

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 56
Week 56 – 2 Kings 16-18; 2 Chronicles 27-28

Key Concepts: The key concepts are that God will allow God's people to suffer the consequences of their faithlessness.

Stories: 2 Kings begins with the reign of Ahaz, his apostasy including sacrificing his own children, his struggles with Syria, his purchasing protection from the Assyrians, his erecting altars to foreign gods in the Temple, his destruction of much of the Temple furnishings, the rise of Hoshea as king in Israel, the destruction of Israel by Assyria, a theological rationale for the destruction, the creation of the Samaritan people where Israel used to exist and the reasons that they are evil. In 2 Chronicles we have a clear delineation between Jotham (very good) and Ahaz (very bad), the trials of Ahaz and Judah's enemies, a theological rationale for his troubles, and how Ahaz's bribing the Assyrians backfires.

Brief Summary: We have finally arrived at the end of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. The situation was that one of the great middle-eastern empires, Assyria, was once again on the ascension. Assyria had been a nation/people beginning prior to 2000 BCE. Under Tiglath-Pileser III (reigned 745-727 BCE) the kingdom covered the territory from the "Caucasus mountains to Arabia and from the Caspian Sea to Cyprus" (Wikipedia). He forced both Judah and Israel to pay tribute. His successor Shalmaneser V (reigned 726-723) besieged Israel's capitol which was finally taken and destroyed by his successor, Sargon II, in 721 BCE. Assyria then deported almost 30,000 Israelites. This event is the foundation for the concept of the "lost tribes of Israel." Assyria then imported people from around their Empire to fill the land. These people would become known as the Samaritans.

The Assyrians would continue to expand their empire, which would eventually include parts of modern day Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Palestine, Cyprus, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Sudan, Libya, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan (Wikipedia) until around 605 BCE when it would fall to the Medes and Persians.

The fall of Israel, would appear to be a blow to the concept that God would never abandon God's people. The writers of Kings and Chronicles both make sure that their readers understand that the fall of this portion of God's people was due to the unfaithfulness of the people and their leaders. The people worshipped other gods, sacrificed children, refused to obey God's law and sought help from other nations rather than trusting in God to deliver them. We have seen these accusations in the words of the prophets Amos and Hosea. The political/historical reality though was that the leaders of Israel were foolish enough to believe that they could withhold tribute from and rebel against an Empire that would dominate the world for another one-hundred years.

In the meantime Judah, under Ahaz, bought protection from the Assyrians by stripping the Temple of its wealth and offering it in payment. At the same time Ahaz became enamored of the altars and worship of the Syrians. He had replicas of their altars placed in the Temple and initiated similar worship. This worship included the sacrifice of some of his own children. An interesting issue with Ahaz was the site of his burial. In 2 Kings he is buried with all of the other kings. In 2 Chronicles he is not. Once again this shows a way in which the writer of Chronicles attempts to clean up the story of Judah for future generations.

1. How do you balance both the theological and historical reasons for Israel's demise?
2. What do you think Ahaz ought to have done in the face of Syrian aggression?
3. What do you make of the Chronicler's not mentioning the fall of Israel?