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Dear Associates and Friends,

October 2018

This month's article is "[Israel and Judah: 32. Jotham and Ahaz of Judah.](#)" We continue to engage the narratives of Second Kings and Second Chronicles with the writings of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) and the twelve Minor Prophets of Israel. The purpose of the prophets was for YHWH to communicate with His covenant people regarding their obligations, potential rewards for obedience, and potential punishments for disobedience. They also tell us readers today what the people were thinking at that ancient time. What the people of Israel were thinking was not pleasant, just as what we think is often unpleasant.

Too frequently the people of the tribes of Israel were openly rebellious toward God and His requirements set out in the Covenant of Moses. Other times they simply did not care what God wanted or even what He thought. They wanted to be left alone to worship their stones; their carvings; the sun, moon, and stars; while listening to the spirits that peep and mutter through servants of spirits that are not from God (Isaiah 8:19).

This is on top of the fact that God chose a stiff-necked people¹ so the good elements and bad elements of their character (as a people group, as distinct tribes, and as individuals) were intensified as an example openly displayed to the rest of the children of Adam. On the one hand, the people of Israel had contact with YHWH more than any other people, yet He made them be more difficult to deal with as a balance to a charge of God being unfair or unjust.

This month's article focuses on a good king and an evil king (the son of the good king). They show a remarkable contrast. Because the evil king Ahaz is so interesting and so much has been written about him, we will finish the story of Ahaz in "Israel and Judah: 33."

Cast of Characters (Not in Order of Appearance):

This episode of "Israel and Judah" has a smaller cast of people, but it also includes topics.

Jotham, king of Judah, a good king who like his long-reigning father Uzziah, had a very prosperous and strong reign.

Ahaz, son of Jotham, king of Judah, one of the most evil kings in the history of Judah. Nonetheless, he is a descendant of King David, so YHWH honors His promises regarding the line of Davidic kings.

Prophets of YHWH. In this episode Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Oded are significant during this period. All but Oded left writings beginning in the contemporary reigns of King Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel.

Isaiah, a prophet of YHWH to Judah, interacts with King Ahaz.

Rezin, King of Syria during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Pekah. A target of Assyrian expansion, he tries to form an alliance of small kingdoms, including Pekah of Israel to oppose Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser. He wants to enlist Judah to the coalition, but attacks Judah during the reign of Jotham and Ahaz.

¹ The people of Israel are so identified as being a stiff-necked people first by YHWH Himself in Exodus 32:9, 33:3, and 5, and by Moses in 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13, 10:16, 31:27; 2 Chronicles 30:8, 36:13; Psalm 75:5; Jeremiah 17:23; Ezekiel 2:4; Acts 7:51.

Pekah, King of Israel, evil and attacks Judah. He tries to create a great alliance with Rezin of Syria to oppose Assyrian threats and expansion.

Oded, a prophet of YHWH, God saves people of Judah from enslavement by Israel. He exercises quiet moral authority.

Tiglath-pileser (in the background), King of Assyria, during this period he is the ultimate “bad guy.”

One of the compilers of Second Kings (mostly edited by Isaiah) wrote a summary of God’s thoughts about the two kingdoms of northern Israel and southern Judah. God was not pleased with the people of the two kingdoms:

“Yahweh testified against Israel and against Judah by means of every prophet and every vision seer, saying,

‘Turn back from your evil ways, and keep My instructions and My statutes, according to all the law that I enjoined on your fathers and that I sent to you by means of My servants the prophets.’

Yet they did not hearken, and they stiffened the scruffs of their necks more than the scruff of their fathers who did not believe in Yahweh their Elohim.

• *2 Kings 17:13–14, Concordant Literal Old Testament*

It was not just Isaiah and Micah, Amos and Hosea. Prophets such as Oded in 2 Chronicles 28:8–15 (and others not mentioned in any biblical text), taught the people but their prophetic work was not preserved for us. Read in Isaiah chapter 8. God will let them respond to the prophets when He sees fit to do so:

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon YHWH, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom YHWH has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from YHWH of hosts, who dwells in mount Zion. And when they shall say unto you,

‘Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?’

To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead [hardened] and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and [then they will] look upward.”

• *Isaiah 8:16–21*

Thank You

We are all given a remarkable gift from God our Father: we do not have to keep the law of Moses. This privilege is granted to us through Christ who fulfilled every aspect of that law. By the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, we also share in Christ’s righteousness that makes it possible for us to approach our Father directly through only one mediator, Christ Jesus.

We share all the biblical information so we all have a better grasp of things to come. You help us share that information. Thank you for the privilege of providing this information to you and to others. We regularly receive notes from people who are excited about the information they have craved for so long. They “find” ASK and suddenly they can access knowledge and understanding from a deep reservoir of biblical teaching. God’s plan makes sense for all mankind. How His word is presented should also make sense. We present it to all who God brings to ASK to enjoy. Thank you for helping us do so.

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