

2Kings 17:1 ¶ In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

2Kings 17:2 And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

Hoshea, son of Elah, began his nine-year reign as king of Israel in Samaria during the 12th year of the reign of Ahaz as king of Judah. He was another evil king, but not quite as bad as the kings that preceded him.

2Kings 17:3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

2Kings 17:4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present 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.

Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, attacked Israel and made Hoshea a servant that had to pay him tribute. According to Clarke, Shalmaneser was the son of Tiglath-pileser. JFB adds this note about him: “or Shalman (Hosea 10:14), the same as the Sargon of Isaiah [Isaiah 20:1]. Very recently the name of this Assyrian king has been traced on the Ninevite monuments, as concerned in an expedition against a king of Samaria, whose name, though mutilated, COLONEL RAWLINSON reads as Hoshea.”

Eventually, Hoshea refused to pay his tribute money to Shalmaneser and decided to seek help from So, king of Egypt. This act resulted in the king of Assyria putting him in prison.

2Kings 17:5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

2Kings 17:6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The king of Assyria then invaded Israel and set siege to Samaria for three years. In the 9th year of the reign of Hoshea, Samaria fell to Assyria and the people were carried away into Syria and made to live in Halah, in Habor by the river Gozan and in the cities of the Medes. History shows that Assyria’s conquest of Israel occurred in 722 BC.

Clarke quotes historian Sir Wm. Jones with an interesting observation: “Now the Afghans are said by the best Persian historians to be descended from the Jews; they have traditions among themselves of such a descent, and it is even asserted that their families are distinguished by the names of Jewish tribes; although, since their conversion to the Islam, they studiously conceal their origin.”

Guzik offers this historical note: “It seems that Sargon II, the brother and successor of Shalmaneser, *finished* this siege or at least took credit for it: The men of Samaria with their king were hostile to me and consorted together not to carry

out their vassal obligations and bring tribute to me, so they fought me . . . I clashed with them and took as booty 27,280 people with their chariots and their gods in whom they trusted. I incorporated 200 chariots into my army. The rest of the people I made to dwell within Assyria. I restored the city of Samaria and made it greater than before. (*Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud, cited in Wiseman*)”

Guzik also notes: “200 years and 19 kings after the time of Solomon (the last king over a united Israel), the northern kingdom of Israel fell.”

2Kings 17:7 ¶ For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 2Kings 17:8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

All of this happened because the people of Israel had rebelled against the LORD their God that had delivered them from the cruel tyranny of the Pharaoh in Egypt. Instead of remaining obedient to the LORD God, they chose to worship the gods of the heathen nations that the LORD had cast out of Canaan and of the golden calves that the kings of Israel had worshipped.

2Kings 17:9 And the children of Israel did secretly *those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. 2Kings 17:10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: 2Kings 17:11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: 2Kings 17:12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.**

The historian notes that the people of Israel secretly did things that dishonored the LORD their God by building high places in all their cities—from the smallest to the largest. They set up idols and groves in the high hills and under every green tree. They burned incense in these high places just as the heathen nations that had been in Canaan before them. All of these things provoked the anger of the LORD against them. They served the very idols that the LORD had forbidden them to do.

The interesting thing to me is that the historian says the people did this secretly. It indicates to me that they thought the false worship of the LORD through the golden calves was acceptable, but they had to hide their worship of the false gods of the heathen nations. Like so many in the professing church today, they thought they could hide their actions from the LORD. You can't!

Psalms 139:1& 7-11 “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.... Whither shall

I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me."

Jeremiah 23:24 "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD."

Like so many in the professing church today, they thought they could worship the LORD without regard to His declared will. To truly worship the LORD is to recognize Him as THE authority in one's life. To truly call Him your LORD is to submit to His will as revealed in His word.

Deuteronomy 10:12 "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul...."

Luke 6:46 "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

1 John 2:3-4 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

2Kings 17:13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye 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.

2Kings 17:14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

2Kings 17:15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

2Kings 17:16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

2Kings 17:17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

The people of Israel and Judah had no excuse for their disobedience; they couldn't plead ignorance to knowing what God expected of them. He had warned them over and over again through His prophets who all faithfully called for them to turn from their evil ways and obey His commandments.

The people refused to heed the message of God's prophets, just as their fathers before them. They refused to obey His commandments and rejected His

covenant. They chose instead to follow after the ways of the heathen nations in direct disobedience to the LORD's command. They were so blinded by self and pride that they didn't recognize how foolish this choice was.

They rebelled against the LORD who had proven Himself mighty on their behalf over and over again to follow powerless false gods and their idols. They even sacrificed their children to the false god Molech and practiced divination and magic—all in direct disobedience to the LORD. They basically sold themselves to the devil and made the LORD very angry.

Exodus 20:2–5 "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...."

Deuteronomy 18:10–11 "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

2Kings 17:18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

2Kings 17:19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

The LORD became so angry that he was determined to remove Israel out of His sight; in other words, He gave them over to their sin and allowed the heathen nations to conquer them and take them out of the land. He preserved only the tribe of Judah in conjunction with His promise to David. Sadly, Judah followed the sinful example of their brothers in Israel.

2Kings 17:20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

2Kings 17:21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

2Kings 17:22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

2Kings 17:23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

The LORD rejected the people living in the northern kingdom of Israel and delivered them captive to the Assyrians. When he took the ten tribes away from the house of David and gave them to Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Jeroboam caused them to turn away from the LORD in disobedience. Eventually, God's long-suffering ran out and He exacted judgment—just as His prophets had warned.

The people of Israel were still living in Assyria at the time the historian was making this record.

2Kings 17:24 ¶ And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

2Kings 17:25 And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew *some* of them.

After deporting the Jews, the Assyrian king brought people from different places to live in Samaria—people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and Sepharvaim. These people did not fear the LORD, and he sent lions to attack and kill some of them.

Most commentators note that there was a remnant of the lower class people left in Israel that eventually intermarried with these foreign transplants. Their descendants became known as the Samaritans.

2Kings 17:26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

2Kings 17:27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

2Kings 17:28 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.

The people quickly decided that they had angered “the God of the land,” and informed the king of Assyria that lions were attacking and killing them because they did not know the laws and customs that pleased Him. The king ordered that one of the priests that had been taken captive be taken back to live among the people and teach them the laws and customs that honored “the God of the land.” A priest was sent to teach them how to fear the LORD; he lived in Bethel.

I surmise that the priest that was sent was one of the priests that followed the false system of worship originally instituted by Jeroboam.

2Kings 17:29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

2Kings 17:30 And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

2Kings 17:31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of

Sepharvaim.

Though the priest may have taught the people how to fear the LORD, it did not prevent them from worshipping their own gods. The people of this transplanted population made their own gods and put them in the houses of the high places of their making in the cities in which they lived. The men of Babylon made Succothbenoth; the men of Cuth made Nergal; the men of Hamath made Ashima, the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites sacrificed their children by fire to their gods, Adrammelech and Anammelech. Commentators make varying identifications of these gods—the main point being that they were all false gods of the heathen nations.

2Kings 17:32 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

2Kings 17:33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

These are interesting verses. The historian records that the people feared the LORD but continued to serve their own gods. It seems that they appointed priests among themselves to offer sacrifices to the LORD in the high places while continuing to serve their own gods according to their established customs.

The key truth here is that one can “fear” the LORD without having faith in the LORD. One can “fear” the LORD while continuing to practice sin. One can “fear” the LORD and appear to be worshipping Him when, in truth, their allegiance is to a false god.

These people “feared” the LORD because of the attack of the lions. They believed He was powerful, but they didn’t differentiate between Him and their own gods. The first verse that came to my mind as I thought about this was this one in James: *James 2:19 “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*

I think the prophet Isaiah sums it up pretty well with these words from the LORD.

Isaiah 29:13 “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:”

2Kings 17:34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

2Kings 17:35 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

2Kings 17:36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with

great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

2Kings 17:37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.

2Kings 17:38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

2Kings 17:39 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

2Kings 17:40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

The historian notes that even to the time of his writing, the people of Samaria followed the worship of the false gods of their people and did not even try to live according to the commands that the LORD had given Israel.

It was the LORD that changed Jacob's name to Israel and affirmed His covenant with him, commanding his people not to show honor in any way to "other gods"—not to bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. The LORD commanded His people to fear only Him—to worship Him, sacrifice to Him and obey His commandments. He commanded them to honor the covenant that had been established between Him and their fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He emphasized again that the people of Israel were only to fear the LORD. If they were faithful to obey Him, He would protect them from their enemies. Sad to say, they chose to disobey the LORD rather than live under His protection and blessing.

2Kings 17:41 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

The people sent to live in Samaria continued to fear the LORD, but they also continued in the worship of their false gods and continued to do so until the making of this historical record. The wording indicates that enough time had passed for the original transported population to have children and grandchildren.