

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3, 2 Kings 15-16, Part 3 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3, 2 Kings 15-16, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on the biblical account of King Ahaz in 2 Kings 15-16, **exploring his unrighteous reign**. The lecture highlights Ahaz's reliance on foreign powers like Assyria instead of trusting in God, and his introduction of idol worship. **Oswalt draws parallels between Ahaz's actions and modern-day tendencies to trust in enemies, money, and institutions rather than God**. He emphasizes that rituals and symbols are meaningless without a sincere heart devoted to God. **The lecture also mentions the importance of outwardly representing our inward faith and devotion to God**. Ultimately, the lecture serves as a reminder to examine our own hearts and avoid the pitfalls of idolatry and misplaced trust.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).



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on25_3.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3, 2 Kings 15-16, Part 3

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on 2 Kings 15-16:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 2 Kings 15-16 (Ahaz)

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Kings_EN_Session25_3.pdf"

Main Themes:

- **Ahaz's Unfaithfulness and its Consequences:** The primary focus is on King Ahaz of Judah and his decision to turn away from God in the face of external threats. Oswalt highlights Ahaz's actions as a stark example of misplaced trust, choosing political alliances and pagan practices over faith in Yahweh.
- **The Futility of Ritual Without a Right Heart:** Oswalt emphasizes that religious symbols and rituals are meaningless if the heart is not genuinely devoted to God. He warns against the idea of manipulating God through religious acts or adopting new rituals in the hope of achieving desired outcomes.
- **The Importance of Material Representation of Faith:** While cautioning against idolatry, Oswalt also argues that physical expressions of faith are important. Material things can represent a person's relationship to God, but only if the heart is sincere.
- **Parallels to Modern Society:** Oswalt draws parallels between Ahaz's choices and the temptations faced by individuals and societies today, such as trusting in money, political correctness, institutions, and personal capabilities rather than God.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Ahaz's Reign and Context:** Ahaz reigned for about 20 years, a period marked by significant external threats from Pekah (Israel) and Rezin (Aram). He ascended as co-regent in 735 BC amidst these threats.
- "in 735, Ahaz was forced upon his father Jotham as a co-regent. Almost certainly, it's at that point that the Pekah and Rezin forces...came south against Judah."
- **Ahaz's Idolatry:** Ahaz "did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. That's 16.2. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son

in the fire," engaging in pagan practices on high places. This is contrasted with previous kings of Judah, for whom Oswalt previously argued the high places were for worship of Yahweh.

- "He did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God...He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire."
- **Ahaz's Alliance with Assyria:** Instead of trusting in God, Ahaz sought help from Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, sending him silver and gold from the temple and royal treasury as tribute.
- "Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel who are attacking me."
- Oswalt likens this to "three mice having a fight, and one of them hiring the cat."
- **Isaiah's Prophecy and Ahaz's Rejection:** The prophet Isaiah met Ahaz, telling him to trust in God and ask for a sign, but Ahaz refused, claiming he didn't want to "put the Lord to the test."
- "This, of course, is what we find in Isaiah chapter 7 when Isaiah meets Ahaz out at the waterworks and says trust the Lord. Ask for a sign as high as heaven or deep as hell. And Ahaz said oh, I wouldn't want to put the Lord to the test."
- Oswalt characterizes Ahaz's response as "Piety is a wonderful cover-up for unbelief."
- **The Altar in Damascus:** Ahaz's visit to Damascus after Tiglath-Pileser's conquest led him to admire an altar there. He then sent detailed plans to Uriah the priest to construct a similar altar in Jerusalem. This symbolizes Ahaz's desire to adopt foreign religious practices, believing they would bring success.
- "He went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria...He sent Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar with detailed plans for its construction."
- Oswalt believes Ahaz is "worshipping the idea that ritual can bring about magical results."
- **The Temple's Significance:** Oswalt notes the detailed descriptions of the temple in Kings, including its rebuilding by Joash and eventual destruction, emphasize that God desires a genuine heart of worship, not just outward symbols. He

contrasts the Hebrew understanding of sacrifice with the pagan belief that rituals automatically produce good results.

- **Modern Parallels:** Oswalt warns against trusting in oneself, money, political correctness, or institutions instead of God, drawing a parallel to Germany's history and the dangers of seeking security from a tyrant. He uses the example of tithing to highlight the difference between manipulating God and giving out of love and gratitude.

Quotes:

- "And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria."
- "I've often said this is like three mice having a fight, and one of them hiring the cat."
- "He hasn't built an idol...But what has he done? He's worshipping the idea that ritual can bring about magical results."
- "On the one hand, the symbols of worship mean nothing without the heart. If your heart is not right, if your heart does not belong to him, then you can do these worship things till you're blue in the face, and they're not going to do a thing for you."
- "But if our hearts are truly his, then the ways in which we express that physically and materially are important to him."
- "You ought to tithe because God is good enough to let you keep 90% of his money."
- "We see ourselves worshipping dead symbols. We see ourselves trusting our worst enemies. We see ourselves trying to find security in this world."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture uses the story of Ahaz as a cautionary tale about the dangers of misplaced trust and the importance of a genuine heart of worship. He connects the historical narrative to modern-day temptations and challenges, urging listeners to examine their own hearts and priorities. He emphasizes the need for a balanced perspective on religious symbols, acknowledging their value as expressions of faith while warning against the trap of idolatry and empty ritualism.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3, 2 Kings 15-16, Part 3

2 Kings 15-16: The Reign of Ahaz - A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences, drawing from the provided text.

1. What was the historical context surrounding Ahaz becoming co-regent?
2. According to the text, what actions did Ahaz take that were considered "detestable in the eyes of the Lord?"
3. How does Dr. Oswalt interpret the references to "high places" in the context of both good and bad kings of Judah?
4. Explain the analogy of the "three mice and the cat" used in the context of Ahaz's political decisions.
5. Describe Isaiah's encounter with Ahaz at the waterworks, and Ahaz's response to Isaiah's advice.
6. What modern-day examples does Dr. Oswalt use to illustrate trusting enemies over God?
7. What does Ahaz observe in Damascus that captivates his attention, and what action does he take as a result?
8. How does the text distinguish between the importance of rituals versus the heart in worship?
9. According to the text, why did God command the Israelites to rebuild the temple after their exile?
10. Explain the difference between a pagan understanding of sacrifice and the Hebrew understanding of sacrifice.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Ahaz became co-regent in 735 BCE likely because the northern kingdoms of Pekah (Israel) and Rezin (Aram) were threatening Judah. This event terrified the house of David and likely prompted the appointment of Ahaz to share the throne with his father, Jotham, to address the crisis.

2. Ahaz "did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God," followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and even sacrificed his son in the fire. He also engaged in the "detestable practices of the nations" by offering sacrifices and burning incense at high places, on hilltops, and under every spreading tree, clearly reinstituting idol worship.
3. Dr. Oswalt suggests that for the good kings of Judah, worshipping at high places indicated Yahweh was worshipped, not idols. However, for a king like Ahaz, the high places were reinstituted for idol worship.
4. The "three mice and the cat" analogy illustrates Ahaz's decision to seek help from Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria against Aram and Israel. Just as a cat is no friend to mice, Assyria was not a true ally to Judah, and Ahaz was essentially paying Assyria to do what it already intended.
5. Isaiah met Ahaz at the waterworks and told him to trust the Lord and ask for a sign from God. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, claiming he didn't want to put the Lord to the test, but this was actually a cover for his lack of faith.
6. Dr. Oswalt uses modern-day examples such as trusting in oneself ("I can take care of me"), money, political correctness, friends, and institutions in place of God. He also referenced people in Germany during the rise of Hitler who trusted a tyrant to take care of them.
7. In Damascus, Ahaz was captivated by the altar he saw and sent a sketch and detailed plans to Uriah the priest to build a similar altar in Jerusalem. Ahaz wanted this altar because Tiglath-Pileser was winning the world, leading Ahaz to believe ritual can bring about magical results.
8. The text emphasizes that the heart is paramount in worship, and symbols mean nothing without a sincere heart devoted to God. God says, "I don't want your symbols if your heart is rotten. Forget it," but also, "I'd love to have beautiful symbols that represent who you are in relationship to me."
9. God commanded the Israelites to rebuild the temple not because the physical structure itself held inherent power, but to represent their renewed relationship with Him. Building the temple from a heart of love would bring about spiritual and material blessings.

10. Pagan sacrifices were seen as a means to automatically achieve good results in the heavenly realm, as a mechanical approach to the divine. Hebrew sacrifices were meant to represent a heart fully devoted to God, symbolizing and expressing a pre-existing relationship.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the role of fear in Ahaz's decision-making process and how it led him to compromise his faith. Drawing on modern parallels, discuss the potential consequences of prioritizing security over spiritual integrity.
2. Discuss Dr. Oswalt's interpretation of the temple's significance in 2 Kings. How does it function as a symbol of both genuine devotion and empty ritual, and what message does this convey about the nature of worship?
3. Explore the parallels between the historical context of Ahaz's reign and contemporary society. In what ways do individuals and nations today face similar temptations to trust in worldly powers or ideologies rather than in God?
4. Explain the relationship between physical acts of worship and spiritual sincerity in the context of 2 Kings 15-16. What are the dangers of focusing solely on external rituals, and how can believers ensure their hearts are aligned with their actions?
5. Discuss the implications of Ahaz's actions for the Davidic dynasty and the future of Judah. How does his reign contribute to the eventual destruction of the temple and the exile of the Israelites, and what lessons can be learned from his failures?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ahaz:** King of Judah who reigned from 735-715 BCE, known for his idolatry and reliance on foreign powers.
- **Tiglath-Pileser:** King of Assyria (745-727 BCE) to whom Ahaz appealed for help, resulting in Judah becoming a vassal state.
- **Pekah:** King of Israel who formed an alliance with Rezin of Aram to attack Judah during Ahaz's reign.
- **Rezin:** King of Aram (Syria) who allied with Pekah of Israel against Judah.
- **High Places:** Elevated locations used for worship, which could be dedicated to Yahweh or to pagan deities. Their presence was a recurring issue throughout the reigns of the kings of Judah.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods, a practice condemned in the Old Testament.
- **Vassal State:** A state that is subordinate to another, more powerful state, often paying tribute and owing allegiance.
- **Temple:** The central place of worship for the Israelites in Jerusalem, built by Solomon and later destroyed and rebuilt.
- **Ritual:** A set of actions or ceremonies performed according to a prescribed order, often with religious significance.
- **Sacrifice:** An offering made to a deity, typically involving the killing of an animal, as an act of worship or atonement.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 25.3, 2 Kings 15-16, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Reign of Ahaz and Principles of Worship

1. Why does the biblical text dedicate more verses to Ahaz's reign (20 verses) compared to Uzziah's, despite Uzziah ruling for a significantly longer period (52 years versus 20 years)?

The extended focus on Ahaz likely serves to highlight the depth of his wickedness and its consequences. While Uzziah's reign had both positive and negative aspects, Ahaz's reign was marked by blatant idolatry, seeking help from foreign powers instead of God, and corrupting the temple practices. The text uses the additional verses to paint a detailed picture of his apostasy and to warn against similar behavior.

2. What was the political situation facing Ahaz at the start of his co-regency, and how did it influence his decisions?

Ahaz faced a significant threat from the northern kingdoms of Israel (under Pekah) and Aram (under Rezin), who sought to remove him and Jotham from the throne and install their own ruler. This created immense fear within the Davidic dynasty. This external threat appears to have driven Ahaz to make desperate choices, including seeking military assistance from Assyria.

3. What specific acts of impiety did Ahaz commit, according to the text, and why were they considered so egregious?

Ahaz followed the ways of the kings of Israel (which were considered sinful), sacrificed his own son in the fire, and engaged in the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out. He also reinstituted idol worship at high places, which, while tolerated by some good kings when used to worship Yahweh, were now used for idol worship. These acts were seen as a complete rejection of the covenant with God and a turn towards pagan practices.

4. Why was Ahaz's decision to seek help from Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, instead of trusting in God, considered such a grave error?

Seeking help from Assyria represented a lack of faith in God's ability to protect Judah. It demonstrated a reliance on worldly power rather than divine providence. It also involved bribing Tiglath-Pileser with silver and gold from the temple and royal treasuries, effectively robbing God to pay for earthly security. This action mirrored the act of "hiring the cat" to solve a mice problem and trusting one's "worst enemy" in place of God.

5. What is the significance of the altar that Ahaz saw in Damascus, and how did it reflect his spiritual condition?

The altar Ahaz saw in Damascus symbolized his attraction to the perceived success and power of Assyria. He believed that adopting their rituals and religious practices would bring him similar advantages. He sent plans of the altar back to Jerusalem and instructed Uriah the priest to build one like it. This reflects his belief that rituals can be used to manipulate divine power.

6. What is the relationship between outward symbols of worship (like temples and altars) and the inward condition of the heart, according to the text?

Outward symbols of worship, like temples and altars, are meaningless without a sincere and devoted heart. God desires genuine worship that reflects a true relationship with Him. While beautiful symbols are desirable and represent the inward condition of the worshipper, they are worthless if the heart is not right. The text emphasizes that God is not interested in manipulation through rituals, but genuine love and devotion.

7. How can the story of Ahaz and the temple be applied to contemporary issues such as materialism, political correctness, and trusting in institutions?

The story of Ahaz serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of misplaced trust. Just as Ahaz trusted in Assyria instead of God, people today may rely on material wealth, political ideologies, or social institutions for security and validation. These things can become idols that distract from a genuine relationship with God. The focus on security can lead to the election of "tyrants" who promise security in exchange for freedoms or moral principles.

8. What is the proper motivation for tithing or contributing to religious causes, according to the text?

The proper motivation for tithing is not to manipulate God into providing financial blessings. Instead, tithing should be an act of gratitude and recognition of God's goodness. The text states that God is generous enough to let believers keep 90% of His money, and tithing is a way of acknowledging His ownership and provision.