

Be Transformed, Not Conformed

2 Kings 16:1-16; Romans 12:1-2

Introduction:

- What do you need to change? To be satisfied? To have peace? To calm the storm?
- For me, I kept looking for the right thing to adopt into my life... Tao of Pooh, Secret Life of Plants, Astral Projection, being non-conformist
- For you... is that why you are here today? Looking for the right system? For a new list of do's and don'ts? Looking to add something to your spiritual buffet?
- What actually has the power to change you, to transform you?

2 KINGS 16: King Ahaz the Pluralist

2 Kings 16:1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham became king of Judah. 2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God like his ancestor David 3 but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even sacrificed his son in the fire [to Moloch], imitating the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites. 4 He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

- Waiting for a king like David...
- A king of Judah behaving like a king of Israel (this is an insult)
- King Ahaz is a pluralist, rejecting the monotheism of David and looking around the world for anything he can add to his spiritual buffet
 - Can you relate? Verse of the day, mood crystal, namaste, comb my aura
 - Or another version: What wild conspiracy theory is out there today to bank my life upon? How can I let this weird thing shape my spiritual life today?
- This isn't a timeline of events, but more of a description of his life. How do you get here?
 - How does it get to the point where you sacrifice your son for prosperity and blessing on the harvest → Moloch of the Ammonites
- We are about to see.

5 Then Aram's King Rezin and Israel's King Pekah son of Remaliah came to wage war against Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz but were not able to conquer him. 6 At that time Aram's King Rezin recovered Elath for Aram and expelled the Judahites from Elath. Then the Arameans came to Elath, and they still live there today. 7 So Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. March up and save me from the grasp of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me." 8 Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the Lord's temple and in the treasuries of the king's palace and sent

them to the king of Assyria as a bribe. 9 So the king of Assyria listened to him and marched up to Damascus and captured it. He deported its people to Kir but put Rezin to death.

- King Ahaz is in a bind → Aram and Israel are trying to kill him. He holds his ground, but In one day, 120,000 men died, and 200,000 were taken as servants to Samaria.. Hardly a win. Bound to happen again... what should he do?
- The OT tells him where to go for his hope...
- He goes to the logic of the world instead... Make alliances... Spend money...

10 King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria. When he saw the altar that was in Damascus, King Ahaz sent a model of the altar and complete plans for its construction to the priest Uriah. 11 Uriah built the altar according to all the instructions King Ahaz sent from Damascus. Therefore, by the time King Ahaz came back from Damascus, the priest Uriah had completed it. 12 When the king came back from Damascus, he saw the altar. Then he approached the altar and ascended it. 13 He offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splattered the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. 14 He took the bronze altar that was before the Lord in front of the temple between his altar and the Lord's temple, and put it on the north side of his altar... The bronze altar will be for me to seek guidance." 16 The priest Uriah did everything King Ahaz commanded...

- Tiglath-Pileser III (also known as Pul), the founder of the NeoAssyrian empire, began to invade south towards Syria and Israel. In 743 B.C.E., he received tribute from Syria and Menahem of Israel (2 Kgs. 15:19, 20). Faced with an impending attack from Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, King Ahaz of Judah sent tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III in exchange for his help to defeat these kings (2 Kings 16:5-16; cf. Isaiah 7). Tiglath-Pileser III subdued Damascus and installed Hoshea over Israel after King Pekah was assassinated (2 Kgs. 15:29-30). → NOTE: Kings isn't always chronological
- King Ahaz gets to be buddy buddy w/ Tiglath-pileser and goes and summers w/ him
- Goes to his house, his temple, the whole 9 yards → LOVES IT, snaps a pic, sends it to his builder and priest → Keep up w/ the Jones Or the Pileasers
 - Ex: When you go to your friend's house and see their new boat, pool, etc.
 - Ex: When you read whatever this month's Oprah Book Club // self help book
 - Ex: When you are a little buddhist, a little Muslim, a little wiccan, a little Christian
- Not only do they build a replica, they plunder the Lord's temple for supplies and use it for terrible purposes → divination
 - Divination is an attempt to gain insight into the future from a god
 - For the Assyrians, divination was their "thing." Their god, Hadad, was known as a "lord of divination"
 - They practiced extispicy (looking at animal parts) and hepatoscopy (specifically the liver). Ahaz thought the bronze altar would be perfect for this purpose
- He could have sought God... the priest could have pointed him to God... Instead, Ahaz looked for change, advice, help, counsel, satisfaction, peace, security everywhere else

IF THIS STORY IS TRUE, WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM IT AND WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

- Connect with the Gospel → I have good news...

- **God wants to transform you, but the world wants to conform you.**

- *Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*
- Our default is to modify our lives, conforming to new ideas, rather than having an idea be planted within us that changes us
 - We try to “look the part” → the way we dress, the way we eat, none of this has power to transform us, only conform us
 - Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian way of dress/eating
 - This is what Ahaz did too
- More good news: You don’t need to adopt more spiritual ideas, you need to be adopted
 - *Ephesians 1:5, He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...*
- God wants to bring you into his family regardless of your mess (his pleasure)
- Jesus describes that there are two paths →
 - One path seems right to a person... filled w/ clever ideas and influential people... conform to their image... pick yourself up by your bootstraps... try harder... ecumenicism and tolerance... leads to death
 - Second path Jesus invites you to turn from it all, surrender to his reign, follow him, trust him, and he will transform you - he will do the work
 - It’s free, but it requires you to turn away from that old life

- Connect with God

- This is good news → God wants to transform you. He doesn’t want you to live in defeat and emptiness. He isn’t waiting for you to get your act together.
- **God wants to transform you by the renewing of your mind and the power of the Holy Spirit as you surrender.**
 - *Romans 12:1-2, Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*
- You are conformed to the world when you fill your mind and life with alternative, spiritual junk food. Just like King Ahaz.
- The world is spending billions of dollars a year to get you to be conformed to its image. Your friends are telling you. Your job is telling you.

- Conformation only results in behavior modification and destruction - it has no power for transformation. Only the gospel has that power.
 - What a privilege that God has provided a sure alternative that works!
- God is gracious to speak his Word to you, to send his Word to become flesh, and to have him dwell within you.
 - What you need is the Word and the Spirit → Your mind is renewed, it learns biblically what is God's good and pleasing will
 - And when someone offers to read your palm, you think it's kooky dukes and you say no thank you
 - And if you want to change, to grow, then feast on something that has the power to transform you as opposed to something that has the power to condemn
 - *Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. (Phil 4:8)*
 - Surrender to God as a living sacrifice, following, trusting him, his Word
- Ahaz started off thinking his neighbors had pretty cool spiritual insight and wound up justifying sacrificing his son to the god Moloch. Nobody starts there, but people kill kids in this country for far less - He sacrificed for prosperity, we sacrifice our kids to the god of convenience
- **Connect with God's Family**
 - *Groups are our lifeblood here at Revolve. Simply stated, if you aren't in a group, then you aren't connecting with Revolve.*
 - Your group isn't a midweek Bible study (shouldn't be). It should be a community of people who have been transformed. They love one another differently, serve one another differently.
 - If you and the people in your group are conformed to the image of the world rather than the image of God, speak truth into one another's lives and hearts
 - It is a gift of God to be part of a community that sharpens one another as we speak truth to one another in love and grace
- **Connect with God's Mission**
 - Christian, you say that you don't want to be different. I get it, persecution isn't fun, but let me tell you something. Christian, you are different. You are categorically, unequivocally, peculiar, weird and other-worldly - if you are in Christ.
 - If your Christianity is just a system or a culture, you're none of those things, but if it is about transformation rather than conformation, you are different.
 - What makes you different is that you have something inside you, called the Holy Spirit, that is transforming you from the inside out.
 - You have faith, hope, love, are a beneficiary of grace, mercy, and adoption
 - You are made holy and called to holiness

- Like a lump of dough, you've been cut apart for a different purpose (holiness).
 - What is that purpose? To be made like Jesus and, while you are here on earth, to glorify God by making disciples who make disciples
 - This is a gift, not a burden. God is inviting you to something spectacular
 - You have the greatest news in the world to share. Share it. Spread it. Don't know how? We can teach you, but it all begins by you being transformed and the overflow of the gospel in your life is a fragrance of life and death
 - You can't control who smells life and who smells death
- *Romans 12:1-2, Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*
- **Be transformed, not conformed.**

Discipleship Groups

1. Do a Discovery Study on 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever."
2. What does this have to do with being transformed vs. conformed?