

Lesson 99

God Judges Israel

The northern kingdom is conquered by Assyria.

Overview

Lesson Focus

For 250 years, the people of Israel did what was right in their own eyes, turning their backs on the Lord. So, the Lord used the Assyrians to judge Israel. Assyria besieged the walled city of Samaria and conquered Israel. They took the Israelites to another land and moved foreigners in to occupy Israel.

Key Passages

2 Kings 17:5–6, 17:7–23 (selected verses)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe how God brought judgment to Israel.

Explain why God was angry with Israel.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 3:11–12 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

God warned the people that judgment would come (2 Kings 17:13–18). He spoke through his prophets Hosea, Amos, and others. Israel was about to be wiped out as a nation and carried away into captivity for their unwillingness to turn from their sin and trust in God.

The 10 tribes of Israel suffered as a result of the wicked kings who led the people to idol worship away from the true God. The suffering was a result of spiritual famine. They had gotten to the place where only a small remnant remained committed to honoring God. The others feasted on their selfish lusts and made offerings and sacrifices to false gods.

Over time, the leaders did not cling to the truth of the Creator God who alone was to be worshipped. Politics and power became the driving force, and alliances were made with the surrounding nations. In disobedience and rebellion, they turned from the One who had brought them out of Egypt. Worship had been corrupted, and even the priests of God were participating in idol worship. Rather than a sweet-smelling aroma (Philippians 4:18), the worship of the people was a stench in the

nostrils of God. In fact, Israel looked a lot like many Western countries today.

God had been patient for 250 years, sending many prophets to warn Israel and Judah. But after years of consistent rebellion, idolatry, sin, and hostility toward God, his anger was finally provoked to action, and he judged Israel by removing them from his sight (2 Kings 17:18). The Lord finally rejected Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers (2 Kings 17:20). God sent the powerful nation of Assyria to bring judgment upon the nation that had forsaken him. The northern territory would never be fully under the control of Israel again. The promised land had been torn from them because of their unfaithfulness.

Hoshea was the final king of Israel, the last in a line of wicked kings. Like the others before him, he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 17:2). Israel was already under the control of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V, and Hoshea acted as his vassal. Eventually, Hoshea decided he didn't want to pay tribute to Shalmaneser, and he sought an alliance with Egypt. When he failed to pay the expected tribute, Shalmaneser apprehended him, threw him in prison, and marched on the capital city, Samaria. As predicted by Amos, the Assyrians surrounded Samaria. After three years, the city could no longer support itself, and the king of Assyria captured Samaria, carrying the Israelites away into foreign lands (2 Kings 17:6). This

marked the end of the northern kingdom of Israel.

During this time, Judah experienced a time of repentance and revival. Hezekiah became king during the third year of Hoshea and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 18:1–3). In fact, he was the best of Judah's kings (2 Kings 18:5–6). He removed the high places and destroyed Moses' bronze serpent, which had become an object of worship. When the Assyrians came against Jerusalem, God defended the city by striking down 185,000 soldiers in the night, causing the Assyrian army to return home (2 Kings 19:35).

Just as he did with Israel, God proves himself patient and gracious to all of his followers. We all were once alienated and enemies of God by wicked works. Yet he offered us reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ. This miracle of salvation presents those who trust in Christ as holy, blameless, and above reproach before our holy God (Colossians 1:21–22).

Historical/Apologetics Background

As the capital of Israel, Samaria was the site of the final showdown between Assyria and the Israelites in the north. However, the takeover of Israel's capital, Samaria, took three years. Why so long? As a fortified city, Samaria had its own supply of food and water within the walls. The Assyrians unglamorous yet effective plan of

attack was to set up camp outside the city and wait until the people inside starved or opened the gates.

The siege lasted through the reign of Shalmaneser V, and some believe that he died at the end of the campaign. After the land was fully taken, the Assyrians conducted a campaign of relocation. The Israelites were delivered to the regions of Halah, Habor, Gozan, and the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6). These were regions far to the east in modern-day Iraq, Syria, and Iran. However, many of the poor and nonthreatening Jews were left in Israel to work the land.

As the Assyrians conquered more lands, they settled Samaria with the foreigners from those lands (2 Kings 17:24). The new citizens moved in, and with them came their worship of false gods. They did not fear the Lord or know how he demanded to be worshipped (2 Kings 17:25–26). This angered God.

In response to God's judgment of sending marauding lions, the foreigners sent for a priest, hoping they could learn the rituals of the true God and appease his anger (2 Kings 17:26–27). But God demands nothing short of perfect obedience and worship of him alone. And although the priest did show them how to worship God, they continued to make gods of their own and put them in the shrines. The worship continued to be blended in perverse

ways, and God was not honored (2 Kings 17:28–33). In addition, the Jews intermarried with these foreigners and they became the Samaritans, whom the Jews despised but Jesus reached out to (John 4:1–42).

Here we can see a clear present-day principle to apply from this Old Testament passage: Beware of churches that integrate worship practices from religions around the world. This type of syncretism promotes a false worship of God. This is unacceptable. We are to have no false gods before God. We are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our minds, and our souls.

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