

Lesson 4

September 27, 2026

Demise of the Kingdom of Israel:

People are ruined when they refuse to repent.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson examines the reign of Hoshea, Israel's last king, and the pivotal events that led to the nation's downfall, as recorded in 2 Kings 17. Hoshea's disobedience is explored as a contribution to Israel's ruin. This study also considers Israel's fall due to its rebellion, idol worship, and the neglect of its covenant with God. The lesson discusses the tragic contribution of idolatry and the perils of merging false religions with true worship. Faithfulness to God and a warning against idolatry and compromise are explored. Timeless spiritual truths, including prioritizing devotion to God and recognizing the costs of straying from spiritual commitments, are considered.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the 8th century BC, during a period of significant political and military turbulence in the ancient Near East, Israel's captivity to the Assyrians unfolded. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, faced growing aggression from the expanding Assyrian Empire. In 722 BC, under Assyrian King Shalmaneser V and later Sargon II, Samaria, Israel's capital, fell after an Assyrian attack. This marked the end of the Northern Kingdom, resulting in the deportation of much of its population throughout the Assyrian Empire to prevent resistance and encourage assimilation. This exile scattered the ten tribes, profoundly impacting Israel's identity and Biblical history.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. HOSHEA: ISRAEL'S LAST KING: 2 Kings 17:1-6.

- A. Hoshea's Reign and Disobedience, (1-4)
- B. The Fall of Israel, (5-6)

2. WHY ISRAEL FELL: 2 Kings 17:7-12, 17-18.

- A. Israel's Disobedience to God, (7-12)
- B. The Consequences of Idolatry and Rebellion, (17-18)

3. FALLEN ISRAEL'S CONTINUED IDOLATRY: 2 Kings 17:24-34.

- A. The Consequences of Idolatry, (24-29)
- B. The Mistake of Merging Religions (30-34)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. HOSHEA: ISRAEL'S LAST KING: 2 Kings 17:1-6.

A. Hoshea's Reign and Disobedience, 2 King 17:1-4.

Hoshea ascended to the throne in the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah, and reigned for nine years in Samaria. The text describes him as doing evil in the sight of the Lord, though not to the same extent as his predecessors (v. 2). This distinction may suggest a relative moderation in his actions compared to earlier kings of Israel who led the nation into deeper idolatry. Nevertheless, his reign was marked by political instability and rebellion. Hoshea became a vassal (a person obligated to a king) to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. As such, Israel was required to pay tribute as an acknowledgment of Assyrian rule. However, Hoshea later conspired against Assyria by seeking an alliance with the king of Egypt and withholding the tribute to Assyria. This act of rebellion provoked Shalmaneser to respond with his military forces, ultimately leading to the siege of Samaria and the capture of Hoshea. The passage highlights both the political maneuvering and spiritual unfaithfulness that characterized Israel during this period, serving as a prelude to the kingdom's eventual downfall and exile.

Israel and Hoshea's disobedience to God and dependence on foreign powers ultimately led to dire consequences. While his refusal to recognize Assyria's dominance may have appeared to be brave, his misguided alliance with Egypt was foolhardy. It demonstrated his failure to acknowledge God as the trustworthy source of protection and provision for Israel. Hoshea's actions not only displayed a lack of spiritual discernment but also highlighted the broader pattern of Israel's unfaithfulness. This period serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of seeking God's guidance and trusting in His plan rather than relying on worldly strategies that lead to downfall and judgment. As King David proclaimed in Psalm 20, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (v. 7 NKJV).

B. The Fall of Israel, 2 Kings 17:5-6.

The Assyrian army, under King Shalmaneser, besieged Samaria for three years and ultimately captured the city. This marked the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, leading to the Israelites' exile. They were deported to various regions under Assyrian control, including "colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (v. 6 NLT). This event fulfilled earlier prophetic warnings from prophets like Hosea and Amos.

The Assyrian Exile served as a fulfillment of God's warnings that disobedience would lead to national ruin. The exile signified God's judgment on the nation for violating their covenant with Him, as they turned away from His commandments and worshiped the false gods of foreign nations. This passage dramatically illustrated the seriousness of covenant faithfulness and serves as a key moment in Israel's history, displaying both divine justice and the consequences of unfaithfulness. These ten tribes are sometimes referred to as "The Ten Lost Tribes," but God knows their whereabouts and how to restore them in the end-time scenario (see Revelation 7:4-8).

Theologically, this passage reveals God's sovereignty over nations and His faithfulness to His covenant, even in the context of judgment. The exile was a direct result of Israel's failure to uphold their unique relationship with God, choosing instead to adopt the pagan practices and gods of surrounding nations. The three-year siege reflects both the severity of Israel's rebellion and the patience of God, who had sent numerous prophets to call His people to repentance. The deportation to Assyria, scattering the Israelites among foreign lands, symbolizes the loss of their identity as one nation under God. This event serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of turning away from God and reveals the importance of faithfulness in maintaining covenant blessings.

Hoshea's failure and Israel's fall remind us of the consequences of turning away from God. His lack of faith and reliance on foreign alliances, rather than trusting God, led to the nation's collapse. This shows us the importance of staying close to God and placing our trust in Him above all else. It's a chance to reflect on areas where we might lean on worldly solutions instead of seeking His guidance. Hoshea's story also shows God's patience and justice – He desires our devotion but won't force it. By learning from Israel's mistakes, we can strive to walk faithfully, prioritize obedience, and build a trusting relationship with God every day.

2. WHY ISRAEL FELL: 2 Kings 17:7-12, 17-18.

A. Israel's Disobedience to God, 2 Kings 17:7-12.

Despite experiencing God's power and provision in their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, they began to worship false gods and adopt the idolatrous customs of the nations that God had previously driven out before them. They did this despite God telling them, "Ye shall not do this thing" (v. 12). This unfaithfulness extended to embracing practices introduced by their own kings, further distancing them from the covenantal relationship they were called to uphold. Their actions reflected a deliberate disregard for God's commands, as they chose instead to adopt the spiritual corruption of surrounding cultures.

The Israelites' idolatry was seen in the construction of high places, sacred stones, and Asherah poles – symbols of worship that directly violated God's commands to remain devoted to Him alone. These actions not only demonstrated a lack of gratitude for their deliverance but also represented a profound breach of their commitment to the one true God. Their choices led to spiritual decline, as they prioritized the practices of other nations over their unique identity as God's chosen people. This passage emphasizes the importance of steadfast faithfulness to God and consistently refusing to compromise with worldly practices and philosophies.

B. The Consequences of Idolatry and Rebellion, 2 Kings 17:17-18.

Israel's rebellion against God reached devastating depths as they engaged in repulsive practices, including child sacrifice and sorcery. These acts were not isolated incidents, but rather a culmination of their disobedience and rejection of God's commandments. Among the many religious acts condemned in the Hebrew Bible, child sacrifice stands out as particularly horrifying. The idea that any group of people would willingly sacrifice their own children to their god(s) is so contrary to modern moral sensibilities that it is difficult to imagine

that such a practice could have ever existed. Nonetheless, the existence of Biblical condemnation of these rites attests to the fact that some ancient Israelites in fact did sacrifice their children (Child Sacrifice in Ancient Israel, Heath D. Dewrell).

Despite numerous warnings delivered through His prophets, the people of Israel continued to defy the Lord, arousing His righteous anger. Their unrepentant hearts and deliberate choices to pursue evil ultimately led to severe consequences, as God “removed them out of His sight” (v. 18) and allowed them to face exile. This marked a significant turning point, leaving only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin as remnants.

Sin creates a barrier between God and us, but His love and desire for our repentance and restoration remain constant. It’s reassuring to know that God longs for a close relationship with us, even when we stumble. By staying attuned to His Word and turning away from distractions that pull us from Him, we can strengthen our bond with God and avoid unnecessary struggles. At times, worldly influences – such as the news, political views, or peer pressure – can subtly infiltrate our lives. However, through a committed devotional life filled with prayer and Bible study, we can stay on the narrow path to eternal life.

3. FALLEN ISRAEL’S CONTINUED IDOLATRY: 2 Kings 17:24-34.

A. The Consequences of Idolatry, 2 Kings 17:24-29.

The consequences of Israel’s idolatry are evident as the Assyrians resettle people from various nations into Samaria, introducing their own gods and perpetuating the cycle of idol worship. This passage shows the serious repercussions of idolatry, as seen in the Lord sending lions, which killed some of the new inhabitants (v. 25) – a direct manifestation of God’s displeasure. It serves as a stark reminder that idolatry, in any form, disrupts the covenant relationship between humanity and God. Whether it takes the shape of materialism, pride, or misplaced priorities, idolatry diverts our focus from God and leads to spiritual decay. This narrative underscores the importance of faithfulness to God and the dangers of being lured away from His Word and His will by external influences.

This message was sent to Assyria’s king: “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” (v. 26 NKJV). His response was logical. An Israelite priest was sent back to Samaria to teach the new residents “how they should fear the Lord” (v. 28). Note the irony: The Israelites had been exiled because they lost their fear of the Lord God, and now one of their priests was sent to his homeland to teach the new residents how to fear God!

B. The Mistake of Merging Religions, 2 Kings 17:30-34.

Here we see the danger of syncretism – incorporating false beliefs or practices alongside acceptable worship of God. The people of Samaria attempted to worship Yahweh while also engaging in pagan religious practices. This blending of faiths was unacceptable to God, as true worship demands complete devotion and obedience. Verse 33 addresses this conflict, stating,

“They feared the Lord, and served their own gods,” illustrating how their hearts were not fully committed to the one true God.

Today, syncretism can subtly infiltrate our faith when we prioritize cultural norms, personal preferences, or societal trends over Biblical principles. When we allow external ungodly influences to shape our worship or beliefs, we risk compromising the purity of our devotion to God. It is essential to examine our hearts and practices regularly, ensuring they align with Scripture and reflect worship that is “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). By remaining steadfast in our commitment to God’s Word, we honor Him fully and cultivate a faith that is sincere and transformational. We should always endeavor to worship God by avoiding sinful influences and keeping Him at the center of our lives.

Losing sight of what truly matters can lead to some dangerous detours. It’s like wandering off a trail because something shiny catches our eye and we suddenly realize we’re lost. When we let distractions, fleeting trends, or misplaced priorities control our lives, we risk veering away from the peace and purpose God has for us. But here’s the good news: God’s grace is always there, waiting like a patient friend who never gives up on us. No matter how far we’ve strayed or how tangled things have become, there’s always a way back. All it takes is a willingness to let go of what’s holding us back and lean into God’s love.

Life with God is about obedience, connection, joy, and a sense of direction that no worldly distraction can offer. Only by following God, using the Bible as our map, will we find a life filled with meaning, peace, and lasting happiness.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is about faithfully following the Lord. We cannot be disciples of Jesus if we are following the world’s trends and tastes. We must always keep our eyes upon Jesus.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

Churches should create opportunities for honest assessments to ensure that they are fully aligned with God’s Word in every aspect of their ministry and worship. Sometimes, course corrections are necessary.

What Happened to the Ten Tribes of Israel?

When ancient Israel was divided into two kingdoms (930 BC), the southern kingdom called Judah consisted of two tribes of Israelites (Judah and Benjamin), and the northern kingdom, which kept the name Israel, consisted of the remaining ten tribes of Israelites (including two tribes for Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh).

When territory was divided between Judah and Israel, the tribe of Levi (the priests and their assistants, the Levites) was not included because they had no tribal territory. God forbade the tribe of Levi to have tribal territory (Joshua 13:14, 33), but they were provided by God with 48 cities in the territories belonging to the twelve tribes (Numbers 35:1-8).

During the nearly two centuries of division between Judah and Israel, most of the priests and many of the Levites chose to live in Judah and Jerusalem because the Temple, built by King Solomon, was there.

When the northern kingdom (Israel) was destroyed the Assyrians in 722 BC, many from the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken captive to Assyria (2 Kings 17:5-6; 1 Chronicles 5:26). Descendants of these captives were living in Assyria when the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians (607 BC) and began deporting Jews from Judah to Babylon (606 BC). All the Israelites living anywhere in the Babylonian Empire became subject to the rulership of Babylon.

Following the end of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon (537 BC), Israelites from all the twelve tribes came to live in Judea and Jerusalem, but the largest number were from the tribe of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. However, many of the Israelites (the twelve tribes) chose to continue living in the countries to which they had been scattered during the captivity / exile (722-537 BC).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul (Acts 26:7) and James, the brother of Jesus (James 1:1), spoke of the twelve tribes of Israel as still in existence. What James said still applies today: “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” The Jews living today, the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, number a little

over 15 million, scattered in 149 nations of the world, with the largest number living in the modern nation of Israel and the United States of America.

WORKSHEET

Hardening Hearts

- **How did the Israelites show themselves to be “stiff-necked” (2 Kings 17:14-17)?**
- **What do Proverbs 28:14 and 29:1 warn about hardening one’s “heart” and “neck”?**

In I Surrender, Patrick Morley wrote that the church’s integrity problems is in the misconception “that we can add Christ to our lives but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior It is revival without reformation, without repentance.”

- **Why can there be no revival without repentance/**
- **How does 2 Kings 17:29-34 describe the mixed worship that took place in Israel?**
- **How do some people try to mix worship of Jesus Christ with unbiblical forms of worship today? Why is this dangerous?**