CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JUNE01 2024

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 28:1-5; 2 Kings 16.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 27.

a leader's influence



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"This was indeed a time of great peril for the chosen nation. Only a few short years, and the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel were to be scattered among the nations of heathendom. And in the kingdom of Judah also the outlook was dark. The forces for good were rapidly diminishing, the forces for evil multiplying. The prophet Micah, viewing the situation, was constrained to exclaim: 'The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men.' 'The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.' Micah 7:2, 4. 'Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,' declared Isaiah, 'we should have been as Sodom, and . . . Gomorrah.' Isaiah 1:9" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 324).

keytext

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD."

(2 Chronicles 28:1, NIV)

what do you think?

The Bible mentions great and awful leaders, but none of them are truly perfect. Only our faith in God can clean us of our sins. The following are some of the most faithful leaders in the Bible. Try to match each of them with their deeds.

1. Noah ___a. Traveled by foot over 10,000 miles and suffered greatly in efforts of sharing God's message.
2. Daniel ___b. Often remembered for his humility and his loyalty to God. His growing leadership skills helped unite Israel.
3. Abraham ___c. The world mocked him for following God's orders, but his efforts gave the human race another chance at life.
4. Paul ___d. Pleaded with God on behalf of others and was willing to sacrifice his own son to do God's will.
5. David ___e. He lived his life in full obedience to God, and risked his life more than once while doing faithful service for the Lord.

did you know?

Did you know that some of God's people offered their children as human sacrifices to the Ammonite god Molech? The practice was done in a place called Topheth or altar, in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. The prophet Micah hints why: "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7, NIV). They thought this practice would appease God.

INTO THE STORY

"In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, 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, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.

"Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but they could not overpower him. At that time, Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the people of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath and have lived there to this day.

"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.' And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.

"Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it."

(2 Kings 16:1-12, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever read this passage of Scripture before? What is new to you?

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Place an X at each point in the story where Ahaz should have talked to God.

Circle the names of all the "minor" characters who play a part in Ahaz's life. What specific contribution does each make to Ahaz's life?

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What spiritual lessons will you take away from this passage?

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Where do you see God in this narrative?

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Do you see God's hand anywhere in Ahaz's life or the circumstances in which he found himself? Explain.

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punch lines

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said. 'We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles' " **(1 Samuel 8:19, 20, NIV).**

"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd" **(Exodus 23:2, NIV).**

"Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God" **(Leviticus 26:1, NIV).**

"Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the LORD your God, and serve him only" ' " **(Matthew 4:10, NIV).**

"But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go" **(Deuteronomy 12:5, NIV).**

further insight

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. . . . Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. . . . Thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 70

Sabbath

Read 2 Kings 14:3; 16:2, 3; 2 Chronicles 28:1.

Did you successfully match the names of men of faith with their godly actions?

From today's reading, how were bad political leaders described in the Bible?

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Thankfully the Bible gives us numerous examples of individuals who followed God and turned to Him for counsel and leading. To whom do you turn for godly counsel, and why?

_____

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Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 12:5.

After reading the *Into the Story* section and completing the *Out of the Story* questions, consider this question: Was there anyone to whom Ahaz could have turned for godly counsel? Do some research to find out which prophets were in the land of Judah during his kingship. (Hint: One of them is considered the greatest Old Testament prophet.)

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Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 28:1; 34:1-3.

This week's *Key Text* tells us that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. Do you think his relative youth had anything to do with his poor spiritual decisions? Explain.

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Why was King Josiah faithful to God even as a young king, and Ahaz was not? Was Ahaz born bad and Josiah born good?

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Find a godly, older individual and ask him/her to tell you of an experience in which they made a bad decision because of their age. What lesson(s) did they learn?

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Tuesday

Read Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 5:14.

This week's *Flashlight* could have been taken straight out of some sci-fi movie. According to God's servant, Ellen G. White, dark satanic forces seemed to be winning the battle for Israel and Judah. Think right now about the world in which we are living. If you did not know God, how would you find hope amid the chaos in our world? What is the role of Christians in a world such as this?

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Wednesday

Read Revelation 14:6, 7.

Read and think carefully about *Punch Lines* for this week. There are a couple of themes running through them. One is the call of God to avoid the peer pressure of the crowd when it is doing wrong. The other is found in today's passage. _____ It is the foundation on which earth's final battle will be built.

_____

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Thursday

Read Leviticus 26:1.

Are there any idols in your life? Here are some questions that might help you find out. What do you spend the majority of your leisure time doing? What specific pleasure do you derive from the person or activity occupying your carefree moments?

Try this: Add up the time you spend

Texting _____ minutes/day
E-mailing _____ minutes/day
Surfing _____ minutes/day
Social Media _____ minutes/day
Total _____ minutes/day

Then, dedicate half of this time to getting to know God better through prayer, Bible study, serving others, or sharing your faith.

Friday

Read Matthew 4:10.

Set aside a quiet moment this evening. Turn off your cell phone, computer, tablet—everything. Get your space really quiet. Then, get a piece of paper and something to write with. Finish the following statements: My relationship with God would be much tighter if I would let go of _____

_____

_____

It's not easy to do it, but I plan to _____

_____

_____

The day I plan to start this is _____ _____. The person I will get to help me stay accountable is _____

Close with a prayer, asking God for strength to overcome whatever is preventing you from getting closer to Him.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 27.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.