

## 2 Kings 15-17 • Chapter Study

### INTO

As we've mentioned before, the record of Kings switches btwn the S'n kingdom of Judah and the N'n realm of Israel.

The formula tends to go,

- So & so became king in the whatever yr of the king of the *other* kingdom
- He was so many yrs old when he took the throne.
- He did what was right/evil in the sight of the Lord.
- He reigned so many yrs, then died and the next guy took his place.

Tonight we start with the throne of Judah.

<sup>1</sup> In the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. <sup>2</sup> He was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Jecholiah of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, <sup>4</sup> except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord struck the king, so that he was a leper until the day of his death; so he dwelt in an isolated house. And Jotham the king's son *was over* the *royal* house, judging the people of the land. <sup>6</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? <sup>7</sup> So Azariah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jotham his son reigned in his place.

We'll skip this tonight since the fuller story of Azariah is told in Chronicles.

It has some great lessons so we'll wait till then.

Now: Israel

<sup>8</sup> In the 38<sup>th</sup> year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria 6 months. <sup>9</sup> And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. <sup>10</sup> Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck and killed him in front of the people; and he reigned in his place. <sup>11</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. <sup>12</sup> This *was* the word of the Lord which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation." And so it was.

**Zechariah** was the 4<sup>th</sup> & last descendant of the **Jehu dynasty** to reign.

Jehu, you remember, was the usurper who brutally ended Ahab's dynasty.

Israel's throne had been a bit of a musical chairs.

But God told Jehu if he faithful executed His judgment on the wicked house of Ahab, his descendants would reign to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation.

Why only the 4<sup>th</sup> and not longer?

Because while Jehu got rid of the idols of Baal & Asherah Ahab & Jezebel installed, he didn't end the practice of the golden calf Jeroboam had started.

So the spiritual condition of Israel kept slipping till his great grandson filled the rebellion barrel and fell to judgment.

He reigned only half a yr, then was assassinated by Shallum, one of his counselors.

Then then reigns for an even **less** time.

<sup>13</sup> Shallum the son of Jabesh became king in the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. <sup>14</sup> For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, came to Samaria, and struck Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; and he reigned in his place.

We've seen this a couple times now.

A king is assassinated by an inner-palace conspiracy.

Then a general, with the backing of the army, offs the assassin and sets himself up as the new ruler. Before we press on – a name's dropped here we haven't heard yet = Uzziah, king in Judah.

That's the **throne name** of the last king we read about – **Azariah**.

It seems Azariah affected a practice common among the rulers of the ancient Middle East.

He took a new name when he ascended the thron.

<sup>15</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and the conspiracy which he led, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. <sup>16</sup> Then from Tirzah, Menahem attacked Tiphshah, all who *were* there, and its territory. Because they did not surrender, therefore he attacked *it*. All the women there who were with child he ripped open.

When the city of Tiphshah refused to honor Menahem as their new sovereign, he employed a practice used by the **Syrians & Ammonites** to create terror.

Pregnant women were put to the sword in this horrific manner.

His goal was to **terrify** potential rebels & force their submission.

<sup>17</sup> In the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi became king over Israel, *and reigned* 10 years in Samaria. <sup>18</sup> And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. <sup>19</sup> Pul king of Assyria came against the land; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his control.

<sup>20</sup> And Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the very wealthy, from each man 50 shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land. <sup>21</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? <sup>22</sup> So Menahem rested with his fathers. Then Pekahiah his son reigned in his place.

It was during Menahem's reign Assyria began flexing their muscles.

Israel was too weak to stand in their way so Menahem decided to buy them off.

He confiscated the wealth of the those best positioned to stage a coup against him.

It was a clever way to strengthen his hold on power while weakening his rivals.

The Assyrians were mollified by this bribe, but only temporarily.

By this payment, Israel became a vassal to Assyria.

Their leader, named Pul here, is the famous **Tiglath-Pileser III** who extended Assyria's empire across the ME.

In vs23-28 Menahem's son becomes king, only to be bumped off after 2 yrs by yet **ANOTHER** coup staged by a commander named Pekah, who reigns 20 yrs.

<sup>29</sup> In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

There's a whole lot of history behind all this.

Turns out when Menahem bought off the Assyrians, this guy Pekah set up a rival kingdom on the east side of the Jordan.

He HATED the Assyrians and was in no way going to be part of one of their vassal states.

When Menahem died, Pekah staged a coup, took the throne, then negotiated with Israel's long-time, bitter rival Syria to forge an alliance against Assyria.

Then Pekah and the Syrian king, Rezin, tried to persuade King Ahaz of Judah to join them.

When he refused, they attacked.

Ahaz then asked Tiglath to help him. V29 is the Assyrian answer.

And this is the beginning of the end for the N'n Kingdom of Israel.

<sup>30</sup> Then Hoshea the son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck and killed him; so he reigned in his place in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. <sup>31</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Now, back to Judah

<sup>32</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. <sup>33</sup> He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name

was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. <sup>34</sup> And he did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. <sup>35</sup> However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the Lord.

Jotham was a good & relatively powerful king.

He knew Judah's strength came from her devotion to the Lord, not her military might.

He did what he could to facilitate the worship of God by rebuilding an important gate to the temple that had been destroyed when Israel defeated Judah years before.

<sup>36</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? <sup>37</sup> In those days the Lord began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. <sup>38</sup> So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

Though Jotham was a good & godly king, Judah began to experience trouble at this time because of his son.

Jotham elevated Ahaz to co-rule well before the end of his term. And Ahaz was **wicked**; supremely so.

Ch16

<sup>1</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. <sup>2</sup> Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David *had done*. <sup>3</sup> But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

Ahaz **both** worshipped the golden calf & renewed the practice of child sacrifice. Chronicles tells us why.

The ancients believed **calamity** was the result of angering the gods while **blessing** was the gods reward.

Ahaz rightly attributed Judah's distress to divine disfavor. But he ascribed it to the wrong deity.

It was Yahweh Judah had offended, not the gods of the ancient Canaanites.

He assumed a return to the **ancient ways** would appease them.

A bit later we'll see that the reason Judah got so far off track was because they neglected God's Word.

Their religion had devolved to superstition, folk-lore, assumptions, and what they believed was common sense.

Their faith was no longer informed by God's Word, His Self-Revelation and how people could know and have relationship with Him.

So the favor God had bestowed on Judah because of David's whole-hearted devotion to God ran out, dried up, evaporated.

And when Judah turned from God, God, turned from Judah.

The same has happened to us.

Listen: The Founders of our Country were profoundly shaped by a Biblical, Judeo-Christian Worldview.

That worldview produced a set of founding documents that have led to the greatest freedom for the most people in the history of the world.

It's resulted in the highest standard of living for the most people.

The liberty and prosperity brought about by the implementing of Biblical principles in economics and government is simply unprecedented in history.

BUT: As western civilization moves away from that Biblical WV, back toward classical paganism, there's been a marked erosion of that liberty and prosperity.

In 2006, New Atheist Richard Dawkins wrote his bestseller *The God Delusion* and called for the systematic end to theistic religion.

He claimed it was doing irreparable harm to the world.

But **NOW!** He admits calling for the dismantling of Christianity was unwise.

No he recognizing the civilizing effect The Gospel has on people while casting off belief in God turns people into ravenous beasts.

The solution to the world's problem isn't more man-made religion or philosophy.

It's a return to God. It's revival.

By worshipping idols, Ahaz only added to Judah's woes.

Making Ahaz's sin more grievous is that it was during his reign the great prophet Isaiah lived.

Isaiah gave much counsel, but Ahaz ignored it.

<sup>5</sup> Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to *make* war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome *him*.

Though Ahaz staved off this attack, Judah's lost 120K soldiers w/200K civilian hostages taken back to Samaria.

It was during all this Isaiah gave many of his most important prophecies.

He made clear both Ahaz's wickedness & Israel's & Syria's attempts to conquer Judah were satanic in origin.

The devil did his best both from within & without to destroy David's royal line so the promise of Messiah would be thwarted.

But even though things seemed to be going all satan's way, God would have the Last Word.

Nothing could hinder His promise.

<sup>6</sup> At that time Rezin, king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites went to Elath and dwell there to this day.

Elath was a port on the Sea of Aqaba, a symbol of Judah's power. // This signaled a crushing defeat.

Lost to Syria was Judah's eastern region with its lucrative trade route.

<sup>7</sup> So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I *am* your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me." <sup>8</sup>

And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent *it as* a present to the king of Assyria.

What makes this so sad is, in Isa ch7, God offered Ahaz a way out distress if he'd only ask.

He refused! Why? There's just no sane answer to that.

All Ahaz had to do was repent of his idolatry, turn back to God, and God would rescue him and his kingdom.

Instead, he impoverished his kingdom and made himself the vassal of a foreign ruler.

Ahaz was a FOOL! Easy to see. But his choice is the one all unbelievers make.

Believe in and submit to God and know a blessed life on Earth and eternity in Heaven.

Or, reject God, go your own way & know sorrow and loss, then eternal death.

<sup>9</sup> So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried *its people* captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.

Ahaz's request was just the thing Tiglath-Pileser was hoping for; any excuse to invade Damascus.

He didn't stop there. He attacked Israel as well.

<sup>10</sup> Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, ...

It was unusual for the kings of Judah to leave their lands.

But Ahaz had to as an act of submission to Tiglath.

<sup>10b</sup> ... and saw an altar that *was* at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. <sup>11</sup> Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made *it* before King Ahaz came back from Damascus.

2 Chr 28 says Ahaz was attracted to the worship he saw in Damascus because he thought it was their gods that had given the Syrians their earlier victory over Judah.

By worshipping them himself, he hoped to curry their favor.

Because the worship of Yahweh had been neglected so long, there was little to no **majesty** in it.

But when Ahaz saw all the pomp & ceremony with which the Syrians worshipped their gods He was impressed.

Then TP added the powerful Assyrian deities to the mix & he got all starry eyed.

So he drew up plans for the pagan altar & sent them back to Jrz where one of the priests went to work making a copy.

Maybe a new altar would spice up things up.

Some churches do the same today.

They've traded in worshipping God in Spirit & Truth for the tools & tricks of mere entertainment.

They define success by numbers & how excited people are rather than faithfulness.

There's nothing wrong in using technology to communicate the Gospel & enhance the work of ministry.

But it must never be more than a **tool** to that end.

Caution & wisdom are needed because **some** tools can **subtly flavor** or **color** the message.

Store garlic in a container then put milk in it; that milk's going pick up the taste of garlic.

The same thing happens with certain mediums we use in sharing the Gospel.

The Gospel is **THE most relevant message** in every place & time.

**BUT:** If in trying to **make it relevant** we end up **distorting** it, we're really just aping Ahaz.

Prov 16 says, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof, is the way of death."

I've mentioned this before but it's called for again

There's a movement afoot in the Evangelical Church, especially popular among Millennials called **Theological Progressivism**.

It's been growing now for about a decade. // It's Ahaz's folly all over again.

It's really just a reheated version of 19<sup>th</sup> C Liberalism that's **ruined** many mainline denominations.

These Progressives have **given up** in the battle between the world and The Faith

**Specifically** in the realm of **morality** and the **exclusivity** of the claims of Christ.

They've capitulated to the world on sexuality, gender, and marriage.

They've forsaken the idea that salvation is in Christ **alone**.

Jesus is no longer **THE** Way, just **A** way.

Their theology isn't shaped by Scripture; it's an accommodation to the world.

Oh, but their services are **exciting**; with lights, smoke machines, dynamic-relevant speakers.

They only need look at any liberal Methodist, Lutheran or Presbyterian church to see their future.

Empty buildings.

When you negotiate with the world, the world doesn't move toward faith, you just move toward the world.

Ahaz was impressed by the worship he witnessed in Damascus, though it was bogus.

Compared to Damascus, the worship at the temple in Jrz where the real God's glory rested between the cherubim, was lackluster.

Tragic! Since things were **opposite** from what ought to have been.

The worship of Yahweh **ought** to have been intense, fervent, profoundly moving.

Hey: Compare the Rose Bowl when UCLA plays to the churches within a hundred miles.

Are the people in church as excited & earnest in their praise of God as others are in their celebration of a piece of pigskin going 10 yards for a first down; a touchdown?

Our preparing to worship ought not be done just by the worship team before service.

Each of us ought to prepare to worship, praise, & give thanks.

Worship isn't something that happens **TO US**; it's something we offer God.

Worship isn't a mood set by the music. It's a decision to give God His due.

<sup>12</sup> And when the king came back from Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. <sup>13</sup> So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.

All the offerings & sacrifices that had before been offered to Yahweh on HIS altar were now transferred to this one.

They were going through the motions – but on an altar God never called for.

This was extravagant & excited, but ultimately **EMPTY** religion

<sup>14</sup> He also brought the bronze altar which *was* before the Lord, from the front of the temple—from between the *new* altar and the house of the Lord—and put it on the north side of the *new* altar. <sup>15</sup> Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "On the great *new* altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire *by*."

Meaning he would use it for divination by reading the entrails of slaughtered animals – an abominable use for God's holy altar.

Here's how I read this – let's keep "doing church," but let's decide what church is & how to do it by drawing our

cue from what's satisfying & exciting & what the world's into.

It won't really **BE** church anymore, at least not what God means by it – but we'll still call it that.

In Revelation 2 & 3 we find letters Jesus sent to 7 churches.

Only 2 of them were doing well, the other 5 had serious problems, & 2 of those, Ephesus & Laodicea, were in danger of not even BEING a church anymore.

Actually, the last – Laodicea > which represents the age in which we live – wasn't a church.

She called herself one, but Jesus didn't go there anymore.

The church of Laodicea was so far gone into the world, Jesus' appeal was to individuals to open up to Him.

What Jesus said to the so-called church of Laodicea fits perfectly with the modern, Western church.

The spirit of Ahaz rules far too many churches today.

And people are worshipping at the altars of this world instead of in spirit & truth.

<sup>16</sup> Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded. <sup>17</sup> And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts, and removed the lavers from them; and he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that *were* under it, and put it on a pavement of stones.

He did all this to pay off TP.

<sup>18</sup> Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple, and he removed the king's outer entrance from the house of the Lord, on account of the king of Assyria.

The Assyrians regularly sent officials to Jerusalem to check on things & get a report.

Ahaz didn't want them to see any wealth or evidence of anything that might question his loyalty.

<sup>19</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? <sup>20</sup> So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

Ah! Hezekiah! A much needed breath of fresh-air.

But before we get to him, back to Israel ...

Ch17

<sup>1</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, *and he reigned* 9 years.

Hoshea assassinated the previous King Pekah, who'd done the same to the king before him.

<sup>2</sup> And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him.

The Hebrew means by comparison Hoshea wasn't as wicked.

He was still bad, just not as bad as those who'd gone before.

<sup>3</sup> Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. The record's condensed.

The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser helped Hoshea get rid of Pekah then put him on Israel's throne.

That's when Israel officially became a vassal of Assyria.

They owed allegiance & annual tribute to Assyria while allowed to govern their own affairs as long as they didn't interfere with Assyrian plans.

When **Shalmaneser** succeeded TP, Hoshea renewed his oath of loyalty.

But after 6 yrs, he rebelled by withholding the tribute and appealed to Egypt for help.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

That left Israel without a ruler. They couldn't appoint another king because Hoshea was still alive.

But being in prison, he couldn't lead.

The result was inter-tribal conflict that led to the disintegration of the kingdom.

When the Assyrians saw chaos descending on Israel and feared some new rebel would rally the people against them, they invaded.

<sup>5</sup> Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for 3 years.

A 3-year siege is one of the longest for any city in history and gives us an idea of just how desperate the situation

had to have gotten inside the capital before it fell.

Nineveh, the Assyrian capital lasted less than 2 years against a siege by the Babylonians.

Mighty Carthage fell to the Romans after 3 years.

Alexander captured Tyre in 7 mns.

In modern times, Sebastopol lasted 11 mns and in 1870, Paris lasted a little over 4.

<sup>6</sup> In the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria [**Sargon II**] 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.

This was 722 BC. The N'n Kingdom of Israel only lasted 200 yrs.

In their conquest, the Assyrians deported anyone they deemed to present a continuing threat.

Large numbers of people were moved to a region on the NE border of Assyria.

The Assyrians adopted this policy of shuffling conquered people as a way to forestall future rebellions.

The idea was that people would be so busy just survive in a new location, they'd have no strength to revolt.

King Hezekiah of Judah invited anyone in Israel who still worshipped Yahweh to move south where he planted them in new homes.

Dozens of families took him up on the offer.

So though the 10 N'n tribes were broken up, a remnant of were found in Judah.

Now we get the **reason** Israel was defeated.

<sup>7</sup> 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, <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> They set up for themselves *sacred* pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."

They were very religious; but it was a false religion, one that led not to blessing but to judgment.

Because it's a spiritual principle We become like the god we worship.

Since the idols they worshipped were petty, selfish, blood-thirsty, cruel, & sensual that's what the people became.

Horrendously immoral condoned by religious words, there was nothing left but judgment.

<sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.

God didn't sit idly back during all these years of spiritual declension.

He sent one prophet after another to call His people to repentance.

But what happened to these godly men?

At best they were ignored. At worst, tortured and killed.

The height of their depravity was child sacrifice. Utterly morally repugnant to us.

We righteously decry the gross injustice of them punishing the prophet who warned people placing their infant on the red-hot arms of Moloch.

What a miscarriage of justice to punish the one doing right while rewarding those doing heinous evil.

Yet we live in a society that **punishes** those who expose *Planned Parenthood* for selling body parts of aborted babies while commending those who stage a gathering of women called *Celebrate Your Abortion*.

How can God judge ancient Israel and NOT judge the US?

Watch the progression in these next vs.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

They BEGAN as God's covenant people, governed by His self-revelation.

Then they **rejected** His Word as the standard for truth & the guide for their conduct.

When they turned **from** Him, they turned **from their identity as His people** and sought that identity in something else; as all people do.

Whatever else they chose was of course a false god, an idol of their own imagination.

They became idolaters.

BUT: Since we're made **FOR** God, nothing else can **REALLY** take His place.

So life becomes an endless pursuit of satisfaction; something, anything that can scratch the eternal itch for meaning, for significance.

In pursuit of that people try ever more dangerous things as their hunger and thirst drive them for the next high, the next thrill.

This is why sin is **progressive**, why it gets increasingly evil, wicked, sick.

<sup>16</sup> So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image *and* 2 calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. <sup>19</sup> Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, <sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

The Assyrians didn't want to lose the valuable resources Israel could provide so they resettled the land with the populations of other people they'd conquered.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

Here's something remarkable; though Israel was now banished from the land, God still treats it as His.

Because IT IS! That's **His** land.

So when these pagans moved in and carried on their religious shenanigans, God sent judgment in the form of lions to harass them.

Here's what's crazy! These pagans realized what was happening.

When they were beset with trouble, they figured out it was because they weren't honoring God.

WHY, for heaven's sake, didn't ISRAEL do the same?

All this just points up their unreasoned, idiotic rebelliousness.

<sup>26</sup> 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." <sup>27</sup> 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." <sup>28</sup> 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.

We get no info about his guy other than he had enough knowledge about Yahweh to tell the new residents about Him.

Which is just another nail in Israel's coffin!

This means there WAS a knowledge of God among them, but they rejected it.

In vs29-41, we're told these new residents *did* fear Yahweh, but kept worshipping their own deities.



<sup>41</sup> 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.

This marks the writer as being a close contemporary to the events, not way off in some later time, penning mere myths as liberal scholars contend.

Before we end, need to note a glaring contradiction in our text.

Look at v32&32

<sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods— according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

Then here in v41 –

<sup>41</sup> 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.

But now, v34 –

<sup>34</sup> 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,

Is this a contradiction? It seems so at first blush.

But why would the author make such a glaring blunder in such a short space?

UNLESS, it's no blunder & contradiction at all!

These new residents of the land who later become the Samaritans of Jesus' day, feared Yahweh in the sense that they recognized Him as a real God.

But they DIDN'T fear Him for the God he really is.

They conceived of Him as the rest of their idols.

So they paid Him lip-service and feared Him in that regard.

But they did not come to revere Him by His own self-revelation through the prophets as the covenant-keeping God of Israel.