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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Peoples of the Bible – The Assyrians

TEACHING SUMMARY

The Scriptures primarily focus on the people of Israel, but many other nations appear throughout the biblical record. One of the most significant of these nations was the Assyrians.

The Assyrians descended from Asshur, one of the grandsons of Noah. Their homeland was along the Tigris River in the region that is now northern Iraq. Their major cities included Asshur, Calah, and Nineveh, which eventually became the greatest capital of the Assyrian Empire.

The Assyrians are best known for building one of the first great world empires. In the eighth century BC they began a campaign of conquest that eventually dominated much of the Middle East.

One characteristic that made the Assyrians infamous was their extreme cruelty in warfare. Their kings often boasted about brutal punishments inflicted on their enemies as a way to intimidate other nations.

Another practice that distinguished the Assyrians was their policy of relocating conquered populations. When they conquered a region, they often deported large portions of its population to other areas of their empire. This policy helped prevent rebellions but also caused great hardship for the displaced people.

Assyrian religion involved worshiping many gods represented by idols. Their most prominent gods included Asshur, Ishtar, and Enlil. Their religious practices involved divination, magic, interpreting omens, and ritual practices that were forbidden by the Torah.

Because of these practices, God condemned the idolatry of the Assyrians. The prophets pronounced judgment against the Assyrian capital of Nineveh because of its violence and wickedness.

Despite their cruelty, God also showed mercy to the Assyrians when they repented. The prophet Jonah was sent to preach to Nineveh, and when the people repented, God spared the city for a time.

The Assyrians played a major role in Israel's history. They conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and exiled many Israelites to other parts of their empire. This event dramatically changed the course of Israel's history.

The Assyrians also attempted to conquer Judah, but God miraculously protected Jerusalem by striking down the Assyrian army during the reign of King Hezekiah.

The story of the Assyrians teaches that God can use even powerful and wicked nations to accomplish His purposes. It also reminds us that God is willing to show mercy to anyone who repents and turns to Him.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Assyrians descended from Asshur, a grandson of Noah.
 - Their homeland was along the Tigris River.
 - Their major cities included Asshur, Calah, and Nineveh.
 - The Assyrians built one of the earliest world empires.
 - They were known for extreme cruelty and intimidation in warfare.
 - They relocated conquered peoples throughout their empire.
 - Their religion included idols, divination, and interpreting omens.
 - God sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh to call them to repentance.
 - The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.
 - God miraculously protected Judah from the Assyrian army.
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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The Assyrians descended from _____, a grandson of Noah.
2. Their homeland was along the _____ River.

3. One of the most important Assyrian cities was _____.
 4. The Assyrians built a powerful _____.
 5. The Assyrians were known for extreme _____ in warfare.
 6. They often _____ conquered populations to other parts of their empire.
 7. The prophet _____ was sent to preach to Nineveh.
 8. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of _____.
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Challenging

1. The Assyrians spoke a language called _____.
 2. One of the most prominent Assyrian gods was _____.
 3. Assyrian religion involved practices such as _____ and interpreting omens.
 4. The prophet _____ pronounced judgment against Nineveh.
 5. The Assyrians exiled many Israelites to regions such as _____ and the river Gozan.
 6. King _____ led the Assyrian army that attacked Jerusalem.
 7. God struck down _____ Assyrian soldiers during the reign of King Hezekiah.
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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were the Assyrians able to build such a powerful empire?
2. What made the Assyrians especially feared among other nations?
3. Why do you think the Assyrians relocated conquered populations?
4. What does the story of Jonah teach us about God's mercy?
5. How did the Assyrians change the course of Israel's history?
6. What does God's protection of Jerusalem teach us about His power?
7. What lessons can we learn from the rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Asshur
2. Tigris
3. Nineveh
4. Empire
5. Cruelty
6. Relocated
7. Jonah
8. Israel

Challenging

1. Akkadian
2. Asshur
3. Divination
4. Nahum
5. Halah / Habor
6. Sennacherib
7. 185,000