

---

Day 189 - July 8

---

## The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

### *The Fall of Israel*

Readings: *2 Kings 17:3-41; 18:7-11*

### *Reflections:*

- The nation of Israel finally falls. The slaves once promised their own land where they could live in freedom, after decades of rebellion against God, are once again taken into slavery. After three years of laying siege to Samaria, it falls and the people are taken as captives into Assyria. Now people from Babylonia and other surrounding countries will occupy Samaria and a new people group will emerge, mixed in ethnic background and holding to a hybrid version of religion. This group, the Samaritans, in later years will be despised by Israelites. The Assyrian King, Shalmaneser V, who will order the siege, will die in 722 BCE. Sargon II will ultimately take credit for the fall of Israel in 723 BCE.
- Here in II Kings 17:7-20, the writers of Scripture actually summarize the meta-narrative of the entire story of Israel. It is a rare jewel for those that wonder if the writers were aware of the narrative that was unfolding. Check it out: "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had **brought them up out of Egypt** from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the **practices that the kings of Israel had introduced**. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger. They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." **The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers:** "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God. **They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers** and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as

they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do. They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. **They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery** and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. **Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence.**" This passage makes the overarching meta-narrative very clear. The basic plot line, the role of the kings (failed and corrupt leadership) and the role of prophets (pointing back to God). The basic problem: the religious heart of the human that leads us to sacrifice those we should love the most."

- "They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless." This verse underscores that we become what we worship. Our world is defined by what we worship and love. Jesus said it this way, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) We must be careful then what we invest our time, energy and resources into. We must guard what becomes the obsession of our heart. Money and possessions, popularity and prestige, power and status. All of these will ultimately define us and consume us. The great promise in this truth is that if we worship Christ with all we are, we will become like him! Also see I John 4:15-18 and Ephesians 3:14-19.
- "So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there." (2 Kings 17:23) Here we have a clear reference to when this account was written. It was written while Israel was in captivity in Assyria.
- The story of the lions killing the new inhabitants of Samaria is a fascinating story. It is one of those stories reminiscent of the book of Judges where a lion is used within the purposes of God. Here we see creation under the control of God and used to bring about his judgment. It also seems strange that requirements of God are actually tied to the land. This is no doubt a sign to show that the God of creation is truly the God of Israel. Yet the people of this region persist in idol worship that included human sacrifice.
- How sad a condition for Israel. Their selfishness and rebellion takes a whole nation of freed slaves and returns them back into slavery. Although they had their freedom, the rules to teach them about God, justice and mercy, kings to govern them and God's accountability to correct them, none of this mattered. Their hearts remained unchanged. Nothing external can change the human heart. The human heart must be change from the inside out. This will become the main cry of the prophets as the people begin to await the seed of Eve, the coming Messiah.