Who was King Pekah in the Bible?

During the time of the divided kingdom in Israel, there was a string of wicked kings who ruled in the northern and southern kingdoms. This should not be surprising; when the people of Israel first became dissatisfied with God as their king and clamored for an earthly king, God warned them that human kings would make them unhappy (1 Samuel 8:6-18). But the people insisted, and so God gave them over to their desire. While there were several righteous kings who ruled over God's people in Judah, the number of poor rulers who led the people into idolatry would eventually bring the nation to ruin and captivity in a foreign land.

Pekah was one such evil king. He began his rule in the kingdom of Israel by assassinating the former king, Pekahiah, for whom Pekah served as a chief officer, and taking over his throne (2 Kings 15:25). Pekah reigned for 20 years before he himself was assassinated by Hoshea son of Elah. Before Pekah was killed, however, some events took place that had a big impact on the nation of Israel and also on the whole world.

Late in his reign, Pekah entered an alliance with the king of Syria and attacked the southern kingdom of Judah, besieging Jerusalem. In response, King Ahaz of Judah sought help from the Assyrians, and Assyria invaded and "took Ijon, Abel Beth Maakah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali and deported the people to Assyria" (2 Kings 15:29). This was the beginning of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, which was God's judgment for the sin and idolatry of the kings and their people (2 Kings 17:7-23). Pekah's assassin, Hoshea, would reign for nine years after Pekah's death, but King Shalmaneser of Assyria would discover Hoshea's treachery in refusing to pay tribute and attempting to ally with Egypt against Assyria (2 Kings 17:4) and imprison Hoshea. Shalmaneser would then conquer the rest of

the kingdom of Israel and deport its people, completing God's judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel.

Another major event happened during Pekah's rule that brought hope to God's people. When King Pekah and King Rezin of Aram marched against Ahaz, king of Judah, the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah to comfort Ahaz and the people. He said, "It will not take place, / it will not happen, / for the head of Aram is Damascus, / and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. / Within sixty-five years / Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. / The head of Ephraim is Samaria, / and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son. / If you do not stand firm in your faith, / you will not stand at all" (Isaiah 7:7-9). In this prophecy, Pekah is referred to as "Remaliah's son."

The Lord also offered Ahaz a sign, and, even though Ahaz refused on the grounds that he did not want to test the Lord, God moved Isaiah to give this famous prophecy: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste."

Not only did God promise that King Pekah and King Rezin would not prevail, but He also spoke about how His Son, Jesus, the Messiah Israel had long awaited, would come. Ahaz saw the sign of a child's birth, but the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy awaited the birth of Jesus Christ, who was born to a virgin, grew up, died on a cross, and rose again, all to save His people from the reign of sin and death.