

had of the wickedness which was then generally perpetrated by the king.

It is important of course to realize the general situation in Jerusalem during the reign of these three kings. When Ahaz became king, we had Jerusalem and Judah standing as it had stood for over 200 years with its neighboring nations to the north, that of Israel. Israel was as you know, made up of 10 of the tribes. It was a kingdom perhaps three times as large as the kingdom of Judah. While possibly not nearly as wealthy per capita as the Kingdom of Judah, it was nevertheless quite a wealthy kingdom and quite a strong one. Just north of Israel was the kingdom of Syria, north and to the east. The kingdom of Syria with its capital at Damascus was a good deal stronger than the kingdom of Israel, and had often defeated it in war. At the beginning of the book of Isaiah, we find Israel and Syria united together in order to attack Judah. Judah is thus attacked by one nation two or three times as large as itself and by another nation which is still larger, both acting together in order to conquer Judah and to put a puppet king on the throne of Judah. This makes a situation in which the people of Judah are very much terrified. Isaiah feels that they should turn to God for help in this great emergency. However Ahaz the king is not interested in God. Instead he tried to play off the great powers of the day against each other. He has his own ideas as to how to lead Judah safely through the troubled water that were ahead. Secretedly he sends a message to the king of Assyria, the great aggressive power which is far across the desert beyond Syria. He sends to the king of Assyria and asks him to come and protect him from Syria and from Israel, saying that if he will do so he will pay him heavy tribute and will