anyway, they were both prophesied during the reign of Jotham. And verse 33 says, he, that is Jotham, was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. Now Zadok was one of the priest's names, but he had lived generations earlier in the time of David, so it's not known if this was a different Zadok or whether she's simply a descendant of the distant, famous Zadok. By the way, I might also mention that at this same time, Hosea, the

prophet, was still prophesied in the north.

He was prophesied earlier in the reign of Jeroboam, and we've mentioned Hosea in the north. He's still prophesied during the reign of Jotham. It says, 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, which is not a good thing, but again, every king who was good had at least something wrong with them, and most of them, what was wrong is they kept the high places operational.

Very seldom do we ever read of them taking them down. I believe up to this point, Jehoshaphat is the only king we've read about that ever removed the high places, and yet, we're told that he did that in Chronicles and Kings, and it says he didn't. So, what I concluded was that apparently he did at one point, but the people reestablished them during his reign, and he didn't take them down after that.

So, he did, and he didn't. But, it says, he built the upper gate of the house of the Lord. Probably that gate had become dilapidated, and so he rebuilt it.

Probably, it must have been a very ornate gate, or else it's hardly worth mentioning. If you're just building a gate, it's not exactly the kind of thing that kings go down in history for, unless that gate was a very ornate, special kind of attraction. Now, we read in Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 27, we don't have to turn there, but at this point, in 2 Chronicles 27, verses 4 through 6, we are told that he also had some wars.

Especially, he fought and defeated the king of the Ammonites, and brought the Ammonites under tribute, so that they paid a tribute in silver, and in wheat, and in barley, for three years. Apparently for three years. It says they paid it in the second, third year as well.

So, it would appear that there was a limit to how long they were under tribute. It was apparently for three years. And it says also in 2 Chronicles 27, 6, so Jotham became mighty.

Apparently, to defeat the Ammonites was quite a military accomplishment. The Ammonites were one of the strong enemies of Israel during much of the earlier history. And often were the ones who gave Israel serious hurt and trouble.

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 Rezan, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Amaliah, 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.

Now, Ahaz was a wicked ruler, just about as bad as Judah ever had a ruler. Jotham was a good ruler, but it was during Jotham's reign that God began to send Rezan, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Amaliah, the king of Israel, against Judah. But apparently, they didn't really attack until the reign of Ahaz.

They were simply mobilizing. They were getting ready to attack in the time of Jotham, because we read later on that they really did attack Judah during the time of Ahaz, and this is no doubt God's judgment on Ahaz and Judah under his corrupt leadership. In chapter 16, we do read about this man Ahaz, in the 17th year of Pekah, the son of Amaliah, Ahaz, the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign.

Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem and did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, his God, as his father David had done. That's to put it mildly. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel.

Indeed, he made his son pass through the fire. That is, of course, the worship of Molech, where you actually take a live baby and burn them in a bronze statue. It was a hollow statue made of bronze that had a fire built inside it until it glowed red hot.

It was of a man's body, apparently with his arms extended and palms up at the elbows, and it would be red hot. They'd put a live baby in the arms and it would be burned up, of course, very painfully. This is how they offered babies to Molech.

This is how the people of the land, the non-Jews, had worshipped Molech, particularly the Moabites, I believe, were the worshippers of Molech. And this king was so evil, he actually sacrificed his own babies. That's what causing your son to pass through the fire means.

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. Now, before we go further, there's some material in 2 Kings 28 about this king. 2 Chronicles.

Did I say Kings? 2 Chronicles, chapter 28, 5 through 15 is what I have here. We read about these sins of Ahaz in like verse 2 and following. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, made molded images for the Baals.

He burned incense in the valley of the sons of Hinnom. And that is also where they offered their children to Molech. He burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord cast out.

In verse 4, he sacrificed on the high places. These are things that we read about in Kings. And then it says in verse 5, Therefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria.

They defeated him and carried away a great multitude of them as captives and brought them to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel who defeated him with a great slaughter. Now, in the days of Isaiah, or I should say the days of Ahaz, Isaiah came to him.

It's recorded in Isaiah chapter 7. And Ahaz, at that time, was worried about Israel and Syria. And they were attacking. We can see this attack took place.

Only Chronicles tells about it. But king Ahaz was seriously damaged. And Judah was seriously hurt by invasions from Syria and Israel.

Now, Syria and Israel at this point were confederate with each other. And the reason they were attacking Joplin was, as we learned from Isaiah chapter 7, that Assyria was coming against those smaller kingdoms in the Middle East. And the northern kingdom, Israel, and the kingdom of Syria were threatened by Assyria.

And they wanted to join forces together against Assyria and resist it. But they realized that the two of them together were not strong enough to resist Assyria. So they wanted Judah to join them.

They wanted to have three nations confederate against Assyria. Ahaz did not want to resist Assyria. He wanted to stay on Assyria's good side.

And therefore he was resisting this coalition. Now, if you read Isaiah chapter 7, we find that Isaiah came to Ahaz and encouraged him that God would not allow the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria to succeed in their plans. What they were planning to do, and you read this in Isaiah chapter 7, Pekah, the son of Ramallah and Rezan, the king of Syria, they wanted to join together to come against Jerusalem and force Ahaz out of office and put in their own guy, someone whose name, who's only referred to as the son of Tabeal.

The man's own name we don't know, but he's the son of Tabeal. Apparently somebody more cooperative with their efforts, probably some Judean who would see things their way. And they wanted to force Ahaz out of office and put the son of Tabeal in there so that he would agree to join with them as a three nation coalition against Assyria.

Now this scared Ahaz because he had these two nations coming against him. And Isaiah actually prophesied that God was not going to let these two nations succeed. It's in that context that Isaiah gave the prophecy about the virgin.

He said, therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel. And he goes on to say that before this child shall know to choose the good and refuse the evil, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both of their kings.

Now what he's saying is that there's going to be a child born, and before that child is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, both the king of Syria and the king of Israel will be gone. And this is true. Both of them were killed within the next three years or so after this thing.

So the Syrian and Israeli attack on Ahaz in Jerusalem was unsuccessful. But other campaigns against him were successful. They never did conquer Jerusalem and they never did force Ahaz out of office.

But they did hurt him pretty bad in other ways. And that's what we're going to read about here. It says in verse 6 of 2 Chronicles 28, I believe in verse 5, it says, Then he was delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter.

For Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, killed 120,000 in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. Now that's not why Pekah was concerned to kill them. That's why God let them die.

This is giving God's perspective on it. They were killed by Pekah, but the reason God allowed this slaughter to take place was because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. Zitri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Meaziah, the king's son, Azraqam, the officer over the house, and Elkanah, who was the second to the king.

So the crown prince, apparently, and some of the other men close to the king were killed in this occasion. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren, 200,000 women, sons, and daughters, and they took away much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria. However, they were challenged about this by a prophet, and strangely enough, they obeyed the prophet.

Now this was, of course, the northern kingdom who never had any real loyalty to Yahweh, and yet, after they took 200,000 women and children captive back to Samaria from Jerusalem, the prophet of the Lord, a prophet of the Lord was there whose name was Obed. And he went out before the army that came to Samaria and said to them, Look, because Yahweh, God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he has delivered them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that reaches up to heaven. In other words, even God is offended by the amount of slaughter you have done.

And now you propose to force the children of Judah and Jerusalem to be your male and female slaves. But are you not also guilty before Yahweh your God? Now hear me, therefore, and return the captives whom you have taken captive from your brethren, for the fierce wrath of Yahweh is upon you. Then some of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Aberachia the son of Meshillimoth, and Jehizakiah the son of Shalem, and Amasa the son of Hedli, stood up against those who came from the war.



And they said to them, You shall not bring the captives here, for we already have offended Yahweh. You intend to add to our sins and to our guilt, for our guilt is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the leaders and all the congregation.

Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them, and gave them sandals. Apparently they took the captives away naked, which is a very common thing to do part of the humiliation of the conquered people is to lead them away naked into captivity. So they took some of the spoils, which include clothes, and put clothes back on these captives, dressed them, and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them, and let them all let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys.

So they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria. So interestingly these 200,000 captive women and children were rescued by the intervention of a prophet of Yahweh who was in Samaria.

And leaders of Samaria listened, and they recognized they said, okay, the prophet said, the reason God has given you victory over Judah is because Judah displeased God. But we displease God too. And the wrath of God is against us as well.

Let's not make God more angry still by turning the people of Judah into our slaves. That's not what God had in mind. And so the leaders of Samaria said, you're right, we're going to listen to the prophet in this case.

Let's send those captives back. So this is a rare occasion when the people of Israel actually heeded a prophet of God. A very rare thing for them to do.

Now back to 2 Kings 16.5 Then Reazan the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Ramaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to make war and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him. Just as Isaiah had told him in Isaiah chapter 7 they would not succeed in taking Jerusalem and breaking through to replace Ahaz. At that time Reazan the king of Syria captured Elath for Syria and drove the men of Judah from Elath.

Then the Edomites went to Elath and dwelt there to this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser the 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.

Now this was the wrong thing to do. Isaiah's message to Ahaz was, God will deliver you if you trust in him. Trust in the Lord and he'll deliver you from these people.

But Ahaz didn't have any faith in God. Ahaz was not a godly man and instead he went to the Assyrians and asked them for help. This did not work out well for him but for the moment it did eliminate the initial threat, the immediate threat.

Ahaz took 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, that's the capital of Syria, where Rezon was king, and took it carried its people captive to cure and kill Rezon. So Rezon is now out of the way.

We still got Peacock in the northern kingdom as a problem. Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, and he saw an altar that was at Damascus, a pagan altar of course, in Syria's capital. And King Ahaz sent Eurygia the priest the design of the altar and its pattern according to all its workmanship.

Then Eurygia the priest built an altar according to all that the king Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Eurygia the priest made it before King Ahaz came from Damascus. So he was so impressed with this pagan altar, it must have been a beauty.

It must have been a real ornate altar after a pagan sword. Now, of course, Jerusalem already had a bronze altar that was made after the orders of God's design in the temple. But Ahaz liked this pagan altar better, so he sent plans down, sent sketches of it down to Eurygia the priest who duplicated it in Jerusalem before Ahaz even got back from his visit in Damascus.

And when the king came from Damascus the king saw the altar and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. So he burnt his burnt offerings and his grain offerings and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offering on the altar. He also brought the bronze altar, that's the original one that belonged in the temple which was before the Lord from the front of the temple from between the new altar and the house of the Lord he put it on the north side of the new altar then King Ahaz commanded Eurygia the priest saying on the great new altar burn the morning burnt offerings and the evening grain offering the king's burnt sacrifice and the grain offerings with the burnt offerings of all the people of the land.

Their grain offering and their drink offerings and sprinkle on it the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifices and the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by. So he says we're going to use this pagan altar to offer our sacrifices to the Lord but the original altar I'll use it to inquire by. Now inquire by in what sense? Nowhere else in scripture is an altar used as a means of seeking guidance.

And that's what he's referring to, seeking guidance. We know they usually use the Urim and the Thummim which were in the breastplate of the high priest to seek guidance from the Lord but the altar we have no way of knowing even how an altar was ever used as a means of seeking guidance. It may be though that what he's saying is when I want to inquire of Yahweh I'll go and offer sacrifices on Yahweh's altar and then maybe Yahweh will give me some directions whereas the rest of the time we're just going to offer on this pagan altar.

Thus did Urijah the priest according to all that King Ahaz commanded. And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts and removed the lavers from them and he took down the sea from the bronze oxen that were upon it and put it on a pavement of stones. So he remodeled the courtyard of the temple and dismantled a lot of the furniture of the temple that Solomon had built.

This again was perhaps the beginning of the end for the temple. So I don't know why he'd want to take the sea off of the bronze oxen and put it down on a stone pavement. It seems like the bronze oxen are cooler than rocks but he maybe wanted to just innovate, just an artistic fellow and maybe he just wanted to desecrate too and destroy and modify what Solomon had built.

Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple and he removed the king's outer entrance from the house of the Lord on account of the king of Assyria. That is out of deference to the king of Assyria. Apparently the king of Assyria didn't like these things in the temple of Yahweh so out of deference to him he removed them and probably melted them down.

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? So Ahaz rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. Then Hezekiah his son, a good guy, a really good guy, reigned in his place. Nice to have a good guy for a change coming up.

Hezekiah was a wonderful king and we're going to next when we come to chapter 17 we'll see the chapters devoted to the destruction of the northern kingdom. Its absolute end comes in the reign of its last king, Hosea.