

Israel Is Taken Captive

Lesson Scope: [2 Kings 17](#)

Lesson Focus

The evil and turbulent history of the Northern Kingdom was nearing its end. The kingdom had begun with rebellion against Rehoboam, followed by Jeroboam's deliberate introduction of idolatry. Not one of the eighteen kings who succeeded him made any attempt at revival. Jeroboam's innovations sparked a general exodus of priests, Levites, and godly people to the Southern Kingdom (2 Chronicles 11:13-16).

God had faithfully warned Israel by His prophets—Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and others. Now Assyria was experiencing resurgence, expanding her borders and influence. Tiglath-pileser III had already carried away the tribes east of Jordan and many northern Israelites in the Galilee Captivity. Shalmaneser V initiated a three-year siege of Samaria, but Sargon II replaced him before the city fell.

Sin incites divine wrath. It may appear—though man is able to elude judgment, but God will finally mete out justice.

This lesson, in some ways, overlaps the previous two. It is different in that in the previous lessons, Israel was not being removed out of the Lord's sight (2 Kings 17:18, 23). This lesson should be taught as a warning for us. It does us no good to feel smug that we have not fallen into sin as Israel did. We must realize that in many ways, we are tempted to turn from God and justify ourselves as they did.

Remember to hold forth the repentance that God desires for apostatizing people.

Lesson Aim: To see the final result of departure from God.

Theme Verses: [James 1:14-15](#). But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Lesson Text

A Dethroned King

2 Kings 17:1-4 ¹ In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. ² And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. ³ Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. ⁴ And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

A Deported People

2 Kings 17:5-9 ⁵ Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷ For *so* it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, ⁸ And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. ⁹ And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

2 Kings 17:23 ²³ Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

A Degraded Worship

2 Kings 17:24-29 ²⁴ And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. ²⁵ And *so* it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew *some* of them. ²⁶ Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cit-

ies of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. ²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. ²⁸ Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. ²⁹ Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

2 Kings 17:41 ⁴¹ So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

Questions for Study

A Dethroned King

1. Why was it a mistake for Hoshea to ask Egypt for help?
2. What forms of bondage enslave men today?

A Deported People

3. What did Israel lose through their apostasy?
4. What was the Lord's perspective of Israel's history?
5. Why might secret sin seem less serious than open sin? In what way might it be more serious?

A Degraded Worship

6. Evaluate the people's conclusion about the lions.
7. Suggest some present-day counterparts to the conditions described in verse 41.

Analyzing the Passage

The fall of Samaria occurred thirty to fifty years after Jonah preached to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. The Assyrians were fierce fighters who were masters at siege warfare. Their cruel terror tactics induced many cities to surrender without resistance. They reserved their worst treatment for rebels like Hoshea.

In his writings, Sargon claimed to have deported twenty-seven thousand people from Samaria (2 Kings 17:6). Likely the majority of them were

women and children. A remnant remained to mix with captives brought in from eastern provinces (2 Kings 17:24). This uprooting and resettling was a strategy for keeping conquered peoples subjugated. The result in Israel was the mixed-race Samaritans, whom the Jews of Jesus' day despised.

"The God of the land" (2 Kings 17:26) alludes to the heathen concept of national deities, who might curse or bless according to whim. These people did not know the true God of all the earth. The priest brought back to teach them (17:28) was not a Levite but was of the caliber associated with Jeroboam's calf worship (2 Chronicles 11:14-15).

Principles and Applications

A Dethroned King

1. Those who depart from the Lord become servants to the enemy (2 Kings 17:2-3). The smoker discovers that he is a slave to tobacco. The habitual liar is a slave to his falsehood. Those who lay aside separated attire soon discover that worldly fashion quickly fills the vacuum. The devil promises freedom, but men instead become slaves to their own habits. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

2. Looking to man for security increases bondage (2 Kings 17:4). Only God can prevent an accident or keep sickness from depleting our resources. If we do not trust Him, we will seek earthly security. Governments and insurance companies offer that security, but they do so at the price of growing dependency and shrinking freedoms.

A Deported People

3. He who departs from God incurs great loss (2 Kings 17:5-6, 23). Satan promises freedom, pleasure, and a multitude of benefits; but he utterly fails to deliver. To depart from God is to trade "every good ... and ... perfect gift" for a fading mirage. The loss might not seem great at first. But loss of fellowship with God is followed by loss of fellowship with His people. What at first seems like freedom turns to defeat and emptiness. No one is there to support in time of trouble. The way back seems impossible and the cost too high. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

4. Departing from God shows contempt for His goodness (2 Kings 17:7-9). God had delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, and they reasonably owed Him all in return. God has a similar claim on us. He not only created us but also paid the price of our redemption on the cross. Living for self either denies that we need God or implies that we deserve everything we have received from Him. Both of those ideas are delusions.

5. God has given ample warning against departing from Him (2 Kings 17:23). At great sacrifice, Israel's prophets labored long to prevent calamity. Today we have the clear warnings of Scripture, the example of Bible characters, and abundant illustrations from secular history that the law of sowing and reaping is valid, universal, and immutable.

A Degraded Worship

6. Mingling with the heathen results in losing the knowledge of God (17:24-6). The ungodly seldom think about God or talk about Him. If we do not establish adequate safeguards, worldly values soon affect our own thinking. As we live and move among society, how easy it would be to forget God if we did not communicate with Him in our daily worship or receive reminders in our church assemblies. To cut ourselves off from these helps practically guarantees that the next generation will know little of what the Bible teaches. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

7. Religious leaders who depart from God give their people a false hope (2 Kings 17:27-28). The priest came and taught in Samaria, and the people mixed the worship of God with their worship of idols. Years later they were still practicing their mixed religion with the hope that it was acceptable to God. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what" (John 4:22).

How many religious people today are involved in the sins of the flesh and all manner of disobedience to the Scriptures, but they have assurance from their leaders that they are all right? Surely for them the Judgment Day will bring a shocking and heart-rending reality.

8. When people depart from God, their posterity live in ignorance of God (2 Kings 17:41). It is easy for Christian parents to fail in passing godly values to the rising generation. But when parents depart from God and do not take their children to a church where truth is taught,

their children do not hear God's Word taught or see it lived. How tragic that one who turns from the light of truth leaves all who follow him to wander in darkness!

Important Teachings

1. Those who depart from the Lord become servants to the enemy (2 Kings 17:2-3).
2. Looking to man for security increases bondage (2 Kings 17:4).
3. He who departs from God incurs great loss (2 Kings 17:5-6, 23).
4. Departing from God shows contempt for His goodness (2 Kings 17:7-9).
5. God has given ample warning against departing from Him (2 Kings 17:23).
6. Mingling with the heathen results in losing the knowledge of God (2 Kings 17:24-26).
7. Religious leaders who depart from God give their people a false hope (2 Kings 17:27-28).
8. When people depart from God, their posterity live in ignorance of God (2 Kings 17:41).

Answers to Questions

1. Why was it a mistake for Hoshea to ask Egypt for help?
Egypt was either unable or unwilling to help Hoshea—perhaps both. His rebellion brought retaliation from Assyria. God was against Hoshea; his only hope lay in repentance and submission to Him.
2. What forms of bondage enslave men today?
Many people today are unable to shake off their physical bondage to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or overeating. Others are in bondage to fashion, pleasure, pornography, or the demands of false religion. Still others are driven by a craving for wealth or fame.
3. What did Israel lose through their apostasy?
Israel lost God's favor and blessing. They lost their freedom and the land that God had given them. Many of them lost their lives.
4. What was the Lord's perspective of Israel's history?
God had, with mighty power and miracles, brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt, led them through the wilderness, and given them the Promised Land. The only reasonable response was to walk in His ways,

but they refused, turning to other gods. The people had spurned His patient and merciful efforts to recover them.

5. Why might secret sin seem less serious than open sin? In what way might it be more serious?

Secret sin might seem less serious than open sin because other people do not know about it.

Hidden sin might, in some ways, be more serious than known sin because it exerts a subtle influence and continues to grow.

6. Evaluate the people's conclusion about the lions.

They rightly concluded that the Lord sent the lions because the people were not serving Him. They wrongly concluded that adding the Samaritan forms of worship would correct the situation. True knowledge of "the God of the land" would have excluded idolatry.

7. Suggest some present-day counterparts to the conditions described in 2 Kings 17:41

Some people attend church on Sunday but live for themselves the rest of the week. Many professing Christians are deeply involved in church activity and claim to follow Christ, but their lives bear the marks of selfish indulgence and the works of the flesh. One cannot be a Christian and walk in disobedience to the Scriptures.

Summarizing the Lesson

The Israelites who were scattered still had opportunity in the land of their captivity to turn to God with all their heart and find mercy. For those who died in their sins, however, the day of opportunity was past. Someday those who do not heed God's call of mercy will meet the Judge of all the earth and receive a sentence far worse than being banished from an earthly promised land. They will be banished to eternity separated from God, with the accompanying horrors of hell. Today we can choose to surrender to God and live.

Research Guide

1. Read the prophecy of Israel's judgment in Amos 8 and 9.
2. Read Hosea 11 notice especially the heart of God as He agonizes over His need to bring judgment on Israel.