

## **II KINGS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Kings chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we are going to pick up looking at the Southern Kingdom of Judah and king Azariah. So let's begin reading in II Kings chapter 15, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

### **II KINGS 15**

#### **VERSES 1-4**

1. Azariah was a good king, his name is also called Uzziah, and he did what was right before the Lord. And if you remember from our previous study, his father, Amaziah, was killed by his own people, he was assassinated in the area of Lachish, in the area of Judah. Why did they assassinate their king? The reason is this; he tried to fight against the Northern Kingdom of Israel and their king Jehoash. Amaziah just defeated the Edomites and thought he was powerful I guess and you can go back to the notes from our previous study because I go into more detail, but he lost the battle against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Some of the people were taken captive as well as Amaziah. He was released and it was after this that he was assassinated. And now his son, Azariah is on the throne and he reigned 52 years in the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

Of this Russell Dilday had this to say, “Following the tragic events that brought King Amaziah’s reign to an end, Jerusalem was in disarray, a major section of its protective wall destroyed, its temple and palace emptied of their treasures, and some of its inhabitants taken away to Israel as hostages.” This is the situation that this sixteen year old, Azariah came to the throne with. It was difficult and yet he did what was right because he obeyed the Lord.

And, according to Knapp, he believes that Azariah came to the throne not because who his father was, but it was the people’s choice you might say. He wrote, “He seems to have come by the throne, not in the way of ordinary succession, but by the direct choice of the people. The princes had been destroyed by the Syrians toward the close of his grandfather Joash’s reign (2 Chronicles 24:23), leaving the people a free hand.” It is possible.

2. In Isaiah 6:1 we are told, **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.”** And it was during the reign of Uzziah or Azariah that Isaiah began his prophetic ministry! But I believe that Isaiah’s ministry really took off after the death of Uzziah or Azariah!

3. Once again we see that those high places were not removed. Now keep in mind that they were not worshiping false gods on these high places, they were worshiping the true God in the wrong way. And, as I have said before, this small compromise only leads to bigger ones and a nation that was once walking with the Lord will follow after the false gods of the Canaanites!

VERSES 5-7

1. Here was a man, a king who walked with God and yet, he must have done something that caused the Lord to strike him with leprosy, what was it? We get more details of his life in II Chronicles chapter 26 and let's just read a little of what went on so we can understand why the Lord struck him with this disease. We are told in II Chronicles 26:16-21, **“But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord — valiant men. 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.’ Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. 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. Then Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land.”**

Here is the tragic story of many people who let pride, when they feel strong, that they are brought down. You see, for Azariah, it was when he felt strong, after his many military victories, and pride filled his heart that he thought God wasn't speaking to him regarding the function of the priests and the function of a king. He thought he could offer incense to the Lord and when the priests tried to stop him, he became furious with them. At this point God steps in and struck him with leprosy. His pride led to his fall! Thus, Uzziah led a life of seclusion and his son Jotham oversaw the kingdom.

What was so wrong with him going into the temple and burning incense on the altar of incense to the Lord? What Azariah did was violation of what God had told the children of Israel not to do. That is no king should be a priest and the reality is that no office of prophet priest or king would be combined together until the Messiah, until Jesus came and fulfilled all three of those offices! Thus, God judged him for his actions! And Knapp lays it out for us regarding the reality of what took place as he wrote, "It was a fearful stroke from God. Death was the actual penalty enjoined by the law for his crime (Numbers 18:7), and leprosy was really that – a living death, prolonged and intensified."

2. Now, as I have said, it was during this time, in the year that king Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. And you have to understand the discouragement of Isaiah because Uzziah was a godly king, a good man and now he was gone and what were they going to do? You may feel like that at times, but you need to see the Lord, He is still seated upon the throne, he is still in charge and it doesn't matter what earthly king may die, it doesn't matter what is happening, the Lord is still King of kings and Lord of lords!

3. Now when we look at the length of time kings were on the throne in the Southern Kingdom of Judah we see a little more stability, like with Azariah who was on the throne for 52 years! But when you look at the Northern Kingdom of Israel it seems like they are dropping like flies. Things were bad and they were only going to get worse. Anarchy is breaking out in the Northern Kingdom, and as I have said before, when you move away from the Word of God, you begin to move away from God, and as you move away from God, morality is tossed out the window leaving you with anarchy. That is what we see in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. (II Chronicles 15:3).

As we look at the Northern Kingdom of Israel now we will see five kings who sat on the throne and not for a long period of time. It is as F. B. Meyer wrote, “This chapter anticipates the final overthrow of this kingdom of the tribes. It describes the corruption and disorganization that made them the easy prey of Assyria.” Not a pretty picture.

And as was with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it can be with us. There can be death and destruction you might say wherever we go because we refuse to walk in the ways of the Lord. Jesus said in John 10:10, “**The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**” And talk about confusion in your life but God does not bring that into your life for we are told in I Corinthians 14:33, “**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**” So this turmoil in the Northern Kingdom of Israel was because they refused to walk with the Lord and the Lord gave them over to these things, to do the things that were in their hearts and it was evil. What a lesson for us as we will see as we study these kings and what transpired in their lives, what was happening in the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

VERSES 8-12

1. Zechariah only reigns for six months in Samaria and he was assassinated by Shallum, who took over the throne. And notice that he was assassinated in front of the people, which tells me that the people hated Zechariah so much that Shallum was able to do this. In fact the people watched as he did it!

2. One more point here and that is God's faithfulness. Remember back in II Kings 10:30, God said to Jehu, king of Samaria, "**Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.**" Zechariah's name means "Yahweh Remembers" and guess what, Zechariah was the fourth generation of the descendants of Jehu, as God honored Jehu's faithfulness and fulfilled his promise to him. And think about this, as John Trapp wrote, "God keepeth promise with his foes: shall he fail his friends?" May we not forget that, God's promises never fail!

VERSES 13-16

1. Look at the mess the Northern Kingdom of Israel is in. We see their king, Shallum only lasts 1 month on the throne in Samaria and he is assassinated by Menahem. Interestingly enough, Menahem means, "Comforter" and yet, that is just the opposite of what he brought to the nation. And for Shallum, his reign is the second shortest in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, second only to Zimri, king of Samaria, whose reign only lasted 7 days.

What is going on here? Knapp gives to us some insight as he wrote, “The great prosperity and expansion under Jeroboam II appears to have corrupted the people and caused them to give free reign to their evil desires and violence. Those in authority, instead of checking this spirit of lawlessness, found pleasure in it. ‘They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies’ (Hosea 7:3).” Look at the prosperity in this country and I think you can see we are following in the footsteps of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, finding pleasure in lawlessness, in evil and I wonder if judgment is just around the corner for this nation?

2. I guess I don’t even have to tell you this, but Menahem was a very wicked king, and just because the people of the town of Tiphshah did not open their gates to him, he killed all the pregnant women. The spiritual and moral condition of the kings from the Northern Kingdom of Israel has deteriorated and now they were acting like and becoming like the pagan nations around them. Menahem perpetrated these atrocities upon his own people! Wiseman makes these comments regarding the acts of Menahem. He wrote, “The action by Menahem against the inhabitants of Tiphshah is unparalleled for brutality by any Israelite. Here it may mark the increasing influence of the surrounding nations. It was a foreign practice inflicted on the Israelites themselves by Aram (2 Kings 8:12), Ammon (Amos 1:13) and Assyria (Hosea 13:8).” It is amazing what is in the heart of man, the wickedness and if you want to do your own thing, if you refuse to come to the Lord, He will give you over to these things and you will be shocked how low you can sink, the depravity that is inside of you!

VERSES 17-22

1. We now see the Assyrians begin to trouble the Northern Kingdom, to flex their muscle. The king of Assyria at this time was Pul, also known as Tiglath-Pileser III, and he was coming against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And notice that Menahem doesn't go to the Lord for help; he goes to the rich and makes them cough up some money to help pay the Assyrians off. Now don't feel too bad for the rich here because we are told how they obtained their riches and it is not good.

In Amos 4:1 we are told, **“Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, Who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, ‘Bring wine, let us drink!’”** In Amos 5:11-12 we are told, **“Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him, Though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, But you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions And your mighty sins: Afflicting the just and taking bribes; Diverting the poor from justice at the gate.”** And in Amos 8:4-6 we read, **“Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail, Saying: ‘When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals — Even sell the bad wheat?’”**



Also, in Micah 2:2 we are told, **“They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.”** And in Micah 6:10-12 we read, **“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness In the house of the wicked, And the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, And with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, Her inhabitants have spoken lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.”**

That was how wicked the land was and the rich were very rich because of how they treated the rest of the people and Menahem has the rich pay for protection so the Assyrians won't attack them. It is as Wiseman wrote, “The Assyrian policy was initially to leave a state on its borders independent, though requiring a substantial annual payment for this privilege. Thereafter the state might be made a vassal, which entailed having an Assyrian official at court as a watchdog on the ruler's attitudes.”

#### VERSES 23-26

1. As you look at all that is happening you can see that it is no longer safe to be a king in Israel, for anarchy has spread throughout the land. And only after 2 years of reigning in Samaria, Pekahiah is assassinated by his own officer, Pekah. And now Pekah is on the throne in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and will reign for 20 years.

2. Now as we look at the Northern Kingdom of Israel we see how these kings were evaluated and we are told over and over again, “**And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.**” II Kings 15:24. Why do we see the father of Nebat mentioned along with Jeroboam? I like what F. B. Meyer wrote and I think he is right. He wrote, “Why should Jeroboam so frequently be called ‘the son of Nebat’? Why should the father be for ever pilloried with the son, except that he was in some way responsible for, and implicated in, his sins? There was a time when perhaps Nebat might have restrained the growing boy, or led him to the true worship of God; or perhaps his parental influence and example were deadly in their effect.” We do have a responsibility as parents to raise our children in the things of God and they too are responsible for their actions!

3. Now look at all that has happened in the Northern Kingdom. They have gone through some 8 dynasties or families who have sat on the throne. How many has the Southern Kingdom gone through? The Southern Kingdom has only gone through 1 dynasty or family, the family of David! That is what we are told in II Samuel 7:12-17, **“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.’ According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.”** God’s promise was fulfilled and I think if the Northern Kingdom would have walked in the ways of the Lord, they too would have had just one dynasty, but they didn’t and God brought judgment upon them.

VERSES 27-31

1. These are very dark days in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. We now see the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser begin to invade the northern areas of the Northern Kingdom. Also, from I Chronicles 5:26 we learn that Tiglath-Pileser carried away into captivity the two tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh who were on the eastern side of the Jordan River, outside the Promise Land. And this is now the first deportation of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, around 733 B.C. The final deportation will occur in 721 B.C. We are told that, “With the loss of Galilee and Gilead and with the presence of Assyrian troops all along the Israel’s western frontier, it seemed evident that Pekah’s anti-Assyrian policy had brought Israel to the point of extinction.” And thus, with parts of the Northern Kingdom falling into the hands of the Assyrians, Hoshea assassinated king Pekah, and assumes the throne. And in regards to Hoshea, Knapp writes, “Josephus says that Hoshea was ‘a friend’ of Pekah’s (Antiquities ix.13). . . . But watch as he might, his very friend in whom he trusted became, in the ordering of God, his slayer; so impossible it is for the wicked to escape their merited retribution.” Again, very dark days for the Northern Kingdom of Israel but they have brought this on themselves!

2. Now we are going to look at the Southern Kingdom of Judah and their kings once again.

VERSES 32-36

1. So in the Southern Kingdom of Judah we see the son of Uzziah, Jotham become king and he was a good king. His father went into the temple to burn incense to the Lord and was struck with leprosy and I think that his son, Jotham understood what he needed to do and not do. In fact, in II Chronicles 27:6 we are told, **“So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”** How important is that for each of us, to make sure we prepare our ways before the Lord, that we are following after Him, serving Him because the world will try to compete for that attention, that devotion and many times it is the world that wins! Thus, Jotham was a good king as compared to all the evil ones we just read about in the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

VERSES 37-38

1. Why did the Lord send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel into the land of Judah, invading them? God was trying to awaken them, make sure that they looked to Him, it was a chastening from the Lord and the desire here is that they would turn to the Lord. Yes, Jotham prepared his heart before the Lord but the nation as a whole was moving away from the Lord! The high places were not removed and again, with this compromise it would eventually led them into idolatry! And Russell Dilday adds this, “During Jotham’s reign, the combined forces of King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel began their invasion of Judah, but the full impact of these military assaults was not felt until Jotham’s son became king.” So let’s read on and see what Ahaz, the son of Jotham will do, how he will led the nation.

**II KINGS 16****VERSES 1-4**

1. As we look at the Southern Kingdom of Judah we are now seeing the spiritual condition and moral condition deteriorate. Out of the last 9 kings in Judah, before their deportation to Babylon, only 2 kings are good, and Ahaz was not one of them. Ahaz did not follow after the example of David but walked in the ways of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he is one of the worst if not the worst king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Ahaz was so bad that he offered his son to the god Molech placing this child in the burning hot, brazen hands of this idol, and sacrificed him. And as the child was placed in these burning hands of this idol they would beat at their drums to drown out the screams of the child until the child was burned to death! How horrible, but again, God will give you over to what is in your heart if you reject Him and that is what we see here. And please understand that the thinking was that by offering your child to this god you would guarantee yourself great prosperity.

And God had warned them not to do this atrocity but they didn't listen. Back in Leviticus 20:1-5 we are told, "**Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: "Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name. And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech."**" Thus, they knew what not to do and they chose to do it anyway!

We do that today as we offer our children up to the god of connivance - abortion. We offer our children up to the god of prosperity - as we leave our children to raise themselves as we climb the corporate ladder, and-so-on.

2. Listen to what the prophet Micah said, as he was a prophet during the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. In Micah 7:2-7 we are told, **“The faithful man has perished from the earth, And there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; Every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands — The prince asks for gifts, The judge seeks a bribe, And the great man utters his evil desire; So they scheme together. The best of them is like a brier; The most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; Now shall be their perplexity. Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth From her who lies in your bosom. For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household. Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.”**

Not a pretty picture and yet, Micah and the godly remnant said that they will look to the Lord no matter what anyone else is going to do. May we remember that! May we be people that follow after us because we are following after the Lord and not a people that follow after the things of this world!



VERSES 5-6

1. Why did God bring judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, especially with these more wicked nations? This all came upon them because of the sin of Ahaz and the people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Thus, we see Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Samaria, team up and attack Judah. And there was a great slaughter you might say. And according to what we are told in II Chronicles 28:5-8, we see that Ahaz lost 120,000 Judean soldiers and 200,000 civilian hostages in these battles with Syria and Israel. And granted these armies were only able to defeat Elath in Judah but there was a great slaughter for the Southern Kingdom because of their sin!

2. Keep in mind that the prophecy given in Isaiah chapter 7 of the virgin birth was given during this time and as much as this being a dark time for the Southern Kingdom, God raised up a prophet by the name of Obed who rebuked the Northern Kingdom of Israel's armies for taking captive the people of Judah, their brethren. He called on them to return these men, which they did. (II Chronicles 28:8-15). Now, how would Ahaz respond to what Obed was saying, would he trust in the Lord or not? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 7-9

1. Instead of crying out to God, after hearing what Obed had to say, he instead cries out to the Assyrian king for help! In fact he pays him for his services with the money that came from the house of God, the gold and silver that was in God's house! And yes, Tiglath-Pileser came to the rescue of Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but that was only going to be short lived. Tiglath-Pileser kills Rezin king of Syria, stops the assault by Syria and Israel but I wonder what would have happened if Ahaz trusted in the Lord instead of man? David, in Psalm 18:6 cried out, "**In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.**" The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**In my distress [when seemingly closed in] I called upon the Lord and cried to my God; He heard my voice out of His temple (heavenly dwelling place), and my cry came before Him, into His [very] ears.**" May we cry out to the Lord and not look to our own resources to deliver us!

2. So if this pagan king delivered Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, how do you think Ahaz is going to respond to this? Let's read on and see!

VERSES 10-11

1. Can you believe this? Ahaz goes to Damascus and sees the altar to their god there and gets the blueprints for it and has Urijah the priest build one of these altars in Jerusalem! And going to Damascus was an act of submission on his part as he was showing Tiglath-Pileser that he was a servant to him. Why in the world would Ahaz do this? Well, first of all to appease Tiglath-Pileser and secondly, he was incorporating the latest trends in altar design and leading the nation in this worship! We see that today as churches try to incorporate all kinds of the latest trends, the latest altars you might say to appease the people. Myer wrote regarding this, "This introduction of the altar of a heathen shrine into the holy temple of Jerusalem reminds us the many rights in modern religious observances which have been borrowed from paganism, and warns us that the Church has no right to go to the world for its methods and principles." May we be warned!

VERSES 12-14

1. How could Ahaz act as a priest? Because he made up his own religion, which means he can do whatever he wants and he is. In fact, we are no different today with what is happening in the church. We bring all kinds of new altars in a sense, into the church and expect God to bless them, but He will not. In fact, when this new altar was finished, the bronze altar was removed, placed on the side, replaced with this pagan altar! Russell Dilday had this to say regarding what Ahaz had done and see how it applies to us today. He wrote, “Ahaz wildly experimented, trying to inject the religion of Judah with new life. He seemed to be drawn to the most lurid elements in the pagan religions around him. Like the Athenians in Acts 17 who ‘spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing,’ Ahaz was addicted to the lure of the sensational.” May we worship God in spirit and in truth for that is the only kind of worship God will accept!

VERSES 15-18

1. Not only does he set up this new altar, this pagan altar, but he also begins to dismantle some of the things in the temple, taking them apart. In fact, in II Chronicles 28:24-25 we are told that Ahaz shut down the operation of the temple and he established small pagan altars all around Judah! That truly is a picture of what is to come upon this nation in the not too distant future, for God is going to finish the job by sending judgment upon them by the hands of the Babylonians. They will dismantle the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

2. Now was Ahaz interested in spiritual things? Absolutely, his problem was that he had no relationship with the Lord, no desire to serve the Lord, only his own man made religion and he tried to extinguish the worship of the true and living God! And what we see here in Judah we see happening in the church today where we have leaders that are very spiritual but they are not saved. They have a form of godliness but they deny its power. Let me share a few things before I close this evening regarding what is coming into the church today. Spencer Burke in The Ooze, an Emergent Church website wrote this:

I stopped reading the approved evangelical reading list . . . I discovered new authors and new voices at the bookstore – Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and St. Teresa of Avila. The more I read, the more intrigued I became. Contemplative spirituality seemed to open up a whole new way for me to understand and experience God.

I was struck by the incredible wisdom that could be found apart from the “approved” evangelical reading list. A Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, gave me a new appreciation for the meaning of community. His *New Man and Seeds of Contemplation* touched my heart in ways other religious books had not. Not long afterward my thinking was stretched again, this time by Thich Nhat hanh – Buddhist monk . . . Hanh’s *Living Buddha, Living Christ* gave me insight into Jesus from an Eastern Perspective.

- Spencer Burke, *From the Third Floor to the Garage*, The Ooze website and *Making Sense of the Church*, p. 136

Many of you have heard of Dan Kimble before, an Emergent Church leader and author of many Emergent Church books. Listen to what he wrote,

The basis of learning has shifted from logic and rational, systematic thought to the realm of experience. People increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and fact-based faith of the modern soil.

- Dan Kimble, the Emerging Church, p. 60

So what we are seeing coming into the church, what people are moving towards is the mystical, looking towards Eastern and New Age religions, the Church is Emerging into something else and I will tell you this, it is not of God! Just as Ahaz brought a false altar into the temple, so too are these men bringing in a false altar, they are bringing this new altar of the Emerging Church into thousands of churches across America and the world. It is an experience driven faith that is not based in the Word of God and the doors of churches are, in a sense, being closed to people of faith and opened to New Age and Eastern mysticism! Let us learn the lesson and wake up before more go down this dangerous road of compromise and idolatry!

And please understand that the New Age proponents have not looked to crush Christianity, but use it as a vehicle to promote their cause and it is working. Alice Bailey, the one who coined the phrase, “New Age” prophesied in 1948, “the regeneration of the churches . . . The Christian church in its many branches can serve as . . . a nucleus through which world illumination [to prepare the way for ‘the Avator, the Coming One’] may be accomplished.” In other words, the church does not need to give up its beliefs, but just alter them some and that is exactly what we see happening. We have been warned!

#### VERSES 19-20

1. We see the chapter conclude with the death of Ahaz and his son, Hezekiah who will now reign in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. What is amazing here is that as wicked, as ungodly as Ahaz was, his son Hezekiah will be a very godly king and we will see that as we continue on in our studies next time. We first have to look at Hoshea in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the captivity of the Northern Kingdom and then we will get to the life of Hezekiah.

May we as Christians listen to what Paul is saying and stand strong, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”** Ephesians 6:10-20.