

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to 2 Kings 17 –

We have been looking at this historical account of the kings of Israel and Judah

How they rebelled against God and turned their back on Him and in the process turned their back on His grace.

They failed to heed His word

So because God is holy – judgment comes upon Israel

Two hundred years and 19 kings after they became their own nation, Israel fell.

It was not because the God of Israel was unable to help them, but because they had so forsaken God and ignored His guidance and correction that He finally stopped actively protecting them and let them rot and degrade according to their desire.

He gave them what they wanted – a life without Him.

And that is the same thing He offers to the world today for those that reject Him – an eternity being isolated from Him.

Let's pray...

[2Ki 17:1-41 NKJV] 1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, [and he reigned] nine years. 2 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him.

King Hoshea – he is significant among the kings of Israel because it was under his watch that the nation is conquered by Assyria.

It is under his watch that the righteous judgment of God comes upon the Northern Kingdom.

Was he the worst king of the 19 – by no means – the scriptures point that out.

Hoshea wasn't as bad as the other guys before him.

But here is the thing to remember church –

Being “not as bad” isn't enough to stop God's judgment.

We can tell ourselves that we are “not as bad” as other people, therefore God should allow us into heaven.

Not so,

We are all sinners.

(Ro 3:23 NKJV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

All of our sin ends in judgment.

(Ro 6:23 NKJV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The only way out of judgment is through believing (by grace through faith) in Jesus Christ.

(Jn 3:16 NKJV) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

King Hoshea was wicked – but not as bad, therefore judgment still came.

His actions were the straw that broke the camel's back.

We've all heard that phrase before right?

Camels are strong animals that could go days without drinking water and carry very heavy loads on their back.

And it was common to overload these camels with these loads (many times it was straw that was needed to feed animals)

So when the load was too heavy, the camel would collapse.

Was it that last piece of straw that made the camel collapse – no it was the accumulation of the load that was on its back.

And we see the same thing here – it was the accumulation of all the rebellion of all the kings and His people that brought God's judgment upon them.

3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. 4 And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute 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.

As we have seen over the past couple of weeks – that instead of repenting of their sins and turning to God, one of the practices of the kings of both Israel and Judah was that they would try to pay off their enemies.

They would burden their people with high taxes or take from what belonged to God and give it to their enemies and hope that they would simply go away.

Hoshea is getting tired of paying the tribute money to Assyria – he conspires against Assyria and goes to Egypt to see if they will form an alliance with him (once again, instead of turning to God – they are turning to the world for help)

He goes to Egypt and Assyria finds out about it and they arrest him.

By the way, the name Hoshea means “salvation” – a promising name but unfortunately, he does not live up to that promise.

Here is a free one for you guys – Hoshea was also the name of Joshua – until Moses changed it to Joshua. So it went from “salvation” to “Yahweh is salvation”

5 Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

So the Assyrians go into Samaria and they take the people back to cities in their growing empire.

Keep in mind that this relocation was not a crosstown relocation.

These cities were 400-800 miles away.

Turn to Amos 4

Amos was one of the prophets that God had sent to Israel – to warn them that if they didn't turn back that judgement was going to come upon them.

[Amo 4:2-3 NKJV] 2 The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you When He will take you away with fishhooks, And your posterity with fishhooks. 3 You will go out [through] broken [walls], Each one straight ahead of her, And you will be cast into Harmon," Says the LORD.

So God warned Israel, through Amos, that because of their rebellion, He was going to use the Assyrians to take them away – and the Assyrians would take them back – not in air conditioned buses – but naked and strung together with fish hooks pierced through their bodies and they would be made to walk past the ruins of their own cities.

7 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, 8 and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9 Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that [were] not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves [sacred] pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 11 There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, 12 for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."

From verse 7 – 12 we have one of the reasons for God's judgment.

They rejected the One True God that had redeemed them.

God redeemed His people out of the land of Egypt – yet Israel chose to worship (fear) other gods.

The people looked to other gods for provision, joy, satisfaction and salvation – the very things that only the One True God could give.

Instead of having lasting gratitude for Yahweh, they looked to other gods.

Church, ingratitude is something we have to guard our hearts against.

[1Th 5:18 NKJV] 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The grace of God has delivered us out of bondage to sin and from judgment, through Jesus Christ, who has led the ultimate exodus.

We need to be thankful for His grace

Remember this about idols – (again, idols can be anything that we put ahead of God) idols can never give us grace – all they do is enslave us.

When we reject the God of the bible, we reject His grace.

And that is what Israel had done for many years.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments [and] My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." 14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became

idolaters, and [went] after the nations who [were] all around them, [concerning] whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them.

Here is another reason for God's judgment upon His people.

They rejected His warnings.

Israel should have known better.

When we did our study through the book of Exodus, when God delivered them out of Egypt, He led them to the base of Mt Sinai where He gave them instruction on how to live – He gave them the book of Law.

Turn to Leviticus 26

Because despite giving them the Law and instructions on how to worship Him.

God tells them that if they are obedient to His statutes, He will bless them, but if they go against His statutes, there will be retribution.

[Lev 26:32-33 NKJV] 32 I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. 33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

The Children of Israel failed to heed His warning.

Then God sent prophet after prophet to warn them – and they failed to listen to them too.

Why?

Because they hardened their heart to God's word.

And the longer they hardened their heart to God's word and pursued idols – guess what happened, they became the idol.

We become like whatever we worship

Listen to what the Psalmist writes - **[Psa 115:8 NKJV] 8 Those who make them are like them; [So is] everyone who trusts in them.**

That is why those who worship money – those who worship pleasure – or any other idol, they can never be satisfied because they become enslaved to that idol.

In contrast, Paul tells us that [2Co 3:18 NKJV] 18 But **we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

16 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image [and] two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

Here we see that they were sacrificing their babies to Molech – I mentioned that last week. (caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire)

Also, we see that one of their practices was astrology – as they worshipped all the host of heaven and consulted fortune tellers and sorcery.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. 19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

The author of 2 Kings gives us a hint of the things to come – Judah is also following in the footsteps of Israel.

20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. 21 For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, [as it is] to this day.

For Israel, everything points back to the sin of Jeroboam.

Jeroboam is the king of Israel who instituted an alternate form of worship.

He didn't want his people traveling to Jerusalem to worship in the temple – so he set up the two golden calves and told people they could worship God there.

But what happened was that it opened the door for the people to start worshipping God however they wanted – including worshipping other pagan gods.

It is important to note that despite the removal of Israel from His sight, God God's heart is always to have them come back to Him.

Even with the warnings in Leviticus there is a promise if they would turn around and confess their sin (Lev. 26:39-42).

(Le 26:42 NKJV) **then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.**

24 Then the king of Assyria brought [people] from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed [them] in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. 25 And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, [that] they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed [some] of them. 26 So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the

rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals 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.

So as the Assyrians took the people out of Israel and into Assyria, one of the things they did was that they would bring people from other parts of the empire to move into the nation that they just conquered.

This is why even in the gospels we see the hate for the Samaritans from the Jews. Because they viewed them as outsiders / as mixed breeds.

So here these new inhabitants of the land – they show up and all of a sudden lions start eating them.

God uses the lions to get these strangers to realize that He is God and He is still around.

So the people send word to the king and the king sends a priest to teach the new inhabitants on how to appease God.

Keep in mind that the priests of the Northern Kingdom, they were corrupt as well – they were the ones that were also involved in the worship of the golden calves.

The king doesn't know it –

So the priests show up and teach the people how to go through the motions – but doesn't tell them that they are only to worship the One True God – why? Because it was something that they themselves did not believe in.

29 However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put [them] in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, [every] nation in the cities where they dwelt. 30 The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. 33 They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods--according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

The new inhabitants of the land – guess what? They resemble the inhabitants that were just taken out.

They come in and start worshipping whatever god they wanted.

I had you make a not that they appointed for themselves priests – by the way, that was the same sin that Jereboam did when he set up the shrines.

Remember, God had instructed that the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi.

But we see the people doing whatever they pleased instead of doing it God's way.

Somehow people get the idea that ministry is something you should consider if you can't do anything else.

Yes, God does use the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

But it is a calling and not a profession to choose.

Those in ministry ought to be the ones setting an example for others to follow.

They ought to be the ones ahead of the pack when it comes to following after God.

34 To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, 35 with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; 36 "but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. 37 "And the statutes, the

ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods. 38 "And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. 39 "But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies." 40 However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals. **41 So these nations feared the LORD**, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children's children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.

In verse 34 – I had you make a note where the scriptures tell us that the new inhabitants did not fear the Lord.

In verse 41, it states that the people feared the Lord

So what is it? Did they or did they not fear the Lord?

When both of the verses are put side by side, we find that they are different kind of fears.

In verse 41, speaks of a fear toward God that the people had because God had revealed His power to them via the lions.

They were taught by the priest that they had to appease Him.

When things go bad – try to do something and God may turn from His wrath.

Think about the individual who doesn't have a relationship with the Lord – a trial comes his way – they make an effort to reach out to God - as soon as the trial passes by, he goes back to his way of life.

Fear does drive people to God.

However, the problem is that fear cannot keep us there.

Fear must lead to something more noble, or it fails in its purpose

Fear should pass on to repentance, faith, and joy in Jesus

Fear may drive us to Christ, but only love will keep us there

These people were never taught about God—only forms to appease Him

And as a result, their fear never became anything other than a craven terror

Outwardly, they feared Yahweh

they spoke His name

they practiced the rituals of worship toward Him the priest had taught them

But there was no loyalty to Him; no real devotion of their hearts to Him

If there had been, then they would have put away their idols

they would have repented of the old ways— and embraced the ways of God

Church, don't miss the lesson.

Paul tells us that these examples are for us.

The names and places have changed—but the story is the same

The God of Israel is the God of this time and this place

And the warning is that it is possible to have a form of religion with no real content

That we can mouth the name of "Jesus"—but have no covenant relationship with Him.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

